A motion was made by Gina Cordero seconded by Alejandro Garcia to *approve item twenty-one (21).* Motion passed.

Ayes: Ruben Reyes, Cesar Nevarez, Alejandro Garcia, Gina Cordero and Irene Rojas
Nays:
Absent:

**30. *DISCUSSION AND ACTION* TO ADOPT SOCORRO ¡AVANZANDO! THE 2025 - 2028 TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE CITY OF SOCORRO.** ***ADRIANA RODARTE***

A motion was made by Alejandro Garcia seconded by Gina Cordero to *approve item thirty (30).* Motion passed.

Blanca Vargas, Lisa Ybarra, Rosa Zaragoza, Xavier Bañales, Manny Rodriguez, and Commissioner Iliana Holguin. Mary and Rosa (no last names) signed up to speak but did not speak.

Presentation by Jonathan Brooks, Transit Practice Lead for the Goodman Corporation made a presentation.

Ayes: Ruben Reyes, Cesar Nevarez, Alejandro Garcia, Gina Cordero and Irene Rojas
Nays:
Absent:

## PUBLIC COMMENT

**4. *PUBLIC COMMENT***

Jeremiah Clark, Edgar Carrasco,

A motion was made by Gina Cordero seconded by Alejandro Garcia to *allow Mr. Carrasco more time to speak.* Motion passed.

Ayes: Ruben Reyes, Cesar Nevarez, Alejandro Garcia, Gina Cordero and Irene Rojas
Nays:
Absent:

Edgar Carraso continued to speak Ruth Dimas, Efrain Caballero, Jeremy Hendrix,

A motion was made by Gina Cordero seconded by Irene Rojas to *allow more time for Jeremy Hendrix to speak.* Motion passed.

Ayes: Ruben Reyes, Cesar Nevarez, Alejandro Garcia, Gina Cordero and Irene Rojas
Nays:
Absent:

# 2025-2028 Transit Development Plan

Socorro ¡avanzando!

**May 2025**

# Acknowledgements


## Mayor & City Council

**Rudy Cruz Jr**, Mayor
**Ruben Reyes**, At-Large Representative
**Cesar Nevarez**, District 1 Representative / Pro Tem
**Alejandro Garcia**, District 2 Representative
**Maria "Gina" Cordero**, District 3 Representative
**Irene Rojas**, District 4 Representative

## City Staff

**Adriana Rodarte**, City Manager
**Victor Perez**, Deputy City Manager
**Lorrine Quimiro**, City Planner
**Alejandra Valadez**, City Development Director
**Victor Reta**, Director of Recreation, Communications, Special Events
**Edward Rodriquez**, Transit Coordinator
**...and everyone else involved in transit and engagement activities!**

## The Consultant Project Team

The City of Socorro hired The Goodman Corporation (TGC) and Consor Engineers through a competitive procurement. The consultant project team provided technical assistance to the City of Socorro for the creation of the Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan and is responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in the plan.

THE GOODMAN CORPORATION

**TGC** has 44-years of history as a Texas-based, transit- and multimodal-focused planning and engineering firm. TGC led the project overall, conducted all quantitative analysis, and created the TDP document.

CONSOR

**Consor** also has 44-years of history and is a national water and transportation infrastructure engineering firm with local community engagement experts in El Paso. Consor led stakeholder and community engagement.

## Photos and Graphics

*All photos and graphics included in the Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan are the property of the City of Socorro, are used with permission, or are cited with a hyperlink. Maps and analysis are available in their original format upon request.*

## Funding Provided By

*The Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan project was supported, in whole or in part, by federal U.S. Department of the Treasury funds awarded to the City of Socorro under program award number 21.027.*

# Plan Contents

## List of Figures



## List of Tables

Socorro ¡avanzando!

# 2025-2028 Transit Development Plan

## Executive Summary

The Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan (TDP) charts the City of Socorro's path for transit through 2028. The TDP project team recommends the City of Socorro (City):

- **Continue** the Rio Vista Transportation Program for older adults and people with disabilities,
- **Support** residents to utilize the county's Vamonos Vanpool for regional commutes, and
- **Establish** a microtransit service – with connections to El Paso Community College (EPCC) Mission del Paso Campus and into Sun Metro's Mission Valley Transit Center (MVTC).

Implementing the recommendations will ensure Socorro has high-quality transit for the next 3+ years, at a sustainable level of local investment leveraging new urban transit federal funding.

## TDP Vision & Objectives

The City of Socorro believes transit is a key element for the community to achieve its vision of fostering economic growth, being a good steward of the environment, and providing a high quality of life for residents and visitors.

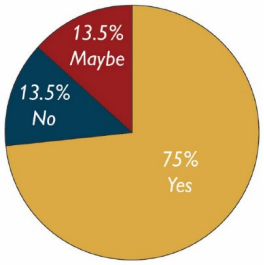
The TDP is the City's independent study of transit potential in Socorro. The project team created the plan so the City could understand how best to improve transit and efficiently utilize limited public resources. The plan prepares the City to provide residents with higher quality transit service than the infrequent fixed routes by El Paso Area Transportation Services (EPATS) – slated for discontinuation after June 30, 2025.

**The TDP completes a key implementation action in the *Socorro 2040 Comprehensive Plan*.**

## TDP Planning Process

The TDP envisions what transit can and should be by combining a three step analytical process with two rounds of proactive community engagement.

**Do you see yourself or someone in your family using the transit services?**



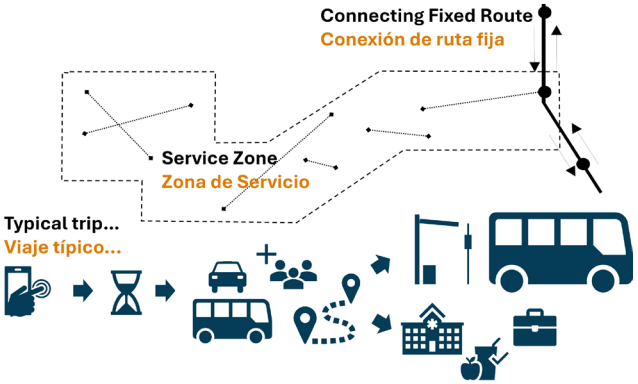

## Recommended Transit Service

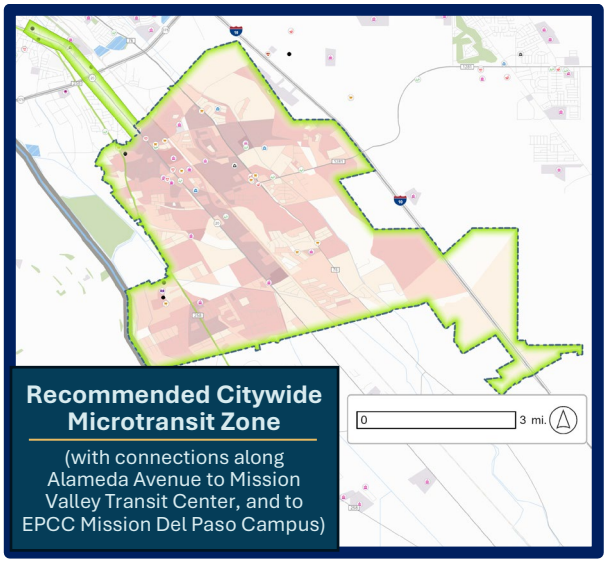
The TDP's central recommendation is for the City to establish a new microtransit service on or before July 1, 2025, by directly operating the service using the City's existing vehicle fleet and TripMaster software:

- Monday to Friday (except major holidays)
- 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM
- **ZERO FARE** (until necessary due to demand)
- Same day trips (limited advance reservations)
- Target of <30 minute wait time for 100% of riders

The City may adapt the service periodically to balance to ridership demand and resources. The TDP also discusses long-term opportunities for the City to consider a (1) premium fare service to connect residents to major regional locations or (2) establishing a fixed route spine + microtransit model if funds prove sufficient.

**Microtransit provides riders with a higher-quality experience over an infrequent, difficult to access fixed route (visualized below).**




## Cost & City Funds Requirement

**The project team conducted detailed modeling to understand the likely cost and performance for the new microtransit service:**

- ~15k riders a year eventually
- ~2 vehicles in service
- ~$40-45 per vehicle revenue hour
- ~$250k per year total cost (variable)

**The City's local match requirement:**

- FY 2025: ~$21k local funds (zero federal)
- FY 2026: ~$109-184k local funds
  (lower amount if federal funds begin during FY 2026)
- FY 2027: ~$190k local funds (+ ~$386k federal)
- FY 2028: ~$192k local funds (+ ~$386k federal)

## TDP Implementation

The TDP contains information on the requisite steps and requirements for the City to implement the recommendations. The two most important steps are to form a Service Expansion Policy (SEP) Agreement with Sun Metro for federal urban transit funding and to become a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Direct Recipient for grant funds.

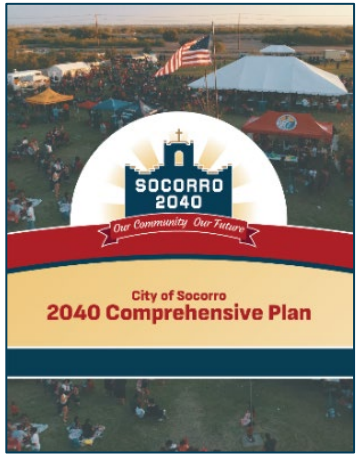
# Section 1. Introduction

**The City of Socorro created a Transit Development Plan (TDP) to determine the best transit approach to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors, now and into the future.**

Section 1.1 discusses the underlying framework for the TDP, including establishing the TDP vision, objectives, and approach taken for plan development. The section includes a discussion about how this plan relates to the City's *Socorro 2040: Our Community Our Future* comprehensive plan.

Section 1.2 provides a transit-focused community profile, discusses the variety of transit modes potentially relevant in Socorro, and explores existing services and current stakeholder plans for transit.

# 1.1 TDP Framework




The City of Socorro recently completed ***Socorro 2040: Our Community Our Future*** comprehensive plan. Members of the City Council and the Mayor approved the plan on July 18, 2024.

The City of Socorro believes transit is a key element for the community to achieve its vision of fostering economic growth, being a good steward of the environment, and providing a high quality of life for residents and visitors. The development of a Transit Development Plan (TDP) began work on *Socorro 2040* implementation action #30, "Develop a transit development plan to improve and expand public transportation services." The City branded the TDP initiative as "**Socorro ¡Avanzando!**."

The TDP is the City's independent study of transit potential in Socorro, as a matter of due diligence. The project team created the plan so the City could understand how best to improve transit and efficiently utilize limited public resources. The TDP boldly answers, "What could, and should, transit be in Socorro." The TDP was also necessary because the existing services, operated by El Paso Area Transportation Services (EPATS) Local Government Corporation, are planned to cease operation by June 30, 2025. The City's TDP process set out to understand, regardless of operator, how transit can most efficiently and effectively serve Socorro residents' needs in the future.

## Vision

### *Socorro 2040: Our Community Our Future* Vision

*Socorro is a welcoming community that celebrates diversity, preserves its rich culture and history, and fosters economic growth, environmental stewardship, and a high quality of life for residents and visitors alike. It stands as a symbol of unity and prosperity for future generations.*[1]

### Developing a TDP Specific Vision

The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP envisions what transit can and should be for Socorro residents, visitors, and businesses by combining robust public engagement with technical analysis. The process followed a logical order of steps and provided educated everyone involved.

The most urgent goal for the TDP process was to understand how the City can support the same level of transit access as operated up to June 30, 2025, by other local governments. The second highest priority goal was growth, meaning to increase the quality of transit to attract and serve more riders by providing a desirable, reliable travel option.

The Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan equips the City and public with a feasible, community-supported course of action to improve public transit. The resulting transit services will provide existing and future riders with a reliable, safe, and dignified travel option within Socorro, to key destinations and the broader transit network in the region. The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP also identifies key opportunities to contribute to the City's progress on many interrelated priorities, such as accessible sidewalks, bikeways, and trails.

[1] https://costx.us/socorro2040/

# Objectives

## TDP Specific Objectives

**The TDP process had four specific objectives:**

### 1. Engage

1.1 Proactively engage current riders at their stops to understand their travel options and ideas for how to practically improve transit

1.2 Proactively engage community leaders and stakeholders; ascertain their vision for transit in Socorro

1.3 Meet the general public at community events and at hosted meetings to provide information, actively listen, and report back

### 2. Educate

2.1 Compile lay term information and graphics about the potential transit modes relevant to Socorro

2.2 Create intuitive information about existing services: their role within Socorro and in connecting people to the broader region

2.3 Evaluate existing services performance compared to peers and identify opportunities for improvement to share with the public

### 3. Envision

3.1 Explore in detail the various markets for transit services in Socorro (e.g., people, jobs, key destinations, travel patterns)

3.2 Identify potential new or altered fixed routes, on-demand microtransit zones, and other specialized services

3.3 Create an evaluation framework and apply it to the transit alternatives to identify potential priorities to review with the public

### 4. Enact

4.1 Recommend a spectrum of complementary transit services for Socorro, balanced to available resources in low/medium/high scenarios, and focused on providing all-purpose transit riders with a reliable, dignified mobility option

4.2 Identify service delivery options available to the City of Socorro and partners, including implementation steps and monitoring benchmarks and service standards

4.3 Create a final Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan to document the entire process and to act as a playbook for improving transit into the future

## TDP Objectives and *Socorro 2040*

The *Socorro 2040* plan contains goals and policies in six topical areas:

- Growth & Development
- Quality of Life
- Mobility
- Public Services & Infrastructure
- Community Resilience
- Administration & Implementation

The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP contributes to the City's progress on many interrelated *Socorro 2040* priorities and goals. **Figure 1**, on the next page, highlights how *Socorro 2040* addresses transit as a means to improve the community.

| Mobility Goals & Policies Directly Related to Transit | All Other Goals & Policies Indirectly Related to Transit *(i.e., transit improves the thing, or improving the thing improves transit too)* |
|---|---|
| **"Incentivize the development of multimodal transit hubs in key neighborhood locations."** (Policy MOB-1.a)<br><br>**"Enhance and expand public transit services, including buses and shuttles."** (Policy MOB-1.e)<br><br>**"Upgrade transit stop infrastructure and integrate technology to improve the user experience and service efficiency."** (Policy MOB-4.b)<br><br>**"Bus stops throughout the City are appropriately located to serve the community and have amenities, including shading and seating, to provide safety and comfort for users."** (Goal MOB-8)<br><br>**"Approve an annual amount to be dedicated to the planning, design, and construction of bus stops with shading and seating throughout the bus route system."** (Policy MOB-8.a) | **Housing**<br>"Promote pedestrian and vehicular mobility by designing connections to adjacent uses" (Policy GD-6.c)<br>"Create a Transit-Oriented Development district to encourage mixed-use opportunities around local transit lines" (Policy GD-7.b)<br><br>**Economic Development**<br>"Prioritize growth in areas with existing infrastructure or areas where infrastructure can be expanded in a fiscally sound manner." (Policy GD-10.b)<br><br>**Quality of Life**<br>"Parks are well-connected and safe for pedestrians through a cohesive and established pedestrian and bicycle trail network" (Policy QOL-11)<br><br>**Mobility**<br>"Establish a citywide network of safety-enhanced multiuse trails... providing access to transit..." (Policy MOB-1.b)<br>"Allocate funds to revitalize existing sidewalk infrastructure, prioritizing high-density neighborhoods." (Policy MOB-2.a)<br>"Mobility improvements are cost-shared with TxDOT and other potential partners...to facilitate Transit-oriented Developments (TODs)..." (Goal MOB-3)<br>"Redefine roadway infrastructure to accommodate multiple transportation modes, emphasizing a pedestrian-first approach." (Policy MOB-5.a)<br>"Coordinate with local civic organizations to seek donations or funding, such as dedication of names or organizations on seating, toward the overall costs involved with bus stop amenities." (Policy MOB-8.c)<br><br>**Public Services**<br>"Consider approval of annual funding to be dedicated for the planning, design, and construction of ADA-approved sidewalks and bike paths that can be built in phases until completed throughout the city." (Policy PSI-9.c) |

**Figure 1.** Transit-related Goals in *Socorro 2040*

The City's TDP process and the final plan contribute to realizing *Socorro 2040*'s vision to **celebrate** diversity, **preserve** culture and history, **foster** economic growth and environmental stewardship, and **improve** quality of life for everyone – to ultimately **ensure** the City is a symbol of unity and prosperity.

## Celebrate

Transit riders come from all walks of life and ride for various reasons. The TDP process engaged existing riders to identify how they use transit today and their vision for how to improve services in the future. The information was combined with technical analysis about mobility equity so as to celebrate the utility of the existing services for individual riders in Socorro, while also identifying a future where transit better supports individuals with diverse mobility needs and requirements (e.g., age, disability, income, etc.).

## Preserve

The TDP assessed the quality and utility of the existing transit network, which is primarily comprised of fixed routes with some accompanying specialized transit services (e.g., vanpool). The TDP process identified the most successful elements to attempt to preserve in the future. The engagement process included stakeholder interviews and two rounds of proactive community engagement. The engagement also explored Socorro's current cultural views pertaining to the role of transit. The information directly informed the recommended mix of transit services in the TDP.

## Foster

Transportation is the ultimate shared interest – impacting every person, household, and business. Transportation is also, for most of us, primarily a means to an end (i.e., simply the connection between locations). For a sizable portion of any community the public transit network is an invaluable resource for affordable, independent mobility.

Transit is generally the primary affordable travel mode capable of connecting users over long distances. Many people do walk, roll (i.e., utilize mobility devices), or bike for some local travel. An effective transit network greatly expands an individual's independent reach in their community and region. The City's acceptance and implementation of the TDP will foster economic growth by creating transit services supporting Socorro residents' physical reach by means other than driving or being driven in a personal vehicle. Travel by transit is also generally more environmentally friendly than driving or being driven. Additionally, the TDP explored how the City might leverage various funding sources to implement improvements. Several of the most likely funding sources specifically seek to support transit services fostering economic opportunity and alleviating local congestion.

### Improve

TDP implementation will improve the quality of life in Socorro as the City and partners implement new or improved transit services over the next three plus years. Better transit services will connect more residents and visitors to opportunities in Socorro and the region. Similarly, the City's incremental improvements to sidewalks, bikeways, and trails will provide existing and future transit riders with more safe, comfortable, and dignified access to the community.

### Ensure

The TDP ensures the potential positive impacts of the limited resources available for transit, and multimodal transportation generally, will be leverage as much federal funding as is feasible. The City of Socorro is supporting greater unity and prosperity by creating a transit network better suited to connecting people to the places they want to reach.

## TDP Approach

The project team developed the Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP by following four project phases (see **Figure 2**). The process included repeated opportunities to hear directly from transit riders, residents, visitors, and organizational stakeholders about their needs and expectations.


**Figure 2.** TDP Project Timeline

This final TDP documents the entire planning process. The TDP provides the City of Socorro and the public with a complete understanding of the basis for the project team's recommendations, including qualitative data engagement data and quantitative technical analysis.

# 1.2 Socorro: Now and Future

**Socorro is growing and changing. To keep moving forward, it is important for the City and partners to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities facing our community when it comes to ensuring high quality transit services. The following profile and key trends in Socorro provide context for the transit recommendations found later in the TDP.**

## Socorro Community Profile

The City of Socorro is home to about 34,000 residents, a 7% increase from 2010 to 2020.[2] The city spans about 22 square miles.

### Is Socorro Rural or Urban?

**Mostly Urban.** The vast majority, 98%, of the City's population resides within the El Paso Urbanized Area (El Paso UZA). The U.S. Census Bureau redefines the boundaries of UZAs every 10 years as part of the decennial census and a region must have 50,000+ residents to be urban. UZAs are important for transit because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the State of Texas (State), provide transit funding principally based on a UZA's characteristics and the amount of transit operated within the UZA compared to other UZAs.

While 98% of Socorro residents live in the El Paso UZA, only about 16 of 22 square miles of land area are urbanized – 72% of the land area. So, while Socorro is primarily urbanized, open land and extremely low density development still exists – leaving room for additional horizontal development (in addition to the option to increase density).

### Do Any Socorro Residents Need Transit?

**Yes.** The following are noteworthy individual and household characteristics that become relevant when discussing transit's future:[3]

- 99.5% of residents are people of color, and 96% of people are of Hispanic/Latino(a) ethnicity
- 57% of the population is employed (63% statewide)
- 15% of the population has a disability (13% statewide); 36% of households have 1+ member with a disability (27% statewide)
- 12% of residents are aged 65 years and older (14% statewide)
- 12% of households are Single Parent Female Headed Households with Own Children Under Age 18 (10% statewide)
- About 3.59 people makeup a household (3.26 statewide) and about 26% of the population are under age 18 (25% statewide)
- 10% of population 25 years and older have a bachelor's degree or higher (34% statewide); K-12 school enrollment is on par with statewide rates
- $47,600 is the median household income (37% lower than $75,800 statewide)
- 24% of households live in poverty (14% statewide)
- 4.1% of households have no vehicle available (5.5% statewide)
- 28% of people are without health insurance (16% statewide)
- 93% of housing units, of all types, were occupied in 2020
- 80% of households own their home, meaning either outright or have a mortgage (63% statewide)
- $956 is the median gross rent (32% lower than $1,413 statewide)

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Censuses, City of Socorro Population

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, City of Socorro profile based on primarily 2020 Decennial Census and 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, accessed via: https://data.census.gov/profile/Socorro_city,_Texas?g=160XX00US4868636

## How do Socorro Residents Commute Now?

**Mostly Driving.** Most residents of Socorro reach their employment primarily by driving, similar to travel behavior across Texas. However, some residents report they commute by some means other than driving alone. Indeed, the portion of employees commuting by means other than driving alone modestly increased from 2010 to 2020:

**Socorro Residents Commuting in 2010**

- 82% driving alone
- 14% carpool
- 2.2% worked at home
- 1.0% of workers commuting by transit
- ~0.9% walk
- ~0.1% bike

**Socorro Residents Commuting in 2022**

- 78% driving alone
- 15.5% carpool
- 5.6% worked at home
- ~1.1% of workers commuting by transit
- ~0.1% walk
- <0.1% bike

## Are Socorro Residents Cost-Burdened?

**Yes.** Housing and transportation are fundamental household needs and consume a substantial portion of household income in any community. The common housing affordability guideline is if a household spends less than 30% of gross income on housing then their housing is affordable. A similar guideline exists for transportation expenses. Spending less than 15% of income on transportation is considered affordable. Spending more on either expense is considered a burden on a household. Per the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing+Transportation (H+T) Index, the average Socorro household is indeed cost burdened:[4]

- Socorro households spend an average of 26% of income on housing (25% or less considered affordable)
- Socorro households **spend an average 31% of income on transportation** (15% or less considered affordable)

Socorro households spend about 57% of their income on Housing+Transportation, the cost-burden primarily coming from transportation. **Figure 3** summarizes how the average household in Socorro spends $14,600 on transportation, has ~2 vehicles, and drives ~22,600 miles a year.

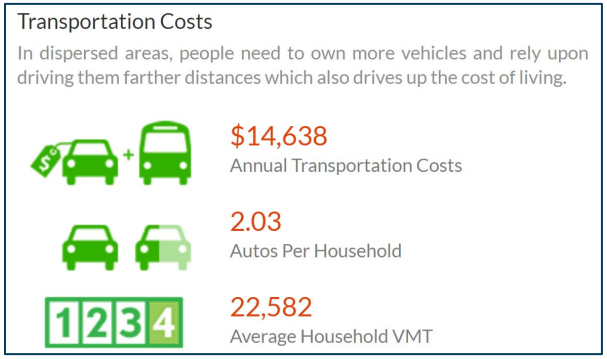



**Figure 3.** Socorro Households' Transportation Expenses – 2022 estimate

[4] Center for Neighborhood Technology: H+T Fact Sheet. Accessed via: https://htaindex.cnt.org/fact-sheets/?lat=31.654713&lng=-106.30352&focus=place&gid=25651#fs

As **Figure 4** suggests, there are a few potential reasons why Socorro households may feel pressure to drive so much. The community has moderate density and some walkability but relatively few local jobs. Additionally, time limited and infrequent existing fixed bus routes may inhibit a household's ability to reduce transportation expenses by choosing not to drive.

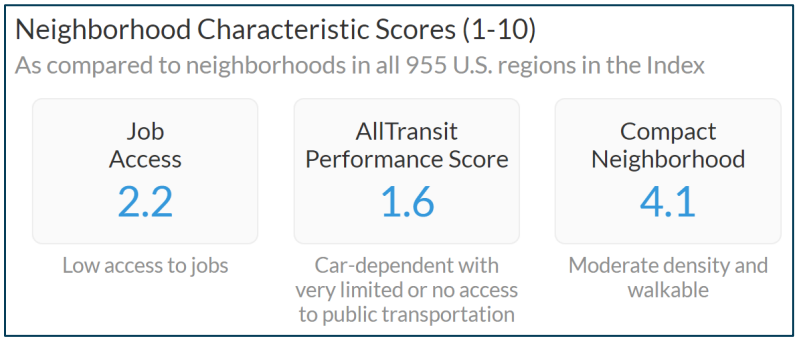



**Figure 4.** Factors Contributing to Socorro Travel Behavior[5]

# Socorro Trends

## Is Socorro Growing in Population?

**Yes.** Socorro experienced 23% population increase in the 20-year period from 2000 to 2020 (see **Figure 5**).[6]

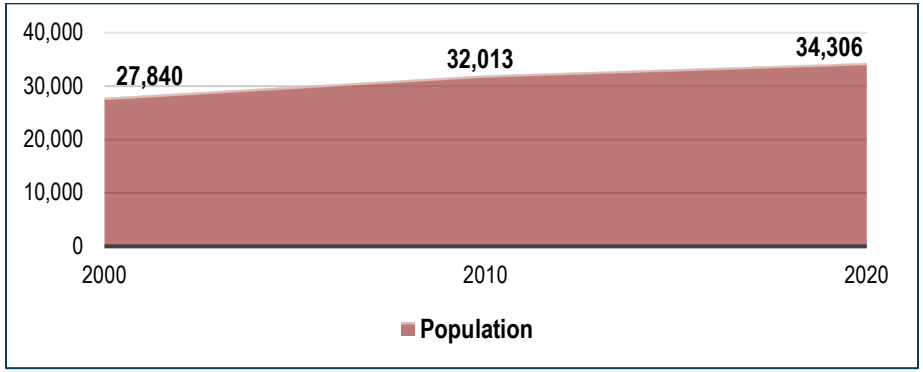



**Figure 5.** Population Growth 2000 to 2020

## Is Job Growth Occurring in Socorro?

**Yes.** The number of jobs within Socorro fluctuated but overall increased 92% from 2002 to 2021 (see **Figure 6**).[7]

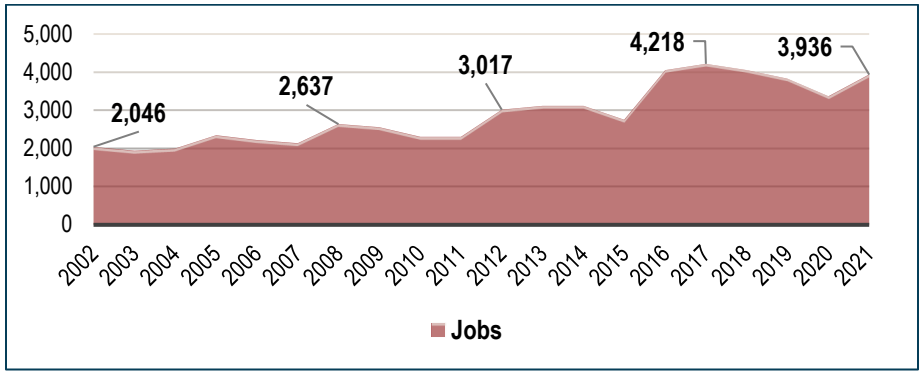



**Figure 6.** Job Growth 2002 to 2021

[5] Center for Neighborhood Technology: H+T Fact Sheet, City of Socorro. Accessed via: https://htaindex.cnt.org/fact-sheets/?lat=31.654713&lng=-106.30352&focus=place&gid=25651#fs

[6] U.S. Census Bureau: 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Censuses

[7] U.S. Census Bureau: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

# Where do Socorro Residents Work?

**Mostly Elsewhere.** Only about 5% of Socorro residents live and work in the community; the other 95% of residents work in nearby communities to the north (see **Figure 7**). This trend held true from 2010 to 2022.

