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**News from the NM Transit Association President**



Dear NMTA Members,

It is now February of 2021 and we are still fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it feels like we are

making progress, not only in our state, but nationwide as well. The number of positive cases, along with the number of deaths has declined steadily in the last month. This is allowing some areas of our state to reopen certain businesses. While there is still a long way to go, I am certain that we will eventually be able to resume our normal lives.

I am once again proud to be associated with the greatest group of people. NM Transit providers and all of the individuals associated with transit have displayed professionalism and dedication to providing an essential service for the people of this state. This is my personal thanks for a continuing "job well done."

NMTA is continually working on training for its members. So far this year we have the following Training Sessions being planned.

- Stress Management during Covid, presented by Rudy Garcia with Tandem Consulting is scheduled for March 24th (9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.). To better accommodate each of your schedules this training will be offered virtually at three different times (times listed above).
- Emergency Preparedness, presented by Ream Lazaro will be presented in April - date to be determined.
- Best Practices to Prepare for Pandemics, Epidemics, or Safety Health Issues will be presented by Walt Diangson. This virtual session is tentatively scheduled for June 10th.

Plans for the 2021 NM Transit Road-ee, Conference and Expo are uncertain at this time. NMTA is keeping a close eye on the New Mexico Health Orders as group gathering limits are increasing. We will let keep you all up to date as a decision is made.

Sincerely,

Joseph E. Hardin  
NMTA President





**News from New  
Mexico  
Department of  
Transportation**

## News From NM Department of Transportation

### New Statewide Price Agreement for Transit Vehicles

The new statewide price agreement for transit vehicles has been awarded and is available at this link:

[https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit\\_Rail/00-00000-20-00087%20Transit%20Vehicles%20-%20Award.pdf](https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit_Rail/00-00000-20-00087%20Transit%20Vehicles%20-%20Award.pdf)

Please reach out to your NMDOT program manager before you begin the process of selecting and ordering any vehicles.

### NMDOT Comprehensive Training Program

NMDOT is excited to announce its proposal to develop standards and practices for a comprehensive training program that meets or exceeds industry standards for all New Mexico small urban (5307) and rural public (5311) and human service (5310) transit bus and van operators. To kick off this program, a series of online meetings were held in January 2021. The meetings presented the two-phase approach that NMDOT will be taking to insure all bus and van operators receive ongoing comprehensive and professional driver training and explained that each agency will create a system to monitor and document this training.

Phase I of the training is to provide a standardized starting point and foundation for consistent training for all 5307, 5311, and 5310 funded subrecipients' driving staff, regardless of time in their position. NMDOT has chosen the National RTAP Safety Training & Rural Transit (START) online course to serve

as the standard for NMDOT FTA subrecipient program bus operators. The START course is a comprehensive and effective method to cover needed driver skills. All drivers would then be required to take the training between January 20 and May 31, 2021. The agency will file certifications with the NMDOT as verification of completion.

Phase II of the training will offer an on-going veteran driver training program after the START training is complete. This will begin in June 2021. The program will include training in the following areas: Defensive Driving Recertification, Passenger Assistance, and Crisis Management/Safety and Security. Starting in February 2021, 4 monthly meetings will be held by a Training Advisory Committee, made up of a small group of subrecipient transit provider representatives from 5307, 5310 and 5311 agencies, who will help to determine the content for the trainings.

### Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA)

On December 27, CRRSAA was signed into law. CRRSAA does not contain any additional funding for New Mexico rural transit providers. Urban providers received a small amount of additional funding, and the state was allocated

a very small amount of Section 5310 assistance. More information on the administration of the CRRSAA Section 5310 funding will be made available soon.

## Federal Law Requiring Mask Usage

Effective February 1, 2021, all passengers and drivers (with limited exceptions) are required to wear properly-worn face masks on public transportation. More information is available at the following links.

USDOT FAQs on Mask Mandate  
<https://www.transportation.gov/safety/mask-travel-guidance#FTA>

Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/21/executive-order-promoting-covid-19-safety-in-domestic-and-international-travel/>

Centers for Disease Control Order: Requirements for Persons to Wear Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs  
[https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC\\_GMTF\\_01-29-21-p.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC_GMTF_01-29-21-p.pdf)

Transportation Security Administration COVID-19 Hub  
<https://www.tsa.gov/coronavirus>

The NM COVID-19 Transit Response Guidance has also been updated to reflect this change, and is available at this link: [https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit\\_Rail/NM%20COVID19%20Transit%20Response%20Guidance.pdf](https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit_Rail/NM%20COVID19%20Transit%20Response%20Guidance.pdf)

Other useful links include:

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>

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## Highlighting Outstanding CATS' Employees

By Mary Lou Kemp

Transit agencies across the nation have dealt with unprecedented obstacles this past year but yet have all risen to the challenge. New Mexico should be proud of how we came together to not only continue to provide service to customers in need, but found innovative ways to keep people safe and even provide delivery services to those who could not leave their homes.

