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News from the NM Transit Association President



As president of NMTA, I want to take this opportunity to commend all the workers in the public transit industry in New Mexico. Each and every one

of you has done an outstanding job of serving the people of our great state. When they talk of the front line workers as heros, all public transportation should be included. Our employees are at risk every day serving the people of our communities.

We are in an unprecedented time, as we all know. Even our vocabulary has changed, with new terms like "social distancing, new normal, spread rates", etc. Hopefully we are seeing some light coming from the end of the tunnel as there appears to be a downward trend in new cases of Covid-19, according to the briefing by the Governor's staff today. As a result, the governor put forth some new guidelines and a plan for reopening more businesses. Unfortunately, we still have a long road ahead of us as this virus will most likely hang around for a while yet. It is not a time to slack off in any way.

What that means is, we all still have to be very vigilant and continue the daily task of disinfecting all

the surfaces we come into contact with, maintaining social distancing on the buses, and enforcing the new mask guidelines. There have been lots of great ideas for protection, especially on the buses, I have seen very innovative types of shields and barriers for driver protection. There are restrictions placed on all businesses for occupancy and wearing of masks by employees and patrons. We must enforce these guidelines, including our office staff and maintenance workers.

As I stated in the beginning, I not only commend everyone in this business, I am honored to be associated with all of you. You perform services that are vital to all our communities, and you do so at great risk to yourselves. All of you can take pride in knowing the service you provide is not only essential, but is vital to the well being of the citizens of New Mexico. As Melissa Drake, Administrator of NMTA is fond of saying; "Thank you for all you do."

Sincerely,
Joe Hardin



"Thank you to all the Transit workers for your dedication and commitment to serving the public during this time!"
-Secretary Elaine L. Chao



More From NMTA

PROTECTING NM PUBLIC TRANSIT PASSENGERS AND DRIVERS

News from

New Mexico Transit Association

While the demand for public transportation has plummeted because of the COVID-19 virus, transportation providers in New Mexico are taking steps to keep their passengers and drivers safe.

A brief survey conducted by the New Mexico Transit Association (NMTA) shows that of the 28 public transit providers in New Mexico, five programs say all drivers wear masks and gloves. Those are in Farmington, Clovis, Roswell, Albuquerque and Rio Metro which serves Valencia, Bernalillo and Sandoval counties.

Keith Wilson, division director of administration and grants for the city of Santa Fe Transit Division, says that cloth masks, face shields and gloves have been distributed to transit division staff along with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the New Mexico Department of Health guidance on their use. He said Santa Fe Trails suspended the collection of fares, blocked off seats closest to the driver and increased their cleaning practices to minimize potential for exposure. On paratransit services, trips were limited to one passenger at a time and drivers were provided extra masks to provide for passenger use when deemed needed.

The CDC reports that senior citizens are at high risk for COVID-19. Santa Fe Ride, a service Santa Fe Trails provides for seniors and people with disabilities, provides masks and gloves for drivers. Santa Fe Ride also offers masks to riders. Santa Fe Ride allows only one passenger to ride in one vehicle.

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD which covers Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba and Taos counties) provides gloves to operators who are required to wear them at all times while cleaning and disinfecting vehicles and commonly touched areas. While masks are currently not required by their drivers, drivers are encouraged to wear them. NCRTD has had difficulty obtaining quantities of masks. However, a facebook

group out of Taos called Mountain Magic has donated masks so each transit operator can have one. NCRTD expects a quantity of N95 masks in May. Hand sanitizer has been placed on all vehicles.

Rio Metro reports that it has installed plastic shields to keep the drivers and passengers safe from one another. Miner Transit in Red River reports it is pulling a bus twice each day from its route to disinfect the bus and to clean the seats of riders aged 60 and older. Some transit providers have defogging machines to keep buses disinfected. Finding the chemical solutions for the defoggers has been a challenge for a few bus operators.

Mike Bartholomew, Transit Administrator for the City of Las Cruces's Roadrunner Transit, says drivers are issued masks and gloves but are only required to use both if they are directly assisting a customer. For example lending an arm or tying down a wheelchair. Bartholomew says Roadrunner Transit would like to offer rear door entry for passengers but the buses are not set up mechanically to do so. Roadrunner Transit is working with a bus manufacturer to see if the rear doors can be opened. He also notes that a temporary agency has been hired to clean the buses nightly and defog them once a week.