**Employment Relative to Socorro in 2010** [8]

- 2,700 jobs within Socorro
  - 2,300 of employees came into Socorro from elsewhere
  - 65% male, 35% female employees
  - 33% of jobs pay $1,250 per month or less
  - Primary industries: Retail trade, transportation & warehousing, construction, wholesale trade
- 11,600 jobs held by residents of Socorro
  - 400 residents lived/worked in Socorro
  - 11,200 residents worked outside Socorro

**Employment Relative to Socorro in 2022**

- 5,100 jobs within Socorro
  - 4,400 of employees came into Socorro from elsewhere
  - 57% male, 43% female employees
  - 27% of jobs pay $1,250 per month or less
  - Primary industries: Retail trade, transportation & warehousing, construction, accommodation & food services
- 13,700 jobs held by residents of Socorro
  - 700 residents lived/worked in Socorro
  - 12,400 residents worked outside Socorro

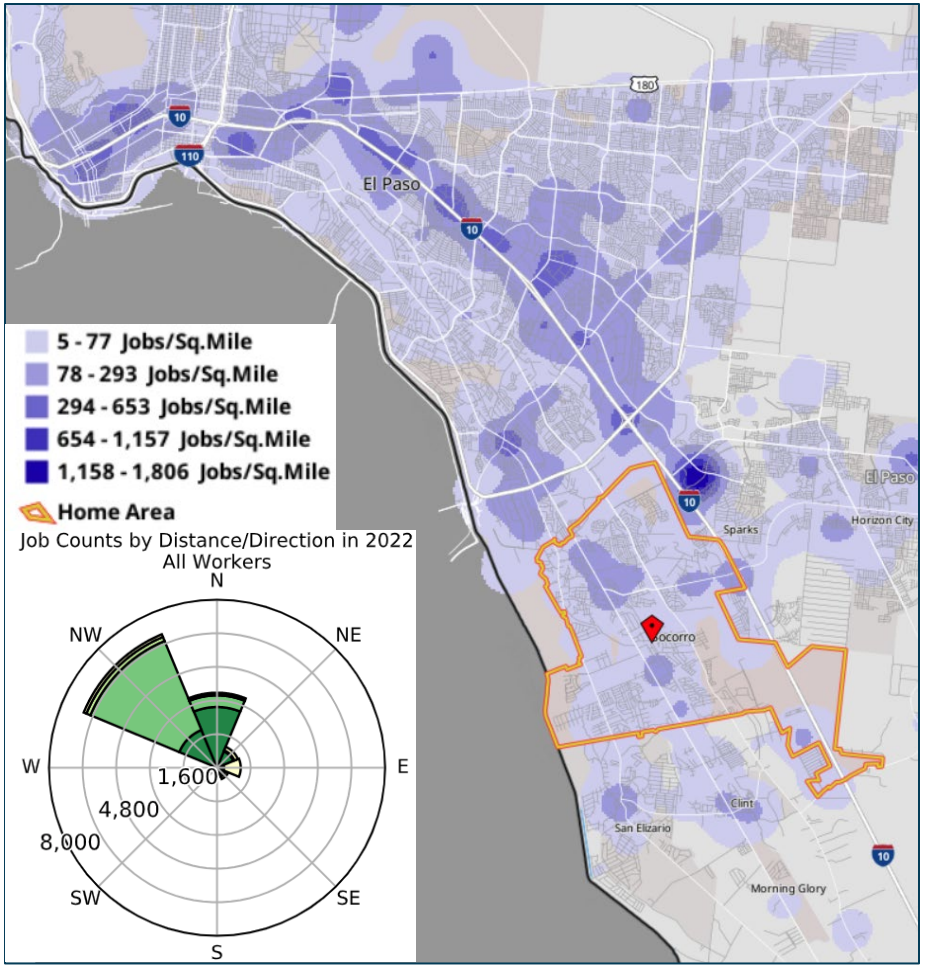



**Figure 7.** 2022 Work Locations of Socorro Residents[7]

[8] U.S. Census Bureau: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics. Accessed via: https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

# Section 2. Potential Services & Current Plans

**This section describes the types of transit services potentially relevant in Socorro, documents the nature and performance of recent services to peers, and discusses existing plans for transit improvements.**

The project team assembled information on recent services and current plans to assist the City to understand how to improve transit for existing riders. The information suggests important characteristics to consider for any new or enhanced transit services in Socorro. The TDP project team reviewed existing plans to improve transit to ensure the TDP planning process explored potential service coordination.

# 2.1 Potential Transit Services

## Transit Modes "Menu"

Transit services can take many forms – called modes. No single transit mode can serve all types of rider demand. Each transit mode has strengths and weaknesses. The following list introduces the primary transit modes considered potentially relevant for Socorro.

- **Local & Commuter Fixed Routes** follow set routes and schedules and generally serve permanent, planned stops.
    - **Local Routes** focus on connections within communities and generally serve closely spaced stops. Sun Metro operates local bus fixed routes.
    - **Commuter Routes** focus on connections between communities or major activity centers, sometimes with a focus on weekdays at peak hours. El Paso Area Transportation Services (EPATS) has historically reported its fixed routes as commuter bus.

- **Paratransit** is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) policy to complement local fixed route services. Paratransit offers a curb-to-curb trip for people who live within three quarters-of-a-mile of fixed routes they cannot utilize due to a temporary or permanent disability. Sun Metro's LIFT is a complementary paratransit service and has been in operation for many years. EPATS established ADA "dial-a-ride" paratransit in Fall 2024.

- **Kiss- & Park-and-Ride Transit** services follow a set schedule connecting parking/drop-off sites (thus the "kiss" name) to a limited set of stops within major activity centers in a region. These services focus almost exclusively on weekdays at peak hours in peak travel directions.

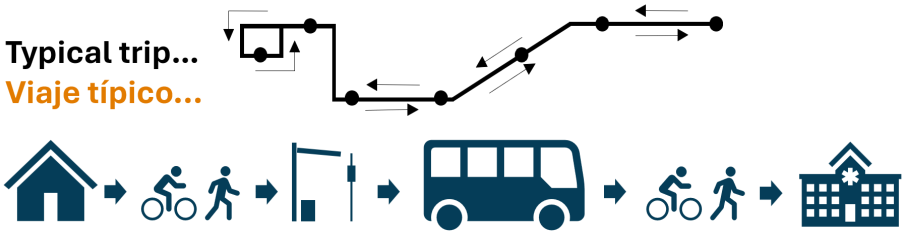
- **On-demand Microtransit** is a curb-to-curb service for the general public for trips within a defined zone; riders make requests via a mobile app or phone call. Microtransit zones can take many forms and be operated in a variety of ways, from cutaway buses to minivans to Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber, Lyft, Ryde, etc.[9]

- **Specialized Transit Modes** take many forms. The two primary specialized services in Socorro and the broader region are:
    - The City of Socorro's FTA Section 5310 funded **Rio Vista Transportation Program** for older adults or people with a disability is an example.
    - **Vamonos Vanpool** for groups of employees, sometimes students, willing to coordinate a consistent shared trip using a provided van.

**The following subsections dive a little deeper into each transit mode's key elements and provide clues for potential application in Socorro.**

[9] Note: Federal and state law require all publicly funded transit services to offer a wheelchair accessible alternative during the same hours and service area as fixed route services. TNC-based microtransit initiatives receiving public funds must include accommodations. This is typically achieved by a TNC partner working with a subcontractor with accessible vehicles to ensure riders with a disability have equal opportunities.

# Local & Commuter Bus Fixed Routes




**Transit following a set route and schedule serving discrete bus stops spaced conveniently along local streets; generally at 60-, 30-, or 15-minute frequency. Local bus service ideally operates 14+ hours per day, seven days a week.**

- Most riders walk, roll, or bike to/from fixed route stops – making safe infrastructure for such modes a strong prerequisite.
- Generally, about half of local bus trips involve a transfer to a second bus route to travel in a different direction.
- A modest fare is typically paid.
- Riders make a wide variety of trips, including multistep trips reaching several destinations.
- Transit agencies will occasionally operate fixed routes at frequencies, known as headway, longer than an hour; infrequent routes create long waits for riders and therefore generally perform poorly compared to more frequent routes.

Local bus service succeeds where demand exists, and the built environment is conducive:

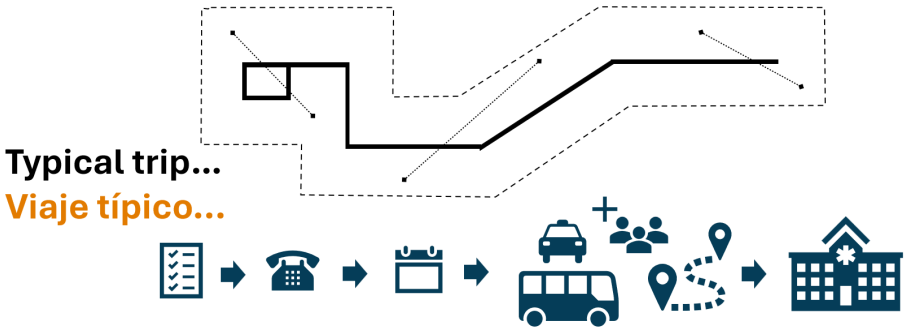
- **Demand** is a combination of density (people, jobs, destinations) and varies by community and household. Local bus riders most often are from households with one-or-fewer vehicles or low-moderate income. Most bus riders are employed, many riders are students, and many riders have a long history of using transit.
- **A conducive built environment** looks like accessible sidewalks along the corridor and, ideally, along cross streets and may also include bikeways. Infrequent signalized intersections, especially along 35+ mph multi-lane streets present significant risk to bus riders who often need to cross streets to make trip connections.

**Important Note: Types of Transit Riders**

Transit riders may be thought of in terms of three common patterns of transit use: occasional riders, commuters, and all-purpose riders. All-purpose riders make up the majority of local and paratransit bus ridership. Service frequency and travel time are critical to riders, as is service reliability (being on-time). The *Who's Onboard 2016* report by TransitCenter explains how transit modes and service quality influence riders' choices (***emphasis** added*):

> *We find three common patterns of transit use: **occasional riders** who take transit once in a while, **commuters** who take transit regularly but only for work, and **all-purpose riders** who take transit regularly for multiple purposes.*
>
> *There is significant demographic diversity within each group... Greater transit access and quality leads to more all-purpose ridership.*
>
> *These categories prove far more illuminating in the real world of transit use than transit-industry dogma that divides people into "choice riders" and "captive riders." **The idea that people without cars are "captive" and will use transit regardless of quality is severely overstated.** It often stands as an implicit excuse for poor service in denser neighborhoods that would use transit the most, lack of market orientation, and over-commitment of resources to chasing "choice" riders...*
>
> *All-purpose ridership is stronger where it's **easy to walk** to transit and where transit itself is **frequent** and provides **access to many destinations**.*
>
> *...The two most important factors driving satisfaction with transit are **service frequency and travel time**. Riders also value station and stop conditions, real-time information, and service reliability.*

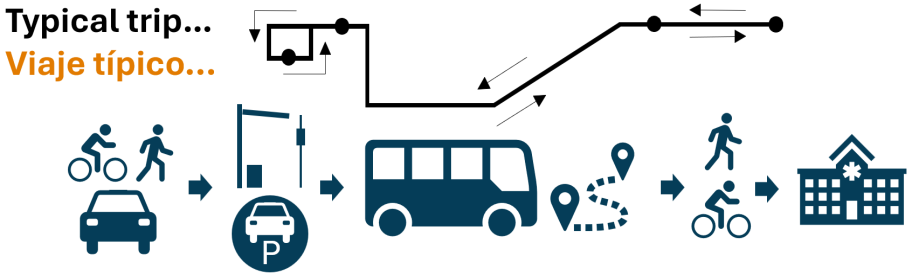
## ADA Paratransit




**Paratransit is required by the ADA and FTA policy to complement local fixed route services. Paratransit offers a curb-to-curb trip for people who live within three quarters-of-a-mile of fixed routes but who cannot utilize the fixed service due to a temporary or permanent disability.**

- Riders generally schedule trips at least 24-hours in advance and pay a fare.
- Some transit agencies choose to offer paratransit services in an expanded area as a courtesy.
- Paratransit trips are generally the highest cost per trip for transit agencies.
- Paratransit provides an essential form of mobility to eligible, interested people with a disability.

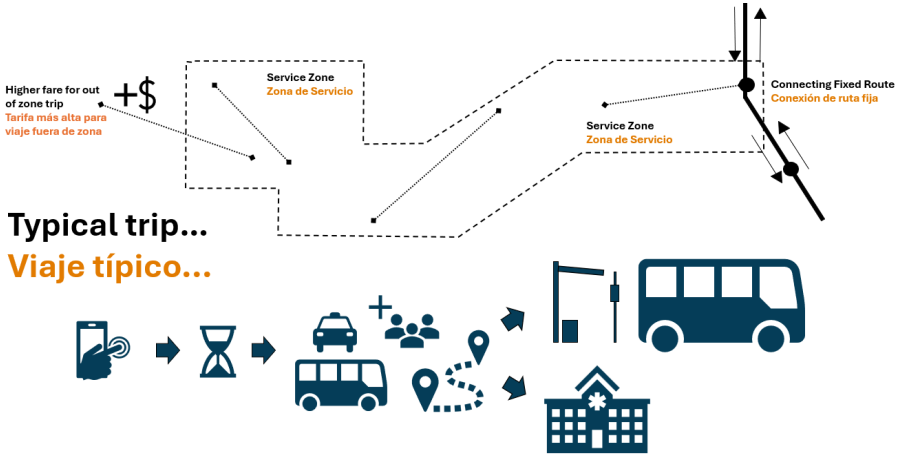
## Kiss- & Park-and-Ride




As the name denotes, **park-and-ride routes are limited stop services focused on connecting riders to concentrated destinations.** While many riders do indeed park and then ride, some riders access the routes via being dropped-off (often called kiss-and-ride), carpooling, or even walking or biking. Riders often pay a zone fare wherein longer distance riders pay a higher fare then closer-in zone riders.

- Park-and-ride riders tend to be people going to/from employment or college destinations at peak travel times on weekdays (typically 6:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM).
- Park-and-ride services naturally limit destinations as the services offer limited origins with stops in only major activity centers.
- Demand for park-and-ride depends on many factors, such as the availability and cost of parking at the destination(s) and congested driving conditions causing long or erratic travel times in the travel corridor.

## On-Demand Microtransit




**The "microtransit" term is an umbrella under which many types of zone-based services exist. Microtransit services operate in pre-defined zones. Microtransit riders request trips via a mobile app or by phone. Riders then meet the vehicle at either a defined anchor point the vehicle frequents or at a desired nearby curb location. Once onboard the microtransit vehicle the rider is taken to their destination within the zone, which sometimes is to meet a local bus or park-and-ride bus route at a transfer point.**

- The most common terms for this type of service are "on-demand" or lately "microtransit."
- The service is increasingly common in suburban, small city, and rural environments where density is lower and the built environment less conducive for walking to/from stops.
- The mode capture of a robust microtransit service is generally between 0.2% and 0.90% of all trips occurring on all travel modes in a service zone.
- Microtransit vehicles are often small cut-away buses or accessible vans and rides may be shared by multiple riders.
- Microtransit can operate with hub stops frequented on a schedule or may be purely responsive to demand.
- Technology connecting riders and the operator is essential.

## Specialized Transit Modes

### Section 5310 (e.g., Rio Vista Transportation Program)


**FTA funded transit agencies and local governments with Section 5310 funding support services and infrastructure improvements for older adults age 65+ and for people with disabilities.**

Section 5310 funded services take a plethora of forms. The City of Socorro has successfully operated the Rio Vista Transportation Program for several years.

- The service offers an accessible ride for point-to-point rides for individuals or groups.
- Section 5310-funded services most often have no fare.
- Trips are generally arranged days in advance by phone, and more recently through a mobile application.
- The services are not necessarily restricted to any particular geographic area or type of destination.
- The local government or non-profit operating the service reports data to a regional entity if in an urbanized area, or to the state department of transportation if in a rural area.

## Vanpool (e.g., Vamonos Vanpool)


**Vanpool is a commuter ridesharing service. Small groups of people traveling to similar places are matched and together form a vanpool.**

- Each vanpool is provided with a leased vehicle matching group size, each rider pays a monthly fee, and one participant is the group's driver (and usually pays less per month as a result).
- The service is designed to ensure riders whose trips cannot be served by bus services efficiently still have a shared ride alternative to owning and operating a personal vehicle.
- Vanpool services often use a variety of vehicles, based on group size and cost preference.
- The distance from origin to destination varies but generally a vanpool's commute is on the longer side.
- It is common for transit agencies to offer a "guaranteed ride home program" to reassure riders they can reach home in an emergency; the guaranteed ride home generally involves providing riders with a taxi or TNC voucher to accommodate unexpected midday or late evening trips – so no riders become stranded.

The image on the right shows some typical Vamonos Vanpool vehicles.

Photo Credit: David Crowder, El Paso Inc.[10]

[10] Image accessed via https://www.elpasoinc.com/news/local_news/new-agreement-with-txdot-keeps-vanpool-rolling/article_bd8e8508-47ee-11e4-bf33-001a4bcf6878.html

# Recent / Existing Fixed Routes

The City of Socorro is principally served by fixed routes operated by EPATS under the brand name El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA). This section highlights how the existing routes connect riders to opportunity and ETA system performance compared to peers.

## Routes Currently In or Near Socorro

Four fixed routes make up the transit network directly serving the City of Socorro (see **Figure 8** to **Figure 11**). EPATS directly operates three ETA routes – 30, 40, and 50 – and contracted with Sun Metro for Route 84 up until December 31, 2024. EPATS also operates ETA Route 31 near the northern boundary of the City of Socorro. The analysis focuses on ETA Routes 30, 40, 50, and 84.

**Typical Day in 2024 (along entirety of routes)**

*(Monday-Saturday 4 of 4 routes; Sunday 3 of 4 routes)*

- Service begins at about 6:53 AM and ends at 6:32 PM
- Routes average nine bus trips at frequency of ~79 minutes
- Buses travel ~1,270 revenue miles over ~62 revenue hours
- Services see ~270 riders paying an average fare of $1.23
- Costs were ~$4.70 per revenue mile, ~$104.11 per revenue hour
- Service performance:
    - Operating expense per unlinked passenger trip: $24.55 (from $10.38 on Route 84 up to $140.22 on Route 50)
    - Unlinked passenger trips per revenue hour: 4.24 (from 10.03 on Route 84 down to 0.74 on Route 50)

**EPATS' two-week ridership count in April 2024 determined 55% of passenger trips were related to Socorro:**

- 5.7% of system trips from other communities to Socorro
- 15.1% of system trips within Socorro
- 34.5% of system trips from Socorro to MVTC or Super Walmart

Ridership on the entirety of the four routes generates about $110,000 in fare revenue annually; whereas the routes require approximately $2.2 million to operate, not including capital costs for vehicles or stop improvements.

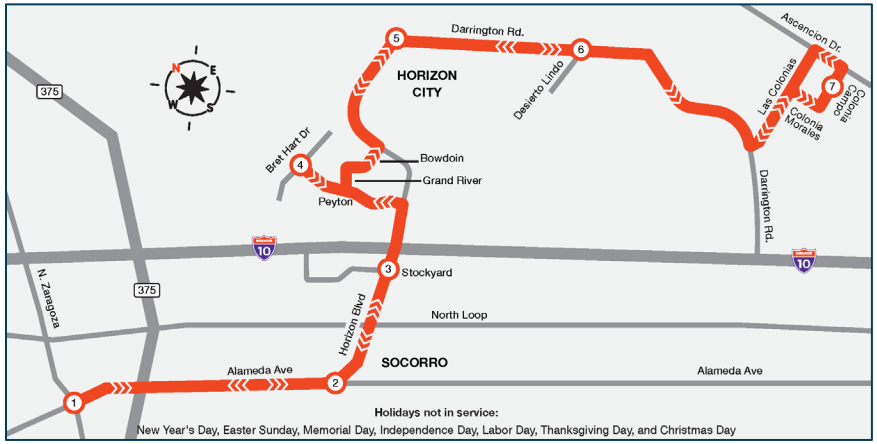



**Figure 8.** ETA Route 30


**Figure 9.** ETA Route 40 (effective 12/27/2024)

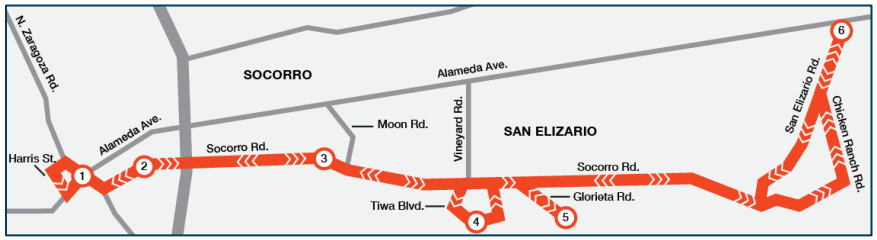



**Figure 10.** ETA Route 50 (effective 12/27/2024)

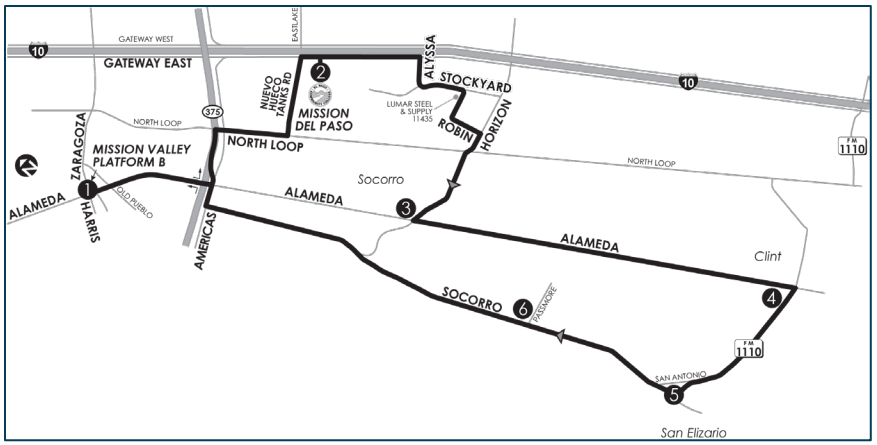



**Figure 11.** Sun Metro Route 84 (ended operation on 12/31/2024)


**Figure 12.** ETA Route 31

**Route 84 Elimination.** EPATS contracted with Sun Metro to operate Route 84 for many years. Route 84 operated as a one-way loop at about 90 minute frequency, whereas the EPATS ETA branded routes near Socorro provide access in both directions at generally equal or better service frequency. Route 84's last day in operation was December 31, 2024.

EPATS chose to end Route 84 and instead extend the daily hours and vehicle trips on ETA Routes 40 and 50 to more closely match Route 84 and continue to operate both Route 30 and 31. Additionally, ETA Route 50 was extended to connect to San Elizario and Clint. The service change took effect December 27, 2024. The four routes collectively cover nearly the entire alignment of the former Route 84, though some riders of the former route must now transfer to complete the same trip. The transfers between routes principally occur at the Mission Valley Transit Center in nearby El Paso. All riders transferring between EPATS and Sun Metro pay both agencies' fares; whereas before Route 84 riders initially paid Sun Metro and thus could continue into the broader transit system in El Paso for no additional fare.[11]

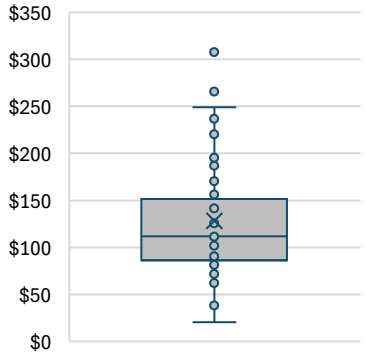
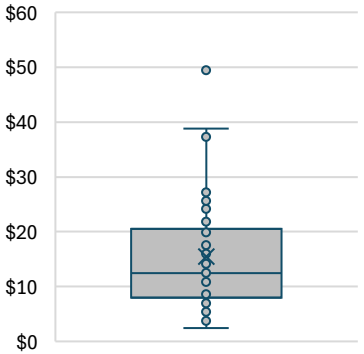
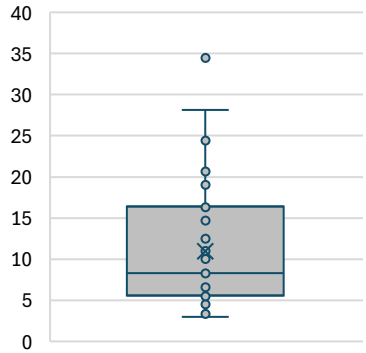
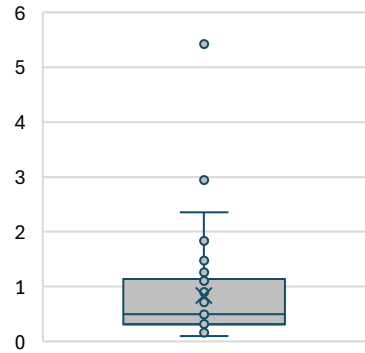
**Route 31 Important Connection to El Paso Community College.** EPATS also operates ETA Route 31 near the northern boundary of the City of Socorro. Route 31's primary utility for Socorro residents is the connection to the El Paso Community College (EPCC) Mission Del Paso Campus via a transfer at MVTC in El Paso (see **Figure 12**).

[11] Note: Riders appreciate bidirectional service because trips to/from a destination are more direct, whereas a loop requires riding in a different direction to complete the loop to return to an origin.

# Fixed Route Performance Compared to TX & NM Peers

**Table 1** compares the performance of EPATS' existing services to peers across Texas and New Mexico. The pool of peers includes all 49 agencies with either commuter bus or motor bus (i.e., local bus). The four whisker plots contain each peer agencies' combined fixed route performance.[12]

**Table 1.** Peer Performance Comparison – Agency & Route

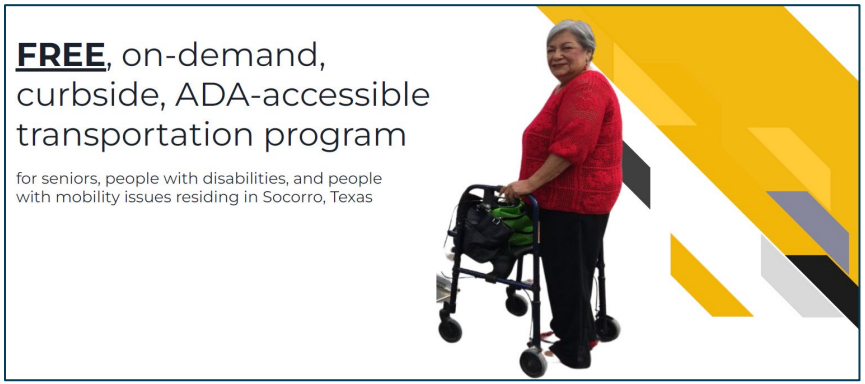
| CATEGORY | SERVICE EFFICIENCY | SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Performance Measure** (directionality) | **2023 Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Hour** (lower is better) | **2023 Operating Expense per Unlinked Passenger Trip** (lower is better) | **2023 Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Hour** (higher is better) | **2023 Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile** (higher is better) |
| (whisker plots show the range of performance; the gray box contains 50% of values) |  |  |  |  |
| **Texas & New Mexico Peers** | $128.43 | $15.45 | 10.9 | 0.8 |
| **Sun Metro** (systemwide) | $130.35 | $9.10 | 14.3 | 1.0 |
| **EPATS ETA** (systemwide) | $101.27 | $29.54 | 3.4 | 0.2 |
| **DISCUSSION** | Sun Metro and EPATS generally perform services efficiently, with operating expenses per vehicle revenue hour in line with peers. | Sun Metro performs better than most peers.<br>EPATS' operating expenses per unlinked passenger trip approach double the peer average.<br>Route 84 is the highest performing individual route; still lower than peers. | Sun Metro performs better as well as or better than many peers.<br>EPATS carries about 1/3 of the riders per hour compared to peers.<br>Route 84 is the highest performing individual route and nearly achieves parity with peers. | Sun Metro performs better than most peers.<br>EPATS carries about 1/5 of the riders per mile compared to peers.<br>Route 84 is the highest performing individual route; still lower than peers |
| **ETA Route 30** | *Not applicable (generally similar cost between routes)* | $24.03 | 4.3 | 0.18 |
| **ETA Route 40** | | $29.70 | 3.5 | 0.11 |
| **ETA Route 50** | | $140.22 | 0.7 | 0.06 |
| **Sun Metro Route 84** | | $10.38 | 10.0 | 0.55 |

*Note: Routes 30 to 84 values are estimates for a typical day in 2024 based on U.S. Department of Labor: Produce Price Index inflation adjustments to El Paso County Transit District's 2023 NTD values (12-month period June-to-June saw 2.80% increase nationally) and 2024 ridership data by route from EPATS for ETA routes, as presented in the September 2024 board meeting for the EPATS Local Government Corporation.*

[12] Outlier values beyond three standard deviations are excluded. The data is from FTA's urban National Transit Databases (NTD). Sun Metro and EPATs values are not included in the whisker plots.

# Existing Specialized Transit

## Rio Vista Transportation Program




The City of Socorro's **Rio Vista Transportation Program** (Rio Vista) is a successful service focused on connecting older adults and people with disabilities to a variety of destinations, most notably congregant meals at a community center. The City receives FTA Section 5310 funding through the El Paso MPO to support a portion of the service's cost.