The City of Clovis has one such agency in the CATS program. In March as pandemic restrictions started to occur and throughout the constant changes in protocol, CATS continued to provide transportation service to dialysis patients, essential workers, medical appointments and shopping for essential supplies. Staff also started making masks for customers, delivering hot meals to seniors, food boxes and delivery of goods to help the most vulnerable remain safely in their homes. Operating and Administrative Staff worked throughout the past 10 months seeing to the needs of their customers without complaint and abiding by all COVID safety precautions. As Director of this program I want to thank each and every one of them for their commitment to their customers and to the City.

Even though each staff member deserves recognition, I would like to highlight two individuals who went above and beyond this past year; Garry Johnson - Office Manager and James Lasater - Operator.



Garry recently received the City's Distinguished Supervisor of the Quarter award for his service. Garry came to CATS two years ago and had to hit the ground running. He had little time to get acclimated and was immediately tasked with learning four new software programs. He took all of this in stride and fell right into his new role. His compassionate nature makes him a good fit as proven by his eagerness to help a young couple who were desperately in need of assistance.

Garry took the call and they relayed to him that they had just arrived back in Clovis from an extended stay at a Lubbock hospital with a premature infant. They were in a local motel without transportation, very little money and needed supplies for the baby. Garry took it upon himself to contact four different agencies for supplies and food. He

then drove his personal vehicle to each agency to pick up these items and delivered them to the couple. **GOOD JOB GARRY JOHNSON AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.**

James Lasater has been an Operator for CATS for three years and has proven to be a great asset. His above and beyond moment occurred when he was transporting a passenger to his dialysis appointment and found his wheelchair to be in poor



condition and it was also too small for him. After his shift that day he immediately began the hunt for another wheelchair. Within two weeks he had located a large wheelchair and delivered the chair to the customer. The customer was moved to tears as he thanked James for this kind and generous gesture. James continues to provide assistance to people he has met on the bus. He helped a disabled young man who had been robbed of his belongings, assisted people wanting to go to church services on Sunday and looks for ways to assist those who are down and out. **WE ARE SO PROUD TO CALL JAMES ONE OF OUR OWN.**

Transit agencies across this great state have many similar stories to share and should proudly do so. We migrate towards transit as a career, not for the monetary reward but the reward of being of service to others and I applaud you all for doing this daily and more so now during this time of great need.



Highlighting  
New  
Mexico  
Transit  
Members

## Red River's Neuwirth Meets the Challenge



Year 2020, as we all know, was demanding for transit drivers, even dangerous, as the nation grappled with the spread of COVID-19. However, for Jimmy Neuwirth, transit operator for Miners Transit in

Red River, it was just a matter of embracing the changes and meeting the challenges head on.

Neuwirth started last year as a part-time employee moving residents and tourists around town in his naturally friendly manner. By the end of the year, he was a mask-wearing, full-time driver responsible for enforcing mandates, explaining New Mexico COVID restrictions to visitors while trying to take care of his passengers with limited seating. This sounds like most transit drivers across the country but, because Neuwirth works in Red River, the situation has its own complications.

While most of the nation quarantined, many people chose to travel, bringing one of the busiest summers Red River has ever seen. Hundreds of travelers came from other states and most were unfamiliar with New Mexico's pandemic mandates. The majority of town guests were happy to be out of the house and enjoying the beautiful Red River summer but more than a few were cantankerous about the restrictions.

"Why can't all 12 of us ride together? We are all staying together?"

That question, along with the constant mask debate, inundated the drivers in Red River all summer, into the fall and remain today during ski season. Through it all, Neuwirth has consistently kept a good-hearted attitude about the challenges and remained focused on what is most important – the safety and wellbeing of his passengers.

As the department implemented new policies, Neuwirth enthusiastically marked off seats, mopped and cleaned, sprayed disinfectant, reminded his passengers to put their masks on and rolled on. He even learned to tolerate the barrier between him and his riders– a fixture he was reticent to have dividing him from the people he strives to take good care of.

Miners Transit and the Town of Red River are proud to have such a dedicated public servant and ambassador for New Mexico on the team and thank Jimmy Neuwirth for his hard work!



## NCRTD Fleet Technician Dalrymple Recognized by Board for Going Above and Beyond

NCRTD Fleet Technician, Keith Dalrymple, was recognized by the District Board at its January meeting for going above and beyond by providing assistance to a bicyclist who was struck by a vehicle in Ranchos de Taos last month.

