

**Facilitator:** Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

**Note Taker:** Xavier Vallejo, New Mexico First

**Speakers:**

- Andrew de Garmo & Stephanie Dominguez, ABQ Ride
- Christopher Ramirez, Together for Brothers

**Welcome**

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Good afternoon everyone. Today, we will have an opportunity to check in and share thoughts on transit equity and what it has to do with climate change. We want you to share your thoughts on what opportunities might exist within a Climate Action Plan for the City of Albuquerque. We want to discuss recommendations and limitations related to transportation. The Climate Action plan will not be legally binding, but it will still have the authority to guide city efforts through public input. After that, we will have a couple of speakers and then go back into conversation.
- **Helga Garza:** I am from the South Valley. As I think about transportation and how it relates to climate change, I think we need to create a system that is locally based and more climate conscious. However, I think we need to realize that public transportation as a resource is lacking in general. As a representative of a collection of farmers, climate change is why we work so hard on local investment, production, and distribution. Through those actions we are addressing transportation, climate change, food access, etc.
- **Kevin Bean:** I am from Carnuel. Where I am from, I often pick up hitch hikers and give them rides into Albuquerque. That is our public transportation. When considering public transportation in town and the barriers of the pandemic, the city should invest in high end filtration systems to ensure public safety and support climate action.
- **Amy Carpenter:** To follow up on Kevin's point, one of the resources in this week's [One Pager](#) specified that all public transportation provided by the city had to be reliable, safe and efficient. I believe that we need to expand on these points and hold public transportation accountable to be more affordable and accessible.
- **Virginia Necochea:** That captures my thoughts as well. We need to address the affordability, accessibility, and transportation equity before we can fully address issues like general transportation and climate change. We need to address the underlying issues before we address the larger picture at hand. If we only look to discuss sustainability, the communities most affected by these issues will be let out of the conversation. There are numerous barriers to access the bus system in the South Valley.
- **Alex Monatano:** I live in the Northeast part of Albuquerque. I understand the whole discussion about equity and the hesitancy to invest in alternatives like bikes, when the most vulnerable communities would not benefit from those changes. I have had the opportunity to live in some cities with very robust, mass transit systems. I think we should develop a mass transit system in Albuquerque and begin to prepare for the expansion of the city in a climate conscious way.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** I live in the Nob Hill Area. When we talk about equity, we need to talk about pollution and single use vehicles. Different populations engage with transportation in different ways. When I first moved to Albuquerque from Minneapolis, I vowed that I was going to use the bus system to get around and I noticed the negative perspectives on using the bus system. Electrifying the busses and making sure there are enough routes to accommodate more neighborhoods would be beneficial.