**A Typical Week in 2024…**

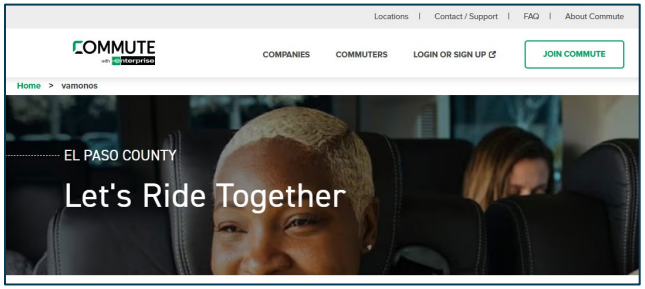
- Service available Monday to Saturday, 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM
  - (expanding soon to 6:00 AM)
- About 30 unlinked passenger trips each week
- Most trips are within Socorro but a portion of riders connect to Horizon City, San Elizario, El Paso, etc.
- Common destinations support daily living, such as parks, churches, banks, medical establishments, and social outings.

The TDP project team understands that the City intends to support the program long-term. The City recently took delivery of additional vehicles for the program. The City's grant applications to the El Paso MPO note the goal to increase Rio Vista's year-over-year ridership by 15% from 2024 to 2026.[13] The City is also in the process of receiving grant funds to support two additional transit-focused staff and is implementing TripMaster software for the program.

***The TDP focuses on additional transit services, such as fixed routes or microtransit, but the project team also recommends sustaining the Rio Vista 5310-funded program.***

[13] Presentation by City of Socorro to the West Texas El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (WTEP) on August 8, 2024

# Vamonos Vanpool




www.commutewithenterprise.com/content/commute/en/partners/vamonos.html

El Paso County offers residents county-wide the opportunity to use Vamonos Vanpool to commute. The purpose of the Vamonos Vanpool program is, "*to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles on the highway during rush hour and provide an alternative means of commuting to and from work. … The Vanpool Program will provide for trips that have their origin or destination within the jurisdictional boundaries of El Paso County.*"[14]

EPC contracts for the Vamonos vanpool service with Enterprise (known as EAN Holdings, LLC in the formal contract). The original contract became effective on January 1, 2021, and was active through January 1, 2024. The contract allowed for two one-year extensions. EPC has exercised the option to extend the service through at least January 1, 2025. It was unclear at the time of this report whether EPC extended the contract again to January 1, 2026.

Pertinent contract details for current and potential riders:

- Vanpool vehicles typically have 7 to 15 seats (incl. driver)
- Individuals making inquiries to create a new vanpool or to join an existing vanpool should have a ride-matching response from Enterprise within 48 hours.
- Vanpool riders are to have an "Emergency Ride Home Benefit"; meaning that if a rider unexpectedly must leave work to travel home then an accommodation on another mode of transit (often a taxi, Uber, or Lyft) is provided.

**Figure 13** is a website clip about the benefits of vanpooling.


**Figure 13.** Vamonos Vanpool - Website Clip on Vanpool Benefits[15]

The County's contract with Enterprise details the type of information to be reported monthly, including the following for each vanpool:

- Vehicle type/capacity
- Operating days
- Daily commute miles
- Origin address
- Stop locations
- Destination address

The City of Socorro will periodically update the TDP, at least every three years, and will again seek additional information from EPC for specifics about actual vanpool travel patterns. If provided in the future, the information will enable the Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP to explore additional opportunities to leverage Vamonos Vanpool for connections to major activity centers or large employers in remote areas.

[14] Services agreement contract between EPC and EAN Holdings, LLC. Page 2.

[15] Vamonos Vanpool website: https://www.commutewithenterprise.com/content/commute/en/partners/vamonos.html

# 2.2 Current Plans for Transit

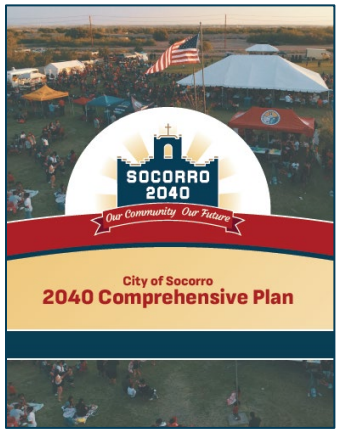
**Section 2.2 highlights key elements of current plans by the City, El Paso County, Sun Metro, and the Far West Texas / El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee.**

## City of Socorro

### 2040 Comprehensive Plan

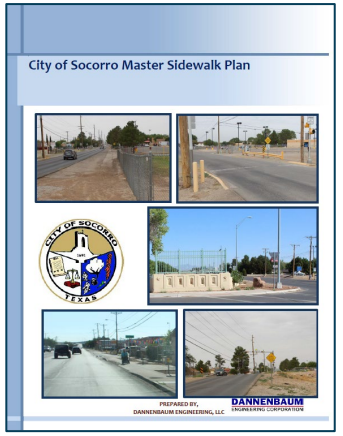
The earlier TDP Objectives and Socorro 2040 section of the plan documented how the Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP relates to the City's *Socorro 2040* plan. The TDP's four objectives – to Engage, Educate, Envision, and Enact – specifically align the transit planning process with the 2040 plan's vision and goals (refer back to **Figure 1**). The TDP ultimately identifies how and where the City should improve transit, including through capital infrastructure, vehicles, and transit operations.

A common challenge for transit riders, and transit planners, is the first- and last-mile connections. The City of Socorro's other multimodal initiatives – for sidewalks, bikeways, and trails – will also substantially improve conditions for transit riders long-term.



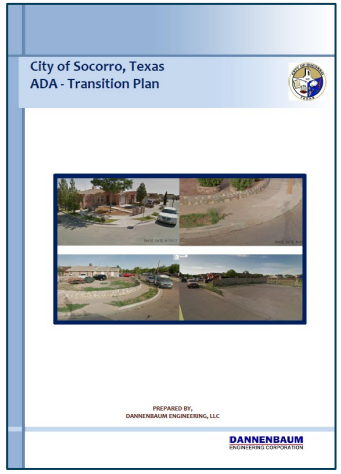

## Other Relevant Plans

### 2019 Sidewalk Master Plan




The *2019 Sidewalk Master Plan* inventoried pedestrian infrastructure, evaluated deficiencies, and evaluated how to make improvements. The plan was the City of Socorro's first major step into improving multimodal access by proactively identifying barriers to walking and bicycling within the City of Socorro. Staff identified concerns about access to/from bus routes and at bus stops – many stops were found not to be ADA compliant.

### 2019 ADA Transition Plan




The City's *2019 ADA Transition Plan* followed shortly after the *Sidewalk Master Plan*. The City tasked engineers to systematically document information on accessibility barriers. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 calls for local governments to self-evaluate facilities, including pedestrian elements in public rights-of-way.

The City's *ADA Transition Plan* considered five aims:

1. Identify physical obstacles limiting facility accessibility
2. Describe the methods to be used to make facilities accessible
3. Provide a schedule for modifications
4. Identify the public officials responsible for implementation
5. Audit the City's bus routes and stops; evaluate the sidewalks and curb ramps for ADA compliance

The *ADA Transition Plan* wisely noted, "A bus stop can be ADA compliant but not accessible (no sidewalks, curb cuts, etc.), conversely, a bus stop may not be ADA compliant but could be accessible."

> Per the Federal Highway Administration...
> *Without curb ramps, sidewalk travel in urban areas can be dangerous, difficult, or even impossible for people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices. Curb ramps allow people with mobility disabilities to gain access to the sidewalks and to pass through center islands in streets. Otherwise, these individuals are forced to travel in streets and roadways and are put in danger or are prevented from reaching their destination; some people with disabilities may simply choose not to take this risk and will not venture out of their homes or communities.*[16]

# El Paso County / El Paso Area Transportation Service

The State of Texas designated El Paso County (EPC) as the official Rural Transit District for the non-urbanized areas of the county (i.e., rural area). EPC operated El Paso County Transit independently for many years. EPC then led the effort to form EPATS, which now operates routes as ETA. The City of Socorro historically provided a small amount of local dollars to EPC each year. The funds were primarily for EPC to contract with Sun Metro to ensure Route 84 could connect to the Mission Valley Transit Center (MVTC) nearby in El Paso.

A gradual change process began in 2016 and continues to this day. EPC partnered with small municipalities to form a local government corporation (LGC) – El Paso Area Transportation Services. The EPATS LGC has assumed primary responsibility for the county's transit services, although EPC continues to be the most principal LGC member based on votes and funding support. EPATS' municipal members include Horizon City, San Elizario, Vinton, Clint, and Anthony – but does not include the City of Socorro.

EPATS has developed a multi-phased plan to improve transit services in member government jurisdictions and is also presently in the process to reprocure their turnkey contract operator. A turnkey contract means the private sector partner owns the vehicles and maintenance facilities and employs the operations staff. EPATS is also presently engaged in standing up an ADA paratransit service to complement the existing ETA branded fixed routes and bring the agency into compliance with state and federal policy. EPATS is also investing in a capital program to gradually improve bus stops, such as by adding shelters or seating.

[16] https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/doj_fhwa_ta.cfm

The EPATS Board voted on September 18, 2024, to explore reducing or eliminating transit services in Socorro by June 30, 2025; via the following motion language:

> *A motion to direct staff to explore the implementation of the recommended service reduction option of one and two as presented by [Texas A&M Transportation Institute], which means it will be a hybrid model, and staff will provide an update at the next meeting, and to authorize the transit director to engage and communicate with any and all relevant stakeholders as part of this process.*

EPATS staff acted upon the direction from the September 18th motion and prepared implementation details for routes changes to accommodate current riders of Sun Metro Route 84 on ETA Routes 30, 31, 40, and 50 beginning December 27, 2024. As a reminder, Route 84 concluded service on December 31, 2024. Item H on EPATS' November 20, 2024, agenda included a staff briefing and general discussion about the matter. In brief, EPATS planned to continue ETA Routes 30 and 31 as they exist today and ETA Routes 40 and 50 were to both have more vehicle trips and operate longer hours and consistently on weekends – to account for trips no longer happening on Route 84 after December 31, 2024. At the time the TDP was completed in May 2025, EPATS had affirmed the agency's plans to end all transit services within the City of Socorro after June 30, 2025. The following notes capture key elements of the November 20, 2024, meeting discussion related to Socorro and services ceasing:

- EPATS is interested and has spoken with Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo representatives about partnership opportunities.
- EPATS board members discussed the need to coordinate with each other and with TxDOT about the possibility to relocate stop infrastructure at stops no longer served.
- EPATS board discussion indicated intent is not to elect to offer ADA service within Socorro long-term (and not to recruit or deem eligible any requests from Socorro residents).

# City of El Paso – Sun Metro

The principal transit agency in the broader region is Sun Metro. The City of El Paso operates Sun Metro. Sun Metro's direct service area is limited to jurisdictions providing a half percent of local sales tax revenue to the agency. Socorro is within the El Paso Urbanized Area (UZA) but not within Sun Metro's jurisdiction. However, many Socorro residents commute to work, education, and shopping destinations in El Paso. As of EPATS' two-week sample of ridership from April 2024, two principle destinations for transit riders on ETA bus routes were the Super Walmart and Sun Metro's Mission Valley Transit Center (MVTC).

Sun Metro presently is focused on implementing additional Brio routes. Brio is a form of bus-based rapid transit (i.e., a frequent, limited stop service). The agency envisions the service to eventually have four corridors (see **Figure 14**). The Brio alignment along the Alameda Corridor will end at the MVTC. Socorro residents riding transit in the future will have an even faster option to transfer onto to reach deeper into El Paso.

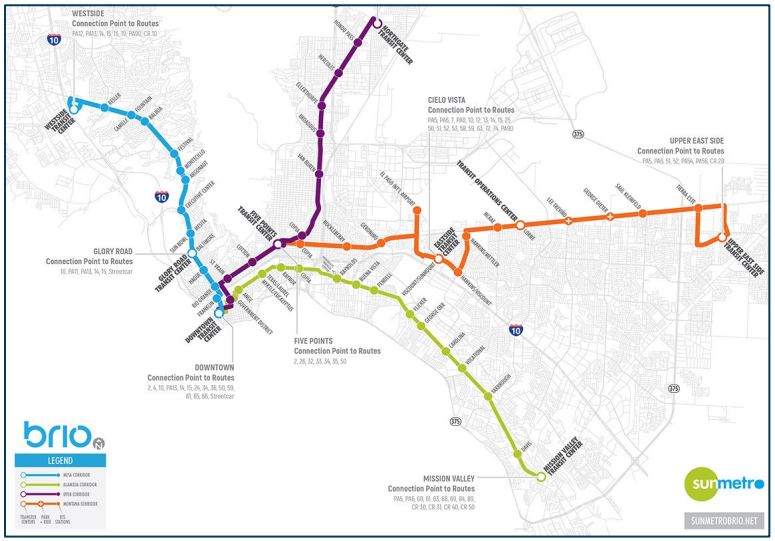



**Figure 14.** Sun Metro's Brio Corridors
Source: City of El Paso: Sun Metro. Accessed via: www.sunmetrobrio.net/about.html

The *July 2022 Sun Metro Rising: State of the System Report* (SM Rising) details the Brio initiative but also provides in-depth information on goals related to local bus routes. The following were the key goals for SM Rising:

- Analyze evolving ridership and travel patterns
- Improve connectivity between local routes and Brio
- Redesign service to meet current and future needs
- Engage riders, stakeholders, and staff
- Maximize the potential of the El Paso Streetcar
- Identify new funding opportunities and partnerships

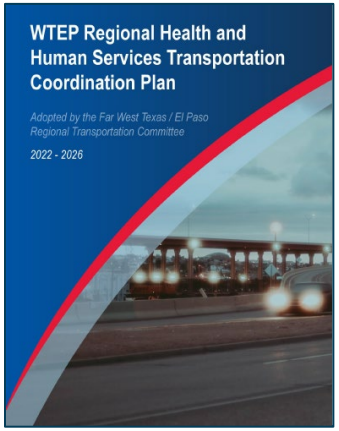
**Figure 15** is from SM Rising and depicts Route 84 ridership hot spots and notes the routes strengths and opportunities. Sun Metro noted moderate to high ridership at several destinations despite the long, one-way loop route structure.


**Figure 15.** SM Rising - Route 84[17]
Source: Sun Metro (Note: Route 84 ended service on 12/31/2024)

[17] City of El Paso: Sun Metro. Accessed via: https://sunmetro.net/assets/documents/smrising.pdf

# Far West Texas / El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee

The Far West Texas / El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (WTEP) maintains a plan focused on improving health and human services related transportation. The current plan is titled *WTEP Regional Health and Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan, 2022-2026*. Project Amistad is the lead agency for WTEP.




The plan inventories existing services, identifies gaps, and plans for comprehensive, integrated services. The City of Socorro is represented on the committee and was actively involved in the development of the most recent plan.

# Section 3. Socorro's Transit Markets

**The project team examined community characteristics and noted potential ridership markets for transit services within Socorro and to key regional destinations.**

TDP analysis examined transit supportive densities (i.e., fixed route viability vs. other types of transit), growth trends (i.e., future viable densities), and where equitable mobility should be a priority (i.e., demographic demand, likely higher transit use). The project team's maps highlight key rider destinations, including major employers, shopping anchors, educational institutions, family support (i.e., daycare, senior centers), healthcare, border crossings, and intercity bus hubs. The project team combined the information to highlight key travel patterns and key potential corridors or zones for transit.

# 3.1 Transit Supportive Density

**Transit exists to connect people to opportunity. As such, transit requires some level of density – people, housing, and jobs – to function properly.**

The City of Socorro has 25 principal local street segments as potential candidates for fixed route bus service (see **Figure 16**). This section explores the potential for each segment individually and as compared to each other – to identify the one or two most key corridors for potential fixed route transit service. The TDP project team evaluated areas of Socorro determined not to warrant fixed route transit for zone-based microtransit services.

***Important Note***

*The density information and other quantitative data in this section complement the rider, stakeholder, and public opinion data acquired through the project team's proactive and repeated community and stakeholder engagement.*

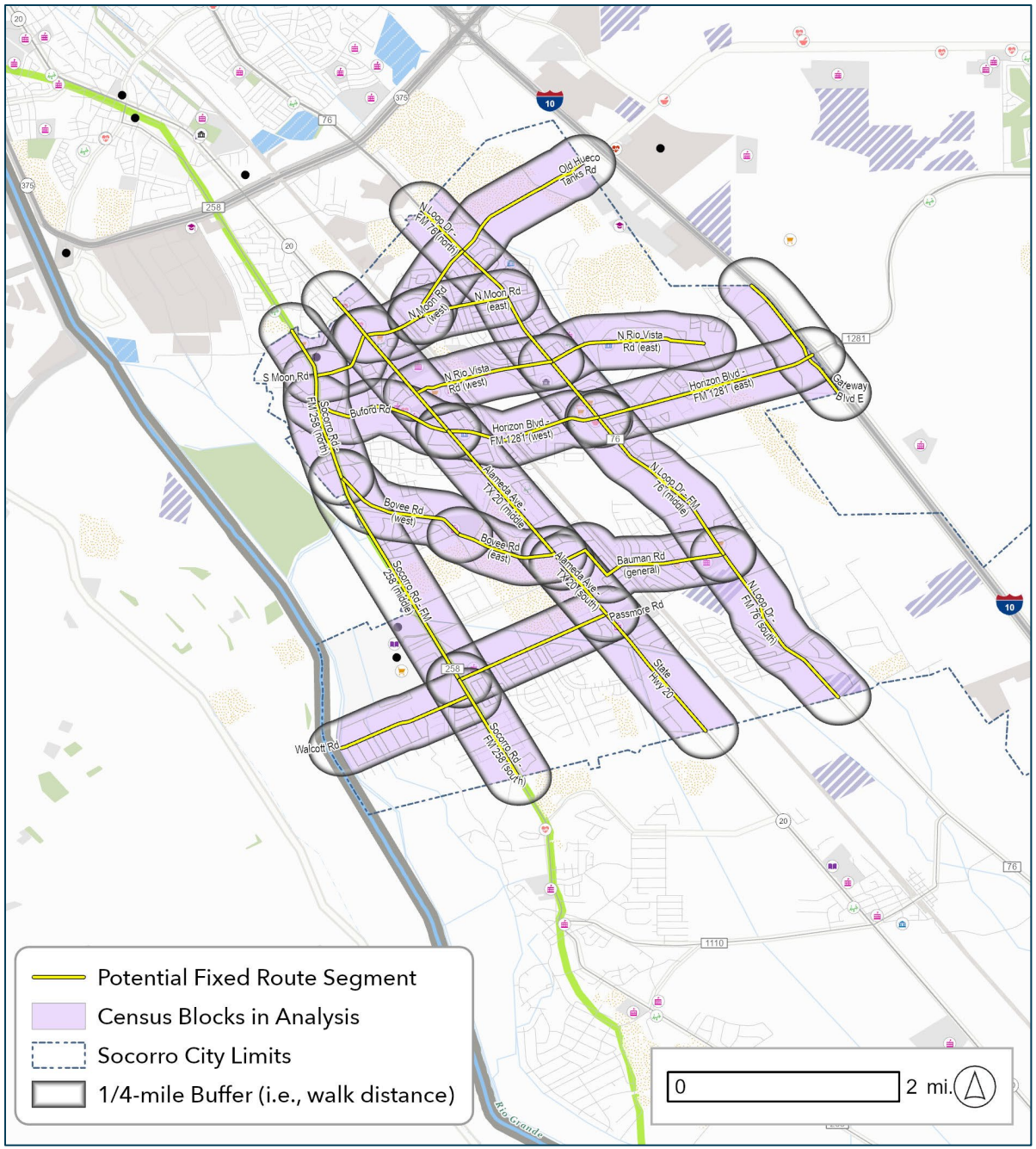



**Figure 16.** Socorro – Potential Street Segments for Fixed Route Transit

**Figure 17** illustrates all of the recently operated fixed routes across El Paso County, meaning as of December 2024. Sun Metro operated most of the routes, marked with white lines on a gray ¼-mile walk buffer. EPATS operated the ETA fixed routes lined in light blue, also marked with a ¼-mile buffer.

The following subsections generally highlight how each corridor within the City of Socorro compared to locations where transit is already operated in the region. Readers will note such a comparison includes a few corridors within Socorro where fixed route bus service existed (e.g., Alameda Ave, Socorro Rd, Horizon Blvd.) at the time the TDP was developed. The project team found that fixed route transit in Socorro might perform best along only particular corridors. The most appropriate corridors have sufficient people and jobs to potentially support fixed routes when resources became available for such services.

The technical analysis complemented the interests of stakeholder organizations and existing, past, and potential future riders (also stakeholders). **The TDP synthesized both technical and engagement data in a three step process to narrow down the recommended services in this plan.**

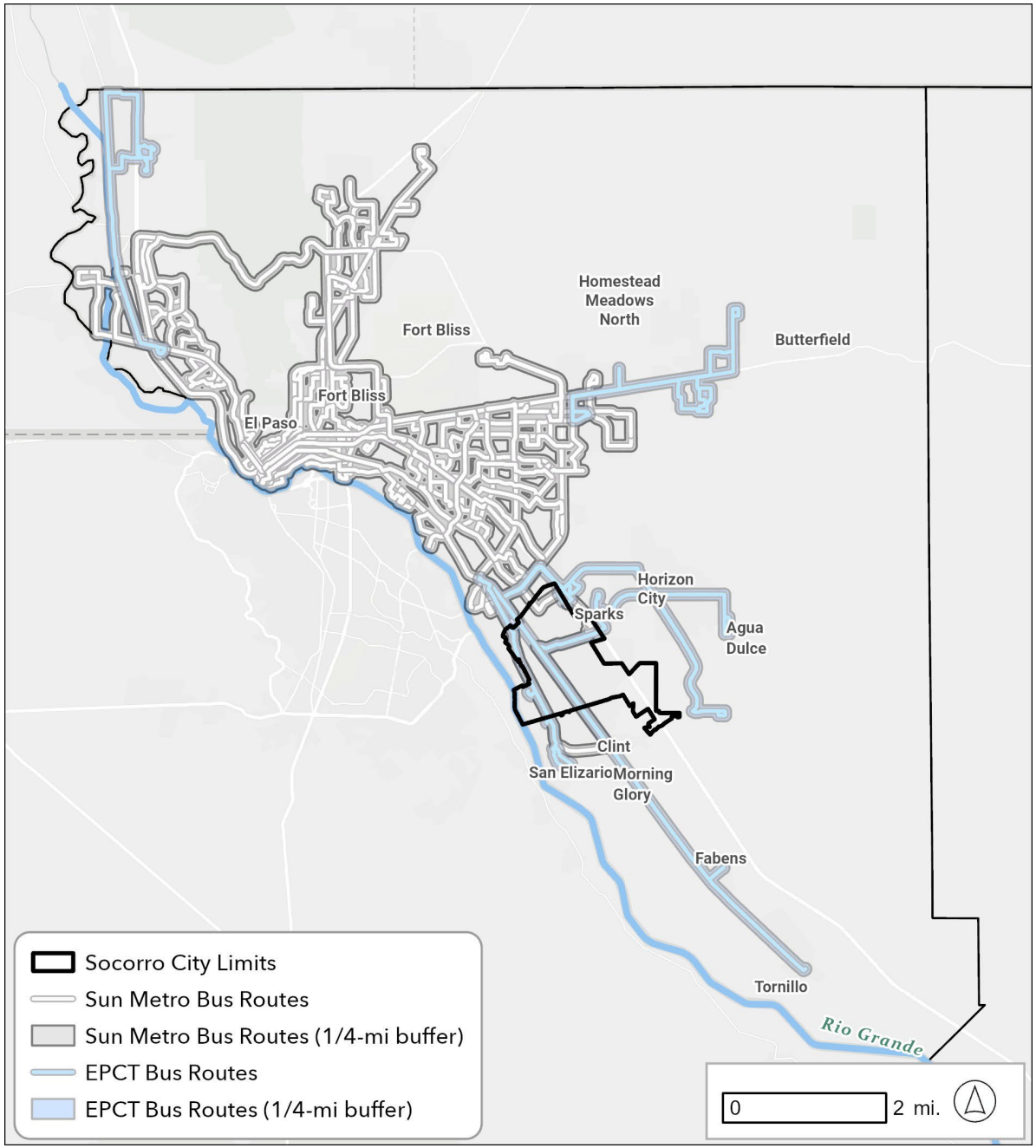



**Figure 17.** Existing Fixed Routes in El Paso County

Chapter Three of the 3rd edition of *TCRP Report 165: Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual* (TCQSM) discusses the relationship between density and transit ridership.

**Density has a double effect on transit demand:**

- **People are more likely to use transit when they live in dense areas**
- **There are more people near transit service as density increases**

In other words, one area with density of 3,000 will have demand X while another area with density of 6,000 will have demand 4X due to the combined effect of (a) density increasing propensity to ride transit and (b) double the people in walk, roll, or bicycling distance to the transit service.

*Read more by accessing the full TCQSM: https://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/169437.aspx.*

# Measures of Density

The City of Socorro contains select areas of sufficient density for fixed route transit, and some other areas more suitable for other types of transit. The project team made this determination based on general measures of density (in this subsection) and an evaluation of densities as compared to locations in the El Paso region where transit is currently operating (in the next subsection).

The three principal measures of density were:

- 2020 housing unit density
- 2021 job density
- 2020 population density

The information in all of these figures was used to identify viable local street corridors (collector and arterial functional class streets) in Socorro where local bus or on-demand microtransit may be feasible. The summary by street corridor is in the following subsection.

## Housing Unit Density

**Figure 18** depicts 2020 housing unit density within and near Socorro by Census Block. Housing unit density helps to reveal clusters of multifamily housing and generally more concentrated demand for transit service than revealed by general population density alone.

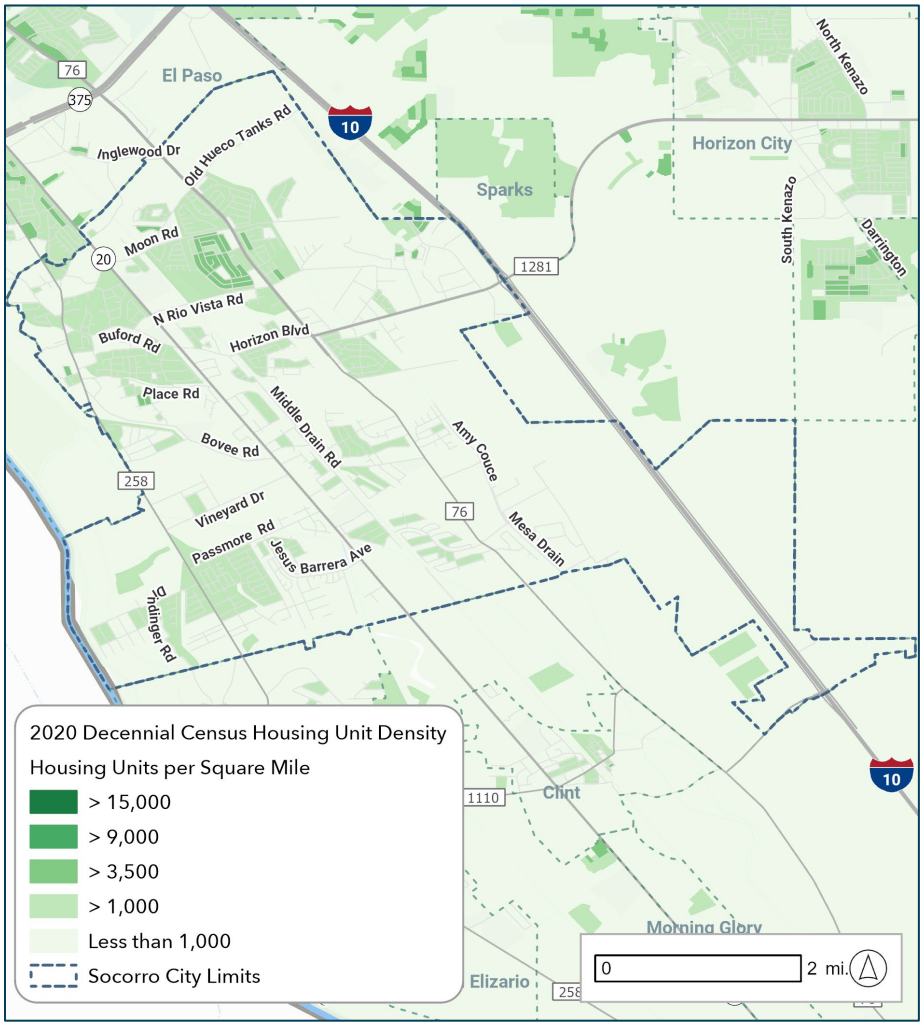



**Figure 18.** 2020 Housing Unit Density by Census Block

## Job Density

**Figure 19** depicts 2021 job density for all jobs within and near Socorro by Census Block. Jobs are an essential destination and a majority of adults, and many youths, hold one or several jobs. Socorro's many commercial corridors do not generally reflect sufficient density to justify intensive transit services based on job density alone.

