

# Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG) Cortez to Durango Transit Service

## **Final Report**

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## Abstract

This project is part of a larger contract with the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation, Technical Assistance for Rural Transportation Systems: Connecting Rural Transportation with Economic Opportunity.

The Southwest Colorado region has prioritized a regional, inter-city fixed route transit line between Cortez and Durango as a major strategy for meeting the region's transportation needs, as consistently identified over nearly ten years. In particular, the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG) is looking for assistance with:

- Determining the potential route (stop locations, etc.)
- Operational aspects of the route (timing, number of runs, etc.)
- How the route/service could/should be funded

The primary objective of this project was to evaluate the potential for a Regional Intercity Bus Service between Cortez and Durango.

## Acknowledgements

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We additionally thank Michael Timlin and Nathan Vander Broek from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) for their time in discussion of funding sources and formulas for a potential service connecting Cortez and Durango.

## Disclaimer

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**Table of Contents**

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	i
Disclaimer .....	i
Table of Contents .....	ii
List of Figures .....	iii
List of Tables .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Demographic Overview .....	1
Existing Transportation Services .....	2
Connection to Economic Development .....	3
Literature Review .....	4
Meetings and Data Collection/Analysis .....	5
Kick-Off Meeting (Durango) .....	5
Stakeholder Meetings (Durango and Cortez) .....	5
Colorado DOT .....	6
Transit Service Parameters .....	6
Cost Estimates .....	7
Recent Developments .....	8
Conclusions & Recommendations .....	9
Conclusions .....	9
Recommendations .....	9
References .....	11
Appendix A – Literature Review Summary .....	13
Appendix B – Meeting Notes & Presentation .....	15

**List of Figures**

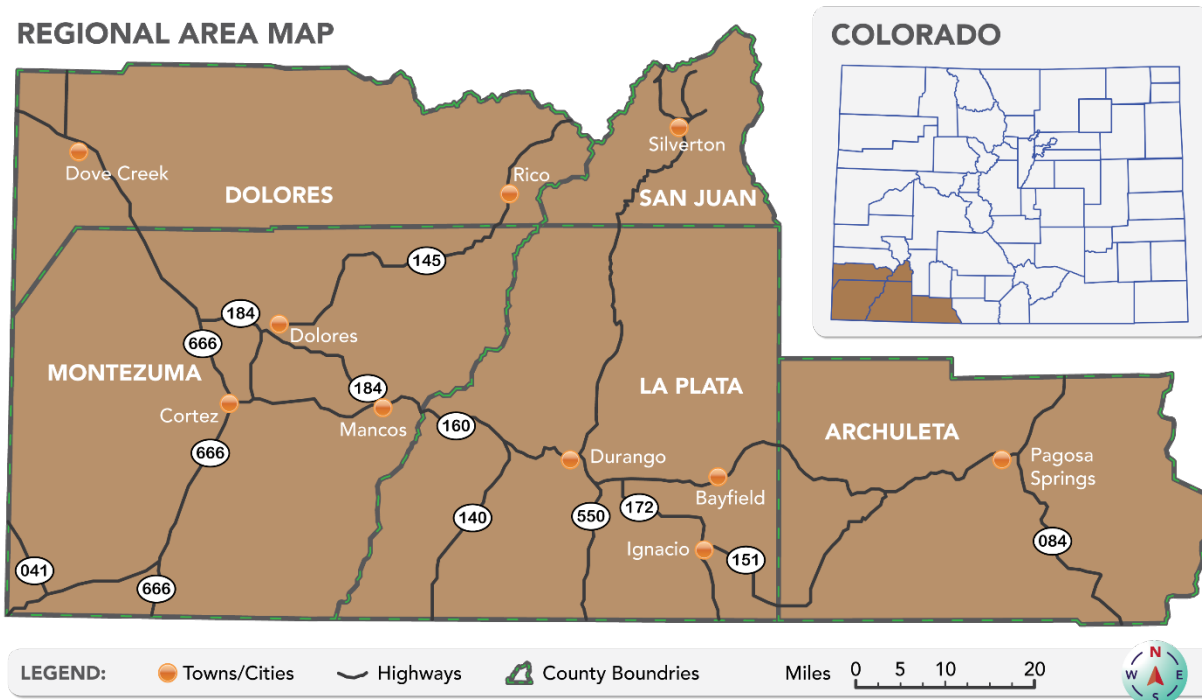
Figure 1. SWCCOG Five-County Region .....	1
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**List of Tables**

Table 1. Population distribution by age for SWCCOG counties and cities.....	2
Table 2. Potential Schedule for Proposed Cortez – Durango Service .....	7

## Introduction

The Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG), which covers five counties in the southwest corner of Colorado (Figure 1), provides leadership on behalf of governments throughout the area by defining issues, advocating for mutual goals, and administering regional programs.



