Photo Credit: Visit Trinidad





# South Central Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Transportatio Plan





**Counties:** Huerfano and Las Animas Counties

Above: the location of counties in the South Central Transportation Planning Region. Photo Credit: Visit Trinidad

## South Central Coordinated Public **Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan**

The South Central (SC) Transportation Planning Region (TPR) includes Huerfano and Las Animas Counties. The largest cities and towns in the Region include Aguilar, La Veta, Trinidad, and Walsenburg. Public transit and human services transportation play an integral role in the Region's multimodal transportation network by providing mobility and promoting personal independence to residents in the Region. Transit improves quality of life and supports public health by providing access to jobs, schools, shopping, food, medical care, senior centers, social services, and social/recreation activities in the Region while also providing connectivity to goods and services in nearby major activity centers.

Every four to five years, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), in coordination with regional planning partners, refreshes the regional transit plans in all rural regions of the state. This 2025 plan refresh builds on the previous plan, completed in 2020, and focuses primarily on updating key components such as textual and data revisions to ensure continued alignment with evolving needs. While a larger overhaul of the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Plans will occur during the next full update in another four to five years, this refresh will ensure the plan remains relevant and effective in addressing the mobility needs of Coloradans.

CDOT's Division of Transit and Rail (DTR), in coordination with the SC TPR members and transit agencies, gathered input from the general public to develop this plan in compliance with CDOT and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning requirements. The TPR will use this refreshed plan to prioritize transit investments and work towards the long-term implementation of the region's unique transit vision and goals, maintaining a framework for developing an integrated statewide transit system.

#### **SC Transit Vision**

To provide safe, reliable, cost effective, and accessible transportation to all residents of Huerfano and Las Animas Counties, with special attention to individuals who cannot access or afford other transportation alternatives.

#### **SC Transit Goals**

- 1. Attract new passengers while continuing to serve existing passengers.
- 2. Continue to enhance the sustainability of the transit system.
- 3. Provide efficient, effective, safe, and reliable services.
- 4. Promote the services provided by South Central Council of Governments Public Transit.

### **Regional Snapshot**

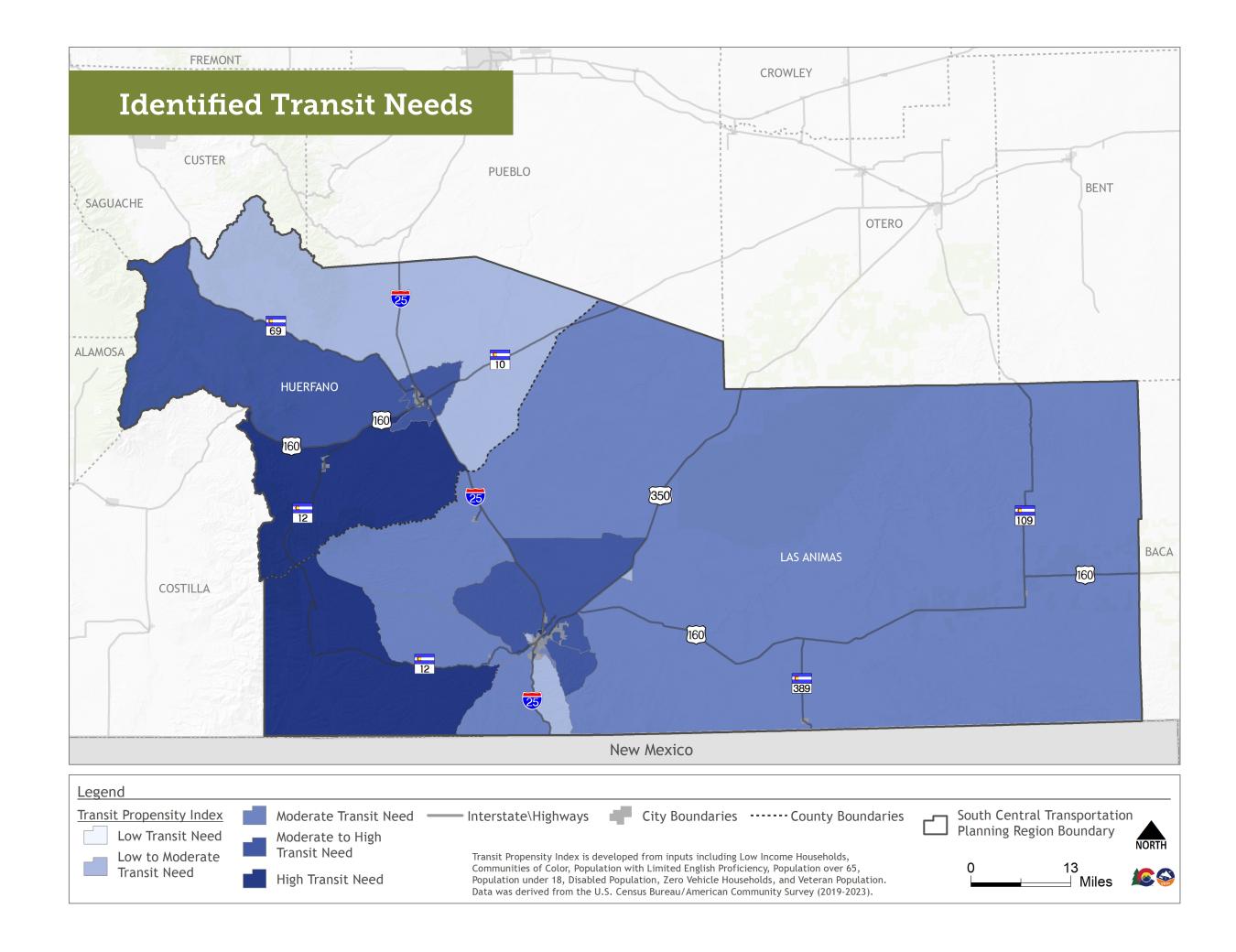
Transportation - whether walking, biking, taking transit, vanpooling, carpooling, or driving a car - is a critical element of everyone's daily life and well-being. Providing access to safe and reliable transportation for all, regardless of who they are or where they come from, results in the creation of accessible and inclusive communities, healthier lifestyle choices, and improved economic prosperity.