Dalrymple had just completed his work at the NCRTD Taos facility and was on his way home to Española when he witnessed the accident and immediately jumped to the aid of the individual while simultaneously ensuring emergency services were contacted and later contacting the District to notify us of the incident which occurred adjacent to the RTD Ranchos bus stop.

In recognizing Dalrymple, NCRTD Executive Director, Anthony Mortillaro, commented that, "throughout Keith maintained a collected and professional

demeanor during an extremely difficult situation and truly showed the compassion and dedication that reflected District values."



(Photo Caption: NCRTD Executive Director Anthony Mortillaro (I) presents Fleet Technician Keith Dalrymple with the District Above and Beyond Award)

## News from



## North Central Regional Transit District

### NCRTD's New Mora to Las Vegas Route Launched December 17: Represents first service in Mora and San Miguel Counties



*Mora County Commissioner Veronica Serna alongside Mora County Commissioner Elect Johnny "Colombo" Trujillo (center) cuts the ribbon to kick off the RTD Blue Bus Mora to Las Vegas NM route at its first stop at Holman, Mora County post office, flanked by members of the NMDOT, District 4 Maintenance team and RTD Transit Operators.*

On Thursday, December 17, NCRTD began a contracted pilot bus transit service between Holman in Mora County and the City of Las Vegas in San Miguel County. The route operates two days a week on Tuesday and Thursday.

The new service was requested by Mora County and began as a ten-month pilot program. Mora County financed 50% of the operating costs. Strategic financial partners to Mora County on this venture are City of Las Vegas, Highlands University and Luna Community College. The remaining 50% will be funded by federal 5311 funding grants allocated to NCRTD.

"We recognized a real need for public transit to serve the community here in Mora," commented Mora County Commissioner Veronica M. Serna. "To be able to provide access to educational opportunities at Highlands University and Luna Community College, as well as employment, shopping, medical and social services in Las Vegas is a huge benefit to our residents. We would also like to acknowledge NM Representative Joseph Sanchez (Dist. 40) for his role in making this happen."

Fare-free service on the route began with two roundtrips per day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There are 11 regular stops along the route including the Holman and Mora post offices, Cleveland Fire Station, Mora Valley Health Services, Sapello, Las Vegas Walmart, Alta Vista Hospital, Luna Community College, Las Vegas Plaza, Highlands University and the Las Vegas Transportation Center where Amtrak trains arrive and depart.



*Pictured at the RTD Blue Bus stop in front of the Las Vegas Transportation Center station in Las Vegas, NM are (l to r) Luna Community College Interim President Dr. Kenneth Patterson, Mora County Commissioner Veronica Serna, Las Vegas City Manager William Taylor, New Mexico Highlands University President Sam Minner, Las Vegas City Councilman Michael Montoya and New Mexico Senator Pete Campos, 8th District.*

## Rail Runner: Final PTC Certification Received



In December 2020, the New Mexico Rail Runner Express was notified by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) that its Positive Train Control or “PTC” system was approved and conditionally certified. This means that the commuter train operator met the end-of-year deadline for installing the \$60-million federally mandated safety enhancement.

“The Federal Railroad Administration is very pleased to announce that the New Mexico Rail

Runner has completed all the necessary steps required to fully implement PTC”, said FRA Administrator Ronald Batory. “We (FRA) have conditionally certified the Rail Runner’s PTC system and recognize its significant accomplishment in meeting the year-end deadline”, added Batory.

Positive Train Control is a federally mandated safety enhancement designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, high-speed derailments on reduced speed curves, operations through a misaligned switch, and incursions into active work zones. Rio Metro Regional Transit District, which operates the Rail Runner, began installing the system on the train’s 100-mile corridor in April 2019.

Learn more at [www.riometro.org](http://www.riometro.org).

## Rio Metro Dial-a-Ride: Making Improvements & Serving Customers

It’s been nearly a year since the COVID-19 health pandemic drastically changed the way people live, work, socialize, and move about the world. While many businesses are operating in a limited capacity, or have been shut down entirely, Rio Metro recognizes that essential employees still need to get to work, and that people still need access to grocery stores, medical services, and more.

Rio Metro’s Dial-a-Ride buses continue to operate, and many individuals who have no other means of transportation depend on the service.

“We’re a lifeline for the majority of the people we transport,” says Carol Mathews, Acting Transit Manager for Rio Metro Sandoval, which operates the Rio Rancho Dial-a-Ride. “Many of our passengers live alone. They wouldn’t have another way to get to the grocery store.”

Rio Metro offers Dial-a-Ride services in Rio Rancho and Valencia County.