**Figure 1. SWCCOG Five-County Region**

It is in the spirit of advancing regional solutions that SWCCOG applied for technical assistance to research implementing additional transit services between Cortez and Durango.

## Demographic Overview

Cortez, located in Montezuma County, is the second largest city in the area with a 2017 population estimated at 8,709 people, and Durango, located in La Plata County, is the largest city in the area with an estimated population in 2017 of 18,465 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Table 1 presents a breakdown of the population by several age ranges for each of the five SWCCOG counties, and the largest city in each county.

**Table 1. Population distribution by age for SWCCOG counties and cities**

County Largest City	Age Group						2016 TOTAL Population
	Less than 15	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-59	60+	
Archuleta	1,815	594	831	1,018	4,065	4,032	12,355
Pagosa Springs	361	71	82	404	538	510	1,966
Dolores	328	42	83	213	530	593	1,789
Dove Creek	145	21	50	64	173	187	640
La Plata	8,762	3,835	3,537	7,464	18,433	11,963	53,994
Durango	2,388	1,756	2,095	3,427	5,541	2,700	17,817
Montezuma	4,871	1,533	1,396	2,736	8,334	7,136	26,006
Cortez	1,782	546	554	1,064	2,690	2,047	8,683
San Juan	47	12	36	95	213	149	552
Silverton	41	9	32	91	199	121	493
<b>SWCCOG Totals</b>	<b>15,823</b>	<b>6,016</b>	<b>5,883</b>	<b>11,526</b>	<b>31,575</b>	<b>23,873</b>	<b>94,696</b>

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1))

San Juan is the least populated county in Colorado, and as indicated by Table 1, Dolores County has a low population as well. Dolores County has the highest percentage of residents aged 60 years or older (33.15%) in the SWCCOG area, and Archuleta County isn't far behind, with 32.63 percent of its residents aged 60 or older. La Plata County is the only one of the five counties that doesn't have at least 25 percent of its residents in the category of 60 years old or older (it's at 22.16%).

### Existing Transportation Services

SWCCOG and others in this region have explored adding fixed-route commuter bus service between the two communities of Cortez and Durango, which are approximately 45 miles apart. While there is intercity and demand-response bus service connecting these communities, the current schedule for the intercity service is such that there is only one departure from Durango to Cortez in the morning (at 6:40 am) and a return trip from Cortez to Durango in the early evening (6:10 pm). One of the issues is that this schedule would not work for someone who wants to travel from Cortez to Durango for work and would certainly not work for someone who needed to spend just a half-day in either community for medical, shopping, recreational or educational purposes. There are numerous transportation services that are providing connections between Cortez and Durango. The majority of these operate on a demand-response basis, meaning that someone has to schedule a ride, sometimes up to two weeks in advance, for the trip. Further, many of these services are limited to specific customers/clients (e.g., the elderly, those taking a Medicaid trip, etc.).

While Cortez has roughly half the population of Durango, it should in no way be considered a “bedroom community” for Durango, as Cortez has its own medical facilities (Southwest Health Systems), retail options including a Walmart Supercenter and Big R, and many local businesses. While not within the city limits of Cortez, the Pueblo Community College (Southwest) is located

approximately 12 miles east of the town. This institution also has a facility in Durango. Finally, the Cortez Airport has direct flights to Denver and Phoenix. So, while Cortez and Durango each have the amenities necessary to meet the needs of their citizens, there is still considerable traffic flowing between the two communities.

### **Connection to Economic Development**

Transportation is typically the second highest expense for an individual or family, behind only housing (2). Further, the American Automobile Association (AAA) distributes an annual report on the costs of owning and operating a vehicle. Based on the most recent figures, commuting daily between Cortez and Durango would put approximately 22,500 miles on a vehicle (90 miles roundtrip per day \* 250 working days) and would cost an average of nearly \$10,920 (AAA, 2018).

Discussions with some stakeholders noted that transportation was a problem for some of their constituents, especially on longer trips. Transportation is known to be tightly tied to the economic well-being of an area, although transportation in-and-of-itself cannot create an improved economy. Much of the economy in the SWCCOG area is dependent upon tourism, either to the ski areas in the winter, or to Mesa Verde National Park, or other Federal or State lands in the area.

As noted in the Southwest Transportation Planning Region Regional Coordinated Transit & Human Services Plan (reference):

Economic benefits of transit include providing access to jobs, shopping, and other destinations; creating jobs in public transit and related industries; reducing the cost of transportation for individuals and families with a portion of the cost savings redirected to the local economy; providing businesses with access to a broader labor market with more diverse skills; and providing savings associated with the reliability and effects of reduced congestion.

Social benefits of transit include providing transportation options to access destinations; reducing household expenditures on transportation, allowing savings to be spent in the local economy; reducing non-transportation service costs; reducing travel time and accidents because of less congestion on the road; providing accessibility of transit by all segments of the population; providing health benefits associated with walking to/from transit; and providing an overall savings in time and money.