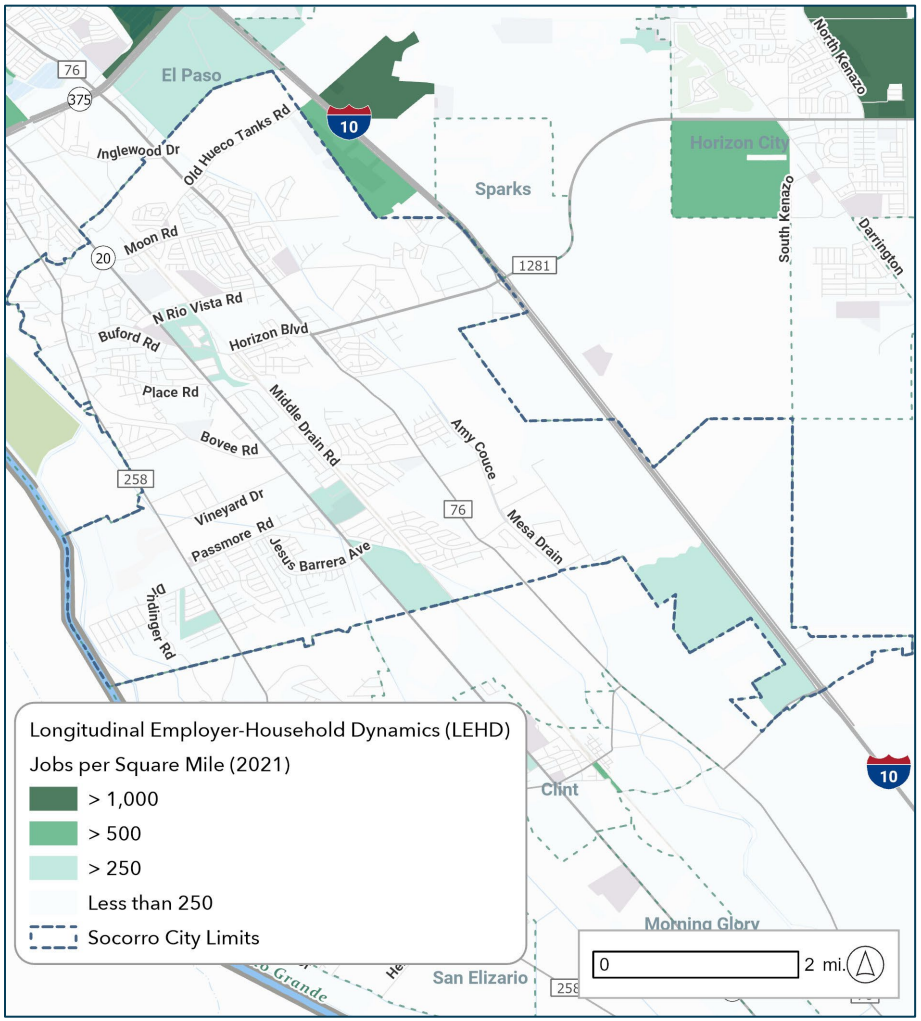



**Figure 19.** 2021 Job Density by Census Block

## Population Density

**Figure 20** displays 2020 population density by Census Block. The map reveals the relatively low density in Socorro and nearby communities. Socorro's population is generally low, with concentrations along segments of a few major street corridors.

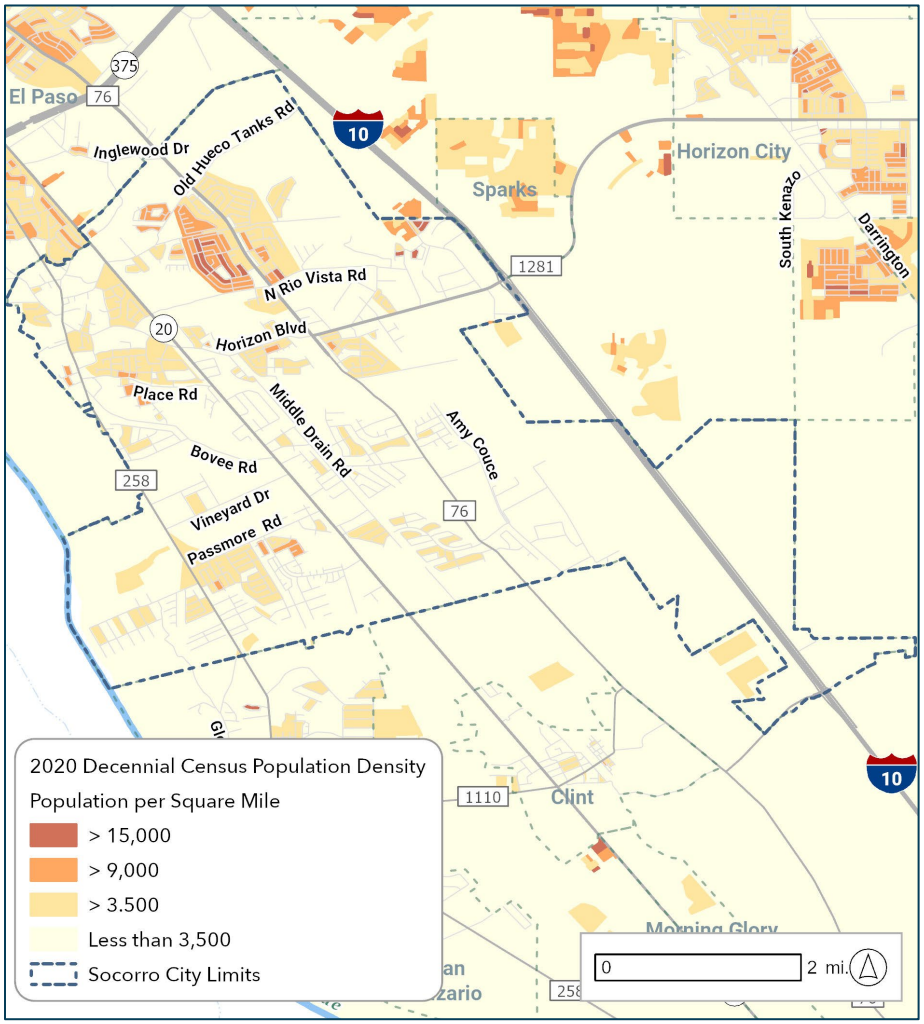



**Figure 20.** 2020 Population Density by Census Block

# Density Near Existing Transit

This subsection compares density along Socorro's principal local street corridors to the density of other El Paso region corridors where fixed route transit existed as of December 2024. The corridors with existing service include both Sun Metro and EPATS ETA routes. Portions of some routes serve particular corridors in Socorro. **Figure 21**, on the next page, documents the relative density across every fixed route in the region, split out by service frequency and operating agency. The comparison enabled the City's project team to answer questions like:

- Should the City consider fixed route service in [corridor name] based on in-region peer comparison?
- If so, generally how frequent might the service be based on this measure of density along?

The TDP project team explored three density measures – housing units, jobs, and population – to identify the relative potential for fixed route service. **The consultant team then used the information in the figures to identify high priority, viable corridors for longer term consideration for fixed route bus service. The project team also used the information to ascertain where to consider focusing on-demand microtransit services. The analysis informed the second round of public engagement in April 2025.**

## Housing Density & Fixed Route Potential

**Figure 21** plots housing unit density averaged along the entirety of each and every fixed route by Sun Metro and EPATS. **These actual housing unit density values identified contexts in which Sun Metro and EPATS were currently providing transit.** The threshold for bus routes was ¼-mile because it is a common walk-to-stop distance for riders.

**Figure 22** is a map showing census blocks where the housing unit density is above three units per acre. The map legend lists a threshold of 4+ jobs per acre but the map is absent such blocks as no blocks

currently meet the threshold. These two target minimum densities came from the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, 3rd Edition. The thresholders represent merely an initial look at potential justification for fixed route transit.

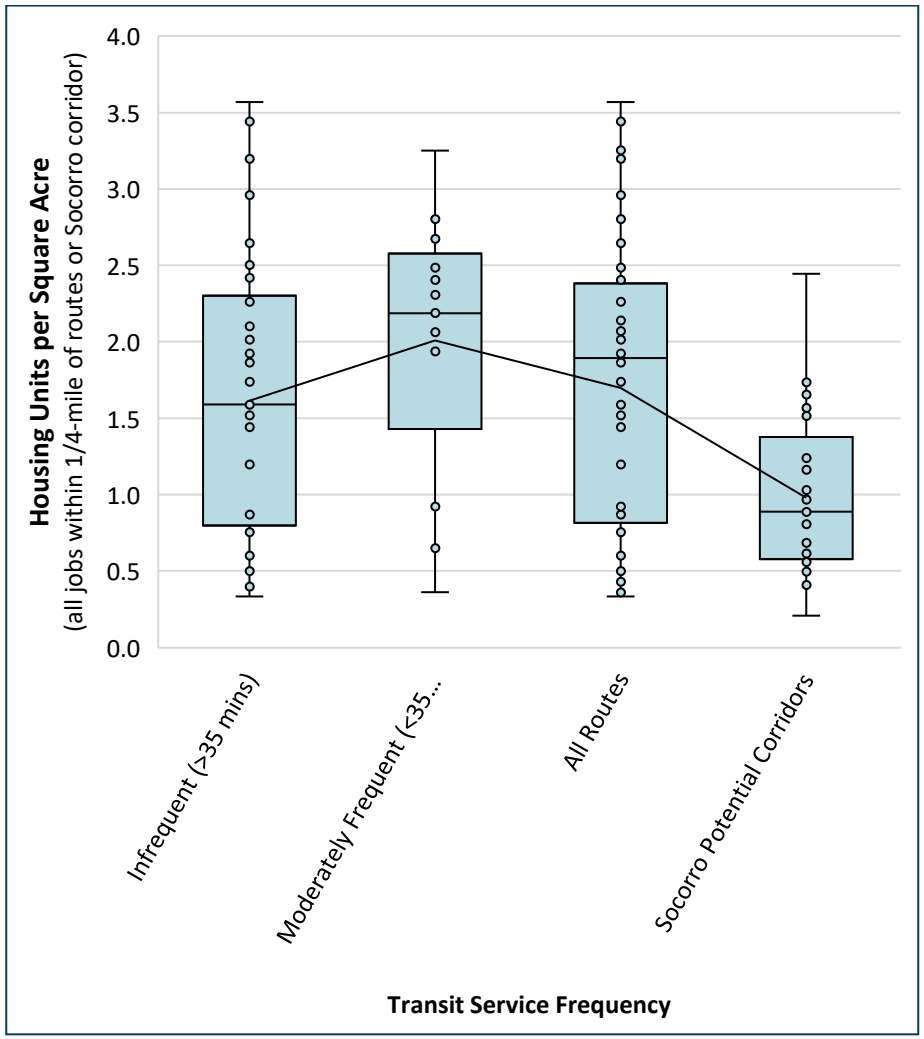



**Figure 21.** Housing Unit Density by Transit Frequency (Sun Metro & EPCT)

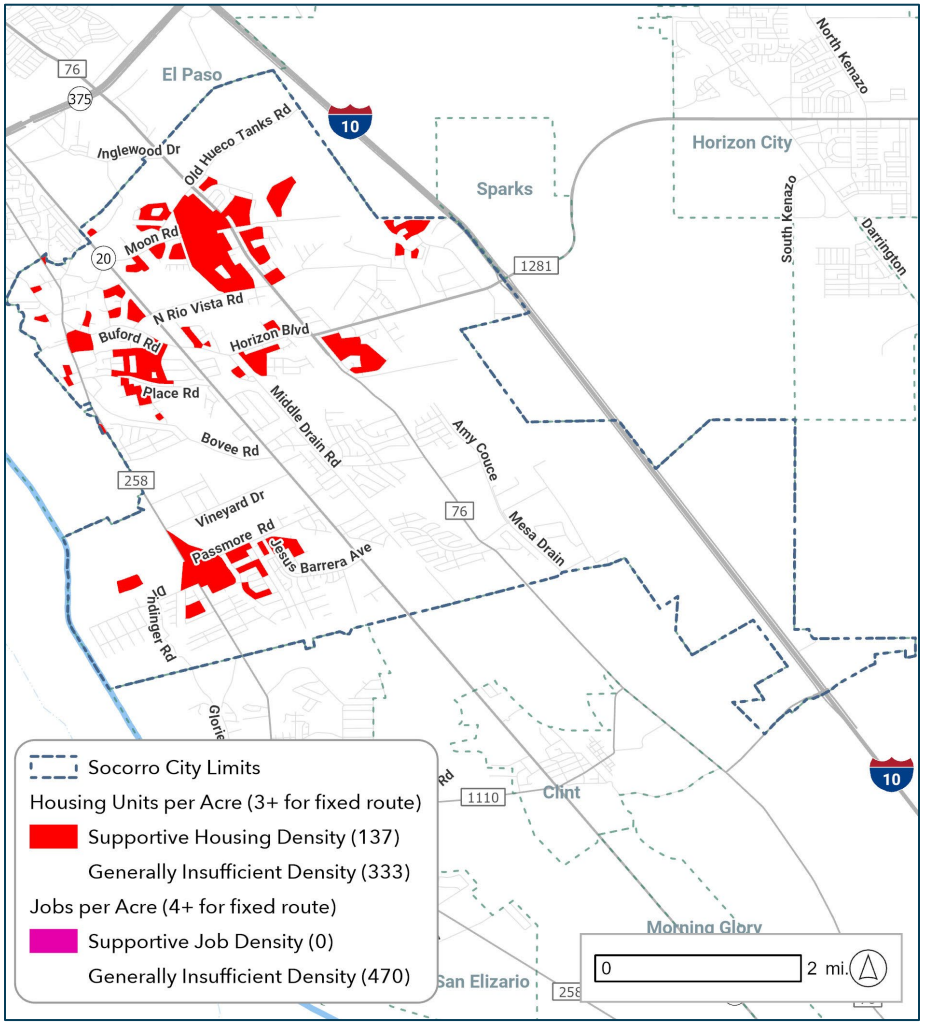



**Figure 22.** Fixed Route Transit Supportive Density by Census Block

# Job Density & Fixed Route Potential

**Figure 23** highlights how Socorro's job density is relatively low. However, as shown in **Figure 24**, a few portions of Socorro corridors may warrant low frequency fixed route transit based on job density alone.

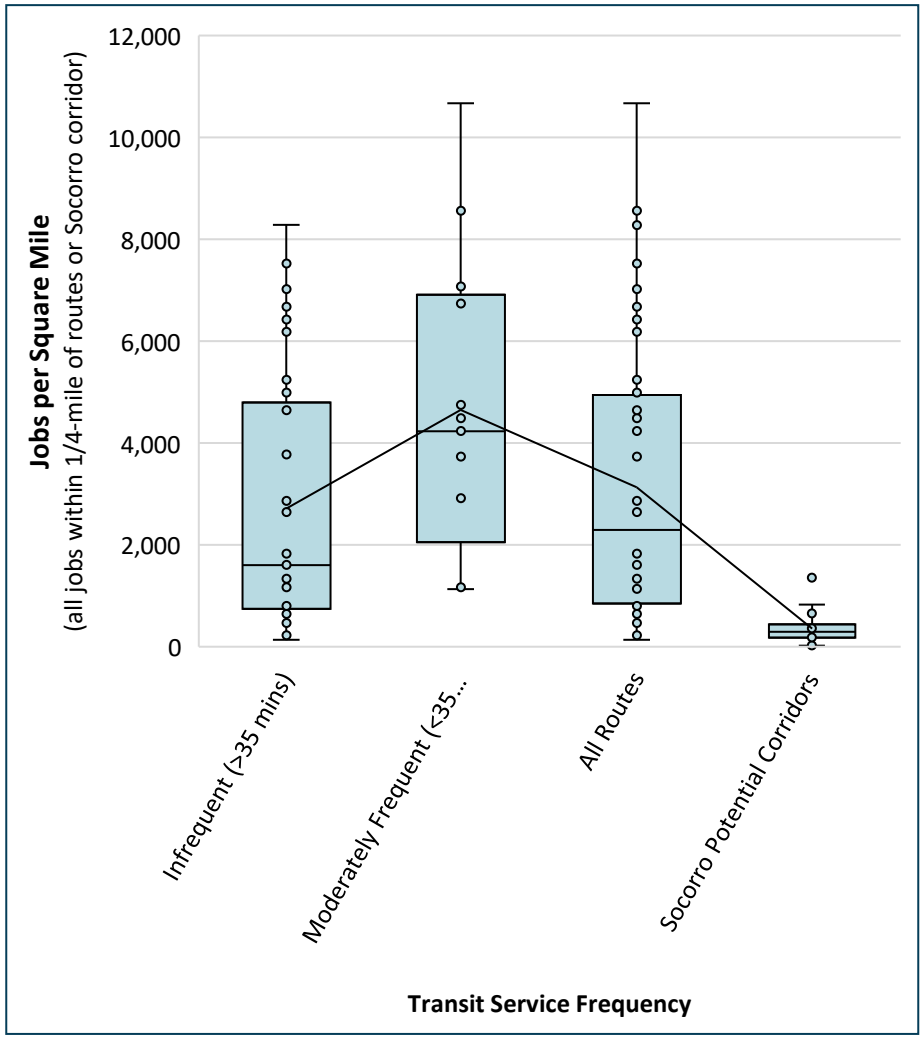



**Figure 23.** Job Density by Transit Frequency (Sun Metro & EPCT)

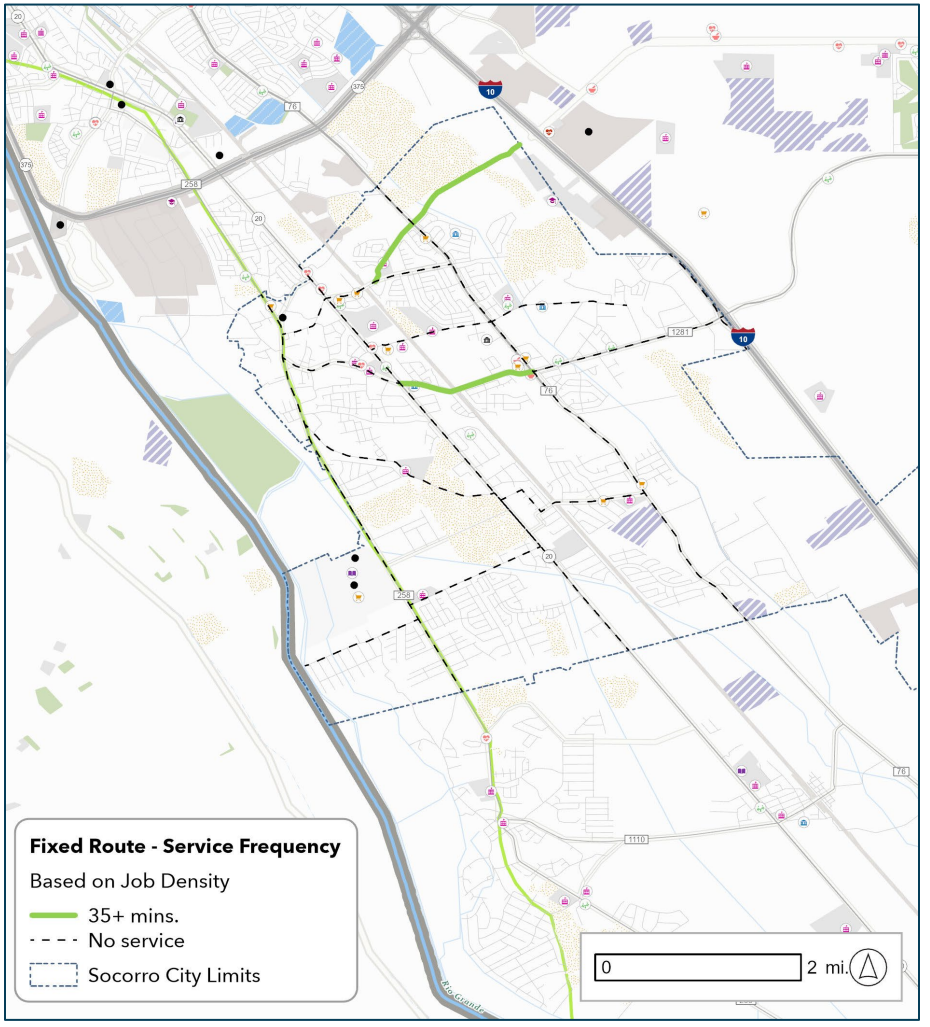



**Figure 24.** Fixed Route Frequency Based on Job Density

# Population Density & Fixed Route Potential

**Figure 25** highlights how Socorro's population density is comparable to many other locations in the region. **Figure 26** shows a few corridors potentially warranting fixed route in the future.

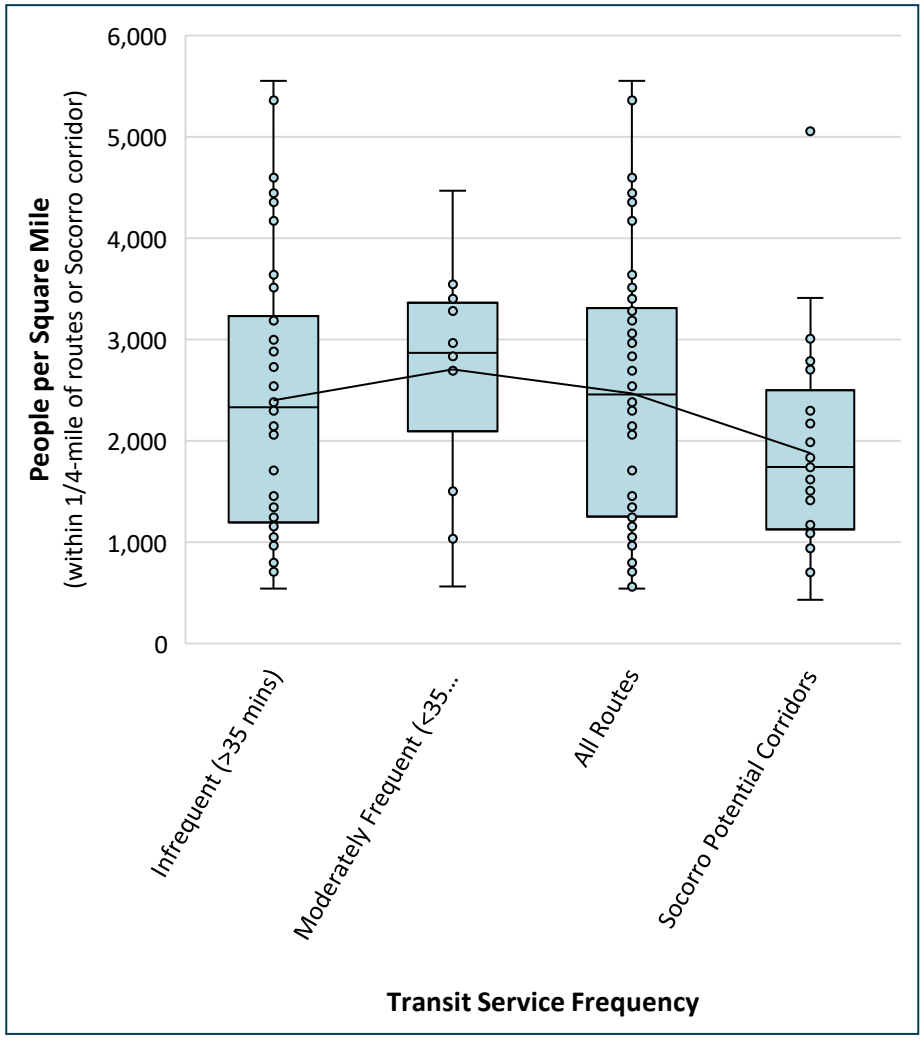



**Figure 25.** Population Density by Transit Frequency (Sun Metro & EPCT)

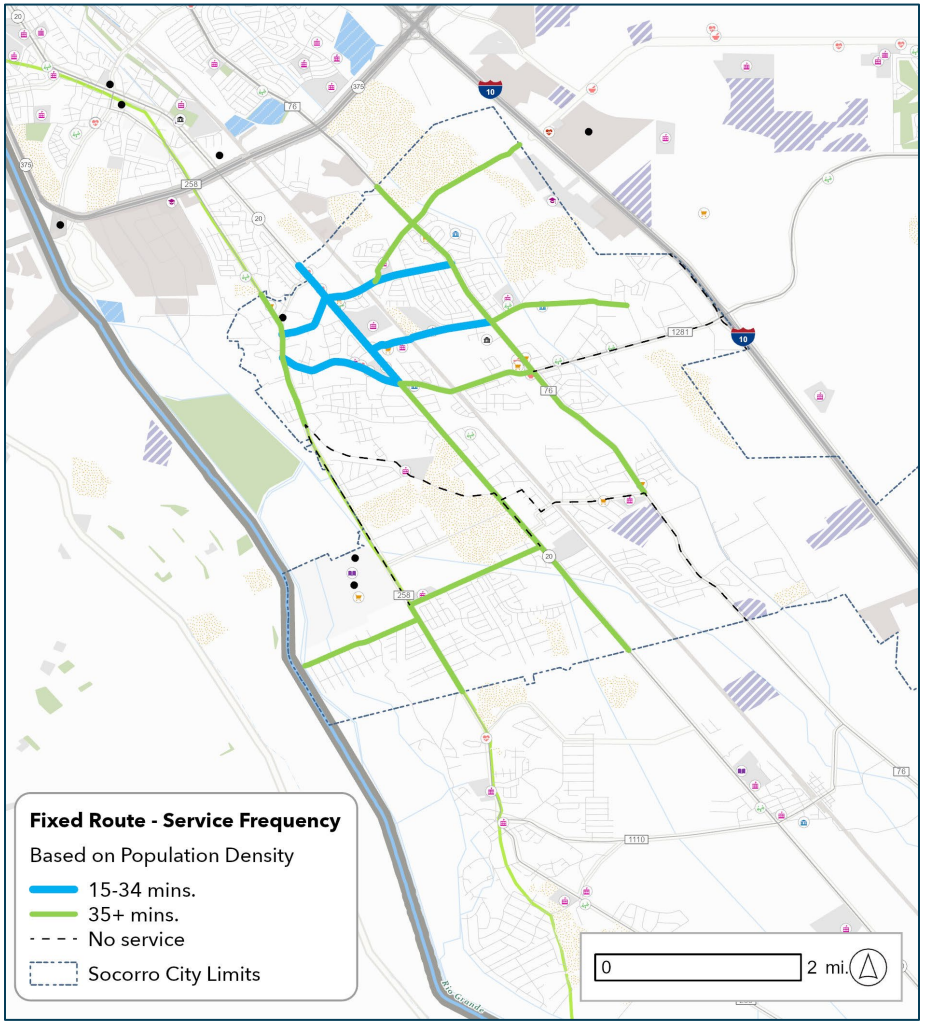



**Figure 26.** Fixed Route Frequency Based on Population Density

# 3.2 Growth in Socorro

**Transit demand changes with time. Similarly, Socorro may experience population and jobs growth with time, including shifts in the concentration of people and jobs within the community. The City's and other stakeholders' investments in the local economy, infrastructure, education, etcetera all have some influence on where people will live, work, and travel locally.**

The TDP project team explored the long-run market trends in commercial real estate classes (retail, office, industrial, multifamily) in Socorro, and as compared to the broader El Paso Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and El Paso County. The City's recent *Socorro 2040: Our Community Our Future* comprehensive plan provides information on trends and puts forward a vision for the community's future. The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP included another quick look at local market conditions in light of potential transit services. *Readers should note the Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP is a living document the project team recommends that the City update the TDP annually.*

## Background

### Data Source

The principal data source in this section is CoStar. CoStar is a commercial real estate service. CoStar tools enable both regional and local evaluation of most development activity, especially in the private market, except single family homes. The data focuses on multifamily and all types of commercial development activity. The TDP project team analyzed general market trends for Socorro and assessed market competitiveness indicators by incorporating contextual findings from the surrounding submarket and metropolitan regional market.

Costar sources data from across multiple commercial listing services and has an in-house market research team assigned to manage and update every individual property listing. CoStar's long-range historical data is dependent upon the asset class. The analysis in this subsection is based on trends for all asset classes from Quarter 1 of 2007 to Quarter 4 of 2024.