Many transit providers have temporarily suspended fares as a way to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus through the exchange of money or bus passes. They are the City of Las Cruces, Rio Metro, Santa Fe Trails, Corre Caminos (service in Silver City and Deming), the South Central Region Transit District (covering Dona Aña and Sierra counties) and Meadow City Express in Las Vegas. NCRTD does not charge fares except for door-to-door service in Española.

NM TRANSIT PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON 60 AND OLDER

While general public transportation in New Mexico transports people of all ages including older adults, yet another program focuses solely on senior citizens. It is funded by the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 and administered by local transit providers.

Typical transportation includes rides to medical appointments, rides to congregate meal sites, to grocery stores and to pay bills. Most senior center vehicles are part of a fleet of a local governing entity (city, county, town or village). Programs work in collaboration with those government agencies for insurance, maintenance and vehicle repairs.

Monica Abeita, executive director of the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District which is the umbrella agency for the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging, said during COVID-19, senior centers and other providers have suspended routine transportation. Trips are focused on those that are medically necessary (for example kidney dialysis) and homebound elders who need a nutritious meal while following "Stay at Home Orders." Abeita said programs are ensuring PPE (Personal

Protective Equipment such as masks and gloves) is used by staff. Vehicles are continually sanitized, often several times a day, to ensure all precautions are taken to safeguard vulnerable seniors. Programs are also limiting the number of seniors using transportation services for medical care until the COVID-19 crisis subsides.

OAA federal funds flow through the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department to Area Agencies on Aging, who then contract with community transit providers. The Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging, which covers all counties in New Mexico except Bernalillo and Indian Country, has 40 contractors that provide transportation to New Mexicans 60 and older.

Senior transportation is free, but riders can offer a donation. However, Abeita said, "Especially in the COVID-19 crisis, seniors should not feel obligated to give a donation.

AIDING HOMEBOUND ELDERS

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) and Lyft are working together in three states to help caregivers get to and assist homebound older adults.

Pilot efforts are at senior centers in Oak Park, IL; Brookline, MA; and San Diego, CA. NCOA will pay Lyft \$15 to \$25 to transport a caregiver to an older family member's home to bring essential food and supplies.

Older adults are at high risk for COVID-19. and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is urging senior citizens to stay at home as much as possible.

NCOA and Lyft plan to expand these pilot programs to other states.





**News from New
Mexico
Department of
Transportation**

News From NM Department of Transportation

COVID-19 Response

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act became law. One of the provisions of the CARES Act is additional funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for public transportation providers to maintain staff and levels of service in the face of dwindling farebox recovery and local matching funds.

It is the US Congress, FTA, and the New Mexico DOT's express intent that these funds are utilized in a way that keeps your transit system intact and temporarily replaces local revenue to reduce revenue loss, so when the public emergency starts to recede, NM transit agencies are well-positioned to resume the full level of service that supports your communities and economies.

In New Mexico, for the remainder of program year 2020, CARES Act funding for Section 5311 (rural public transportation) providers will be used to cover all administrative and net operating costs at 100% Federal match. Capital projects will still require the 20% local match. In program year 2021, only net operating expenses will be reimbursed at 100% Federal match. Administrative and capital expenses will require the standard 20% local match.

As the year progresses, NMDOT will be flexible in its approach in utilizing these funds. Please let us know how we can assist you in any unique way that arises. Again, it is NMDOT's goal to keep you ready and able to come back at full service when the public emergency is lifted, so please reach out to your local administrations to reserve local funds for match

Program Year 2021 Awards

Staff is finalizing our recommended awards for CARES Act and Sections 5310, 5311, and 5339 applicants for the program year 2021,

from your cost saving from FYs 20 and 21 for when local match requirements go back into effect.

Lastly, please continue to participate in the coordinated bi-weekly meetings with NMDOT. These meetings will start to transform from funding questions to looking forward from an operational and safety perspective.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The NM Dept. of Homeland Security and Emergency Management can assist you with obtaining PPE for your staff. You should reach out to your local emergency manager directly, and that person will process your request through the State Emergency Operations Center for fulfillment.