While the service continues to operate, a lot has changed to comply with the State of New Mexico’s COVID-19 public health orders and to make the experience as safe as possible for

both drivers and passengers. New safety measures include:

- Daily sterilization of the buses
- Plexiglass barriers between the driver’s seat and passenger entrance
- Each bus is limited to a 4-seat capacity (instead of the standard 16)
- Social distancing signage is placed throughout
- Seats are blocked to keep people 6 feet apart
- Drivers clean their buses with disinfecting spray and wipes throughout the day

In addition to the COVID-19 related safety changes, Rio Metro has also implemented a new scheduling software for the Dial-a-Ride service. The software, called Ecolane, will streamline the delivery of shared ride service, reduce costs, and improve efficiencies.

Learn more at [www.riometro.org](http://www.riometro.org).



## News from



## Rio Metro Regional Transit District



## News From ABQ Ride



### ABQ Ride Debuts Electric Bus

On January 30, 2021, Albuquerque ushered in a new era in reducing the carbon footprint of its city buses when ABQ RIDE began using the city's first-ever electric bus. The bus fleet currently either uses diesel or compressed natural gas to run its routes.

The 40-foot electric bus puts practically zero emissions into the air, running its first route on the #66-Central. ABQ RIDE introduced the new electric bus at a news conference January 29 at the Albuquerque Convention Center.

The new bus and the five additional electric buses on their way this year are one part of Mayor Tim Keller's administration's commitment to make Albuquerque a 100 percent renewable-energy City by 2030. In addition to the new buses, over the past three years the Mayor has:

- Signed the Paris Agreement committing to climate action,
- Installed 38 solar projects at city-owned buildings,
- Added dozens of electric vehicle charging stations across Albuquerque,
- Helped local businesses reduce their energy bills through the Mayor's Energy Challenge,
- Made the transition to more sustainable LED street lights citywide,
- Provided over 200 local homes with free energy audits and upgrades,
- Launched Solar Direct project to get to achieve over 80% renewable energy use by fall 2021,
- Purchased the first electric vehicles for the City fleet,
- Achieved LEED for Cities Silver certification, and
- Ranked 5th Most Improved City on the 2020 ACEEE Clean Energy Scorecard.

Mayor Keller said, "Albuquerque is on the route to 100% renewable energy by 2030—and we're

rolling out another big step toward that goal with near-zero emission electric buses. When we lower the carbon emissions coming from our roads, we lower our carbon footprint, and we uphold our commitment to a cleaner, healthier Albuquerque.

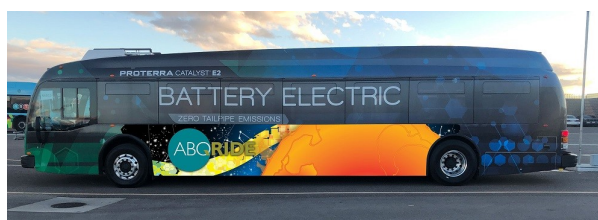


The electric bus is a Proterra Catalyst E2, which seats 37 passengers, though it may have fewer seats for the time being with COVID-safe, social distancing measures in place. Proterra was chosen through a bid process with several companies to lease one electric bus for a year to test on Albuquerque's streets.

"We're hopeful this bus will be the first of many to come to Albuquerque that will be an alternative to the diesel buses that Transit has used for decades," said Danny Holcomb, Transit Director.

Drivers and maintenance staff for the electric bus have been training in-house and on the bus since December; trained by ABQ RIDE supervisors, who received their training by Proterra's trainers via Zoom.

The bus is starting out on the #66-Central Avenue route, although it will eventually will be assigned to cover other routes as well. A range of 150 to 175 miles on one battery charge is anticipated. The City of Albuquerque hopes to buy five more Catalyst E2 buses this year. Funding for the buses comes from grants provided by the Federal Transit Administration.







## **Save the Date!!!**

### **Announcements:**

#### **Upcoming Quarterly Training Sessions and Annual Conference...**

- Stress Management during Covid, presented by Rudy Garcia with Tandem Consulting is scheduled for March 24th (9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.). To better accommodate each of your schedules this training will be offered virtually at three different times (times listed above).
- Emergency Preparedness, presented by Ream Lazaro will be presented in April - date to be determined.
- Best Practices to Prepare for Pandemics, Epidemics, or Safety Health Issues will be presented by Walt Diangson. This virtual session is tentatively scheduled for June 10th.

#### **NM Transit Conferences**

Due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, Upcoming NM Transit Conferences are on hold until further notice.

#### **More From NMTA...**

Please check [nm-ta.com](http://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](http://nm-ta.com) website .

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