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- **Chas Robles:** A lot of the conversation seems to be focused on what we can do as individuals to address climate change. We need to think about how we can minimize pollution in multiple sectors. It would be interesting to look into the benefits of investing in green sectors. In the South Valley, there are a lot of barriers to riding bikes as a form of transportation. The quality of the roads is bad, there are no bike lanes, and it can be overwhelming for people who are not as comfortable riding their bike. We need to invest in that infrastructure and make sure there are safe resources for people to be utilized.
- **Josue de Luna Navarro:** I live in the International Zone. It is critical to also think about how we can generate economic development in a way to create green energy jobs within local communities. People from the South Valley often have to commute out of the community for work. How can we promote a public transportation system that is currently non-existent? How can we expect people to ride a bike across town to get to work? Local economic development with a sustainability lens is a way to promote climate action in an equitable way. We also need to make sure that the infrastructure that the city invests in does not promote gentrification.
- **Tara Trafton:** I am from the Duranes neighborhood. I think investing in reliable public transportation and viable bike paths are great ideas. A couple of other ideas to consider are car-share and bike-share programs.
- **Theresa Cardenas:** I am from the Northeast Heights. I agree with the ideas that have been shared, regarding local investments to promote equity. I also wanted to mention that our communities are aging and transportation routes available for seniors are very limited. Most of the bus stops do not look inviting and are not often located near places where people gather.
- **Karen Leming:** I am from the Parkland Hills area. I agree with all of the comments that have been shared so far. I think a lot about the disability community, when considering these issues. We need to make sure the issues of equity and access are addressed in a way to accommodate the needs of all communities.
- **Tony Sparks:** I live in the Up Town Area. I come from a global climate crisis perspective because of my job with Albuquerque Public Schools. The school district has too little funds and a lot of needs. I have had to address climate change by the biggest bang for the buck. I agree that we need to address social equity and transportation equity are vital, they must be addressed concurrently with other strategies to bring big benefits immediately because we can not wait. I love some of the ideas that have been brought up related to economic development and community-based approaches. I think we need to address these issues thoughtfully, but urgently.
- **Daniel Beaman:** I work with the Bernalillo County Economic Department. I believe the blue line service offers by the city is limited. I also know the green and red lines have additional routes. I think the frequency of these bus lines could be improved. There should also be more of an emphasis on the safety of those who use public transportation.
- **Genesis Arizmendi:** The biggest thing that comes up in my head is the accessibility of public transportation. We should look into which specific neighborhoods need more access and which bus routes get the most traffic. I think we also need to work on developing the appeal of public transportation with crime and safety. As a woman, after a certain time, I am not going to want to wait an hour in the dark at a bus stop. We need to better publicize information related to the buses, including their routes, their stop times, and any delays.
- **Solana Granados:** I live in the Silver Hill neighborhood. I think we need to continue to develop public transportation. To get there we need to invest in public awareness campaigns. We also need to make sure that people feel safe using public transportation. We need to do research on how routes need to be adjusted to best accommodate the communities that reside within the city.

### Andrew de Garmo & Stephanie Dominguez Presentation

- **Andrew de Garmo:** I am a Principal Planner with ABQ Ride and Stephanie is our Deputy Director. To start with, I wanted to highlight the role of transportation within context of the Climate Crisis. Transportation comprises 28% of green house gas emissions and private vehicles comprise 17%. This is a major piece of the problem and all of us have a personal connection to it.
- ABQ Ride runs 40 routes throughout Albuquerque on weekdays. 16 of those routes are considered commuter routes and only run one way during peak times of the day (one direction in the morning and the opposite direction in the evening. The other 24 routes are all day routes, which includes those run by the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) and ART X (formerly known as the Blue Line Rapid Ride). On weekends, less services are offered. These busses only run half days on Saturdays and quarter days on Sundays.
- We are primarily funded through city taxes. Bus fares pay for about 8% of our budget. The county pays for the routes that go out of the city and into the county. Rio Metro pays for the routes that go into Rio Rancho or specifically connect to the Rail Runner.
- Public transportation use did peak in 2014 and has since experienced a slow decline. This is consistent with national trends and is predominantly due to cheaper gas prices and low interest car payments. We did experience an increase in ridership, once ART started, but that number has gone back down, due to the pandemic. Most of our riders are low income, about 85% are from households that make less than \$35K a year, and about 66% of our riders are people of color. The central city is the dominant areas where people tend to ride busses.
- There are numerous benefits associated with increasing bus ridership. The more people there are on the vehicle, the less emissions there are because people are not driving private vehicles. Public transportation is also a beneficial resource for people who would otherwise have a difficult time commuting, due to low income, disability, etc. We have to find a balance between investing in high traffic routes and coverage areas across the city.
- When considering ridership, the contexts we look into, include the market demand for public transportation, the type of transit service that is needed by the community, and the costs to potential riders. Transit costs are significantly less expensive than the costs associated with owning your own vehicle. Our services are budget-constrained, so our focus on optimizing the use of the resources we have access to.
- We usually consider how many people can walk to our bus stops. Making driving a little more expensive and inconvenient is a good way to increase public transportation use. The University of New Mexico is a great example of this dynamic because people have to pay for parking.
- Albuquerque has a large population in a less concentrated area, which is why our transportation systems may sometimes not appear to be the most abundant. Frequency of our efforts can be very expensive, so we have to be very targeted, planning around work times, traffic times, weekends, holidays, etc.
- We are in the process of buying 5 battery electric busses as part of a pilot program. However, these vehicles will have a very limited range. In the future we may consider hydrogen fuel-cell busses, but these tend to be very expensive to operate.
- **Transit Advisory Board Meetings take place on the 2nd Thursday of every month. Find more information at [www.abqride.com](http://www.abqride.com).**