The remainder of this document covers the three main tasks that were conducted as part of this project, which include: 1) Literature Review; 2) Meetings and Data Gathering/Analysis; and, 3) Conclusions and Recommendations.

## Literature Review

The research team conducted a comprehensive literature review to understand existing information regarding the potential implementation of a commuter bus service between Cortez and Durango. Researchers reviewed past plans and other literature, focusing on implementation plans, as well as funding sources for the proposed transit service. The results of the Literature Review conducted during the project can be found in Appendix A. The following section summarizes literature that relates to key points that helped guide the majority of this project.

Perhaps the most relevant literature reviewed are the two most recent reports: the 2015 Regional Public Transit Feasibility Report (University of Colorado, Denver) and the 2015 Statewide Transit Plan (Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig, et. al.). The Feasibility Report mirrored many of the tasks that were identified for this project. The report provided a review of previous reports/literature, provided estimates for the costs of a commuter service between Cortez and Durango, and even presented a schedule/route for the potential new service. The 2015 Statewide Transit Plan does an excellent job of providing demographic information and reviewing existing transit services, as well as identifying transit gaps and needs. It provides a financial outlook and funding sources, but perhaps most importantly, provides recommendations and implementation actions. A list of all known studies/reports conducted in the last ten years (in order from most recent to least) are as follows:

- 2015 Regional Public Transit Feasibility Report (3)
- 2015 Statewide Transit Plan (4)
- 2014 Colorado Intercity and Regional Bus Network Plan (5)
- 2014 Southwest Transportation Planning Region Regional Coordinated Transit & Human Services Plan (6)
- 2012 Southwest Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Action Plan (7)
- 2009 Regional Transit Feasibility Study (8)
- 2008 Colorado Statewide Intercity and Regional Bus Network Study (9)
- 2008 Southwest Local Transit and Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (10)
- 2005 Regional Transportation Plan (published in 2008) (11)

In summary, the literature shows that implementing a fixed-route commuter transit service has been studied numerous times. While some studies/plans have focused on additional routes/service in addition to a Cortez – Durango service, these two communities are the largest (most populated in the area) and connecting these two towns are key to making additional services feasible. Further, while the timing of potential routes, key stops, and potential costs vary to an extent between the various studies, most point to the need (or desire) for such service.



## **Meetings and Data Collection/Analysis**

To launch the project work, several meetings were held in the Cortez and Durango area to finalize the Scope of Work and gather new and relevant information.

### **Kick-Off Meeting (Durango)**

At the beginning of the project, researchers met with SWCCOG representatives to review the Scope of Work and plan a meeting with key stakeholders, including members of the SWCCOG Regional Transit Coordinating Council. At the kick-off meeting, the City of Durango (Durango Transit) announced that it had received notice from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) that CDOT had implemented a new formula for distributing the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 funds. As a result, Durango Transit would go from receiving over \$1 million per year in Section 5311 funds to receiving approximately \$415,000 per year. It was noted that the reduction would take place over a four to five year period.

In related discussions, many of the counties in the area, including La Plata and Montezuma counties, noted that they had reduced their budgets in the last year, due to a reduction in revenue. A part of the reduction in revenue was due to reduced activity regarding oil and gas extraction in the area.

### **Stakeholder Meetings (Durango and Cortez)**

The researchers and SWCCOG representatives met with COG's Regional Transit Coordinating Council, which includes transportation providers from the area including Durango Transit and the Southern Ute Community Action Program (SUCAP). As noted later in this document, SUCAP is now known as SOCOCAA. Minutes from the meeting, including a copy of WTI's presentation, are in Appendix B.

Much of the meeting centered around the purpose of the potential transit system, and whether it would be focused on moving people for medical appointments, jobs, educational opportunities, recreational opportunities (including moving tourists), or a combination of all these purposes. There was discussion on implementing van pools in the area to address those who were commuting for work purposes. It was noted that while there may be a few vanpools operating in the area, current options were limited.

There was some discussion about how the system would be judged in terms of "success." Would success be judged by the number of rides provided, or the cost per ride, or would other factors be included, such as providing a way for people to get to work or a medical appointment who would not have otherwise been able to make the trip. Additional conversation focused on coordinating services, such as making sure that people who rode the Road Runner Stage Lines service between Durango and Cortez could get on the Montezuma County service in Cortez to access other stops/locations in that community.

Staff (Mary Holaday and Sue Fletcher) from the Montezuma County Public Transportation (Mo Co Public Transportation) were not able to attend the meeting. However, researchers were able to meet with them later, as the researchers traveled from Durango to Cortez to review previously noted routing and timing for potential bus service. It should be noted that while that Montezuma County is not a member of SWCCOG, it does participate as part of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council. Further, Montezuma County Public Transportation does not currently receive any funding from the County (Montezuma County). Mary and Sue noted that the transportation agency provides trips from the greater Cortez area to Durango, primarily for specialty medical needs. Further, it provides service to some of the smaller communities in the area including Dolores, Dove Creek, Mancos and Towaoc.