Useful Links

NMDOT COVID-19 Transit Response Guidance https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit_Rail/NM%20COVID19%20Transit%20Response%20Guidance.pdf

FTA Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 and CARES Act <https://www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19#CARES>

Centers for Disease Control – What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>

Environmental Protection Agency - List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

beginning October 1, 2020. We plan to present the awards via webinars during the week of June 1, 2020.

FTA Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program

FTA has announced a funding opportunity for its HOPE Program, intended to support planning, engineering and technical studies or financial planning to improve transit services in areas experiencing long-term economic distress. The HOPE Program also supports coordinated human service transportation planning to improve transit service or provide new services such as rides to opioid abuse

recovery and treatment. If you are interested in applying, please reach out to Deborah Bach (contact information below). Applications are due to FTA by June 3, 2020. Here is a link with more information about the HOPE Program.

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/HOPE>

New Staff

We are pleased to welcome our newest rural programs planner, Alexis Corning-Padilla, to the Transit Bureau. Alexis started with us on February 8, 2020, in the local program

manager role previously held by Jason Park. She has a Master of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of New Mexico.

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Highlighting

New Mexico

Essential

Transit

Employees

Thank you New Mexico Essential Transit Employees by Mary Lou Kemp - Clovis Area Transit System

COVID-19 has changed many things in our lives and transit service is no different. As we all work tirelessly to provide safe service to our customers and still see to the needs of our staff it becomes even more important to remember why we do what we do. Transit is a vital link for patrons to access needed service on a normal day, but these past several weeks have been anything but normal. Innovative thinkers throughout New Mexico have come up with ideas on how best to sanitize work areas & transit buses even while supplies have been in high demand, ways to provide for the safe-spacing of passengers, ways to keep the vulnerable population safe while still meeting their need to replenish supplies, and ways to keep our employees safe and still working.

As transit employees, whether talking to a customer on the phone to make sure they understand the importance of taking precautions and also finding a way to assist them with their needs or a driver coming face

to face with a person in need, we are frontline employees of this COVID-19 pandemic. We are finding ways to assist our vulnerable seniors get what they need, getting essential workers to their jobsites, and providing service to our frail dialysis passengers. We are delivering meals, delivering groceries, delivering food boxes, making masks, sanitizing, sanitizing and sanitizing again. All the while, fearing for the safety of our passengers and loved ones at home, some of who are in the vulnerable category. At times it becomes difficult to sleep for the worry of what lies ahead and on our shoulders, yet we continue to put on the uniform and be present because as a transit worker, especially these days, we know the important role we are playing and the people who are depending on us.

So THANK YOU NM TRANSIT WORKERS, stay safe and May God bless you.

NEW MEXICO JOINS TRANSIT SYSTEMS NATIONWIDE FOR #SOUNDTHEHORN CAMPAIGN

As a tribute to #HeroesMovingHeroes on the front lines of this public health crisis, buses sounded their horns in solidarity with partner agencies on April 16. Several New Mexico agencies joined buses, trains and ferries nationwide at 1:00 PM MST for #SoundTheHorn as they give two, one-second horn blasts in solidarity to honor transportation workers throughout the country.

The effort was spearheaded by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), together with NJ TRANSIT, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Amtrak, NYC Ferry, and other regional bus and ferry operators.

MTA identified at least 117 transit systems that participated including multiple New Mexico transit agencies, as well as those in Chicago, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Francisco, Denver, Dallas, Tampa, St. Louis and Portland, among others.

Heroic transportation workers continue to provide critical service for healthcare workers, first responders, childcare workers, grocery store employees and other heroes who are performing critically essential work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The sounding of horns advances the #HeroesMovingHeroes campaign, which is dedicated to honoring transit employees. The campaign was first launched on April 6 and features heroic frontline transportation workers who continue to go above and beyond the call of duty during this challenging time.



CITY OF CLOVIS EMPLOYEES SEWING MASKS FOR STAFF/CATS RIDERSHIP



City of Clovis staff pictured at the Friendship Center (left to right) Sandra Cordova, Sarah Wiliford, Tammy Sena,

City of Clovis' Senior Services, Library and CATS employees have been busy making cotton face masks this week for various city departments who are working as part of the State of New Mexico's essential services order.