### Christopher Ramirez Presentation

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- **Christopher Ramirez:** I am the Executive Director of Together for Brothers. I am here to present with Baruch Campos and Luis Coluna. Before we begin, we want to recognize that we are on indigenous land. This is especially important to recognize when considering topics like environmental racism. One of the first definitions of environmental racism comes from Ben Chavez and the work he did through the United Congregational Church in the 1980's. One of the things to consider when thinking about environmental racism is that it goes beyond the placement of factories and even encompasses things as small as the placement of bus stops. I also wanted to ground our work in the Jemez Principles and we stand on the shoulders of decades of community work.
- **Baruch Campos:** When we talk about transit equity, we are referring to the idea that the people most impacted as transit dependent riders get what they need. When I first moved to Albuquerque, I grew up in the International District. It was a big challenge because there was only one vehicle in our household and my mother worked 24/7. I was very transit dependent and it was difficult to find a job because of that transit dependency. When I started at CNM, I got a free bus pass and it helped me to get a job at Tucanos.
- **Christopher Ramirez:** Together for Brothers conducted a [Transit Equity Health Impact Assessment](#). Around transit equity, we often think about buses, but we want to expand our view to the social determinants of health. The four social determinants of health that we learned to be closely tied to access to public transportation included education, employment, recreation and healthy habits. Together for Brother surveyed young men of color and found that 75% said they would be less likely to miss class with a free bus pass, 78% said it would be easier to find and keep a job with a free bus pass, and 81% said they would be more likely to engage in recreational activities with the ability to access parks across town.
- **Baruch Campos:** These surveys were created and implemented by young men of color for young men of color. We got a lot of really good feedback. Watch the [Access to Employment Video](#).
- **Luis Coluna:** Our definition of transit sovereignty is that the people who are most impacted as transit dependent riders have the ability to make their own decisions about transportation and are at the decision-making table. I am originally from Arizona and moved to the North Valley. After graduating from high school, I became a full time bicyclist that allowed me to get to and from work. We identified ways for me to navigate how to make the commute safely. Using the bus as a resource was often dictated by whether or not I had change on me. Often times I would have to use lyft or uber, or ask a friend to drive me. Even getting groceries could be difficult on a bike.
- **Christopher Ramirez:** One point that I want to make is that a challenge we have experienced working with the city is that the South Valley and North Valley areas are not often included since they are part of the county. I think we also need to consider transit gentrification, which is prioritizing resources to meet the needs of commuters over people who are transit dependent. This introduces the idea of transit drought, where some of the communities most in need, do not have access to those transportation resources.
- **Luis Coluna:** Some of the solutions to these issues that we have come up with are to identify the resource available in our communities and attend the Transit Advisory Board meetings. We think it to be important to have bus stop information available in multiple languages. We recommend Free Summer Bus Passes for students and have been advocating for Transit Equity Day. We have also identified that we need to establish public transit as a harassment and violence free space.
- **Christopher Ramirez:** One of the things we have been working on with the city s to get free public transit for all young people under the age of 18 during the pandemic. We want to expand this program and advocate for free public transit for everyone at all times, even after the pandemic. We should ask ABQ Ride about the Route and Frequency Study and the associated funds.