### **Colorado DOT**

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has multiple funding sources that could be used to help with the start-up and on-going operations of a service/route between Cortez and Durango. In addition to distributing funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to the rural transit systems, CDOT also oversees the distribution of the Funding Advancement for Surface Transportation & Economic Recovery (FASTER) state funds for transit.

Researchers had numerous discussions (via email, over the phone, and in person) with staff from CDOT's Transit & Rail Division regarding potential funding for a proposed service. Details regarding potential funding are in the Cost Estimates section.

### **Transit Service Parameters**

As noted in the literature review, there has been some relatively recent work on potential routes/schedules for a bus service to operate between Cortez and Durango. The 2015 Report (3) noted a schedule with two roundtrips per day. While that level of service may address some of the transportation needs in the corridor, the reality is that ridership on transit (the usability of transit) typically increases with frequency. Therefore, a service that had three to five roundtrips per day would be more useful than a service with only two roundtrips per day. It should also be noted that given the time to travel between Cortez and Durango (approximately one hour each way), it can be harder to implement a service using only one vehicle. For example, a bus leaving Cortez at 7 am could get people to work in Durango by 8 am, but it would not get people from Durango to Cortez until at least 9 am. A potential schedule for the proposed service is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Potential Schedule for Proposed Cortez – Durango Service**

<b>Stop</b>				
Cortez-Montezuma County Annex Building	7:00 am	10:00 am	1:00 pm	4:00 pm
Cortez-Walmart	7:10 am	10:10 am	1:10 pm	4:10 pm
Southwest Colorado Community College	7:25 am	10:25 am	1:25 pm	4:25 pm
Mancos	7:40 am	10:40 am	1:40 pm	4:40 pm
Durango West	8:00 am	11:00 am	2:00 pm	5:00 pm
Durango Transit Center	8:10 am	11:10 am	2:10 pm	5:10 pm
Mercy Regional Medical Center	8:25 am	11:25 am	2:25 pm	5:25 pm
Mercy Regional Medical Center	8:30 am	11:30 am	2:30 pm	5:30 pm
Durango Transit Center	8:45 am	11:45 am	2:45 pm	5:45 pm
Durango West	8:55 am	11:55 am	2:55 pm	5:55 pm
Mancos	9:05 am	12:05 pm	3:05 pm	6:05 pm
Southwest Colorado Community College	9:20 am	12:20 pm	3:20 pm	6:20 pm
Cortez-Walmart	9:35 am	12:35 pm	3:35 pm	6:35 pm
Cortez-Montezuma County Annex Building	9:45 am	12:45 pm	3:45 pm	6:45 pm

Morning service from Durango to Cortez would be available through the Bustang Outrider service, which currently departs Durango at 6:40 am, arriving in Cortez at 7:27 am, before continuing service all the way to Grand Junction. That same bus returns to Cortez at 6:10 pm, arriving in Durango at 7:10 pm. The proposed schedule (Table 2) could be adjusted based on trial run times, and a determination if ridership would be higher if the morning bus from Cortez to Durango should arrive by 7:30 am or 7:45 am, if potential riders would ride to work for an 8 am to 5 pm job. While the Bustang Outrider service from Durango to Grand Junction operates seven days per week, it is anticipated that the Cortez to Durango commuter service would begin operating just five days per week (Monday-Friday). While this schedule would work well for those working 8 am to 5 pm in Durango (commuting from Cortez), it still would not address a return trip for those working until 5 pm in Cortez.

### **Cost Estimates**

The 2015 Report (3) estimated potential first year costs, including capital costs (acquiring a bus) and operating costs at \$167,457. It is likely that given the various transportation providers in the area, a bus for this potential service already exists. Therefore, only operating costs would need to be available for implementation. Operating costs would cover items such as the driver's wages (including all applicable benefits), fuel, maintenance and vehicle/liability insurance.

Operating costs are often expressed in either a per mile or per hour basis. If an estimated operating expense of \$70 per hour is used, the proposed service would cost approximately \$214,000 to run on an annual basis. The calculation is as follows:

$$255 \text{ service days} * 12 \text{ hours per day} * \$70 \text{ per hour} = \$214,000$$

The service days (255) reflect the number of days (Monday – Friday) that the bus would operate, taking into consideration that the bus would likely not operate during five days due to six major holidays: New Year’s Day; Memorial Day; 4<sup>th</sup> of July; Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. The actual cost for implementing the service would depend ultimately on which provider is selected to operate the services, their costs, and the actual days of operation (more holidays may be included, or, the service may operate on some of the major holidays noted above).