### Market Definitions

CoStar market areas are drawn in correspondence to each asset class's primary and secondary consumer market catchment area. The market areas do not necessarily correspond to traditional government boundaries. Socorro is part of the El Paso Market Area (**Figure 27**). The City resides within the following asset class-based submarkets:

- Office, Industrial, and Retail - East Submarket (**Figure 28**)
- Multifamily – Socorro Submarket (**Figure 29**)

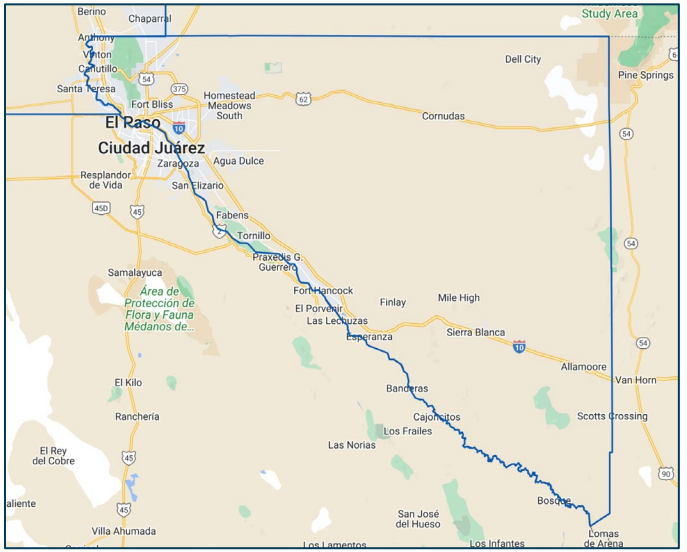



**Figure 27.** El Paso - TX Market Area

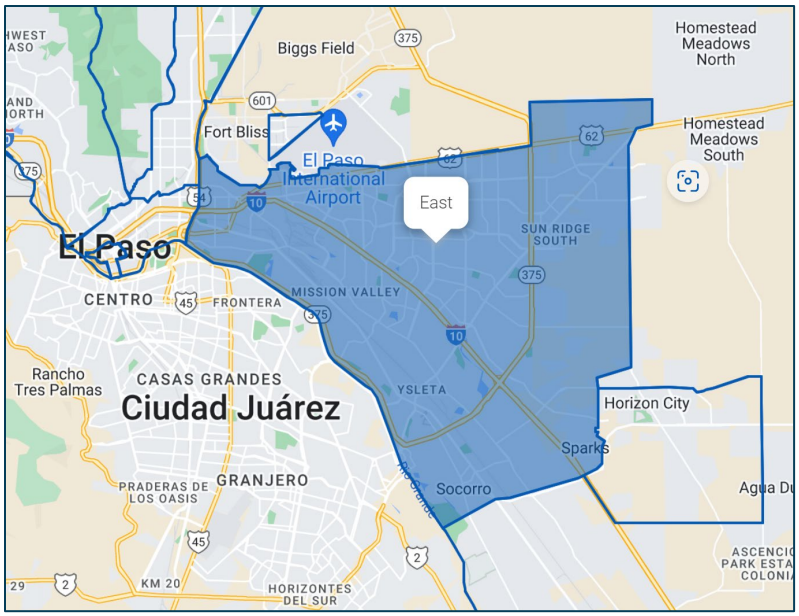



**Figure 28.** East Submarket for Office, Industrial and Retail Asset Classes

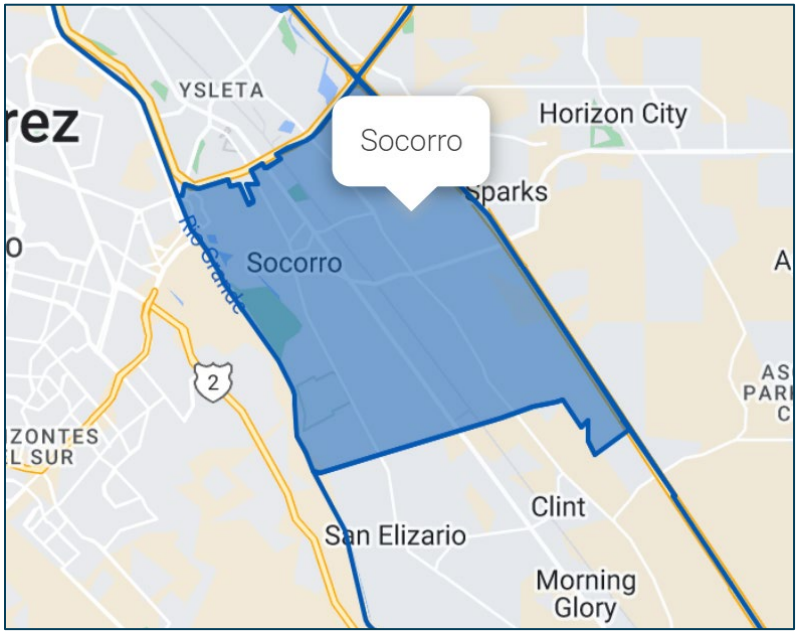



**Figure 29.** Socorro Submarket for Multifamily

# General Findings

## El Paso-Juarez Metropolitan Area

The El Paso-Juarez metropolitan area is a binational epicenter of global commerce, being a major hub of cross-border trade and equidistant between the Texas Triangle (i.e., the metros of Dallas, Houston, and Austin-San Antonio) and the United States' west coast. Trade, transportation, and utilities sectors drive the largest portions of the private sector economy – comprising about 1 in 5 jobs. Additionally, institutional employers in education and health services and the leisure and hospitality sectors are also significant employment drivers.

## Socorro Submarket Area

Industrial is Socorro's primary strength relative to the broader region. The community recently saw the opening of a 157,000 square foot (sf) project at Socorro Gateway Center, located adjacent to IH-10, about 13 minutes from Zaragoza Bridge and 20 minutes from El Paso International Airport. Other sectors seeing growth are largely affordable multifamily housing, and some smaller-scale retail. The office market is generally static within Socorro.

**The following subsections overview key points for the following economic sectors:**

- **Industrial**
- **Retail**
- **Office**
- **Multifamily**

# Industrial Change

The El Paso Market's 80 million square feet (sf) of industrial space is predominantly used for trade, logistics & distribution facilities tapping the IH-10 corridor, with some manufacturing and assembly facilities. The East El Paso submarkets collectively comprise about 50 million sf and the City of Socorro is home to 3.2 million sf (see **Table 2**). The City shared with the TDP project team that the total amount of industrial development planned is closer to 7 million sf as of spring 2025.

**Table 2.** Industrial Change Summary Table

| | |
|---|---|
| **Inventory Trends** | Until 2020, Socorro had a small collection of warehouses collectively comprising 1.5 million for 20+ years. The primary driver of new product in the coming years will continue to be Socorro Logistics Center (Figure 4), which will ultimately deliver 2.5 million total new Class A space at full buildout. |
| **Rents** | Until new facilities were delivered at Socorro Logistics Center, Socorro industrial space captured rents $.20-$.30 below the El Paso market rate since 2007. The East El Paso submarket, which was the focal point for new industrial development for the last decade, generally captures rents above the regional market due to its newer-build assets. In Socorro, the gap between the regional market and broader submarket competitor communities is rapidly closing, and with new deliveries, future rents are projected to potentially exceed market rates in the coming few years. |
| **Vacancies** | Industrial vacancy in Socorro has seen some peaks immediately upon delivery of new-build projects but currently sits at 5.5% and tends toward a long-term vacancy rate of 4.9%, which is 4-5% below the regional market, and upwards of 7% for the East El Paso Submarket. These tight vacancies and continued rent gains bode well for future growth in the sector. |
| **Recently Completed Projects** | 157K sf at Socorro Gateway Center (2022)<br>1.1M sf Socorro Logistics Center (2024) |
| **Upcoming Projects** | 3 projects under construction<br>2 new Class A logistics facilities at Socorro Logistics Center (combined 900,000+sf) targeting rents between $9-$11/sf to deliver in 2025/2026<br>1 Class B Warehouse of 35,000 sf (2024) |

**Figure 30** shows CBRE's Master Plan for the phased development called the "Socorro Logistics Center" located northeast of the Nuevo Hueco Tanks Boulevard and North Loop Drive intersection.


**Figure 30.** Master Plan for Socorro Logistics Center
Source: CBRE, Q4 2024

## Retail Change

The El Paso region has approximately 54 million sf of retail space. The East El Paso Submarkets comprise about half of the total retail activity, but Socorro currently contains a relatively small portion of the overall retail sector. Most Socorro retail is characterized as neighborhood or locally focused strip centers or freestanding shops featuring locally targeted food & beverage service or personal services (e.g., banks, automotive care, general merchandise) – see **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Retail Change Summary Table

| | |
|---|---|
| **Inventory Trends** | Socorro has 473K sf of retail and generally adds between 2K-8K per year. It is often built-to-suit or owner-operated as evidenced by low vacancies. |
| **Rents** | Retail rents in Socorro generally sit $1-$2 below the regional market and lag up to $2.50-$3 behind the East El Paso submarket rates. Currently $14.89 is the NNN market rent in Socorro, compared to $16.64 for El Paso, and $17.40 for the East El Paso Submarket. Rent growth is low and not projected to increase in coming years based on the lack of a pipeline for new product. |
| **Vacancies** | Vacancies generally sit between 0-1% in Socorro, compared to the long-run rate of 6% for El Paso and 6.2% for the East El Paso submarket. |
| **Recently Completed Projects** | 2,500 sf was delivered in 2023 for a new freestanding Wendy's Prior to this there were no new deliveries since 2017. |
| **Upcoming Projects** | No specific projects identifiable in CoStar. |

## Office Change

The El Paso region is home to 25 million sf of office space. The amount of office space in the region has largely remained static for at least 20 years. The bulk of office space in the region is located in the Central Business District and is largely occupied by government, education, and healthcare entities. The East El Paso submarket has seen some growth in office space, though little to no office growth is currently discernible within Socorro (see **Table 4**).

**Table 4.** Office Change Summary Table

| | |
|---|---|
| **Inventory Trends** | Socorro's office market has been 58K sf for over 20 years. |
| **Rents** | Socorro office rents are currently $24.78/sf, interestingly higher than the $23/sf in El Paso writ large and $22.82/sf for the East El Paso Submarket. This is largely due to the stagnant supply couple with inflation. |
| **Vacancies** | Office vacancies are currently at 0% and generally sits at or below 1% year over year. The region sits at 10.7% and the East submarket at 5.7%. Both tend to operate with long-term vacancies at 6%. |
| **Recently Completed Projects** | No specific projects identifiable in CoStar. |
| **Upcoming Projects** | Despite strong and rising rents and tight vacancies it is not likely that the market will support much new office growth so long as areas with high quality, newer product have higher vacancies and cheaper rents to absorb demand growth. |

# Multifamily Change

The El Paso region has 47,110 units of multifamily total, and the Socorro submarket included 347 multifamily units as of early 2025. Most housing units in the City of Socorro are single family residences of some variety. **Table 5** summarizes a few details about multifamily within Socorro.

**Table 5.** Multifamily Change Summary Table

| | |
|---|---|
| **Inventory Trends** | The City of Socorro limit is home to 169 units, 106 of which were delivered in 2020 alone. |
| **Rents** | Given that most units in the Socorro market are affordable units, rents site well below market rate. The El Paso regional market average rent for 1 unit of multifamily housing is $1,070, compared to $1,131 for the Socorro submarket, and $592 for listings only in the City of Socorro. |
| **Vacancies** | With a vacancy of 1.1% the City of Socorro's multifamily housing stock is very tight, 2% below the 20 year average and long run projected rate of 3%. This is below the regional vacancy rate of 5.1% (only slightly above its long-run average) and 3.5% for the Socorro submarket (also tighter than its long run average of 4.3%) |
| **Recently Completed Projects** | Neverez Palms delivered 104 units (1-4 BR) in Jun 2020<br>1 duplex project in 2020 |
| **Upcoming Projects** | Fiesta Palms Apartments: 80 affordable units announced at 1080 Horizon Blvd. Awarded $11 million in LIHTCs[18]. When announced in 2022, planned to complete by 2024. Likely stalled due to capital markets and high interest rates. Construction to start in Jan 2025 (per CoStar). |

**Readers will note vacancies are very low for the few multifamily units that do exist, despite the relatively recent introduction of an additional 106 units in 2020.**

[18] Tropicana Building awarded $11 million in tax credits | Business Announcements | elpasoinc.com

# 3.3 Equitable Mobility Priority

**The transit industry has a long history of utilizing various forms of indices to explore spatial patterns in communities to identify high priority locations for transit improvements.** In most cases, the same efforts will include a separate look at home-work locations and population and/or housing density as the strong indicators of suitability – or viability – for certain types of transit and frequencies of service.

- **Transit propensity** is a person or group's willingness, or predisposition, to utilize transit as part of a trip. Propensity varies individually and generally amongst population groups. Propensity also varies between trip purposes.
- **Equity** is defined in many ways. Equity in transit and transportation is the fair and just distribution of benefits and burdens of transit services and infrastructure across communities. [19]

Evaluating propensity and equity side-by-side with densities sometimes resulted in equitable outcomes but other times resulted in an eventual dominance of the density information. As a result, LINK Houston, a non-profit in Houston, Texas, created the Transportation Equity Demand Index (TEDI) in 2018. The TEDI combines measures of fundamental demographic demand, propensity (or likely higher transit use), and human and built environment suitability in the form of densities. The TDP project team used the TEDI methodology as a singular lens of where demand, propensity, and suitability for transit co-exist in relatively higher quantities within Socorro, and as compared to El Paso County.

## Measuring Opportunity

The TDP project team's application of the Transportation Equity Demand Index involves combining 13 unique factors onto a single map. Readers may find it helpful to think of the 13 factors as belonging to one of three categories:

1. Fundamental Demographic Demand (Factors 1-5)
2. Propensity – Likely Higher Transit Use (Factors 6-10)
3. Human & Built Environment Suitability (Factors 11-13)

The following three sections highlight the three categories of factors – shown by Census Block, the smallest possible geography in Socorro. Section 3.3 then goes on to relate the final Socorro TEDI and then a comparison to TEDI results by Census Block Group for the entirety of El Paso County. **The EPC wide result may help readers to understand how transit demand exists in particular areas of Socorro but overall it is relatively low compared to other more central locations in the El Paso region.**

Appendix A2 explains the methodology in more detail and contains individual maps of each of the thirteen TEDI factors.

***Note About Maps***

*The following pages contain several maps. In each map darker shaded locations indicate higher potential demand and suitability for better transit and walking or biking access. Five categories symbolize each geographic unit's ranking compared to all geographic units, from very high to very low equitable mobility demand. The five categories statistically represent natural breaks, identifying inherent groupings within the data distribution. This technique helps to minimize variance within classes and maximize variance between symbolized classes, resulting in a more accurate and visually meaningful representation of spatial data – simply put, a way to see where transit demand and suitability for services are both relatively high in a community.*

[19] *Equity in Transit* (2022). LINK Houston. Retrieved from https://linkhouston.org/reports-briefings/equity-in-transit-2022/

# Fundamental Demographic Demand

**Figure 31** shows the five TEDI factors indicating transit demand based on fundamental demographic characteristics of Socorro:

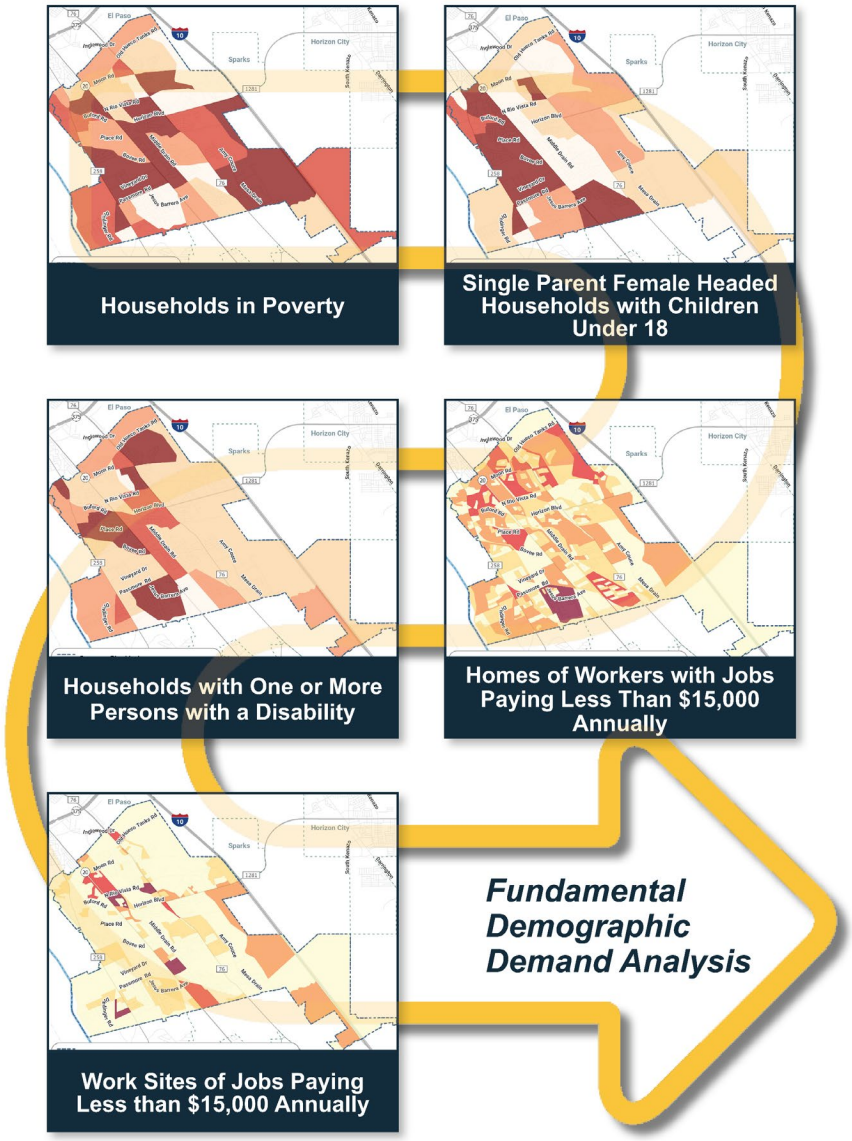



**Figure 31.** Socorro TEDI, Fundamental Demographic Demand Factors

**Figure 32** illustrates the relative distribution of the first three factors, all percentage based, across Socorro. The grey boxes indicate the statistical concentration of each value; the whiskers identify the highest and lowest values; and the small circles, if present, indicate outlier values.

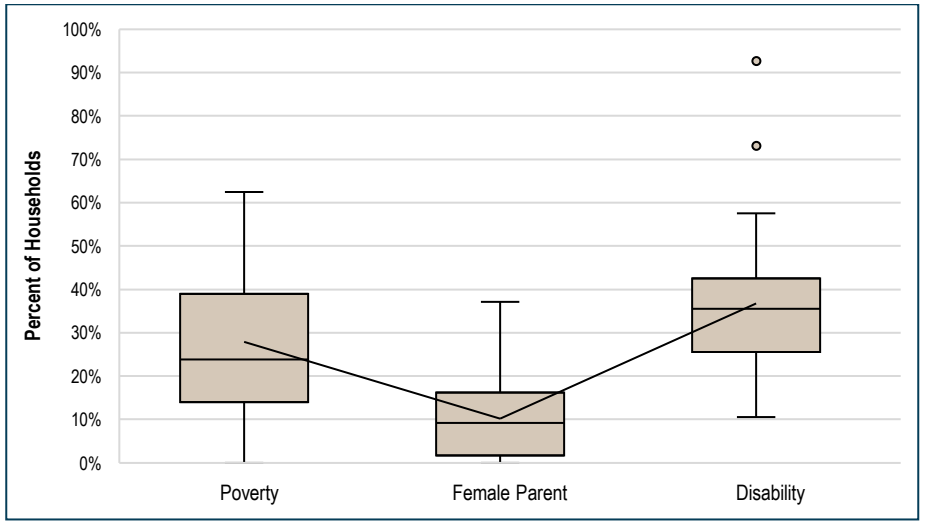



**Figure 32.** Socorro TEDI, Factors 1-3 Value Distribution

**A substantial portion of households live in poverty. A sizable portion of households are also headed by a female parent with at least one child under 18 at home. About one in three households have a member with a disability that may affect the ability to drive or move about independently outside the home.**

**Figure 33** depicts where Factors 1-5 combined reveal demand is higher for better transit (and walking, rolling, and biking).

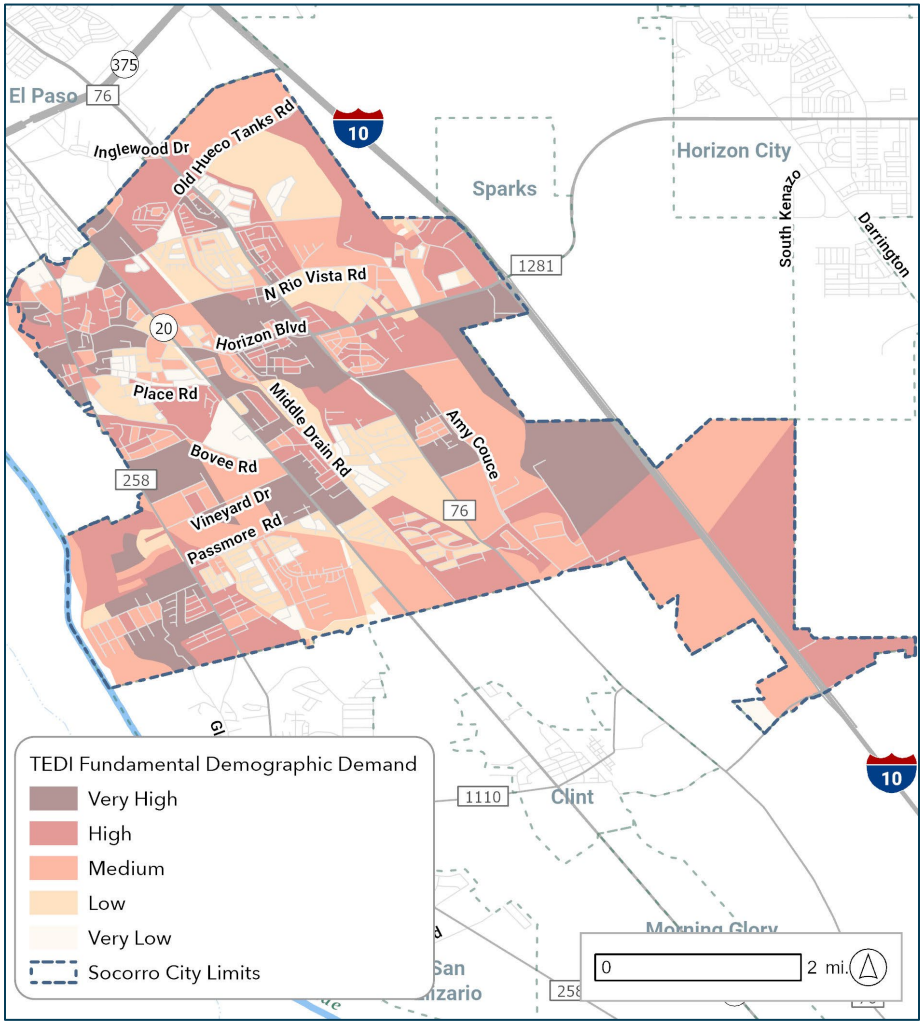



**Figure 33.** Socorro TEDI, Fundamental Demographic Demand (Factors 1-5)

## Propensity – Likely Higher Transit Use

**Figure 34** shows the next five factors that make up the propensity portion of the TEDI index:

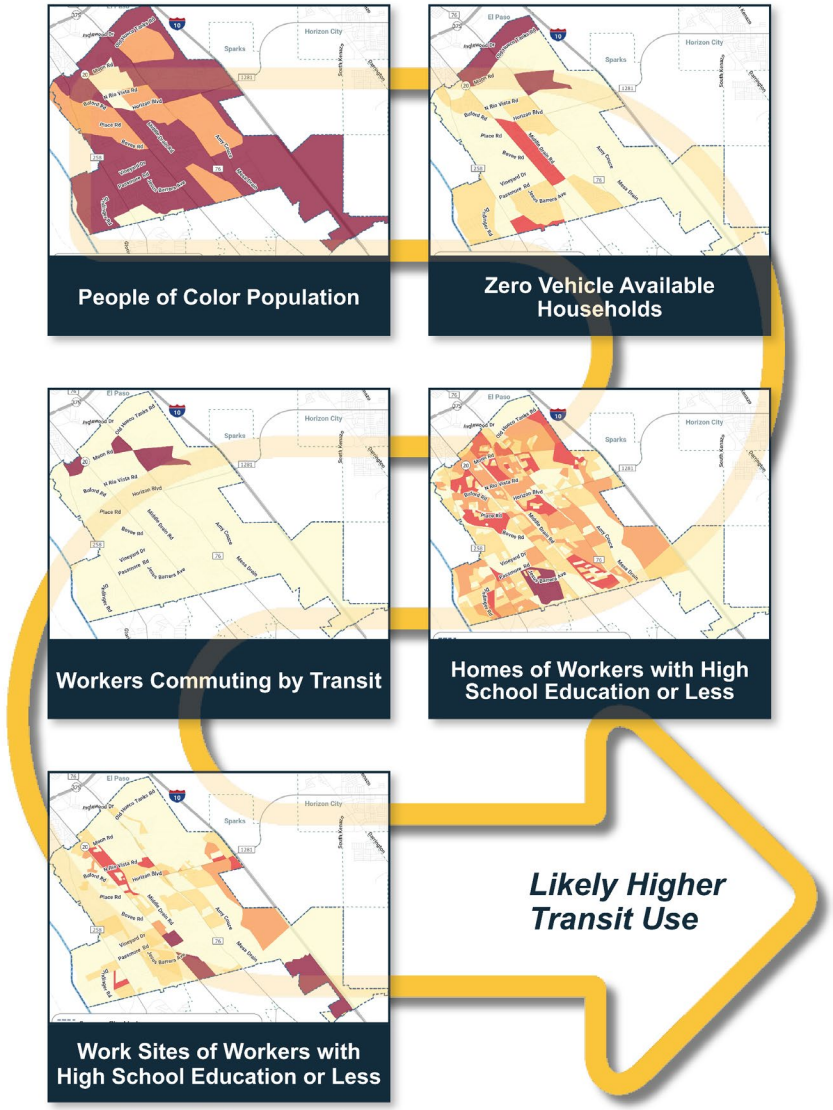



**Figure 34.** Socorro TEDI, Propensity Factors

**Figure 35** illustrates the relative distribution of the three percentage based factors in the propensity factors, across the study area, in box and whisker plots. The grey boxes indicate the statistical concentration of each value; the whiskers identify the highest and lowest values; and the small circles, if present, indicate outlier values.


**Figure 35.** Socorro TEDI, Factors 6-8 Value Distribution

**A relatively low, but not insignificant, portion of households live with zero vehicles – even in Socorro. Overall, a very small portion of people access work via transit, but the rate varies substantially for workers in some particular areas of Socorro.**

**Figure 36** depicts where Factors 6-10 combined reveal propensity for better transit (and walking, rolling, and biking) is likely higher.