## Guest Speaker Q&A

- **Tara Trafton:** The idea of having free passes is a great idea. What is the amount of revenue we would have to generate to offset the price of free passes?
  - **Stephanie Dominguez:** The city budget's each year. The last couple of year's the anticipated fares collected by public transit have come out to \$3.7M per fiscal year. Compared to other cities, our fares structure is relatively low. It costs \$1 for each ride. There are different categories and discounts. If you are a student, you get a discounted rate. If you are over 62 years old, you get a discounted rate. During the pandemic, we have implemented free rides for youth ages 18 and younger. We are looking to expand the program to allow free fares for people over 62 and to veterans. We also provide discounted passes to 40 organizations across the city.
  - **Christopher Ramirez:** Surveys distributed by Together for Brothers found that young people would pay 60 cents a day to ride the bus. Most of the young people who are transit dependent live in poverty and do not have the option to spend 60 cents per day. Even with the UNM ID, bus routes do not represent where we need them, to serve the communities in most need.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** CNM offers free bus passes for students. Today, I also saw a funding opportunity through the New Mexico Environment Department for upgrading city fleet vehicles. In regard to ABQ Ride, I attended a meeting several years ago, where someone talked about increasing the amount of stops in the South Valley and the West Side. There response from the board was that there were not enough riders in those areas. How do you determine that?
  - **Andrew de Garmo:** One of the challenges in the South Valley is that the county pays for those services. ABQ Ride is city taxpayer funded. In terms of where we think services would be well used, it can often come down to land use in the area and population density. If the goal is ridership, then you would not want to prioritize areas with low density or areas where it can be difficult to get to a bus stop. But ridership is not always the goal for transit.
  - **Christopher Ramirez:** One thing that is interesting is that UNM and CNM had initially created a program where students, staff, and faculty could get free bus rides through the city. Both institutions, however, have now passed that cost onto students. We know where transit dependent households are and we know a regional transit system to cover area in Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia Counties would be beneficial. This would help to support rural and indigenous communities, and would allow for self-sustainability and generate revenue separate from the city and the county funding
  - **Andrew de Garmo:** By state law public transit can charge up to a 1/2 of a cent in sale tax per fare. The Rio Metro charges 1/8 of a cent in tax per bus fare to accrue revenues as an additional source of funding.

## Discussions

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Are there any new or affirming ideas that caught your attention? Was there anything that gave you pause and caused concern?
- **Amy Carpenter:** Was there money that was allocated but never utilized? At what level do coalitions like this task force get to weigh in and question accountability. At some point, we need to be able to review plans and look into developing next steps.
  - **Christopher Ramirez:** Money was allocated for a study and the study was never implemented. The pandemic has stalled this project, but an RFP was never created under three different directors.

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- **Stephanie Dominguez:** In either fiscal year 2019 or 2020, \$250K was allocated for the study. We do want to include public participation in this route study. We are still working to develop the scope, so we can receive review proposals.
- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Thank you to our speakers for joining the call today. We also wanted to take some time on the call to address some of the questions concerns that have come up, to ensure we use our time in the most effective way possible. Task force members, thank you for those of you that gave feedback. One idea was to start meetings with perspectives and ideas to focus more on concrete recommendations and ideas. Another idea is to have guest speakers record their presentations before the meeting to allow for more time for discussion and questions. Another option is to increase the time of our meetings by another half hour to accommodate for presentation time.
- **Tara Trafton:** I really like the idea of prerecorded presentations. It would reduce technical issues and allow for more flexibility.
- **Sharon Hausam:** Adding half an hour onto each call would be a challenge.
- **Alex Montano:** Some of my comments may be controversial. I think there are two issues. The first issue is that I feel like the actual group is too big. To get through everyone, it takes so much time. One idea is to break the group into two smaller groups. The other idea is to put the task force on hold until after the pandemic because there are extra challenges.
  - **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** We can look into creating smaller groups with Zoom Breakout Groups.
  - **Sharon Hausam:** I think the breakout groups could work well. It does help to have a designated facilitator in each small group. Splitting into smaller groups could allow for more dialog.
- **Karen Leming:** I love our meetings, but I often feel overwhelmed after the meetings. I feel like the length and time frame we have includes a lot of pieces and we do not get a lot of time for discussion. I think either breaking into smaller groups or waiting for in person meetings would be beneficial.
  - **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** We appreciate the suggestions, but there is also a sense of urgency to come up with solutions now.
- **Amy Carpenter:** I share a sense of urgency about this. I do not think we can afford to wait. I think pre-recording meetings would be absolutely helpful I also think the breakout groups are a great idea.
- **Sharon Hausam:** If we did switch to in person meetings, I would not be able to participate. There are benefits to meeting online because it takes away travel time.
- **Tony Sparks:** I feel a real call to action to get results as fast as possible. I want to talk about issues and concepts, but I want to see results.
- **Kevin Bean:** Are these meetings being recorded? I think that we need to get this information to the public sooner rather than later. We need to make these zoom links more accessible. If these meetings are being recorded, we need to consider putting them on public access stations.
  - **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** The meeting recordings and the zoom information can be found on the [New Mexico First website](#). We also need your help as task force members to spread the word about the great work the task force is doing. Please share with your networks.
- **Karen Leming:** I wanted to clarify that I do believe there is an urgent need to take action, but we also need to find a middle ground. Discussion can be difficult in such a large zoom setting.