Based on the most recent conversations, CDOT expressed that it would be willing to consider providing 80 percent of the funding needed to start the service as part of a two-year pilot project. Therefore, the local funding needed to implement this service would be approximately \$43,000 ( $\$214,000 * 20\% = \$42,800$ ) per year for the first two years of service. Afterward, the funding match would likely revert to the 50/50 funding ratio currently noted by the FASTER regulations.

### **Recent Developments**

As noted earlier in this document, one of the issues that could affect implementation of a route/service between Cortez and Durango was the reduction in FTA Section 5311 funds for the City of Durango (Durango Transit). However, the new allocation formula implemented by CDOT that will reduce Durango’s funding will provide additional funding to Montezuma County’s Public Transportation service. Over the next four to five years, Montezuma County should see its Section 5311 funding increase from approximately \$66,000 per year to \$157,000 per year. CDOT notes that the 5311 funding should be used for local service, however, the increase in 5311 funding may allow other funds in the area to be allocated to a regional service, such as the proposed Cortez-Durango service.

Another relatively recent development involves the Southern Ute Community Action Program (SUCAP), which operates the Road Runner Stagelines service from Durango to Grand Junction, as well as Road Runner Transit, which connects many communities on the Southern Ute Reservation (in La Plata County), as well as connecting those communities to Bayfield and Durango. In the September/October 2018 timeframe, SUCAP’s relationship with the tribal government changed, and there was some concern that there would be enough funding to continue the current level of transit operations. Further, SUCAP changed its name and became the Southern Colorado Community Action Agency (SOCOCOA). In addition, the service from Durango to Grand Junction was renamed the Bustang Outrider service, to reflect branding for intercity services by CDOT (Bustang and Bustang Outrider). As of the writing of this report, it did not appear that the transit services offered by SOCOCOA had changed.

Finally, there is also a Coordinated Transit Plan (Planning) effort for the Four Corners area, which includes all five counties in the SWCCOG area, four counties in Arizona, three counties in New Mexico, and four counties in Utah. It is anticipated that the plan will be completed in early 2019 and may include discussion of connecting the larger communities in the SWCCOG area, including Cortez and Durango.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

As President Eisenhower often said (more often when he was a General), “Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.” In his view, a plan is a static item, while planning is an on-going dynamic process. This is relevant to this report, because as previously noted, there have been numerous plans and reports that discuss implementing a commuter, fixed-route bus service that would connect Cortez and Durango. As noted herein, some of the literature reviewed discusses how the service may be integrated into a larger regional system, while other literature focuses on a stand-alone service. Regardless, there has been much planning put into, and plans written about this proposed/potential service.

As Mahatma Ghandi said, “The future depends on what we do in the present.” If this is so, then having a scheduled, fixed route transit service that connects Cortez and Durango in the future will depend on decisions that should occur within the near future (four to twelve months). Hopefully, the information contained herein will help with that process.

### Conclusions

As noted herein, there has been a significant amount of planning that has focused on a fixed-route bus service between Cortez and Durango. The literature review highlights some of the planning efforts (plans) related to this topic. All these plans/reports, including this one, provide the foundational information needed to implement a service. Further, while conditions in the area have recently changed (county budgets; FTA/CDOT funding levels; and service providers’ relationships with other entities), the reality is that the infrastructure exists to implement such a service. While local match (funding) would need to be secured, it seems all other elements are in place to start a two-year pilot/trial period for the service.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that SWCCOG continue discussions with its Regional Transit Coordinating Council to finalize the details of a proposed Cortez-Durango fixed route transit service. We recommend that the service begin operating five days per week (Monday-Friday) based on the preliminary schedule (Table 2). The schedule should be verified by operating a bus for two days, and finalizing where stops should be located in Mancos and Durango West. The stop locations should be as close to US-160 as possible to minimize the route time. The cost to provide the service would be determined based on the actual operating cost for the selected provider, which would determine the amount of FASTER funding to be applied for, as well as the local match needed. During the SWCCOG process, it could be determined whether one provider should be selected, or if a Request for Proposals (or Request for Bids) process should be used to determine which provider should implement the service.

Further, even careful and comprehensive planning efforts like this one will need to be monitored and updated. Therefore, after the first year of the service has been implemented, it is likely that changes will be needed to the service. These changes may be to the schedule (timing of the

service), adding or reducing stops, or even adding or reducing service (based on ridership and demand).

Applications for FASTER funding are due in April 2019 (and likely April 2020), so it is recommended that SWCCOG work with CDOT and the regional providers to formulate a plan in preparation for submission of a FASTER application. If it is not feasible to submit an application in 2019, the 2020 date should be attainable.