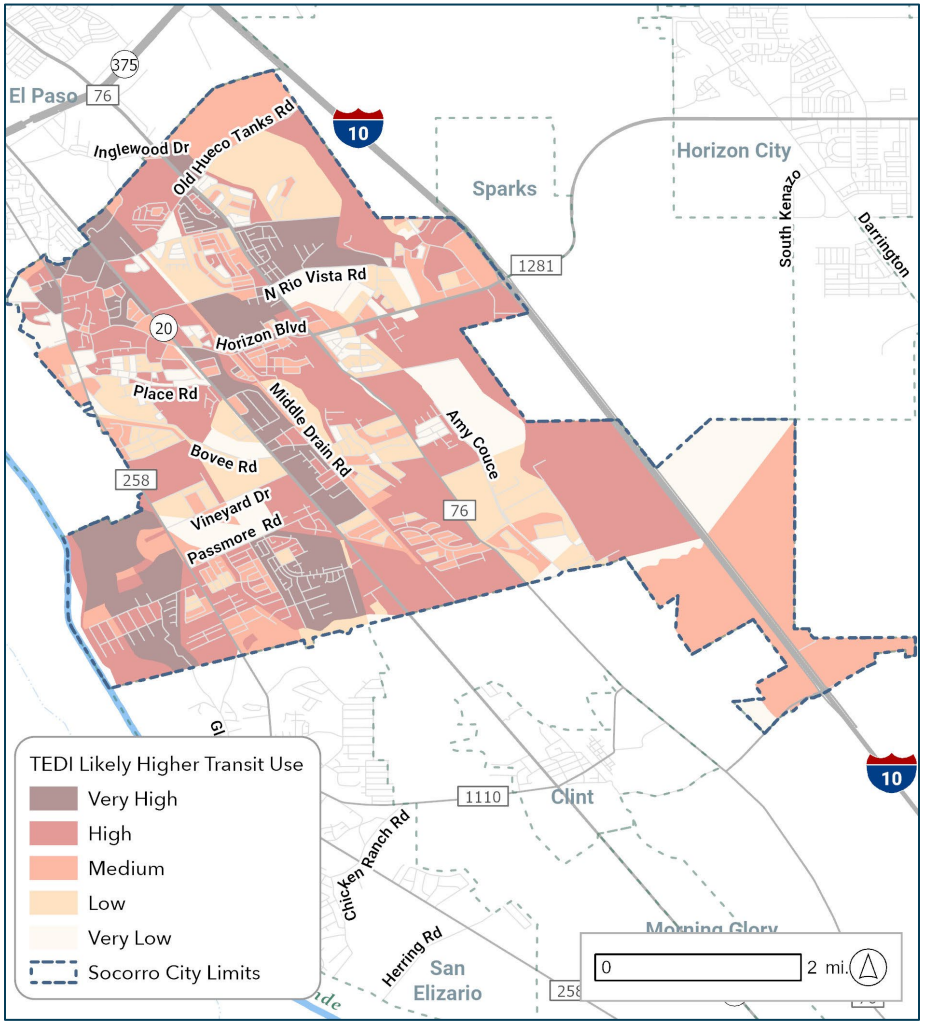



**Figure 36.** Socorro TEDI, Likely Higher Transit Use (Factors 6-10)

# Human & Built Environment Suitability

**Figure 37** shows factors eleven to thirteen, which constitute the suitability portion of the TEDI index:

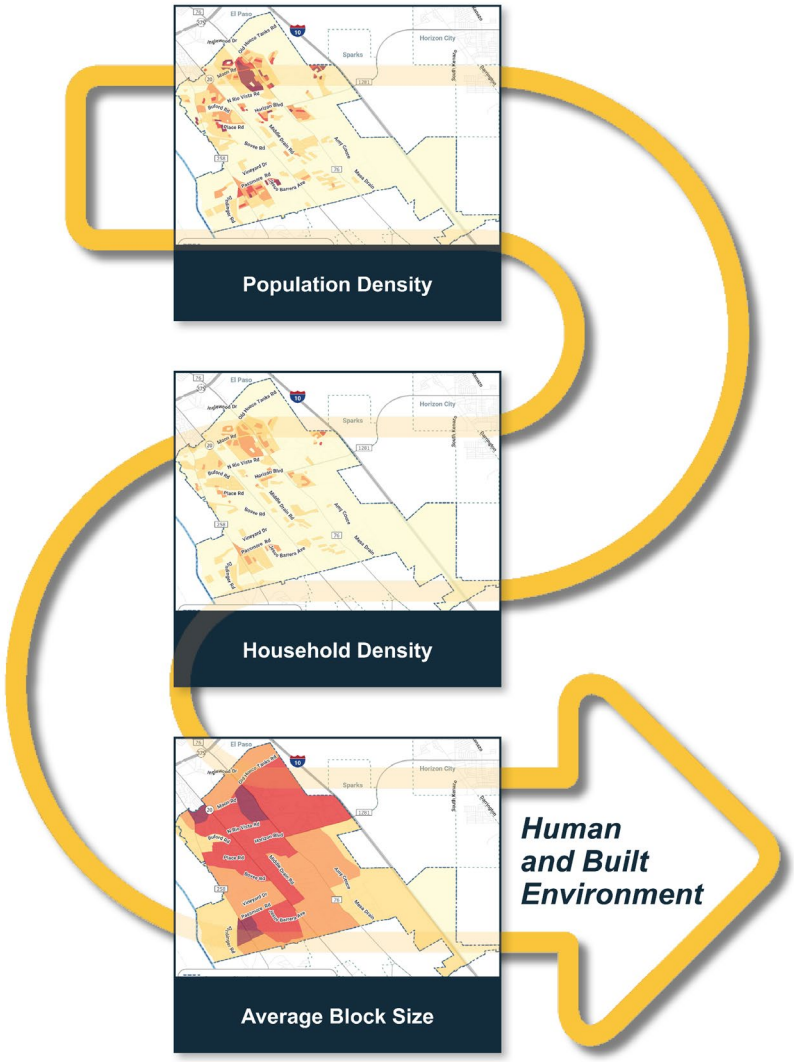



**Figure 37.** Socorro TEDI, Suitable Environment Factors

**Figure 38** depicts where Factors 11-13 combined reveal the human and built environment is relatively more suitable for better transit.

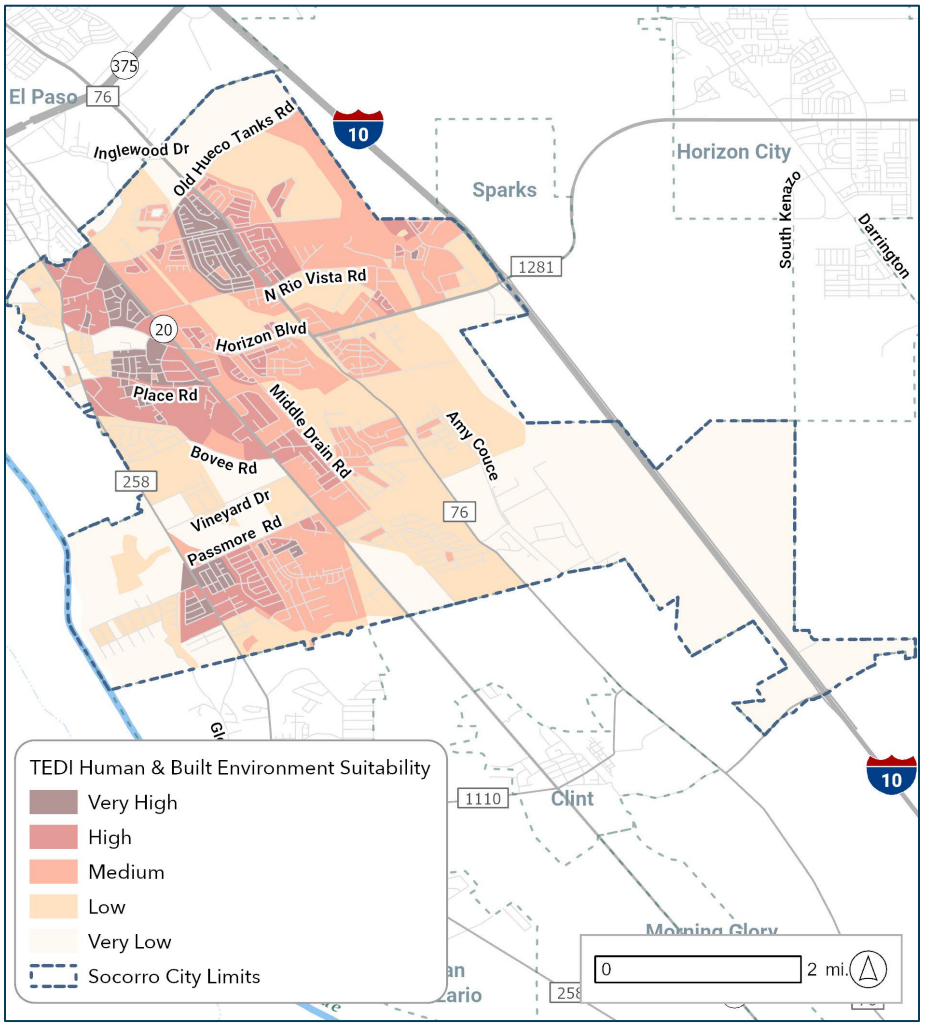



**Figure 38.** Socorro TEDI, Human / Built Environment Suitability (Factors 11-13)

***Note:*** *The index does not capture actual walking conditions as no sufficient datasets exist about intersection safety, sidewalk existence and quality, and infrastructure accessibility – the three key indicators for actual walkability necessary to connect people to fixed route transit services. The Appendix discusses data sources and methodology in more detail.*

# Transportation Equity Demand Index – Socorro & County-wide

**Combining all of the indicators – demand, propensity, and suitability – enabled the project team to assist the City of Socorro to identify clear priority locations to consider for transit improvements.** The City may also find the information helpful when prioritizing walking or biking access improvements in the future.

## Socorro Compared to El Paso County

**Table 6** compares Socorro to the remainder of El Paso County based on a selection of six TEDI indicators.

**Table 6.** Select TEDI Factors, Comparison of Socorro to El Paso County

| Comparison of Selected TEDI Factors | City of Socorro | *(excluding Socorro)* El Paso County |
|---|---|---|
| 2022 Households in Poverty | 26% | 20% |
| 2022 Single Parent Female Headed Households with Children Under 18 | 12% | 10% |
| 2022 Households with One or More Persons with a Disability | 34% | 30% |
| 2022 People of Color Population | 98% | 88% |
| 2022 Households with Zero Vehicles Available | 4.4% | 6.6% |
| 2022 Workers Commuting by Transit | 0.92% | 0.94% |

**Socorro has fewer households with zero vehicles, but generally higher equity demand based on poverty, single parent female headed households with children at home, and households with one or more persons with a disability.**

## Socorro TEDI Results

**Figure 39** is the TEDI result specific only to the City of Socorro. The map shows the most granular result possible by using Census Blocks.

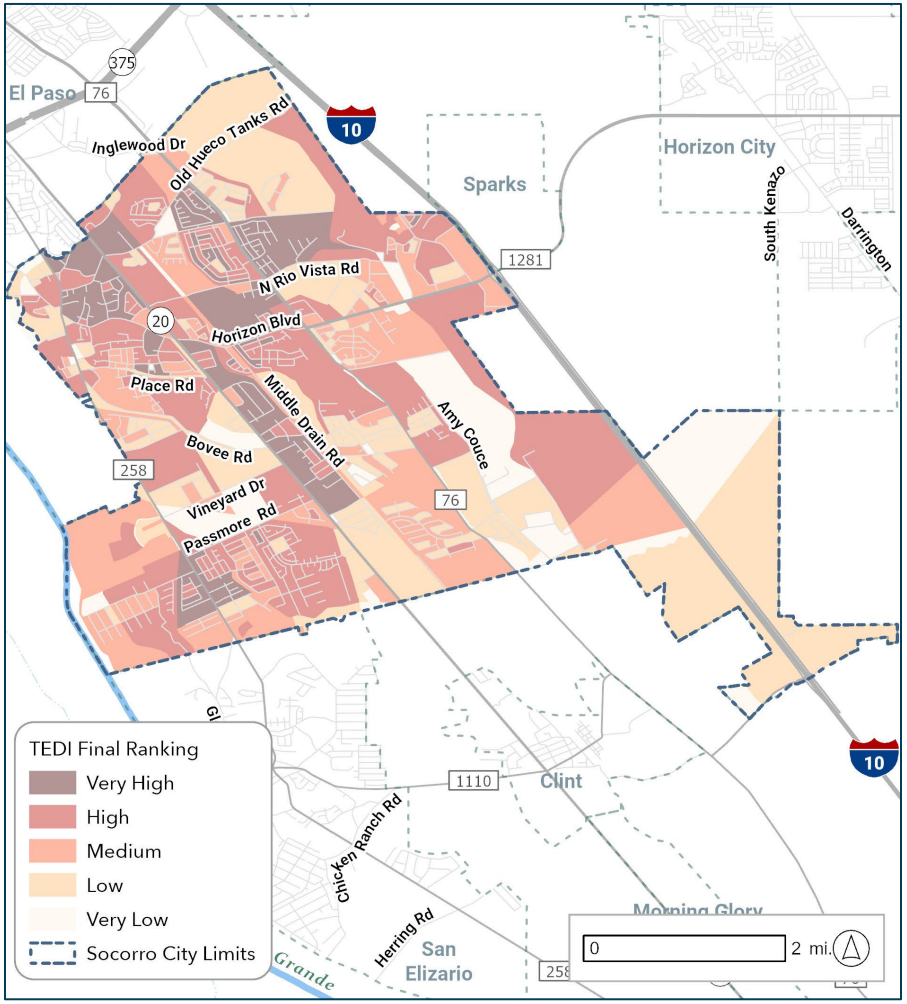



**Figure 39.** Socorro TEDI, Final Index Result by Census Block

**Overall, the Socorro TEDI indicates transit and active transportation investments may be especially beneficial in particular locations in the southwest and central-north areas of Socorro.**

The project team conducted a hot spot analysis ArcGIS to identify statistically significant clusters of either high or low attribute values within the dataset. This analysis highlights areas in Socorro and surrounding communities of El Paso County where unusually high demand for equitable mobility (hot spots) or relative low demand (cold spots) in the TEDI results.

**Figure 40** utilizes the previous map and provides a hot and cold spot analysis based on spatial statistics. In other words, red areas mark clusters of Census Blocks with statistically more concentrated demand and suitability for transit, and blue spots indicate relatively lower demand and suitability locations. **Two distinct patches of significantly high demand exist in Socorro – one area in central-north and the other in the southwest.**

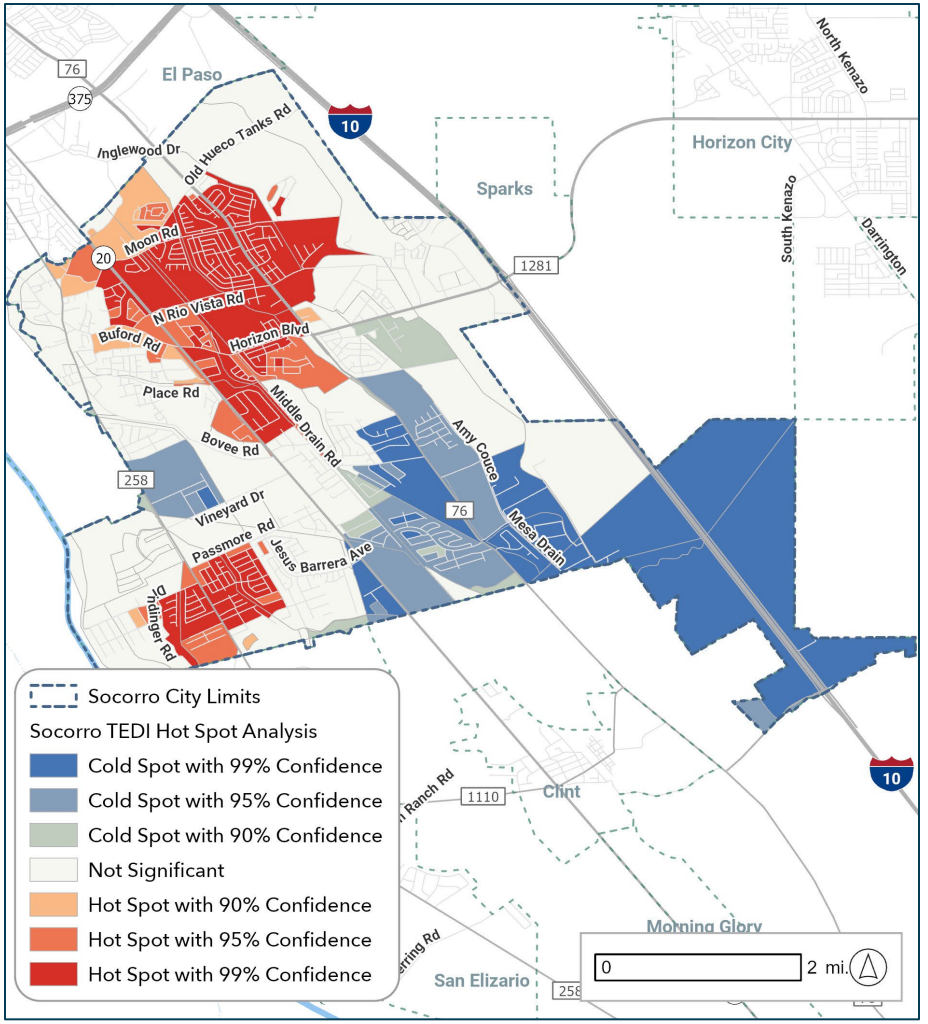



**Figure 40.** Socorro TEDI, Statistical Concentrations by Census Block

# El Paso County TEDI Results

This section contains a TEDI for the entirety of El Paso County, including Socorro, mapped by Census Block Group. The county wide TEDI enabled the project team and the City to understand the relative demand for better transit within Socorro compared to other nearby communities and the region as a whole. **Figure 41** is the El Paso County TEDI result symbolized by Census Block Group.

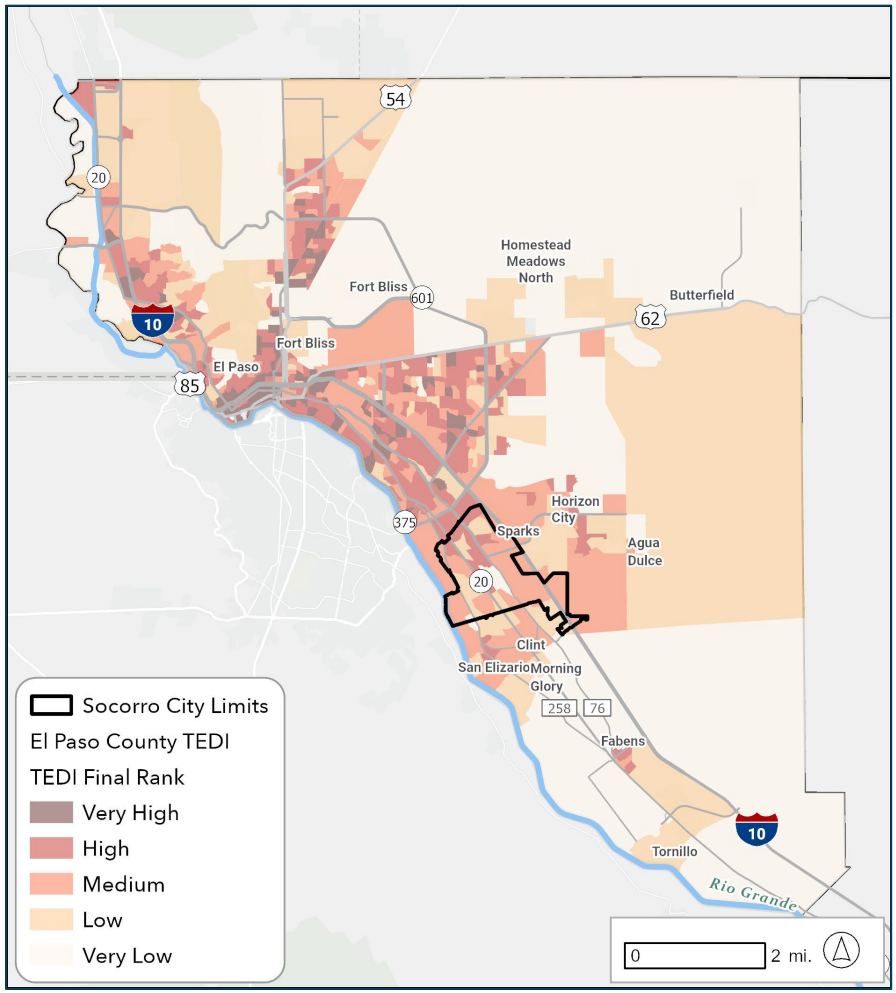



**Figure 41.** El Paso County TEDI, Final Result by Census Block Group

**Figure 42** is the same county-wide TEDI zoomed in on Socorro.

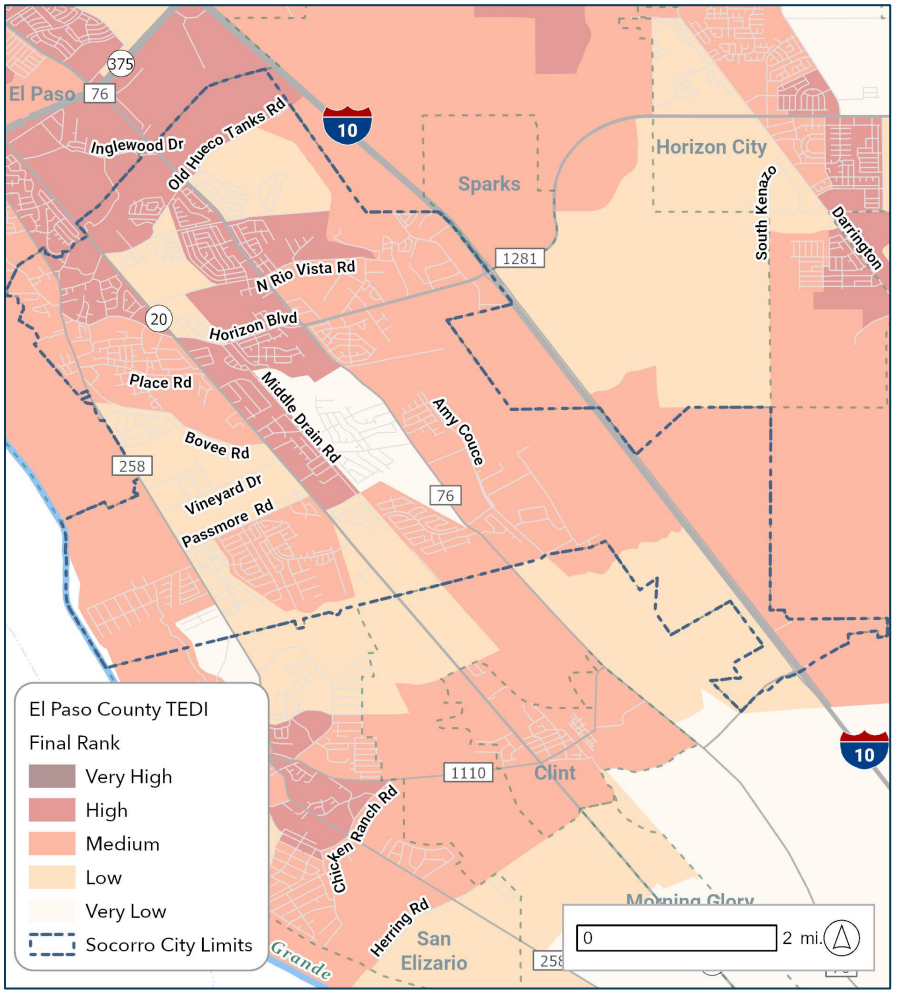



**Figure 42.** El Paso County TEDI, Socorro Context by Block Group

**Readers should note that some degree of transit demand exists everywhere, in every community. The two TEDI indices simply help to identify where transit demand is statistically more pronounced – so transit services can be designed to ensure general coverage but also to provide strategically more robust services where demand is higher.**

# 3.4 Key Rider Destinations

Some residents of Socorro have relied on transit for many years and continue to ride up to the time the City completed the Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP in May 2025. Transit connects these riders to a variety of destinations within Socorro and in nearby communities. The TDP project team's engagement with the public collected information about how existing riders used transit. The engagement also asked how and where people desired to use transit in the future.

**This section provides three additional views of potential transit demand by exploring the location of low-medium wage jobs, priority types of destinations, and key regional travel destinations for Socorro residents.**

The project team assembled the information to enable the City, its stakeholders, and the public to discuss potential priorities and ultimately to identify the highest priorities for better transit service implementation of a multi-year period.

***Data Sources***

*Low-medium wage job locations come from the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data and are for the year 2021 (the most recent year available).*

*Priority destinations come from a variety of sources. The principal source is data mined from ESRI ArcGIS Business Analyst. Searches on Google Maps confirmed the current status of some locations.*

*Travel pattern data is entirely derived from the proprietary Locus portal; through a license between Locus and The Goodman Corporation.*

# Low & Medium Wage Job Access

**Figure 43** depicts the distribution of employment within and near Socorro for all low/medium wage jobs (i.e., jobs paying less than $39,996 annually). Most of these jobs are along Alameda Avenue or near Socorro to the north or northeast.

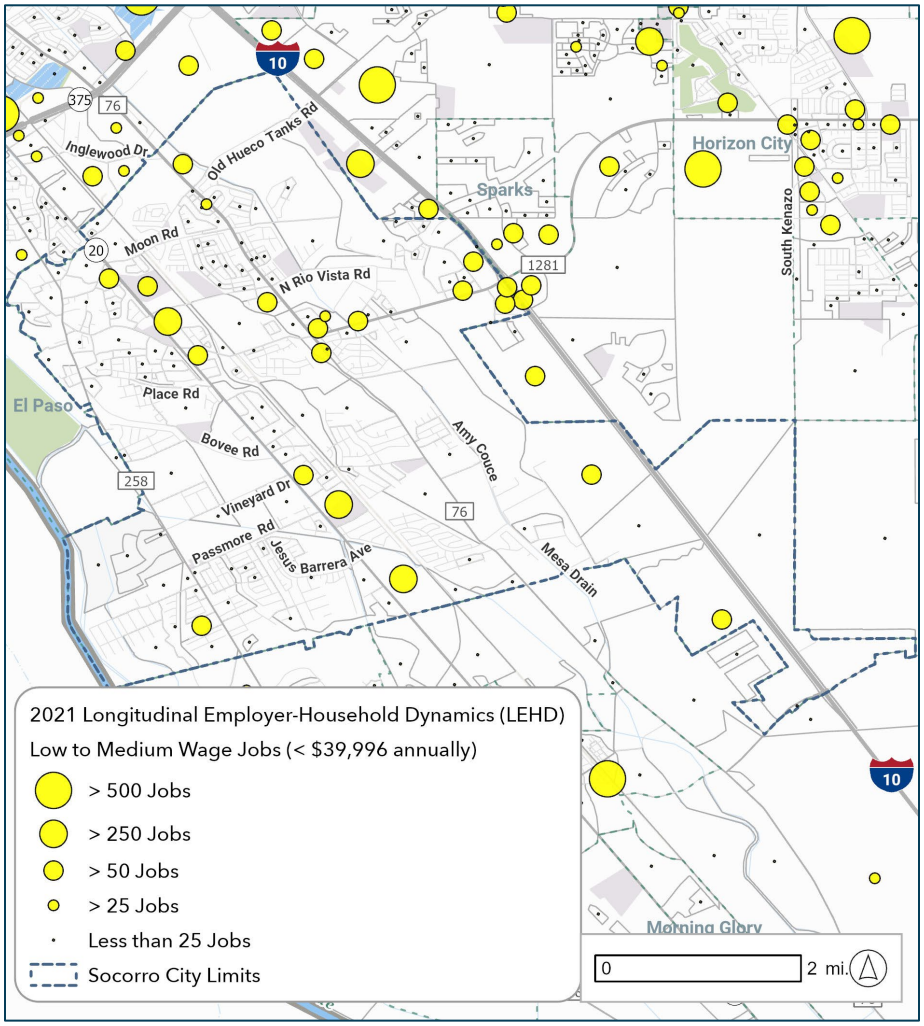



**Figure 43.** Work Locations for Low-Medium Wage Jobs

# Potential Priority Destinations

Certain types of destinations attract more transit rider trips than others – transit generators. **Figure 44**, on the next page, highlights the location of seven categories of transit generators within or near Socorro:

- **Major Employers**
- **Multifamily Housing**
- **Shopping Anchors**
  - Full service grocery stores
  - Department stores
- **Education**
  - Middle & high schools
  - Job & vocational training
  - Higher education (community college, university)
- **Family Support**
  - Childcare
  - Senior centers
  - Social Security Offices
  - Government Offices
- **Healthcare**
  - Hospitals (various types)
  - Clinics
  - Pharmacies
  - Dialysis center
  - Veterans Administration
- **Other Key Locations**
  - Border crossings
  - Intercity bus hubs

**Alameda Avenue and Socorro Road are the key corridors for transit rider destinations within Socorro and in adjacent communities.**

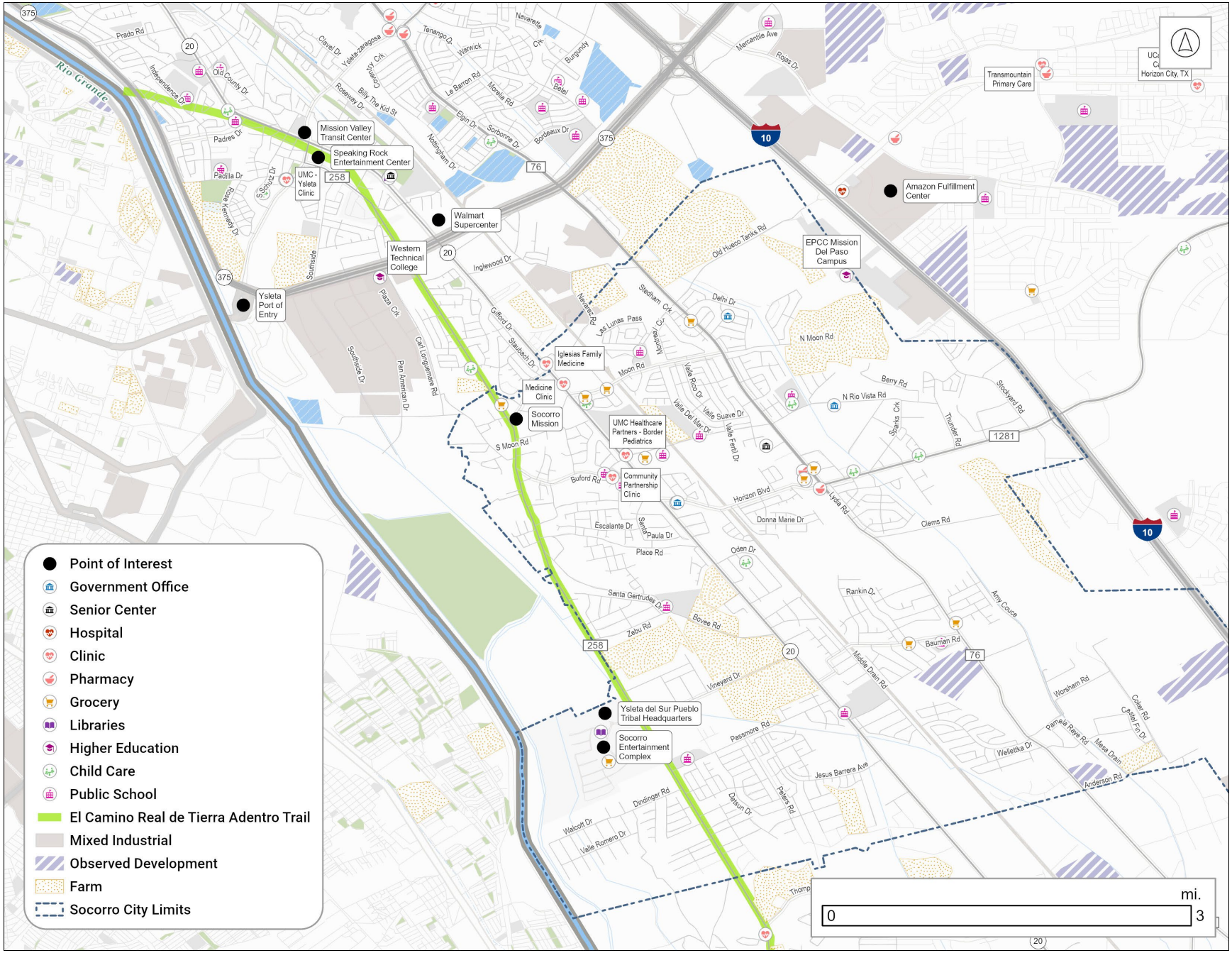



**Figure 44.** Potential Priority Destinations – in or near Socorro

# Travel Patterns: Local

Transit ridership, like most travel, is most prominent during early morning to late evening hours. Transit demand also sees peak demand generally at similar times as personal auto-based travel. The TDP project team used the following time periods for modeling trip demand:

- Early AM – 3:00 to 6:00 AM
- AM Peak – 6:00 to 9:00 AM
- Midday – 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
- PM Peak – 3:00 to 6:00 PM
- Evening – 6:00 PM to 3:00 AM

Residents were generally making about 75,000 trips longer than 0.5-miles each day between 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM within Socorro as of Quarter 3 of 2024. Nearly all of those trips were in a personal or work vehicle. **Figure 45** shows the general location of these trips by Census Block Group.

