

Region 9 – US 160 - Regional Transit Feasibility Study
(Pagosa Springs-Durango-Cortez-Dove Creek and Extensions)
5304 Contract Scope of Work
July, 2008

Background:

This five county collaborative project is to conduct a regional transit feasibility study in Southwest Colorado to critique, address and inventory our mobility system, travel forecasts, and land use forecasts in order to identify a viable regional public transit service that would meet the needs of communities in the region. This study will primarily look at the potential of transit service along Highway 160 between Pagosa Springs, Durango, Cortez, and Dove Creek, with potential extensions into New Mexico and other areas in the region.

Transit services are recognized by the public as a large gap in the region's transportation infrastructure. The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) cites that 96% of Southwest Colorado transit needs are not being met. The five county region includes communities as small at 600 residents, to the regional center of Durango at 16,068 (2006). However, the 2000 Census shows the daytime population in the regional center of Durango increases 53.5% during the day. Much of this daytime influx of visitors into Durango must travel out farther in the region to find affordable housing. With the Durango Transit system limited to the city limits, a strong need for more regional transit and interconnectivity of transit systems has developed. Further, communities and industry also have regional transit service needs across state lines to transport workers.

There are currently no designated park-n-ride facilities in the corridor, and three of the five counties offer no public transit. Transit providers generally serve special populations, i.e. elderly or disabled persons, within limited service areas, though service between Ignacio, Bayfield and Durango, continues to expand. Dolores Senior Services provides medical transportation to Cortez (approx. 30 miles one way) and if needed, Durango (80 miles one way) several times a week. However, they are unable to serve the general population and would like to expand to a public transportation system in 2010.

With regional transit needs identified by various agencies and the community as a whole, this regional transit feasibility study will benefit all communities, many that could not afford to undertake such an effort alone. In early 2006, transit and transportation stakeholders in the region met to discuss how service areas could be expanded, particularly in La Plata County. A Ride Share program to encourage car pools between commuters was started. A Transit Advisory Council was formed several years ago and meets to coordinate grant applications.

Region 9 Economic Development District includes the 5 counties that will be part of the feasibility study. As the coordinator of the SWTPR, Region 9 would take the lead and make sure all community transit needs are addressed through this study effort.

Project Tasks:

This *Regional Transit Feasibility Study* will analyze the feasibility and need for bus service along the US 160 Corridor between Pagosa Springs, Durango, and Cortez, and also include analysis of regional bus service to Dove Creek and into New Mexico. This study will develop an operating plan and develop an implementation plan for initiating and expanding regional transit service. This project will be used to determine how well a regional public transportation system will work between the identified communities and will look at the various components of a regional public transportation service including: stops, routes, schedule, and finance and governance options. This project will focus on Durango as the regional hub and will specifically analyze the regional transit capacity and operational needs of the new Durango transit transfer facility.

This project is a strategic plan. This project will be used to determine the feasibility and need for a regional public transportation system between Pagosa Springs, Durango, Cortez, Dove Creek, and other areas. This project will be carried out by a consultant under contract under the direction of the Region 9 Economic Development District. Transit providers and partners will cooperate with the hiring of a project consultant and providing all necessary information to provide a clear picture of existing and future services. Key partners including Region 9, Roadrunner Transit, Durango T, Dolores County Senior Services, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and La Plata County planners will provide guidance for the project consultant. The La Plata County Planning Department will oversee the feasibility study time-line, and the more detailed needs of their county, while Region 9 EDD will oversee the project's regional scope. This study will identify a regional transit operating plan in the following corridors:

1. Service connecting Pagosa Springs with Durango AND service connecting Dove Creek and Cortez with Durango, including points in between along the U.S. Highway 160 corridor;
2. Integration of service timetables in priority 1 with existing transit services to meet ridership needs;

Region 9 EDD will manage this study, issue a Request for Proposals, hire a consultant, and assemble and facilitate a Working Group to provide input and to oversee the study. The following entities will be asked to participate financially in funding this study and to serve on a Working Group:

This *Region 9/US 160 Regional Transit Service Feasibility Study* is a feasibility study that will analyze the regional and commuter transit needs along the US 160 Corridor between Pagosa Springs, Durango, Cortez, and Dove Creek. It will also address: Additionally, this study will identify the operational requirements and identify a regional transit service to meet those needs. An operating plan will be identified that identifies service characteristics, operating and capital needs and costs, maintenance requirements, funding sources, and an implementation plan. The chosen consultant will complete the following tasks:

Task 1: Working Group: Region 9 EDD will work with the partner agencies and the chosen consultant to establish a Working Group to provide input and oversee this study effort. This Working Group will be open to existing transit service providers within the study area, human service providers, government entities, and other selected persons committed to regional transit services improvement in the region.