When considering the South Central TPRs mobility future, reviewing and analyzing available data helps uncover potential gaps and needs in the transportation network. Populations that often have a higher than average need for transit and/or have limited access to transportation services and facilities must be considered as a part of any equity-focused assessment of transit access and connectivity.

## Equality vs. Equity of Colorado's Transportation Network

Colorado's statewide transit planning efforts consider the needs of all people - not only from an equality perspective, but also through the lens of equity. An equitable transportation network offers convenient and affordable access to jobs, medical services, education, grocery shopping, and social/recreational activities. Access results in opportunities that can often positively influence personal health and quality of life.







### What We Heard

CDOT coordinated with each TPR to assess their goals, priorities, and desired transit improvements for their communities, while also evaluating any changes since the last plan. What we heard from the TPR members and agencies is summarized below.



#### **New Funding Opportunities and Funding Assessment**

Need for a better understanding of new grant opportunities and funding options for transit projects, such as those available through SB 24-230. Additionally, an assessment is needed to identify which types of projects, whether capital, planning, design, or construction, are required, and to determine whether funding sources have been secured for them.



#### **Interconnected Transportation** Network

Need for a cohesive transit network both within and connecting to the SC TPR, along with a holistic approach to all transportation-related decisions that considers the role and integration of the existing network.



#### **Multimodal Transit Centers**

Need to assess the feasibility of establishing multimodal transit centers within the Region.

## **The 2025 Statewide Transportation Survey for Older Adults and Adults** with Disabilities is currently in progress. Findings from the survey will be incorporated into the Public **Review draft of the plan, expected** later this summer.

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# **Existing Providers & Coordination Activities**

All transit service provider information and associated data for the SC TPR was collected from the 2023 National Transit Database (NTD), previous plans, CDOT's Division of Transit and Rail, tailored outreach to providers, and internet research. While extensive efforts were made to collect information about all providers, the information may not be comprehensive.

### **Bustang Outrider**

Bustang is Colorado's statewide bus service, offering affordable and reliable transportation between major cities and regions. Bustang's mainlines serve I-70 and I-25 connecting Denver with destinations such as Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, Vail, Glenwood Springs, and Grand Junction, providing convenient options for travelers across the state. In addition, Outrider extends service to rural communities, offering regional connections and enhancing access to areas not covered by Bustang.

### **Trinidad to Pueblo Outrider Route**

Connects the SC TPR with the Pueblo Area. The route is operated by the Southern Colorado Council of Governments (SCCOG), with two trips in each direction Monday through Friday; one bus heads south around 10am and another heads south at 3:45am. One bus heads north at 8am, and another heads north at 2pm.