"Police, Fire, EMS, CATS and Emergency Management already have the personal protection equipment (PPE) their departments need," advised City Manager

Justin Howalt, Tuesday. "However we have other staff, including Public Works, Airport staff, Building Safety and Municipal Court, who are still working in the community as part of essential services. Although we are practicing social distancing wherever possible, and even though face masks have not been mandated at this time, we wanted to provide face masks to our other employees as they go about their work for the community to help them and anyone they may come into contact with."

Staff is also making face masks for people using the CATS bus system. "Our CATS drivers have N95 masks, but we wanted to make masks for our CATS ridership," advised MaryLou Kemp, CATS Director. "This helps protect not only our drivers, but our ridership. I would especially like to thank the Library and Senior Services departments for helping me with this project, Commissioner Casaus for volunteering to assist, and Baxter-Curren Senior Center for donating some of the material and ribbon for this project." To date they have made 140 masks.

C.A.T.S. Assists with Meal Delivery

On April 1, 2020 CATS started assisting CRSMA (Curry Resident Senior Meals Assn) with hot meal, home deliveries. Today, two drivers are delivering 36 meals a day to senior citizens in the Clovis area. This count continues to increase putting the route right at 2 hours. It is the driver's responsibility to follow the route planned out for the day, while the runner gets the proper number of meals and sides ready for the next stop. Both employees are utilizing proper PPE and distancing during the delivery process by putting the meals on a table near the door. The driver honks as the bus arrives and the runner knocks on the door and then stands back while the senior retrieves the meals. If there is not a response at the stop then the meal is returned to the meal site.

Employees come to transit because they are service-minded individuals and enjoy being of service to the community. Delivering meals to our vulnerable population during this crisis fits right in this category, providing a much needed meal and providing the driver with a feeling of service and humility.



News from



North Central Regional Transit District

NCRTD RIDER SURVEY SHOWS HIGH SATISFACTION FOR RTD “BLUE BUS” SERVICE AND DRIVERS



This year, the NCRTD conducted a large-scale rider survey to gather useful information on demographics and rider sentiment that will assist the District in developing driver and customer service training over the time.

Overall, the vast majority (73%) of Blue Bus passengers are *very satisfied* with the Blue Bus, while an additional 17% express satisfaction. Just 1% expressed dissatisfaction. When asked about specific attributes of Blue Bus service, passenger satisfaction is high, with each attribute tested ranking over 4.0 on a scale of 5.0.

The drivers receive the highest marks in the specific attributes tested, with 90% of respondents saying they are very satisfied or satisfied with the drivers being helpful and friendly, obeying and enforcing safety rules, as well as for being knowledgeable.

In 2011, the NCRTD completed its first largescale rider survey and repeated that in

2016. The questions for the 2020 survey worked off the original set of questions, though included various improvements to provide for a benchmark of comparison analysis over the years since the 2011 and 2016 surveys.

Timing of survey was February 29 through March 9. During the survey week, riders were given a survey upon boarding the bus and an RTD pen they could keep upon filling out the survey. Drivers were also given business-sized cards directing riders to the online survey if they preferred not to complete the survey on the bus. In the end a total of 457 surveys were collected vs. 360 in 2016.

The NCRTD commissioned Southwest Planning and Marketing, an impartial, third party firm to provide survey research, data collection and data analysis, in a variety of different topic areas including driver performance and overall satisfaction with the RTD Blue Bus. Southwest Planning and Marketing is a market research and public opinion research company based in Santa Fe.

The survey, which can be viewed at RidetheBlueBus.com, resulted in a comprehensive 96-page report that summarizes the results from each question in the survey and reports on any variances in attitude or perception, where significant, among demographic subgroups.

NEW VEHICLES PURCHASED TO LAUNCH NMDOT PILOT PROGRAM

NCRTD has ordered two new Dodge Caravans that are expected to be delivered and up-fitted in late May.

The vans will be utilized as part of an NMDOT pilot program that will expand District demand and paratransit operations. In Española, demand service is offered within a 15-mile radius from the Española Transit Center, within Rio Arriba County only. This will now allow us

to service north Santa Fe County within that 15-mile radius as well. In Taos, the Chile Ride paratransit and demand service will now offer rides within a 1.5-mile service area from the Chile Red route, expanding the service from the current ¾ mile. The expanded services will launch upon delivery and upgrade of the new vehicles.