Task 2: Public Outreach: A kick-off meeting will be held between the Working Group, Region 9, and the consultant to identify project goals, determine a project schedule, and to discuss the public and government input process for the study. The Working Group will further determine the need for a travel demand survey and a government entity survey that would look at agency needs and the willingness to participate in the planning, funding, and implementation of the identified service. The consultant will identify and implement a process for attaining community input. This outreach effort will gather input from transit providers, existing van pool programs, commercial shuttle services, citizens, government entities, workforce training centers, larger employment centers, the regional hospital, the regional airport, and senior centers.

Task 3: Demand Estimation, Data Collection and Analysis: The consultant will work with the applicable agencies and communities to collect and then analyze the pertinent foundational data for this study effort. This data should included, but is not limited to: transit demand estimation, traffic volumes and growth in traffic, peak hour traffic volume, existing transit service and employment van ridership, and regional airport enplanements. Financial information will also be collected to determine agency budget size and ability to contribute funding to a regional transit service. The transit demand estimation will specifically address the following corridors:

- Demand estimation and feasibility of transit connecting Northwest New Mexico municipalities with employment centers in Ignacio and Durango along the U.S. Highway 550 corridor south of Durango;
- Demand estimation and feasibility for transit routes connecting the towns of Silverton, Rico, and Dolores with the identified corridors. Also to be looked at are transit possibilities across the state line on Highway 160 into New Mexico and Highway 491 into Utah.

The pertinent data collection and an inventory of transportation providers and their respective budgets will be identified by the consultant in a Technical Memorandum.

Task 4: Assessment of Regional Transit Needs: The consultant will utilize efforts of the *2035 Regional Transportation Plan*, the *Colorado Statewide Intercity and Regional Bus Network Plan*, input from the Working Group, input from the data collection effort, and input of existing providers, to identify transit needs. The consultant will then analyze the functional need for service, express those needs in terms of service area, type of service, routes, budget, and operating needs, and determine the total costs of providing a service to meet identified needs. The consultant will also inquire with TNM&O to see if there is an opportunity to link schedules with the north-south TNM&O service on US

550. Finally, the consultant will identify gaps in regional transit service in the identified corridors in the region, the unmet needs of transit dependent populations, and develop workable solutions to address gaps in regional transit service. The consultant will compile findings and analyses of transit need into a Technical Memorandum.

Task 5: Durango Transit Center Accommodation of Regional Transit Service:

Since the City of Durango will be building the Durango Transit Center (DTC) to provide a central transfer point for the Durango T system and other providers in the region, as well as private enterprise and intercity buses, the consultant will identify the needed capacity required at the DTC to accommodate all expected transit traffic and identify demand-management actions needed to accommodate regional transit service.

Specifically:

- Review the current schedules of all existing local transit providers in the region, as well as scheduled TNM&O services through Durango to see how their respective schedules may be coordinated to provide linkages at the Durango Transit Center.
- Analyze the current level of bus traffic, as well as the anticipated growth of transit over the next 10 years to determine capacity needs at the DTC.
- Develop a plan to physically accommodate and dispatch all expected transit services in the region at the DTC.

Task 6: Regional Transit Operating Plan: Upon identifying regional transit need in the region, the consultant will develop an operating plan of regional transit service. At a minimum, the operating plan will identify a service to address regional transit need, operating and capital costs, the routes, schedule, budget, and finance options and an equitable distribution of funding and management and staffing needs. The Operating Plan will also identify either an operator or the process for hiring either a public agency or private contractor to operate the regional transit service. The Operating Plan will also identify any Colorado PUC authority that is needed to operate the service.