South Central TPR stops: Trinidad, Aguilar, and Walsenburg

### **Intercity Transit**

Greyhound serves the SC TPR and connects Colorado to the national transit network.

### Greyhound – Albuquerque to Denver

Greyhound - Albuquerque to Denver operates one bus in each direction daily from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Denver, Colorado with two stops in the SC TPR. Buses heading south depart around 11:30am and buses heading north depart around 9:30am.

South Central stops: Trinidad and Walsenburg



### **Transit Service Types**

- Fixed-route: Transit service that operates on a defined route and schedule.
- Deviated Fixed-Route: Transit service that follows a defined route and schedule but will deviate off route within a defined area to pick up passengers upon request.
- Commuter Bus: Local fixed-route bus transportation primarily connecting outlying areas with a central city. Characterized by a motorcoach, multiple trip tickets and stops in outlying areas, limited stops in the central city, and at least five miles of closed-door service.
- Demand Response: Typically door-to-door service where you call ahead to schedule a trip (e.g., Dial-a-Ride, Call-n-Ride, Access-a-Ride).
- Vanpools: Service that is organized in advance by a group of people who travel to and from similar locations at the same time.
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): Fixed-route bus systems that operate at least 50 percent of the service on fixed guideway. These systems also have defined passenger stations, traffic signal priority or preemption, short headway bidirectional services for a substantial part of weekdays and weekend days; low-floor vehicles or level-platform boarding, and separate branding of the service.
- Aerial Tramway: Unpowered passenger vehicles suspended from a system of aerial cables and propelled by separate cables attached to the vehicle suspension system. Engines or motors at a central location, not onboard the vehicle, power the cable system.

### **Transit Service Categories**

- Interstate Public: Open to the general public and connections one or more regions/TPRs to regions outside the state of Colorado.\*
- Interregional Public: Open to the general public and connects one region/ TPR of the state to another region/TPR.\*
- Regional Transit Service: Open to the general public and connects communities and counties within a region/TPR.
- Local Transit: Open to the general public and operates primarily within a city, town, or community.
- Human Services Transportation: Service provided by a human services agency that is typically for a specific population, such as older adults, people with disabilities, and veterans.
- Private For-Profit Transportation: Services that are operated privately and can include taxis, resort transportation, ridehailing services (Uber, Lyft), etc.

\* Interstate and interregional include intercity bus service as defined by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in reference to the FTA's classification for Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Funding eligibility



Photo Credit: La Veta Inn

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## Interregional, Regional & **Local Transit Providers**

The SC TPR currently only has one regional transit provider that operates on-demand services.

Note: Ridership, budget, revenue miles, and revenue hours include all service types.

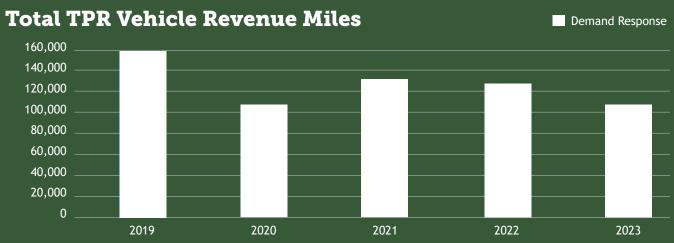
Provider	Service Area	Types of Service	Span of Service	Fares	2023 Annual Ridership	2023 Ops & Admin Budget	2023 Vehicle Revenue Miles	2023 Vehicle Revenue Hours
South Central	Walsenburg, La	Demand	Mon-Fri,	\$2 to \$4	15,017	\$522,296	105,535	6,304
Council of	Veta, and Aguilar	Response	8am to					
Governments			4pm					
Transit (SCCOG	Multi-Region:							
Transit)	Colorado Springs							
	and Pueblo							