NCRTD TO BRING SECURITY SERVICES IN-HOUSE

The NCRTD has made the decision to bring security services on staff. The District will recruit, hire and train transit security personnel in a program similar to its Driver's Academy which trains transit operators.

As part of its current Service Plan Update, it had been expressed in community meetings that security was a concern for passengers. Many individuals acknowledged that the District has taken measures to ensure that the buses and facilities were safe, however, they wanted to see more security officers on the buses.

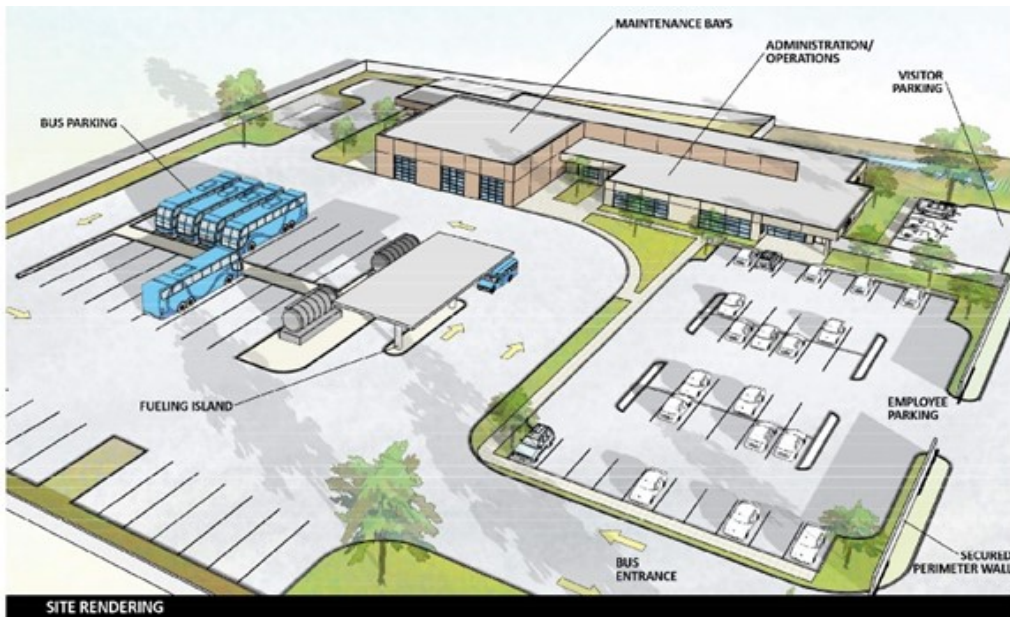
Over the course of the past two years, the District has been contracting for a Level III security officer for transit vehicles and facilities. Over that time, we had contracted with two security providers and have had six security officers. Based on this experience, it was determined that bringing security in-house was the best for the safety of operators and passengers.

UPDATE ON NCRTD TAOS OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE FACILITY

The NCRTD has entered into an agreement for the acquisition of land for the development of the NCRTD Taos Operations and Maintenance Facility. The site is located in the vicinity of Este Es and Salazar Roads.

The District will purchase five to six acres. The plan calls for a secured facility that will house a

series of maintenance bays, a fueling island, office space for administration/operations, bus parking, and employee and visitor parking. Meanwhile, the Española Maintenance Facility is nearing completion of its final design phase with construction expected to begin late summer or early fall.



News from



RIO METRO
REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT

Rio Metro Regional Transit District

COVID-19 Impacts on Rio Metro Services

The COVID-19 crisis has severely impacted transit operations, as well as the lives of both transit employees and passengers. Below is an update on how Rio Metro has handled operations during the pandemic, and what has been done to ensure the safety and security of our staff and passengers.



New Mexico Rail Runner Express

New Mexico Rail Runner Express service was suspended beginning March 16, 2020. The decision was made as New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham issued a directive to all state agencies to temporarily adjust, and in some cases suspend, certain functions in order to minimize public health risks.

During the suspension of service, testing and implementation of Positive Train Control, a federally mandate safety enhancement, has continued in the corridor as scheduled.