Task 7: Governance and Finance Structure: The consultant and the Working Group will coordinate in gathering government and provider input as to preferred governance and finance structures. The consultant will further develop a financing plan that considers FTA and local funds available, private contributions, and coordination with existing providers. The consultant will develop a menu of possible governance and financial structure options. The Working Group and other planning partners will review these options, whereupon a recommendation will be made as to preferred governance and financing structure that is suitable to meeting the service and funding needs of regional transit service in the three counties. The consultant will identify a final governance and finance structure for regional transit service that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of city and county governments, transit providers, and other agencies.

Task 8: Implementation Plan: The consultant will identify the steps necessary to implement the recommended regional transit service. Whether the implementation plan is locally grown system, whether it utilizes an outside contractor, or whether the course

more simply comprises a set of recommended changes to the current programs/services, the consultant will identify costs and staffing associated with implementing a regional transit service, a governance and finance structure that is supported by the funding partners, and funding sources (local, state, and federal). The consultant will clearly delineate the necessary steps for implementing regional transit service in an Implementation Plan.

Task 9: Final Report and Recommendations: The consultant will deliver a Final Report that identifies existing transit providers, the need for regional transit service between the stated communities, an operating plan, a governance and finance structure, and an overall implementation plan for initiating service. Both electronic and hard copies of this Final Report will be delivered to Region 9 EDD and the Working Group, the CDOT Transit Unit, and CASTA. The grantee may also be asked to present findings from this study at the next annual CASTA/CDOT Fall Conference.

Deliverables:

The expected outcomes of the study will be to provide demand estimates for the identified priority routes, along with proposed schedules, capital equipment needs and preliminary cost estimates over a five year period. It will also propose implementation steps to increase inter-system connectivity through scheduling, transfer policies, and address coordination issues, including connections and capacity needs at the Durango Transit Center.

The project results will be used to optimize the staff, equipment and funding in the most effective manner. Specifically in Dolores County, the study will be used to plan the expansion to public transportation. Region 9 will distribute the results of the feasibility study to each of the region's 17 governmental jurisdictions, as well as the SWTPR. This will be done through submission of a report to staff and the appropriate elected bodies. Each governmental jurisdiction will be responsible for implementation.

The expected outcome of this project is a feasibility study that determines the need for regional transit service in the region. The results will be used by the study partners to facilitate a regional public transportation plan. The eventual goal will be to implement a regional public transportation service. The consultant will deliver the following products:

1. The consultant will compile findings, analyses, and recommendations from the public outreach and transit demand/data collection tasks into a Tech Memo.
2. The consultant will deliver a Technical Memorandum that details the assessment of regional transit needs and a recommendation of how to meet those needs.
3. The consultant will deliver an Operating Plan that details the elements identified in Task 5.
4. The consultant will deliver a Tech Memo identifying capacity needs at the DTC, how various transit services in the region will be accommodated, and recommend

any operational or physical changes that are needed at the DTC to accommodate regional transit service.

5. The consultant will deliver an Implementation Plan that serves as a guidebook for implementing regional transit service between the identified communities.
6. The consultant will deliver a Final Report that combines the above tasks and Technical Memorandums into one report.

Project Schedule:

The participants will meet and review/refine the existing RFP designed by La Plata County for a consultant to conduct the feasibility study of the five county's transit corridors. We estimate that the RFP will go out by August 2008 and that the feasibility study work will begin in September, 2008. The final results will be in December, 2008. The Implantation Plan will then hopefully be part of each county's budgeting process for 2009.

Budget:

The 20 percent match (\$7,000) will be split between the study partners. This represents approximately \$1000-\$1500 per jurisdiction depending on the size and financial capabilities of each partner.

The projected cost of this study effort is \$35,000, recognizing that it will be necessary for Region 9 EDD to provide the identified data above to achieve the above objectives within this budget. CDOT will contribute a total of \$28,000 in Section 5304 funding for this project. Any additional expenses are the responsibility of Region 9 EDD as the administrator of this contract.

Federal (5304):	\$28,000
Required Local Match:	\$7,000
Total Project Cost:	\$35,000

The contact person for this project is:

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