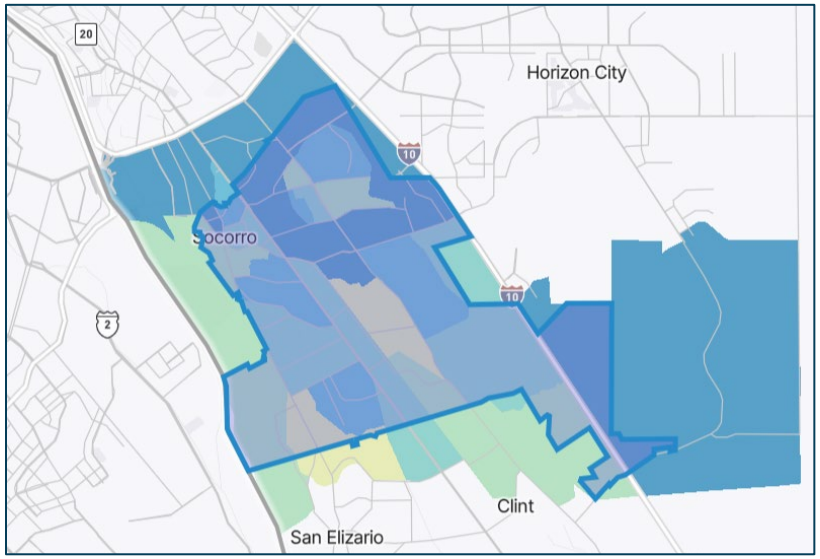



**Figure 45.** Relative Local Travel Demand – AM Peak through PM Peak
Source: Locus

# Travel Patterns: Regional

**Figure 46** depicts the top 15 regional destinations for Socorro. Readers will observe the most prominent destinations are relatively nearby.

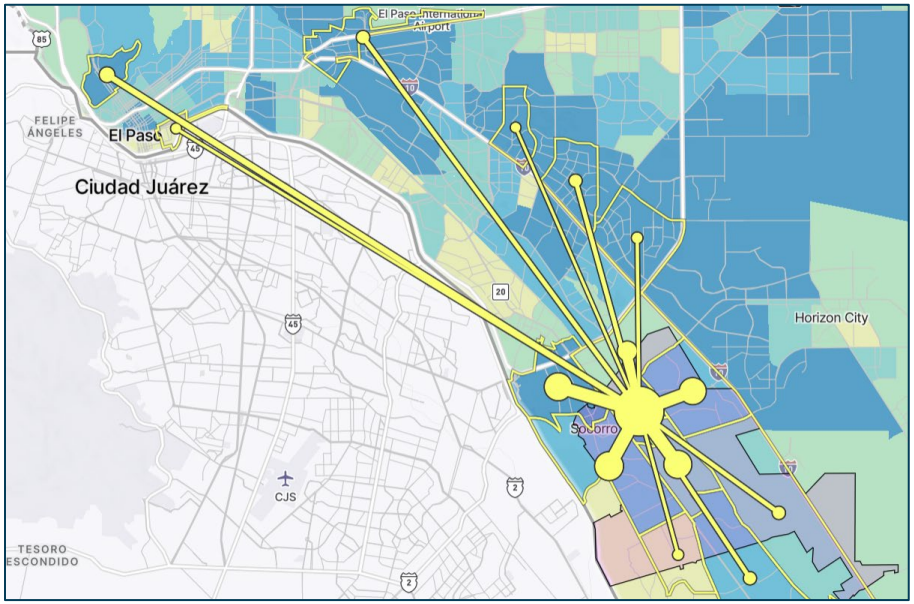



**Figure 46.** Principal Regional Destinations for Socorro Residents
Source: Locus

**The principal external destinations for daily trips from Socorro…**

- **UTEP – 642 trips** (31% AM Peak, 56% Midday, 13% PM Peak)
- **Downtown – 533 trips** (32% AM Peak, 42% Midday, 26% PM Peak)
- **Fort Bliss – 181 trips** (64% AM Peak, 24% Midday, 12% PM Peak)
- **Airport – 160 trips** (45% AM Peak, 43% Midday, 12% PM Peak)

The introduction of better transit service for local trips will capture a portion of these trips in the future. The percentage of trips converted to transit will be relatively small at first but grow over time as awareness of transit service increases. Transit's success at converting driving trips to transit varies and is based on many factors (discussed later in the TDP).

# 3.5 Transit Viability in Socorro

**This section synthesizes all data previously documented by the TDP project team. The combined view will enable the City and stakeholders to evaluate the relative potential for fixed route local bus service along every major street segment in Socorro. The northernmost section of Alameda Avenue is the single best option for fixed route in the future if and when resources become available.**

The project team explored the potential for fixed route bus service along local streets across the entire community:

- **Figure 47** depicts the potential priority for fixed route local bus transit across 25 local street segments based on multiple factors documented in previous sections.
- **Table 7**, on the next page, summarizes the overall ranking of each corridor (i.e., the map is based on the result in this table).
- **Table 8**, two pages back, notes a potential service frequency based on population or jobs density.

***Note:***

*The quantitative findings complemented the synthesized perspectives from extensive community engagement in both Fall 2024 and Spring 2025.*

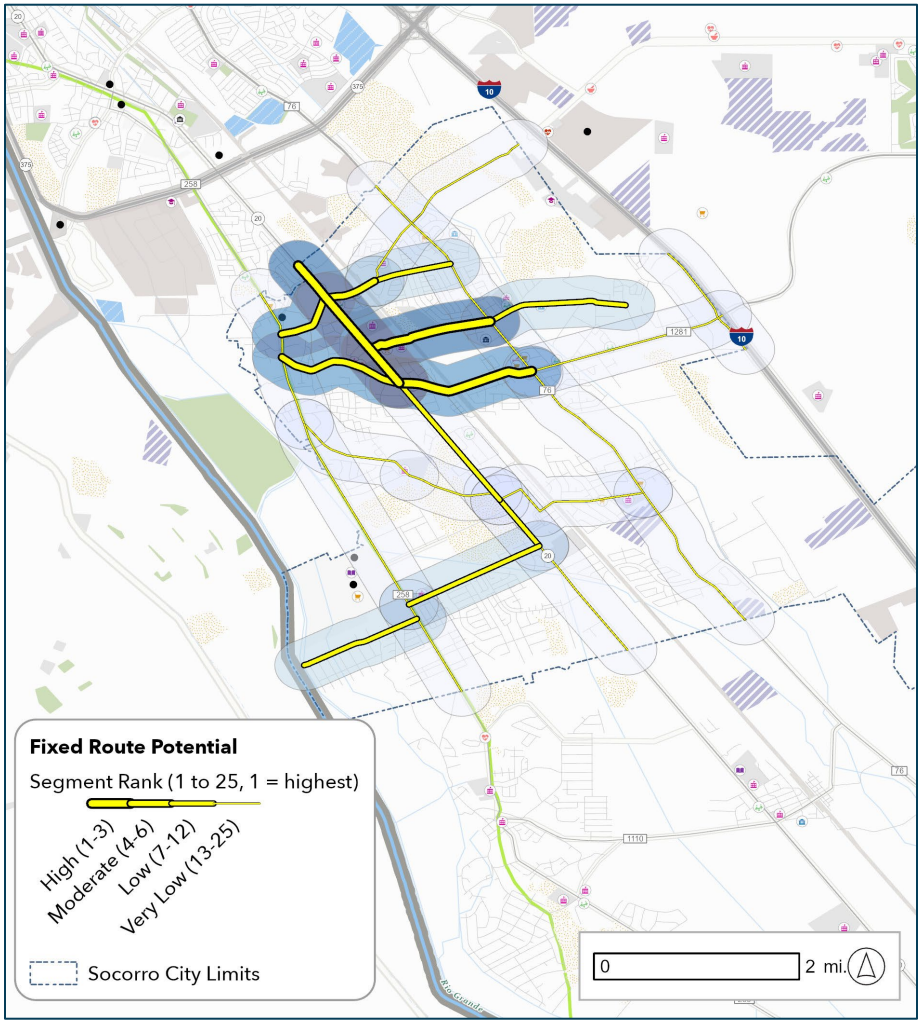



**Figure 47.** Corridor Potential for Local Bus Fixed Route – Ranking Map

**Table 7.** Corridor Potential for Local Bus Fixed Route – Ranking Table

| Socorro Corridor Street Segment | Overall Priority Rank | Transportation Equity Demand Index (TEDI) Ranks | | | | 2020 Population Density | | 2020 Housing Units Density | | 2020 Jobs Density - All Jobs | | 2020 Jobs Density - Low Wage Jobs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Fundamental Demographic Demand | Likely Higher Transit Use | Human/Built Environment Suitability | TEDI Overall Index | *Number* | *Rank* | *Number* | *Rank* | *Number* | *Rank* | Number | Rank |
| Alameda Ave - TX 20 (north) | 1 | 14 | 5 | 1 | 2 | *3,052* | 3 | *1.65* | 3 | *685* | 4 | *187* | 4 |
| N Rio Vista Rd (west) | 2 | 9 | 11 | 3 | 3 | *3,414* | 2 | *1.73* | 2 | *661* | 5 | *238* | 2 |
| Horizon Blvd - FM 1281 (west) | 3 | 3 | 14 | 6 | 4 | *2,296* | 7 | *1.24* | 7 | *834* | 2 | *266* | 1 |
| S Moon Rd | 4 | 10 | 2 | 4 | 1 | *2,702* | 6 | *1.57* | 4 | *434* | 7 | *128* | 7 |
| Buford Rd | 5 | 7 | 19 | 7 | 6 | *2,786* | 5 | *1.52* | 6 | *730* | 3 | *197* | 3 |
| N Moon Rd (west) | 6 | 18 | 8 | 8 | 7 | *3,007* | 4 | *1.55* | 5 | *362* | 10 | *104* | 10 |
| Passmore Rd | 7 | 13 | 3 | 14 | 9 | *1,988* | 9 | *1.03* | 9 | *297* | 13 | *110* | 9 |
| N Moon Rd (middle) | 8 | 23 | 12 | 2 | 5 | *5,059* | 1 | *2.45* | 1 | *226* | 15 | *66* | 18 |
| Walcott Rd | 9 | 4 | 1 | 21 | 10 | *2,172* | 8 | *1.16* | 8 | *210* | 18 | *77* | 15 |
| N Rio Vista Rd (east) | 10 | 16 | 9 | 9 | 8 | *1,855* | 10 | *0.97* | 10 | *218* | 16 | *82* | 14 |
| Alameda Ave - TX 20 (middle) | 11 | 22 | 20 | 5 | 11 | *1,741* | 13 | *0.89* | 14 | *460* | 6 | *111* | 8 |
| Alameda Ave - TX 20 (south) | 12 | 15 | 10 | 11 | 12 | *1,114* | 20 | *0.55* | 21 | *398* | 9 | *149* | 6 |
| Socorro Rd - FM 258 (south) | 13 | 8 | 6 | 20 | 14 | *1,757* | 12 | *0.93* | 11 | *214* | 17 | *75* | 16 |
| N Loop Dr - FM 76 (north) | 14.5 | 20 | 21 | 10 | 20 | *1,838* | 11 | *0.92* | 12 | *250* | 14 | *87* | 13 |
| State Hwy 20 | 14.5 | 24 | 7 | 13 | 16 | *1,234* | 17 | *0.61* | 18 | *341* | 11 | *94* | 11 |
| Gateway Blvd E | 16 | 1 | 4 | 25 | 13 | *434* | 25 | *0.21* | 25 | *335* | 12 | *50* | 20 |
| Horizon Blvd - FM 1281 (east) | 17.5 | 2 | 15 | 23 | 18 | *704* | 24 | *0.41* | 24 | *413* | 8 | *89* | 12 |
| Old Hueco Tanks Rd | 17.5 | 25 | 22 | 19 | 24 | *1,415* | 16 | *0.68* | 16 | *1,356* | 1 | *153* | 5 |
| N Loop Dr - FM 76 (middle) | 19 | 6 | 16 | 18 | 15 | *1,508* | 15 | *0.80* | 15 | *172* | 20 | *55* | 19 |
| Socorro Rd - FM 258 (middle) | 20 | 5 | 13 | 22 | 21 | *1,173* | 18 | *0.62* | 17 | *106* | 21 | *40* | 21 |
| Socorro Rd - FM 258 (north) | 21 | 12 | 24 | 12 | 19 | *1,619* | 14 | *0.89* | 13 | *46* | 23 | *17* | 22 |
| Bauman Rd (general) | 22 | 21 | 18 | 17 | 22 | *1,143* | 19 | *0.56* | 20 | *191* | 19 | *70* | 17 |
| Bovee Rd (east) | 23 | 11 | 17 | 15 | 17 | *1,089* | 21 | *0.60* | 19 | *92* | 22 | *16* | 23 |
| Bovee Rd (west) | 24 | 17 | 25 | 16 | 23 | *941* | 22 | *0.50* | 22 | *23* | 25 | *10* | 24 |
| N Loop Dr - FM 76 (south) | 25 | 19 | 23 | 24 | 25 | *939* | 23 | *0.44* | 23 | *26* | 24 | *9* | 25 |

Dark green boxes highlight the top two corridors in each column; light green boxes highlight corridors ranked three to five (out of 25 corridor segments)

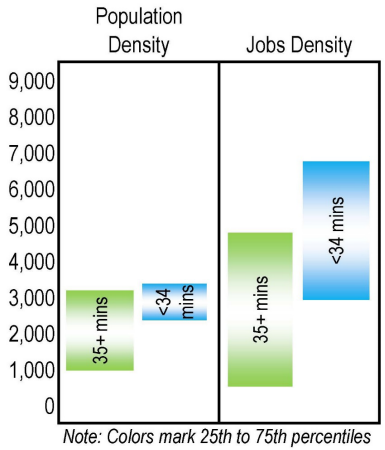
**Table 8** identifies the hypothetical local bus frequency that might exist on each local street segment if (A) the corridor had the necessary infrastructure and (B) was located within the existing Sun Metro network.

**Table 8.** Corridor Potential for Local Bus Fixed Route – Frequency per Density

**Presuming conducive infrastructure existed in the corridor...**
(i.e., sidewalks, intersections, bus stops)

| Socorro Corridor Street Segment | Overall Priority Rank | Fixed Route Service Frequency... Based on 2020 Population Density | Based on 2020 Jobs Density |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alameda Ave - TX 20 (middle) | 11 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| Alameda Ave - TX 20 (north) | 1 | 15-34 mins | No fixed route |
| Alameda Ave - TX 20 (south) | 12 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Bauman Rd (general) | 22 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Bovee Rd (east) | 23 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Bovee Rd (west) | 24 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Buford Rd | 5 | 15-34 mins | No fixed route |
| Gateway Blvd E | 16 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Horizon Blvd - FM 1281 (east) | 17.5 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Horizon Blvd - FM 1281 (west) | 3 | 35+ mins | 35+ mins |
| N Loop Dr - FM 76 (middle) | 19 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| N Loop Dr - FM 76 (north) | 14.5 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| N Loop Dr - FM 76 (south) | 25 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| N Moon Rd (middle) | 8 | 15-34 mins | No fixed route |
| N Moon Rd (west) | 6 | 15-34 mins | No fixed route |
| N Rio Vista Rd (east) | 10 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| N Rio Vista Rd (west) | 2 | 15-34 mins | No fixed route |
| Old Hueco Tanks Rd | 17.5 | 35+ mins | 35+ mins |
| Passmore Rd | 7 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| S Moon Rd | 4 | 15-34 mins | No fixed route |
| Socorro Rd - FM 258 (middle) | 20 | No fixed route | No fixed route |
| Socorro Rd - FM 258 (north) | 21 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| Socorro Rd - FM 258 (south) | 13 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| State Hwy 20 | 14.5 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |
| Walcott Rd | 9 | 35+ mins | No fixed route |

**Existing Sun Metro and EPCT Bus Route Frequency Ranges**




*Note: Colors mark 25th to 75th percentiles*

*Note: Local bus service success is predicated both on rider demand and supportive infrastructure, most especially accessible sidewalks.*

# Section 4. Funding & Service Scenarios

**This section describes the three stage process the TDP project team undertook to identify and evaluate potential transit funding and service scenarios – to arrive at a recommended future for transit in Socorro.**

Section 4.1 details the potential funding sources, primarily federal, that the City of Socorro would likely be able to access to establish and support transit.

Section 4.2 describes the three step process – with two rounds of community engagement – to move from a broad set of hypothetical services to a final recommended transit program backed by data, public opinion, and feasible for the City to implement.

# 4.1 Potential Transit Funding

**Transit agencies usually pool a variety of funding sources to create and sustain services. This is true regardless of whether the transit agency is hosted by a city, county, local government corporation, a region, or the state. The City of Socorro currently receives Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 funding for a portion of the Rio Vista Transportation Program for older adults and people with disabilities.**

**The purpose of this section is to highlight the relative potential for transit funding of various types to support transit in Socorro. The actual dollar amounts will vary over time. The principle sources of transit funding are local and federal.**

## Key Funding Definitions

**Recipient** – the FTA has a process for a local government to become an eligible receiver of funding.

- **Direct Recipient** – a local government eligible to receive funds directly from the FTA; may be multiple in each urbanized area.
- **Designated Recipient** – the primary local government eligible to receive and manage FTA formula grant funds – usually one per urbanized area – and designated by the governor or state department of transportation (i.e., Sun Metro for El Paso).

**Grant** – financial assistance from the state or federal government.

- **Formula Grant** – grant funds provided to all eligible transit agencies based on universally-applied formulas; split each year by agreement between direct recipients in an urbanized area.
- **Discretionary Grant** – grant funds provided to only transit agencies who successfully compete for limited funds.

**Local Match** – most federal transit funding requires at least a certain percentage of funding to come from a non-federal source, usually between 10% and 50% of federal funding.

**Reimbursable Expenses** – state and federal governments require local governments to incur expenses first and then to seek reimbursement for eligible expenses.

- **Operating Funding / Expenses** – dollars used to operate transit services, such as for fuel, labor, marketing, security, fare collection, etc. – percent reimbursable varies.
- **Capital Funding / Expenses** – dollars used to purchase transit vehicles, stop improvements, equipment, and to build facilities, etc. – percent reimbursable varies.

**Direct Operation** – transit services directly operated by the transit agency with little to no contractor involvement.

**Purchased Transportation** – transit services operated by competitively procuring one or several contracted partners (i.e., from turnkey – everything included – to only contracting certain aspects of a service).

- **Capital Cost of Contracting** – contracts with partners may involve capital costs on behalf of the transit agency, such as for a maintenance facility or vehicles. Seven different types of contracts are eligible for varying amounts of FTA reimbursement. The contract portion eligible for 80% federal share ranges from 0%, zero capital expenses incurred, up to 100%, all capital costs for a service incurred by the partner.

***Important Note:*** *Using even one dollar of state or federal funds for a transit program requires a local government to abide by all policies and requirements of said governments – such as federal Title VI, Americans with Disabilities Act, and FTA's Master Grant Agreement all transit agencies must agree to.*

# Key Funding Sources

The City of Socorro can access a limited variety of funds. The amount and type of funding required for transit in Socorro will ultimately depend primarily on two factors:

1) The mix of services (i.e., operating vs capital needs) and
2) How the City operates the services (i.e., direct vs. contracted, or a mix).

**Table 9** summarizes key funding sources. The right-hand column estimates annual funding, if known, in a low-medium-high range. **In the highest confidence scenario (i.e., low), the City has become an FTA Direct Recipient and is able to reliably utilize about $541,000 a year for transit.** Approximately 40-60% of funds can reasonably be expected to be available to reimburse operating expenses.

**For the City to obtain more funds, the medium-high scenarios presume the City would do one-or-more of the following:**

- Utilize more City general funds
- Pursue changes to sales taxes
- Successfully compete for CMAQ funding for a pilot transit program
- Compete for regional category or federal discretionary funds to offset transit capital investments (see next page)

**Table 9.** Transit Funding Sources in Socorro

| Type | Name | Source | Allowed Uses | Local Match | *(Estimated)* Annual Amount | *(Low – Medium – High)* Socorro Scenario Funds |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Local | **General Fund** | City of Socorro | Capital & Operating | *Not applicable* | **Variable** ($5,000 currently for transit) | **$85k / $149k / $212k** (accessible at will) [20] |
| Local | **Sales Tax** (each 0.5%) | City of Socorro | Capital & Operating | *Not applicable* | **~$1.25 million** (currently used for other purposes) | **$0 / $0 / $0** (only accessible with rededication) |
| Local | **Sales Tax** (each 0.5%) | El Paso County ESD#2 | Capital & Operating | *Not applicable* | **~$1.25 million** (currently used for other purposes) | **$0 / $250k / $625k** (only accessible with rededication) [21] |
| Regional | **Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)** | El Paso MPO | Capital & Operating | 20-50% | **~$2 million** (for the region) | **$0 / $80k / $160k** (need eligible program/service) [22] |
| Regional | **Category Funds** (various) | El Paso MPO | Primarily Capital (planning too) | 20-50% | **Variable** (competitive) | **Unknown** (need eligible project) |
| Regional | **Transportation Development Credits** | El Paso MPO | TDC credits match federal funds | | **Variable** (not real dollars – only match) | **Not real dollars** (need eligible grant to match, saves local real dollars) |
| Federal | **Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grants** | FTA | Capital & Planning (operating in certain circumstances) | 10-50% | **~$360,000** | **$324k / $360k / $396k** (need to become FTA direct recipient) [23] |
| Federal | **Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities** | FTA | Capital & Operating | 20-50% | **~$1 million** (for the region) | **$70k / $110k / $150k** (continue to seek from region and/or become FTA direct recipient) [4] |
| Federal | **Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities** | FTA | Capital | 20% | **~$26,000** | **$23k / $26k / $29k** (need to become FTA direct recipient) [4] |
| | | | | | **Annual Total:** | **Low = $0.541 million**<br>**Medium = $1,001 million**<br>**High = $1,585 million** |

**Sources:** Federal Transit Administration, El Paso MPO

***Note:*** *The table does not include passenger fare revenue or other revenue (e.g., advertising, local partnerships, etc.). These other sources will increase available local funds, but based on peers the total is unlikely to add more than 10% in financial capacity. For this reason, the TDP does not include these other sources to ensure the low/medium/high budget range is conservative.*

[20] Low is 20% match for $424,000 federal
[21] Low is 0% returned to City; medium is 0.1% returned (i.e., 20% revenue); high is .25% rededicated to transit (0.25% still to ESD#2)
[22] Low is Socorro not receiving any CMAQ; medium is receiving 4% of the region's allocation; and high is 8% of the region's funds
[23] City of Socorro will need to become FTA direct recipient, which takes about 9-12 months. The City will then seek a funding split with the City of El Paso as the designated recipient.

# Other Funding Sources

**The project team recommends that the City of Socorro competitively seeks and utilizes some other funding sources. These other sources will primarily support capital investments in transit facilities, stops, or vehicles.**

## Federal (Agency and Congressional)

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Department of Energy, Housing & Urban Development, and other federal agencies periodically release notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs) for competitive, discretionary grant programs. The following are some examples:

- BUILD (formerly RAISE or TIGER)[24]
- Reconnecting Communities Pilot[25]
- Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change[26]

Additionally, interested U.S. House of Representatives (House) members can opt to receive local government proposals for Community Project Funding (CPF) grants each year.[27] CPF grants resemble the years past "earmark" program. House members tend to expect the proposed projects to be ready to implement, meaning the federal funds fill the last remaining financial need for the project.

## Texas Department of Transportation

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) receives portions of federal and state funds to improve safety and multimodal transportation options. Two programs in particular may be opportunities for the City of Socorro:

- **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)** – example: crash-warranted improvements to safety, both for people in vehicles and people walking or biking (not limited to state roads)
- **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** – example: sidewalks, shared use paths, or accessible intersection improvements (also not limited to state roads)

## El Paso MPO – Category Funds

The MPO's 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan provides a summary of funding sources.[28] Category 5 and 9 funds are the most likely to help Socorro with transit improvements.

- **Category 2 – Metropolitan and Urban Area Corridor Projects**
- **Category 5 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)** (i.e., funding for a multi-year pilot for a transit service connecting riders to jobs or education along busy corridors)
- **Category 7 – Metropolitan Mobility and Rehabilitation**
- **Category 8 – Safety**
- **Category 9 – Transportation Alternatives Program** (i.e., the regional twin to TxDOT's TAP; could fund some transit supportive sidewalk and stop improvements)

***Note about Transportation Development Credits***
*Transportation Development Credits (TDCs), formerly called "toll development credits", are credits recognized by the federal government and available to use as match for federal grants. TDCs are not real dollars. TDCs simply match federal funds without the need for a local government to use real dollars from local sources. Many Texas regions have a substantial TDC balance because the state has invested in transportation improvements without federal funds, mostly toll roads. For example, if the City of Socorro receives $350,000 in federal grant funds, and the El Paso MPO agrees to use TDCs, then $70,000 in TDC match would be deducted from the region's balance and Socorro could use the $350,000 federal funds. This means that if a capital project needs $1,000,000 then 100% could come from federal sources, provided the TDC balance was reduced by $200,000 (or 20% of the total).*

[24] https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/infrastructure/tiger/
[25] https://www.transportation.gov/reconnecting
[26] https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/351071
[27] https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/edi-grants
[28] https://www.elpasompo.org/departments/mtp

# 4.2 Transit Service Scenario Development

**The City's TDP project team followed a three step process to develop the final recommended transit services to implement.**

**Step 1 in Fall 2024** explored a comprehensive suite of hypothetical transit service configurations, to inform public engagement and refine analytical efforts. The exercise enabled the TDP project team to discern the general opportunities for further exploration with the City and public.

**Step 2 in Winter 2025** built on the qualitative data from the extensive community engagement and the quantitative data from geographic analysis to identify a short list of three feasible transit futures. The TDP project team facilitated virtual conversations with City staff to identify an initially preferred alternative for review with the public in a follow-on engagement effort in April 2025.

**Step 3 in May 2025** put forward the final recommended suite of transit services based on all engagement and analytical work from the TDP process. The recommended services represent a cost-constrained, feasible future wherein all residents of Socorro will have better, affordable access to their entire community through an on-demand microtransit service. The TDP also discusses potential future opportunities for transit services should sufficient resources become available.