### Next Steps

- Please complete the task force homework survey. Use the survey to reflect and expand upon any of the things we talked about during the meeting. Please complete the survey by 12:00 PM on Monday, November 9, 2020.

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- Please complete the stipend questionnaire if you have not done so yet, by 12:00 PM on Monday, November 9, 2020. The questionnaire will ask you about whether you would like to receive a stipend for being part of the task force. If we don't hear back from you by Friday, November 6, we will assume you are forgoing your payment to be used towards other members stipend.
- Please write a small biography of yourself to be posted on the website, for the public to get a better sense of who each of you are. We ask that your biography be no longer than 3 sentences. We ask that you send these biographies to [cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org](mailto:cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org) by 12:00 PM on Monday, November 9, 2020. If you do not submit a biography by the deadline, it will not be included on the website.
- Presentation recordings will be sent out on the evening of Monday, November 9, 2020. Please watch the presentation recordings before the meeting on the Tuesday, November 10, 2020.
- Any comments or recommendations can be sent to [cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org](mailto:cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org), to be entered into the comment logs.

### Public Comment

- **Chrysa Johnson:** Thank you for letting me speak. It is important to think about the ridership of women and single mothers. It should be acknowledged that a single mother may need to make several stops throughout the day to meet the needs of her family.
- **Susan Gorman:** I have been attending all of these meetings and I am still unsure of the product.
  - **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Product comes through relationship and the final product is to create a climate action plan. That climate action plan would be something that would be shared out with community to be commented on and then adopted by the city as a guide for future investments.
- **Susan Gorman:** In 2009 there was a climate action task force. Is this task force going to build on the work that was already done?
  - **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Yes, we want to build on the work that has already been done. But not behold to. We want new ideas to be created by these task force members because they bring experiences to the table, different from the previous task force in 2009.
- **Blair Brown:** Together for Brothers had mentioned that they did a survey of disadvantaged households and access to public transit. I was wondering if he had shared that information with ABQ Ride? As the city expands, they need to take these results into account.
- **Terra Reed:** I presented last week and was excited to listen in on the discussion this week. I wanted to make a comment about the free bus passes. I think a piece that is often missing from conversation is how people are able to access those passes. Do people have to present a student ID? Do people have to go through a process to get a fare discount? Sometimes that process can be a deterrent to people from using those resources. As a previous presenter, I also love the idea to record presentations, but I think some resources should be offered to presenters to help record those presentations if they do not have the means to record on their own.
- **Valerie Rangel:** My only suggestion is that you focus on what communications are going to go to. Tailor your comments to accommodate who you get those comments to.