Rio Metro Bus

Rio Metro made several temporary adjustments to bus service in both Valencia and Sandoval Counties. Out of an abundance of caution, Rio Metro took the following measures to limit the exposure of our passengers and transit staff:

Limited the number of passengers on vehicles, ensuring appropriate social distancing onboard

Enhanced vehicle cleaning, including contracting with Stanley Steamer to disinfect all buses every day before going in to service

Rio Metro bus fares were suspended until further notice

Protective shields were installed around drivers to reduce face-to-face interactions between passengers and transit staff

Pace ABQ Bike Share

Zagster and Rio Metro suspended all Pace ABQ Bike Share rentals.

Customer Service

Rio Metro customer service has remained available by phone to answer questions.

Keeping Passengers Informed

Rio Metro has several channels of communication to keep passengers and stakeholders informed. These include email-based rider alerts, website service alerts and news articles, updates on Twitter, and text message alerts.

A Word of Thanks

Rio Metro is thankful to all transit employees for the essential services they continue to provide during these uncertain times.

Note: At the time this article was submitted, New Mexico Rail Runner Express service was suspended through May 15, 2020. For the most current service information on both the Rail Runner and Rio Metro buses, visit www.riometro.org.



ABQ RIDE Employees Sew Hundreds of Face Coverings for Drivers



ABQ RIDE provided its fixed route and Sun Van drivers with another tool to keep themselves and passengers healthy, courtesy of other ABQ RIDE employees. On April 13, 2020, thanks to ABQ RIDE staff members who dedicated time to sewing face coverings, Mayor Tim Keller, Transit Director Danny Holcomb and Transit staff were able to distribute the first batch of face coverings for drivers.

The previous week, Mayor Keller, Gov. Lujan-Grisham and the Center for Disease Control had encouraged everyone to begin wearing face coverings when it is necessary for them to go out in public, including essential workers. Any two-ply cloth worn over the nose and mouth can help limit the ability for infected people, even those who are not showing symptoms, to spread the virus to others.

“We encourage all riders to stay home unless you are traveling for essential reasons,” said Mayor Tim Keller. “We’re grateful to the Transit employees showing up every day to help the people who count on us, from folks who have no other way to get groceries, get to medical appointments or pick up grab-and-go meals. The CDC

recommends people wear any face covering with two layers of fabric in public. Volunteers have stepped up to sew masks for our drivers to help slow the spread of coronavirus.”

“One of ABQ RIDE’s administrative assistants in the Maintenance Division is a master seamstress, and made dozens of masks, with more on the way to be distributed to drivers on the front lines of transporting the public who are making necessary trips to work as essential employees, for food, or to a medical appointment. Along with help from Customer Service staff who cut patterns for the masks, we also got contributions from different groups in the community” said Danny Holcomb, Transit Director.

Of course, nothing replaces the important actions of staying home, washing your hands, coughing into your elbow and aggressive social distancing as far as reducing the spread.

ABQ RIDE is still encouraging riders to stay home if you are not traveling for work related to an essential business, or for urgent personal business like a medical appointment or to get food for you family. We need to keep our limited capacity available for people who must travel.

As a reminder, specially designed masks for doctors and nurses should not be used by members of the public to ensure there are as many as possible for front-line health care workers and first responders. A bandana, homemade fabric mask, scarf, ski mask, or other cloth barrier with two layers of fabric can help prevent those who have mild or no COVID-19 symptoms from unknowingly spreading the virus to others.



News
From
ABQ Ride





Save the Date!!!

Announcements:

Upcoming Quarterly Training Sessions and Annual Conference...

Summer Quarterly Training

Due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, all quarterly training opportunities are on hold until further notice.

2020 NM Transit Conference and Expo

Due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, the 2020 NM Transit Road-ee has been cancelled.

The 2020 NM Transit Conference and Expo is on hold until further notice. Possible dates (depending on state group restrictions) are Monday, August 31st to Tuesday, September 1st.

Where: Santa Ana Star Casino and Hotel
54 Jemez Canyon Rd.
Santa Ana Pueblo, NM 87004

More From NMTA...

Please check nm-ta.com regularly for upcoming news, upcoming legislative agendas, events in transit and more.

The Myth Busters Brochure is also available for your review and use at the nm-ta.com website .

Follow us on Social Media:

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