Nearly all Federal funds for transit are tied to the Surface Transportation Bill, also known as the Highway Bill. The most current version of that legislation is known as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which expires September 30, 2020. The authorization of the next Surface Transportation Bill could have a significant impact on the funding available for transit systems throughout Colorado and the rest of the nation. While potential changes to federal funding should be monitored, that concern shouldn't stop SWCCOG from moving ahead with efforts to implement a Cortez-Durango fixed route service.

The recommendations to move forward with implementing a service may be best articulated by the following quote:

I have been impressed with the urgency of doing.  
Knowing is not enough; we must apply.  
Being willing is not enough; we must do.

--Leonardo Da Vinci

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## Appendix A – Literature Review Summary

The following table provides a list of the five most recent documents, reports, plans, etc. that are related to this project. Highlights from each document and available lessons learned are provided.

Title	Description
<p><i>2015 Regional Public Transit Feasibility Report</i>  <a href="http://www.swccog.org/assets/Transit%20Combination%20Study%20Report%202015.pdf">http://www.swccog.org/assets/Transit%20Combination%20Study%20Report%202015.pdf</a></p>	<p>This report was part of the Capstone process for a graduate student in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) degree program at the University of Colorado Denver. Through the process of developing the report, the student provided background information (the research methodology, a literature review, and a review of past planning efforts), and then provided recommendations for the proposed transit service, including funding sources and the cost of operations. This report provides a good basis for moving toward implementation of a service.</p>
<p><i>2015 Statewide Transit Plan</i>  <a href="https://www.codot.gov/programs/transitandrail/plans-studies-reports/statewidetransitplan/statewide-transit-plan">https://www.codot.gov/programs/transitandrail/plans-studies-reports/statewidetransitplan/statewide-transit-plan</a></p>	<p>This is a statewide plan, but does a good job of highlighting existing conditions, identifying needs and gaps in services, and providing recommendations and implementation strategies. At the bottom of page 103 it notes a Cortez-Durango route with service at five days per week, and a long-term goal of eight trips per day.</p>
<p><i>Colorado Intercity and Regional Bus Network Plan – 2014</i>  <a href="https://www.codot.gov/projects/intercityregionalbusnetworkstudy/intercity-and-regional-bus-network-plan">https://www.codot.gov/projects/intercityregionalbusnetworkstudy/intercity-and-regional-bus-network-plan</a></p>	<p>This 2014 study is an update to one prepared in 2008, and addresses changing conditions, current needs, and funding. This is a long-range plan and will be adopted as part of the State Transit Plan and the 2040 Statewide Transportation Plan, both now underway. The plan does note proposed regional services in the Cortez-Durango area.</p>
<p><i>Southwest Transportation Planning Region Regional Coordinated Transit &amp; Human Services Plan – 2014</i>  <a href="https://www.codot.gov/programs/colorado-transportation-matters/documents/regional-transit-plans/southwest-regional-transit-plan.pdf">https://www.codot.gov/programs/colorado-transportation-matters/documents/regional-transit-plans/southwest-regional-transit-plan.pdf</a></p>	<p>This plan does an excellent job of laying out the planning process, providing a regional context and overview, reviewing existing transit providers and human service agencies, and current and potential funding sources. The plan then highlights transit needs and service gaps, provides a financial and funding overview, and then gives an implementation plan, laying out high priority strategies.</p>

<i>Southwest Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Action Plan (Adopted August 2011, Revised March 2012 and August 2012)</i>	This plan highlights four main goals for the area, which are: #1 Sustain & expand public and specialized transportation services in the region; #2 Develop mechanisms to coordinate existing public & specialized transit service providers; #3 Develop mechanisms to sustain & strengthen the Regional Transit Coordinating Council; and, #4 Complete Southwest Colorado Accessible Transportation Plan for end users.
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Colorado Department of Transportation, Division of Rail & Transit

<https://www.codot.gov/programs/transitandrail>

CDOT manages the Federal and State funding related to public transportation services, including funding for planning for such services. SWCCOG will need to keep CDOT informed of planning efforts and will need to submit application for funding to CDOT for future transit services.

## Appendix B – Meeting Notes & Presentation

The following are the notes from the SWCCOG Regional Transit Coordinating Council meeting.

### **Durango-Cortez Bus Meeting 4-19-18, 10:00 am**

**Attendees:** David Kack, Rebecca Gleason- Western Transportation Institute (WTI), Peter Tregillis – Southern Ute Community Action Program (SUCAP), Matt Nesbitt – SUCAP, Jessica Laitsch – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG), Jason Armstrong – SW Center for Independence- SW rides, Sarah Dodson – City of Durango, Matt Muraro – CDOT Region 5.