Source: 2023 National Transit Database and Tailored Provider Surveys

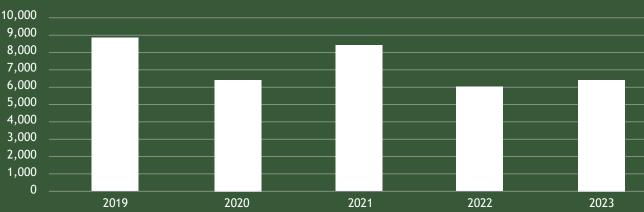




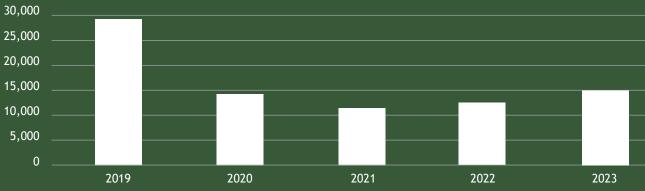
Five-year historic trends for key transit operating metrics (ridership, revenue miles, and revenue hours) for all local and regional public transit service providers in the SC TPR show a notable decline in all metrics around 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The region experienced a sharp decline in ridership in particular, indicating that although fewer rides were taken, transit agencies were still covering high mileage over several hours. SCCOG, the sole provider in the area, experienced a slight rebound in ridership starting in 2022, but ridership is still almost half of what it was in 2019.



### **Total TPR Vehicle Revenue Hours**



### **Total TPR Unlinked Passenger Trips**



Source: 2019-2023 National Transit Database

### **T**ransit Provider Service **Performance Metrics**

Key performance data indicate the efficiency of an agency's service operations. SC TPR cost per trip, cost per revenue hour, and cost per revenue mile are highlighted to understand agency performance.

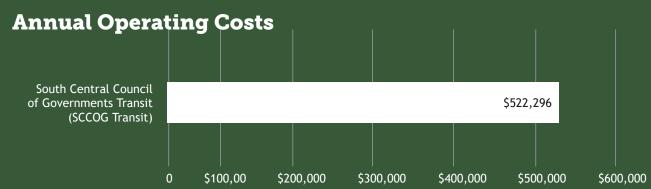


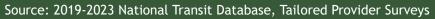
#### **Cost per Mile** South Central Council \$4.95 of Governments Transit (SCCOG Transit) \$0 \$1 \$2 \$4 \$5



\$6







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### **Human Services Providers**

Several human services agencies operate transportation services in the SC TPR; however, for many of these providers, transportation is only one of the services they provide. The table below identifies human services agencies in the Region that provide transportation services and the populations they serve. The list below includes providers from the 2020 SC Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Plan that still provided services in 2023, as well as providers found through desktop review. As this list was compiled through online research, it may not reflect all providers in the SC TPR, particularly those that do not have websites

Provider	Service Area (Within SC)	Additional TPRs	Types of Service	Days of Service	Passenger Eligibility
Aponi Transport Inc	Huerfano County	CFR, Eastern, SLV, SE	Demand Response	Daily	N/A
Brave Sisters Transportation LLC	Las Animas County	CFR, Eastern	Demand Response (Medical)	Mon-Fri	Individuals needing non-emergency medical transportation
Golden Gate Manor Inc	Huerfano and Las Animas Counties	CFR, GV, IM, NW, SLV, SE, SW, Eastern	Demand Response (Medical)	Mon-Fri	Medicaid-eligible older adults and people with disabilities
Retired Senior and Volunteer Program	Huerfano and Las Animas Counties	SLV, SW	Specialized Services, Demand Response, Reimbursement	Mon-Fri	Older adults (65+), low income populations, veterans, Medicaid recipients
Southern Colorado Developmental Disabilities Services	Huerfano and Las Animas Counties		Demand Response	Upon Request	Adults and children with developmental disabilities

Source: 2020 SC Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Plan, Desktop Review



# **Other Human Services Providers**

Some human services providers do not offer direct transportation services but may fund transportation programs, offer transportation-related services, or coordinate with transportation providers in the region. The list below includes providers from the 2020 SC Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Plan that were still active in 2023, along with additional providers identified through online research. Since this list was compiled through available online resources, it may not include all providers in the SC TPR, especially those without websites.

Provider	Service Area (Within SC)	Additional TPRs	Types of Service	Days of Service	Passenger Eligibility
Axel Medical Transportation	Huerfano and Las Animas Counties	IM, SLV, CFR, SE, SW, PPACG	Demand Response (Medical)	Upon request	Medicaid beneficiaries
Maguy Medical Transport LLC	Huerfano and Las Animas Counties	CFR, GV, IM, SLV, SE, PPACG, PACOG	Demand Response (Medical)	Upon request	Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program) members and individuals needing non-emergency medical transportation
MedRide	Custer, Fremont, Park, El Paso, and Teller Counties	All of Colorado	Demand Response (Medical); Specialized Services	Mon-Fri, 6am to 6pm Sat-Sun, 6am to 5pm	Individuals requiring non-emergency medical transportation
Medilyft LLC	Las Animas County		Demand Response (Medical); Specialized Services	Upon request	Individuals requiring wheelchair- accessible transportation for medical and mobility needs
The Independence Center	Huerfano and Las Animas Counties	CFR, Eastern, DRCOG, PPACG, PACOG	Vouchers or Reimbursement	N/A	People with disabilities, older adults (65+), low income populations, veterans, Medicaid recipients

Source: 2020 SC Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Plan, Desktop Review

## **Private Transportation Providers**

Three private for-profit companies in the SC TPR provide transportation services, including City Cab, Safe Rides of Trinidad, and Uber.



CDOT's DTR comprehensive Transit Asset Management Plan meets federal requirements and was last updated in fall 2023. The Plan identifies the condition of assets funded with state or federal funds to guide optimal prioritization of investments to keep transit systems in Colorado in a state of good repair. Currently, a third of CDOT tracked transit vehicles in the SC are beyond their state of good repair.

Provider	Total Revenue Vehicles	Vehicles Beyond State of Good Repair	Percentage of Vehicles Beyond State of Good Repair	Cost of Backlog
South Central Council of Governments Transit (SCCOG Transit)	17	10	58.82%	\$1,168,255
TOTAL	17	10	58.82%	\$1,168,255

Source: 2023 Transit Asset Management Plan

## **Regional Coordination Activities**

Coordination of transportation services, funding sources, information, vehicles and equipment is paramount when looking for ways to minimize service duplication, create more efficient and productive systems, and provide trips to as many people as possible. A variety of existing coordination activities are occurring between transit providers and human services agencies in the SC TPR. The 2025 Statewide Transit Plan Provider Survey gathered information from providers in the SC TPR about coordination to better understand current activities and identify barriers.

# **PLACEHOLDER GRAPHIC**

Meetings are currently underway with agencies to update both quantitative and qualitative data related to coordination activities in the region. This updated data will be included in the Public Review Draft, which is expected to be released in the summer of 2025.

## Local/Regional Coordinating Councils

# **PLACEHOLDER GRAPHIC**

Coordination with agencies is currently underway to update information on local/regional coordinating councils. This updated data will be included in the Public Review Draft, which is expected to be released in the summer of 2025.



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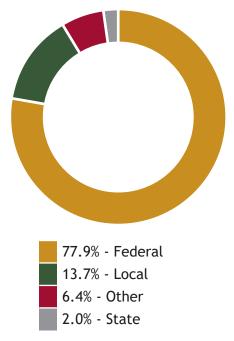
# **Other Partnerships**

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Transit funding is complex and Colorado providers typically use a patchwork funding approach that includes federal, state, local fares, donations, and/or tax revenues. Public funds are primarily used to support transit and transportation services in rural parts of Colorado, with most agencies relying on federal funds from the FTA. Based on 2019-2023 budget data, over three quarters of SC's operating and capital revenues from federal sources. For operating revenues, the remaining quarter is split between local, state and other sources. For capital revenues, the remaining guarter comes exclusively from state sources.

**Operating Revenue** Sources

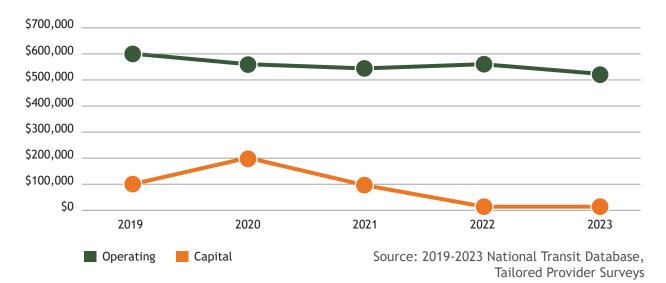


Source: 2023 National Transit Database, Tailored Provider Surveys



## **Historic Revenue Data**

The chart below shows five-year SC operating and capital funding trends. Both operating and capital funds have decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic, with operating funds falling by 13 percent between 2019 and 2023, and capital funds seeing an increase in 2020 but falling to \$0 for both 2022 and 2023.



## Additional 10-Year Capital & Operating Needs

Additional capital and operating projects were identified by SC TPR participants, transportation providers, CDOT staff, and other key transit stakeholders throughout the Region. Project needs identified do not include any anticipated fleet replacement funds needed to maintain all assets in a state of good repair. See page XX for the full list of additional project needs.