Via Phone conference line: Shane Hale - City of Cortez, City Manager, Phil Johnson - City of Cortez, Public Works Director, Chris Burkett - City of Cortez, Interim City Manager, Sam Proffer - City of Cortez, Building & Planning Director, Peyton Heitzman - City of Cortez, Intern, Myron Baker - Ute Mountain Ute Tribe Planning Dept, Kalisha Crossland - San Juan Basin Public Health Department

David Kack provided project and WTI background and presented overview of issues (see attached pdf presentation)

- A fixed route bus line between Cortez and Durango has been a high priority in regional planning documents for years. What would it look like if we could implement? This project is funded from the National Association of Development Organizations, a Dept of Agriculture grant.
- David has been working in public transportation for 18 years. He led a project to create Bozeman-Big Sky bus service in Montana [www.Skylinebus.com](http://www.Skylinebus.com) WTI was selected with North Dakota State University and Eastern Washington to lead the Small Urban, Rural and Tribal Center on Mobility (SURTCOM). This is a University Transportation Center (UTC) with funding from the USDOT to address transportation issues.
- WTI takes a broad view of transportation including: winter maintenance, road ecology, freight movement, and emergency incident response. When thinking about mobility, most people think about the automobile. WTI has a broad view- bus, bikeshare, vanpools and considers how these urban solutions may apply to small urban and rural areas.
- Mobility is typically the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest expense to most people in the U.S. after housing, up to 50% of income combined for housing/mobility. With a high cost of living in Durango or Bozeman, people move to outlying communities, not knowing the cost of their commute. AAA 2017 average cost \$7480 for a car driven 10,000 miles annually. What are other options? Work, school, medical care- all require mobility. Quality of life suffers without mobility.

- Are you a one percenter - most people use about 1% of their car's capacity. We spend \$7500 per year on a vehicle and only using 1% capacity. Does this make sense?

### **How do we provide mobility to SWCCOG residents?**

- Coordinate existing services, expand existing services, start new services
- What is success? Providing a ride to a job for someone that didn't have one before could be success... What does success mean to this project? What is minimum service to provide mobility?
- Peter- success is relative. It is hard to compare apples to apples w/ transit. Every system has its own characteristics and challenges. Durango system versus more regional systems differ. Frequency is another challenge. When we increased frequency in dial a ride went from 650 rides to 16,000 for 10 hours of service. Safety is an issue as well. Durango to Ignacio - how to handle later evening routes.

### **What issues are you trying to address with this project?**

- For employment- vanpool is low cost compared to fixed route transit
- Sarah – curious about who riders are? Osprey has vanpools for 4-5 people from Durango to Cortez daily. What are other trip purposes?
- Matt - Employment, tourists in summer months Mesa Verde, medical.
- Jason- focused on La Plata County medical trips. Pressure for door to door for medical and some for employment. Some requests for Cortez area. Riders want to go from La Plata County to Mancos. Accessibility to people w/ disabilities and seniors.
- Kalisha - Does Durango offer different clinics than Cortez? She represents clients with medial needs. Montezuma county has no pediatric. Medicaid clients must come to Durango. Works both ways as far as clients needing to get to Cortez and Mancos. Valley wide health – one of the only Medicaid providers before expansion. Frontier areas outside of Cortez – need access to care.
- Peter – wonders about ability to attract “choice” riders. Haven't had financial oomph to market. It takes about 40 minutes to drive and an hour on transit from Durango-Cortez.

### **Can you get to 3 round trips between Cortez and Durango- one in morning, noon and afternoon?**

- Peter – Bayfield has 2, no funding for 3.

### **What existing services are here?**

Define what resources are out there now. Roadrunner one-way service. What other providers are there? Can you expand to public rather than specialized? A transit system will be more resilient if it is not tied to one funding source. Can we implement something for a year and try it out?

Cortez – who is utilizing services and why? Colorado is challenging as a place where people love vehicles.

What are current statistics on available routes and how they bisect the area. What is defining success? What is goal? Reduce carbon footprint or a service for disenfranchised people?

- Daily medical trips from MoCo (Montezuma County) transit to Durango. There is an existing last mile system in Cortez. Serving them could be greatest need. Nursing students from La Plata must commute to Pueblo Community College east of Cortez.
- Kalisha did scan of service in Montezuma county. Free and reduced lunch 51% (47% of those are free). Role of public health -access to care for people with health disparities that are accessing health services in La Plata county. From Kids Count- reliable data source. No one from Montezuma CAB in room – need to talk to them. MoCo – could get ridership – from Evan. Medicaid transportation – dead head. Talk to Mary Holiday – Montezuma County transit manager. Start with info from Kalisha on inventory. Senior services in Montezuma.
- Jason DAV – daily trips for medical to La Plata
- Peter- vanpools – did webinar a few years ago. Had 2 vanpool companies do PowerPoints. May have been a vanpool that came from it- Hermosa to Durango. Modal shifts are tough.
- Hospital foundation has said no to public transit funding to lots of people. Told Jason rates are too high. Scheduling is challenging. People don't know if they have transportation benefits from Medicaid.
- Mesa Verde – should service be provided to this location/destination.