- O Capital Project Needs: TBD
- O Operational Project Needs: TBD
- O Total Identified Need: TBD

# Regional Transit Revenue Trends Annual Operating/Capital Projections

# **PLACEHOLDER GRAPHIC**

Financial data is currently being reviewed to determine the most effective approach for updating this information, as this plan is a refresh rather than a full update.

## **Funding Programs and Opportunities**

Federal funding is the primary source of revenue for transit and human services providers in Colorado, supporting both operating and capital projects. CDOT serves as the designated recipient for rural transit funds, allocating Grants for Rural Areas (5311) funding based on a Colorado-specific rural funding methodology. Additionally, CDOT distributes Bus and Bus Facilities (5339) and Planning (5304) funds through an annual competitive grant application process open to rural providers across the state.

Historically, funding for both operating and capital transit needs has been limited. In the previous planning cycle, strategic funds from sources like SB-267 and others were allocated for transit capital projects over four years. Recently, the Clean Transit Enterprise was established through HB 21-260, creating a Retail Delivery Fee to provide competitive funding for zero-emission transit planning, facilities, charging infrastructure, and bus replacement projects. Furthermore, SB 24-230 introduces an "Oil & Gas Production Fee" to fund future transit and rail projects, with implementation expected in January 2026. This bill allocates fees from oil and gas companies to fund a Formula Local Transit Operations Grant Program (70 percent), Competitive Local Transit Grant Program (10 percent), and a Rail Funding Program (20 percent).

Due to limited state funding, many transit agencies in Colorado rely heavily on local funding, especially for operational costs. Alternative funding sources to support local and regional transit services include:

- Ο General funds
- Ο Lodging taxes
- Ο Parking fees
- Property taxes Ο
- Public-private partnerships Ο
- Rural transportation authorities Ο
- Sales and use taxes Ο
- Sponsorships/donations Ο
- Ο Tourism taxes
- Ο Utility taxes/fees
- Ο Vehicle fees
- CDOT's Office of Innovative Mobility Enterprise Funding Ο

# Federal Transit Administration **Funding Programs**

- Accelerating Innovative Mobility 5310 Ο
- Access and Mobility Partnerships 5310 Ο
- Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Program -5339(b) Ο
- Capital Investment Grant 5309 Ο
- Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities 5310 Ο
- Grants for Buses & Bus Facilities 5339(a) Ο
- Grants for Rural Areas 5311 Ο
- Human Resources & Training 5314 Ο
- Ο Integrated Mobility Innovation - 5310
- Low or No Emission Vehicle Program 5339(c) Ο
- Mobility for All Pilot Program Grants 5310 Ο
- Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox Demonstration Program 5312 Ο
- Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning 20005(b) Ο
- Planning Grants 5304 Ο
- Public Transportation Innovation 5312 Ο
- Rural Transportation Assistance Program 5311(b)(3) Ο
- State of Good Repair Grants 5337 Ο
- Technical Assistance & Standards Development 5314(a) Ο

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## **Implementation Strategies**

Implementation actions are meant to be near-term, practicable measures related to the TPR's transit vision and goals and to support the implementation of identified transit projects in the Region.

- O Advocate for stable funding to maintain the operation of existing transit services.
- O Advocate for full funding of TPR identified transit projects.
- O Maintain all assets in a state of good repair.
- O Maximize existing and seek new funding sources to expand local and regional services to include additional days, hours, and geographic coverage.
- O Consider ways to integrate transit and improve access to transit along main streets for residents, employees, and visitors.
- O Expand regional transit service to provide access to goods and services in communities while enhancing quality of life for historically underrepresented populations.
- O Maintain existing interregional Bustang Outrider transit service between Trinidad and Pueblo, and ensure transfer opportunities to the Bustang Outrider routes connecting in Pueblo.
- O Implement mobility hubs, such as the Trinidad Multimodal Center, to increase accessible, multimodal transportation connectivity between all modes.



Based on findings from public input, data about gaps and needs, and input from stakeholders, SC TPR members prioritized their operating and capital projects for the Region. If projects were added after the TPR prioritization process, those projects are identified as "unranked." It is important to note that while projects are ranked, priorities may change based on available funding, grant opportunities, agency needs, etc.

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## ects are currently In updated draft list I be included in the Review Draft.