Matt- DTR is putting together a development plan. Put projects on there over \$250k – above and beyond- outside of STIP. Looking for shelf-ready projects that could enhance transportation system – not necessarily operating costs. Meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:00-3:00 in this office, to draw line of what projects are in and out. Important to get projects on list by end of this month. Ask Matt, Jessica or DTR.

# Mobility & Transportation

David Kack, Director

Rebecca Gleason, Research Engineer  
Small Urban, Rural and Tribal Center on  
Mobility (SURTCOM)



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## “Transportation”





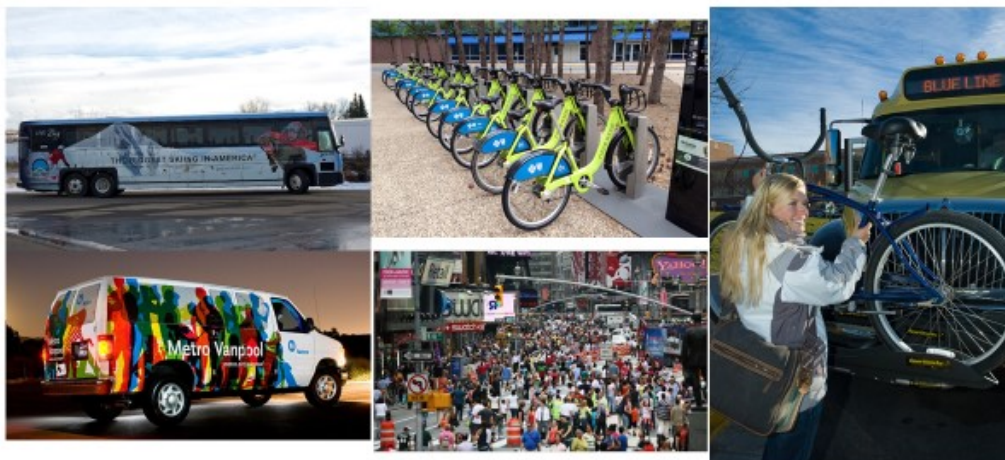
## WTI & Transportation



## “Mobility”



## Mobility

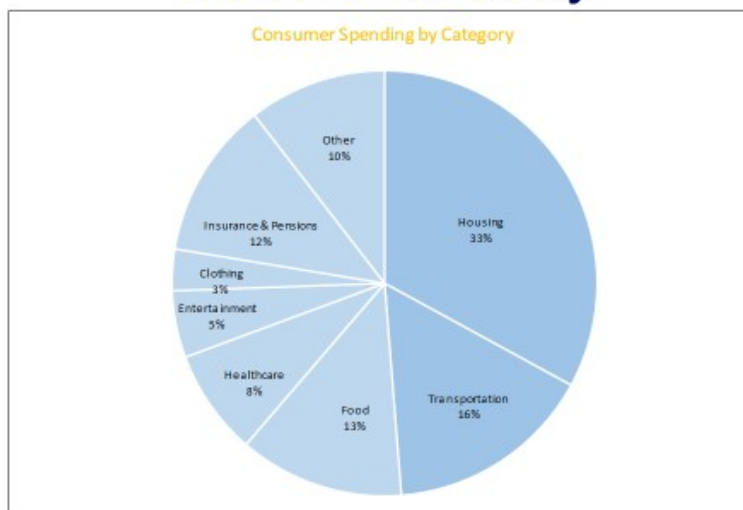


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## Cost of Mobility



Source: 2016 Consumer Expenditures, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

Note: In 1917 transportation was 2% of the budget, or the 6<sup>th</sup> highest expense



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## Cost of Mobility

Mileage	Small Sedan	Medium Sedan	Large Sedan	Small SUV	Medium SUV	Minivan	Pickup	Avg.
10,000	\$5,508	\$7,163	\$8,222	\$6,573	\$8,208	\$8,023	\$8,664	\$7,480
15,000	\$6,354	\$8,171	\$9,399	\$7,606	\$9,451	\$9,146	\$10,054	\$8,597

Note: 10,000 miles equals 40 miles per working day (250 working days)

If you commute to work by car, figure about \$56.46 in total vehicle expenses per 100 miles. If that seems like a lot, driving a more fuel-efficient model or using public or alternative transportation options could save you money.

Source: AAA Your Driving Costs 2017 Edition



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## Are You A One Percenter?

$$\begin{aligned}
 1/24 &= 4.2\% \\
 &\times 25\% \\
 &= 1.05\%
 \end{aligned}$$



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## How do we Provide Mobility to SWCCOG Residents?

- Coordinate existing services
- Expand existing services
- Start new services

What is Success??



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## Evolution of Transportation



RING

titute

## Other Options?



TEERING



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## Questions & Discussion



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