**The following subsections summarize the three step process and related public engagement.**

## Step 1. Suite of Hypothetical Transit Scenarios [Fall 2024]

**This section documents the earliest exploration of potential transit service scenarios for Socorro and the initial round of public engagement.**

### Fall 2024 – Initial Transit Scenarios

The initial scenarios from September 2024 informed the project team's engagement and analytical strategies early in the TDP planning process. The initial scenarios, on the next page, did not reflect rider, public, or stakeholder viewpoints. Rather, the information helped the consultant team assist the City to understand the breadth of transit alternatives available and scale of resources required so the TDP process could be grounded in discussions of feasible alternatives with stakeholders, riders, and the public.

Findings for the five initial scenarios are compared in **Table 10** on the following page:

1. Continue EPATS existing fixed route service
2. Establish more frequent City-led fixed routes with paratransit
3. Establish limited corridors of frequent City-led fixed routes with on-demand microtransit zones
4. Establish City-led on-demand microtransit zones
5. Contract with a transportation network company (i.e., Uber, Lyft, etc.) and an accessible provider for subsidized rides

All scenarios assumed two services would continue: (A) the City would continue to operate the Section 5310 funded Rio Vista Transportation Program for older adults and people with disabilities and (B) residents would continue to have access to the county-wide Vamonos Vanpool.

**Table 10.** Hypothetical Initial Transit Scenarios [Fall 2024]

| Services Continuing in All Scenarios | Existing / Alternative Transit Services | Service Details | Cost / Fare (full / discount) | Advantages / Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Socorro's Rio Vista Transportation Program (RVTP)**<br><br>(serving older adults and people with a disability using local and Section 5310 funds) | **EPATS Existing Fixed Routes**<br>(portions of routes serve Socorro) | • Monday-Saturday – 6 routes<br>• Sunday – 4 Routes<br>• Begin – ~6:20 am; End – ~7:10 pm<br>• Weekday Frequency ~71 mins.<br>• Weekend Frequency ~87 mins. | *(Entirety of all six routes)*<br>**Operating Cost – $2.2 million**<br>(530k VRM; 31k VRH per year)<br>**Capital Cost – $0.42 million**<br>(9 buses)<br>Fare – $1.50 / none | Advantages<br>• Regional connections<br>• All-purpose riders supported<br>• Higher demand does not increase cost<br>Disadvantages<br>• Multiple routes = high cost<br>• Infrequent service<br>• Poor quality stops<br>• Needs better walk/bike infrastructure |
| | **More Frequent Fixed Route with ADA Paratransit** | • Monday-Sunday – 1 Route Alameda Ave. (6.2 miles from Tanton Rd. to MVTC)<br>• Begin – 6:00 am; End – 9:00 pm<br>• Peak-hour Frequency – 30 mins.<br>• Off-peak/Weekend Frequency – 60 mins. | **Operating Cost – $0.87 million**<br>(year: 90k VRM; 7k VRH)<br>**Capital Cost – $0.13 million**<br>(3 buses)<br>Fare – $1.50 / $1.00 | Advantages<br>• More frequent service<br>• Regional connections<br>• All-purpose riders supported<br>• Higher demand does not increase cost<br>Disadvantages<br>• Portion of City served is limited<br>• Coordinating paratransit outside City<br>• Requires stop improvements<br>• Needs better walk/bike infrastructure |
| | | • Same days and hours as fixed route<br>• Service area: within ¾-mile of route | **Operating Cost – $0.15 million**<br>(1.5k VRH per year)<br>**Capital Cost – $0.019 million**<br>(2 vans; $6k software)<br>Fare – $3.00 / $1.50 | |
| **2. El Paso County's Vamonos Vanpool**<br><br>(serving commuters to work/school using a variety of funding sources) | **More Frequent Fixed Route with On-Demand Microtransit Zone(s)** | • Fixed route same as above, transfer included | **Operating Cost – $0.87 million**<br>**Capital Cost - $0.13 million** | Advantages<br>• More frequent service<br>• Regional connections<br>• All-purpose riders supported<br>• 100% of City served<br>Disadvantages<br>• High service cost; managed with timing<br>• Higher demand = some cost increase |
| | | • Four on-demand zones connect to the fixed route on same days/hours:<br>○ Begin – 6:00 am; End – 9:00 pm<br>○ Zones ~2-7 square miles each<br>○ Target wait time ~15 mins.<br>(zones provide the ADA service) | **Operating Cost – $1.75 million**<br>(22k VRH per year)<br>**Capital Cost – $0.053 million**<br>(5 vans; $6k software)<br>Fare – $1.50 / $1.00 | |
| | **On-Demand Microtransit Zone(s)** | • Two on-demand zones: north, south<br>○ Begin – 6:00 am; End – 9:00 pm<br>○ Zones ~9 square miles each<br>○ Target wait time ~20 mins.<br>• Higher zone fare to Super Walmart or Mission Valley Transit Center in El Paso | **Operating Cost – $2.00 million**<br>(18k VRH per year)<br>**Capital Cost – $0.053 million**<br>(5 vans; $6k software)<br>Fare – $1.50 / $1.00<br>Zone Fare - $3.00 | Advantages<br>• 100% of City served; zones adaptable<br>• Regional connections, by request<br>Disadvantages<br>• Higher demand = higher cost<br>• Cost control = longer wait or deny trips |
| | **Uber/Lyft TNC Subsidy – with accessible subcontractor** | • Turnkey contract with a TNC provider<br>• 24-hour service<br>• Fare + max voucher subsidy per trip<br>• Max number of trips per month per user<br>• TNC subcontracts with ADA compliant provider for flat monthly fee ~$15k | **Operating Cost – $0.44 million**<br>(TNC – $300k; ADA $144k)<br>Fare – $3.00<br>Max. Subsidy – up to $10<br>Max Monthly Trips - 10 | Advantages<br>• Ease of implementation<br>• No direct capital<br>• 24-hour service<br>Disadvantages<br>• Higher demand = higher cost<br>• Cost control challenging (longer wait or deny trips) |

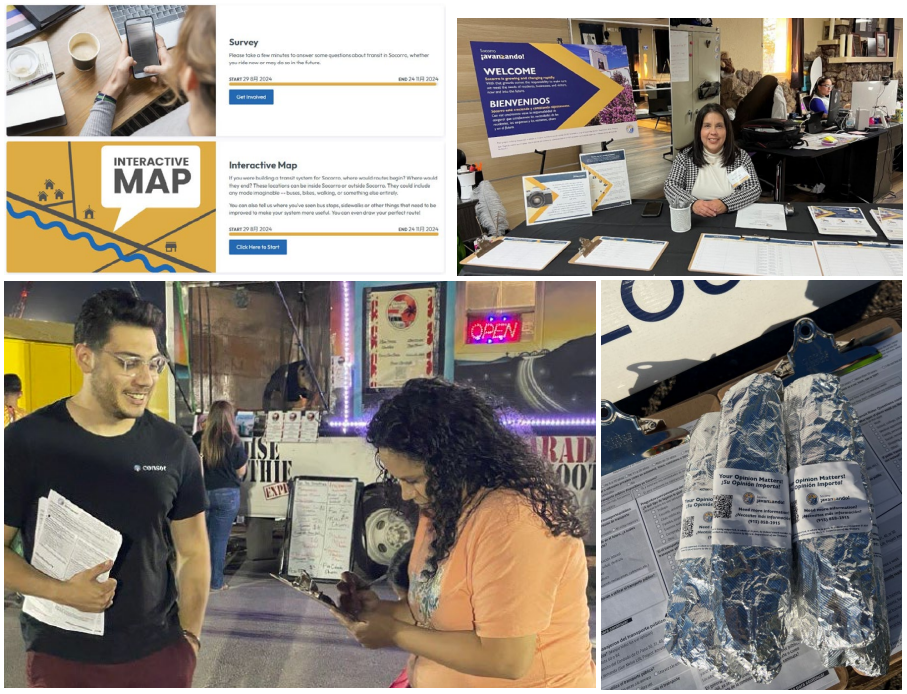
**Sources:** Federal Transit Administration, El Paso County, City of Socorro VRM is Vehicle Revenue Miles VRH is Vehicle Revenue Hours

***Important Note:*** *The City should consider the need to use the Rio Vista Transportation Program service, coordination with non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) providers, or to formalize arrangements to provide seamless mobility for eligible riders of complementary ADA service.*

# Fall 2024 – Public Engagement Round #1

The TDP project team utilized a robust, multi-pronged approach to public engagement in Fall 2024 to reach more than 130 people:

- Online engagement website launched in August 2024
- Guest editorial from then Mayor Ivy Avalos featured in the news
- Initial engagement activities in September-October 2024:
    - Online and print survey – English and Spanish
    - Online interactive map (31 contacts)
    - Stakeholder Interviews (5 interviews)
    - Fright Farm in-person engagement (85 contacts)
    - Rider interviews – "Burritos at the Bus Stop"




The project team concluded the initial engagement efforts by hosting an in-person open house public meeting at the Rio Vista Community Center in November 2024. A news release, social media posts, bilingual flyers, and bilingual signs placed at bus stops throughout the city promoted the event. The team produced 11 display boards for the public meeting. Everyone received a bilingual fact sheet and information on the timeline of events related to transit in Socorro (see the timeline on the following page).

The open house also featured two interactive exercises:

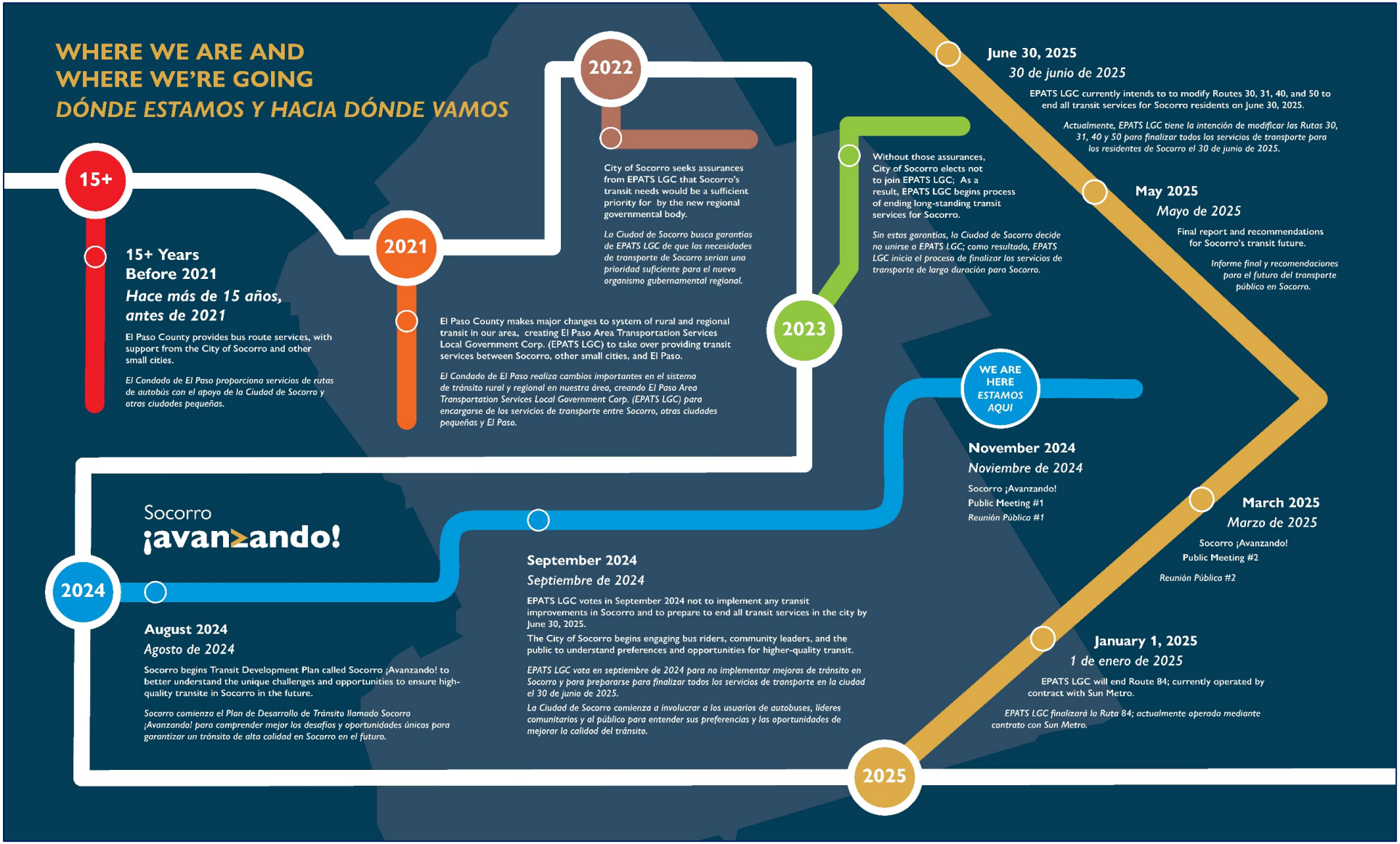
- ***Participatory budgeting:*** To better understand community priorities surrounding transit
- ***Draw your perfect route:*** Participants used push pins and yarn to map a preferred bus route and received a stick, "My ideas are moving Socorro forward"

**Five common themes emerged from the engagement effort:**

1. **Many existing riders expressed a feeling of gratitude for the existing routes, despite admitting to performance issues.**
2. **Socorro residents need and want transit in some form, with interest and support for both microtransit and fixed routes.**
3. **Transit riders need transit to remain affordable and have a cash option for any fare.**
4. **Maintaining access from Socorro into El Paso and to EPCC are both high priority.**
5. **About 51% of residents support the City using existing levels of funding to support transit; 23% support paying more for better transit; 5% believe the City spends too much on transit (21% of people were undecided).**

Refer to Appendix A3 for details about the 2024 engagement activities.

**The timeline board used during the November 2024 workshop:**



# Step 2. Preliminary Scenarios for Fixed Route and/or Microtransit [Winter 2025]

The Step 1 analysis and initial public engagement confirmed that the alternatives for transit in the future should be limited to particular fixed routes and/or on-demand microtransit. The services should be irrespective of whether the operator would be EPATS, the City, Sun Metro, a private contractor, or any combination thereof.

**The second analytical step for the project team was therefore to identify a more limited set of transit alternatives for City staff to workshop.** The scale of fiscal resources likely required, and modeled to be available to the City specifically, also strongly influenced the limited set of alternatives considered in Step 2. The TDP project team assisted the City to evaluate alternatives before deciding which scenario to put to the public in the final round of engagement in April 2025.

**CONSIDERATION #1**
**Creating new local bus fixed routes is complex.** Projected ridership will require 1-2 years to materialize. Capital costs for buses and bus stop improvements must be accounted for, as well as bus operating facility space to park and maintain vehicles. A transit operator must be willing to field the full level of service from launch to at least two years to build public awareness and realize the eventual ridership potential of the route. Long-term route performance may be modeled with an acceptable degree of accuracy, especially when based on in-region routes with similar corridor characteristics and urban/suburban context.

## Key Potential Transit Modes

### Fixed Routes on Limited Corridors

**The TDP project team determined that the City of Socorro does not generally possess the correct conditions for solely relying on fixed route local bus as the transit service.** Population density, and especially jobs density, are insufficient to justify an extensive fixed route network. Transit demand definitively exists but is dispersed in ways difficult to serve with set routes. However, there is one central corridor warranting consideration.

The City of Socorro explored the potential for a frequent fixed route along Alameda Avenue as the one most promising corridor for long-term consideration. Key success aspects for a future fixed route service:

- The route would operate in both directions generally from at least 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM (ideally until at least 8:00 PM or later).
- The City would strive for at least 30-minute frequency.
- The route would operate on all days except major holidays (transit agencies typically do not operate services on 4 to 5 major holidays); the City may choose to operate at lower frequency during particular time periods on weekdays or on weekends.
- Bus stops would be marked with signs, and key stops should have seating, shade, and trash cans. The city could opt to allow “flag stops” so riders can hail the bus at other locations.
- Bus seating capacity would be right-sized over time given ridership levels and available vehicle capital.

A fixed route along Alameda Avenue could extend from about Oden Drive at the south end north through Socorro to end at the Mission Valley Transit Center in El Paso. The route could be extended further southeast in the future, when demand is apparent based on development patterns and microtransit ridership.

## On-Demand Microtransit Citywide

**The distribution of people and destinations, and the built environment, make Socorro an excellent community in which to consider microtransit both locally and to potentially provide regional connections through transfers and vanpool.** The TEDI indices highlight some portions of the community with especially high priority. Microtransit is capable of supporting resident mobility regardless of natural and manmade barriers – i.e., railroads, canals/laterals, etc. – that divide Socorro and impede access to fixed route services.

Key aspects for successful microtransit service:

- The zones should operate generally from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.
- The hours of operation could extend, or zone coverage adapt, to provide residents with earlier morning, later evening, etc. access even when the fixed route (if applicable) is not operating.
- The City should anchor zones with stops at key destinations.
- The City should market the service proactively, provide a cash fare payment option (if a fare is required at all), and accept ride requests via both telephone and a mobile app.
- The City should establish initial performance metrics for shared rides, average wait time (generally 10-30 minutes), and no-shows – by balancing zone size, ridership demand, zone configuration, vehicles available, etc.

**CONSIDERATION #2**
**Adding on-demand transit zones is less complex than creating fixed routes but comes with other potential limitations, such as variable cost as demand changes.** As with fixed routes, projected ridership will require 1-2 years to materialize. Capital costs for additional accessible vehicles are required. Transit operators must market the new service and provide a reliable experience (i.e., wait times for trips) to sustain ridership. Likely initial and long-term zone performance may be modeled with an acceptable degree of accuracy.

If the City were to establish a fixed route in the longer term future then the City will need to satisfy FTA requirements for ADA complementary paratransit. As discussed previously, paratransit is for eligible riders living within 0.75-miles of a fixed route. The City could satisfy ADA requirements for paratransit by operating the microtransit in a particular way so as to also serve ADA eligible riders.

# Winter 2025 – Three Transit Scenarios

**The TDP project team helped the City to explore three transit scenarios, and to conduct a final round of public engagement, before deciding on the final recommended transit service for Socorro's future.**

**The three scenarios were:**

A. **Socorro+ Zone**
(city-wide zone with zone branch along Alameda to MVTC)

B. **Socorro Zone + Fixed Route**
(city-wide zone; fixed route connecting along Alameda to MVTC)

C. **Socorro North & South Zones + Fixed Route**
(two zones: fixed route connecting along Alameda to MVTC)

All three scenarios preserved access to key destinations along Alameda Avenue and into the Mission Valley Transit Center in El Paso. Preserving riders' opportunity to connect with Sun Metro at the MVTC was an essential expectation for the City of Socorro – and riders. **Figure 48**, **Figure 49**, and **Figure 50** illustrate the general nature of each scenario and provide some details used by the TDP project team during deliberations with the City of Socorro.

## Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone

Scenario A consisted of a solely microtransit service operating in a singular zone of about 23 square miles. The zone covered the extent of the City of Socorro and included the EPCC campus and a branch along Alameda Avenue northwest to the Mission Valley Transit Center (see **Figure 48**).

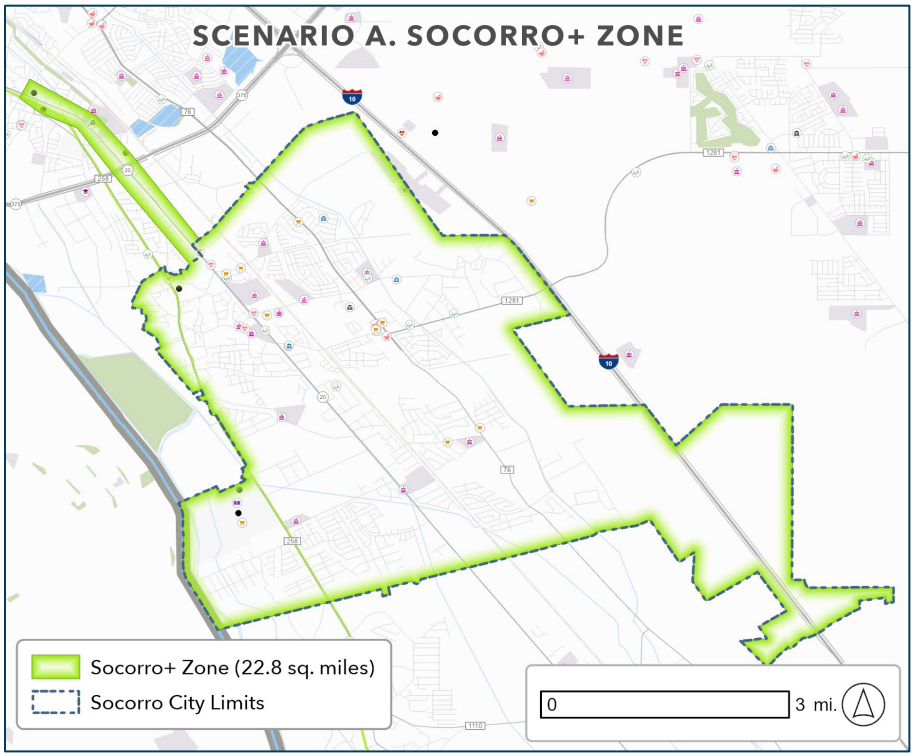



**Figure 48.** Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone

## Scenario B. Socorro Zone + Fixed Route

Scenario B consisted of a mix of both one microtransit zone and one fixed route. The microtransit zone of about 22 square miles covered the extent of the City of Socorro and included the EPCC campus. The fixed route operated along Alameda Avenue in both directions from the middle of the City northwest to the Mission Valley Transit Center (see **Figure 49**).

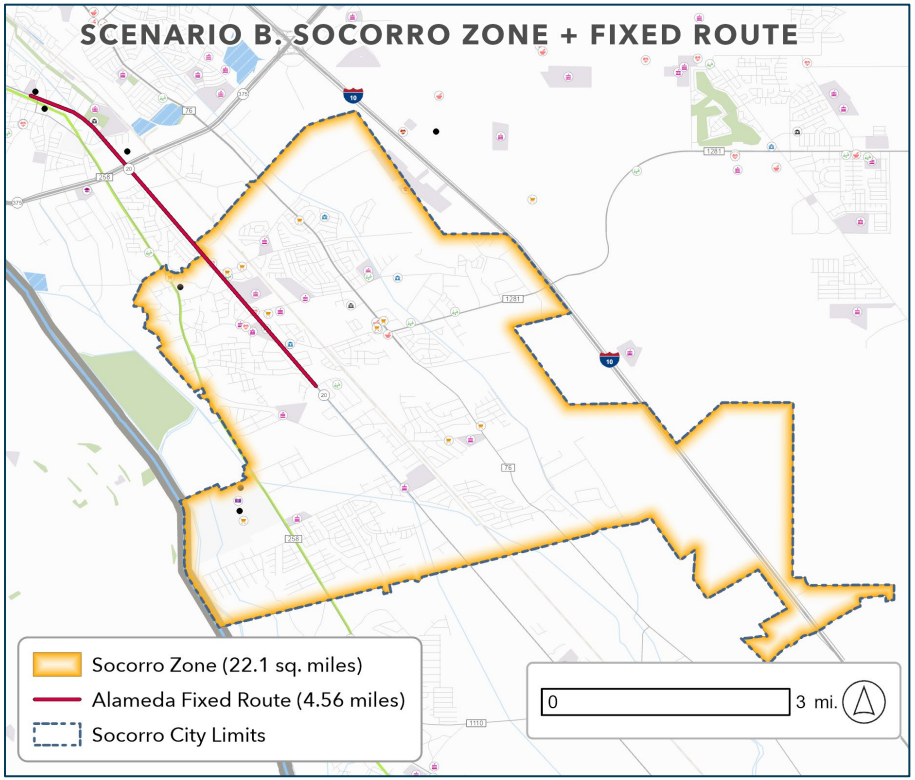



**Figure 49.** Scenario B. Socorro Zone + Fixed Route

## Scenario C. North & South Zones + Fixed Route

Scenario C also consisted of a mix of both microtransit and fixed route services. In this scenario, the City is split into north and south microtransit zones (about 9 and 13 square miles respectively). The two zones covered the extent of the City of Socorro and included the EPCC campus. The fixed route operated along Alameda Avenue in both directions from the middle of the City northwest to the Mission Valley Transit Center (see **Figure 50**).

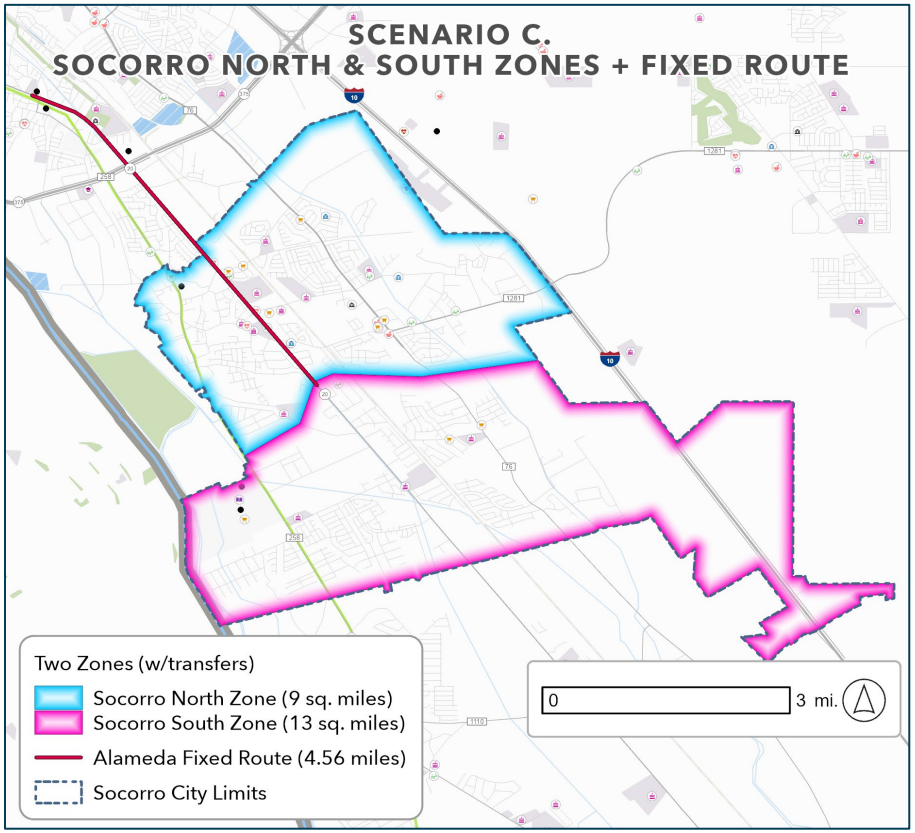



**Figure 50.** Scenario C. Socorro North & South Zones + Fixed Route

The two zones would assist the City to control cost by encouraging trips to access the fixed route or for riders to make shorter trips within a zone.

# Scenario A, B, and C Evaluation

The City and the project team discussed each scenario in detail early in the spring of 2025. The intent of the conversations was to discuss the ins and outs of each alternative. The evaluation looked beyond the operating cost, though the local dollars required to sustain the alternative was of prime importance, to consider the public interest in the scenario and the experience of riders should the City implement the option.

**Table 11** details the six evaluation criteria and evaluation results. **The project team determined the most cost feasible and desirable scenario was likely to be Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone.** The team put the idea to residents of Socorro in a second round of engagement in April 2025.

**Table 11**. Scenario A-C Evaluation

| Evaluation Criteria | Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone | Scenario B. Socorro Zone + Fixed Route | Scenario C. North & South Zones + Fixed Route |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Operating Cost** (i.e., for labor, fuel, etc.) | Lowest Cost | Highest Cost | Medium Cost |
| **Capital Investment** (i.e., for vehicles, stops, hardware) | Low Investment | High Investment | High Investment |
| **Operating Complexity** (i.e., how easy system is to run for the City) | Least Complex | Medium Complexity | Most Complex |
| **Ease for Riders** (i.e., how simple the service is for riders) | Simplest to Ride | Somewhat Complex to Ride | Somewhat Complex to Ride |
| **Accessibility for All** (i.e., reliable, dignified mobility option) | Mobility for All | Mobility for All | Mobility for All |
| **Supported by Community** (i.e., meets expectations for both microtransit and fixed route services as heard in Fall 2024 engagement) | Satisfies interest in only microtransit | Satisfies interest in both microtransit and fixed route services | Satisfies interest in both microtransit and fixed route services |

## Spring 2025 – Public Engagement Round #2

The project team took the emerging scenario for transit's future in Socorro – Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone – out to the public for a final round of engagement. The final round of engagement provided community members with the opportunity to learn how their feedback was integrated into the scenarios, to familiarize themselves with the emerging recommendation, and to offer their personal opinion on the proposed service.

Similar to Fall 2024, the public engagement activities undertaken in April 2025 aligned with the Public Participation Plan adopted at the outset of the study. Public engagement activities were created in consultation with guidance referenced in the original plan, with a particular focus on meeting people where they are and employing multiple methods to maximize opportunities for participation.

**Website.** The consultant team posted bilingual information on the Social Pinpoint project website, which included information on upcoming public engagement events, documentation of previous public engagement events, and information on the emerging recommendation for Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone on-demand microtransit service.

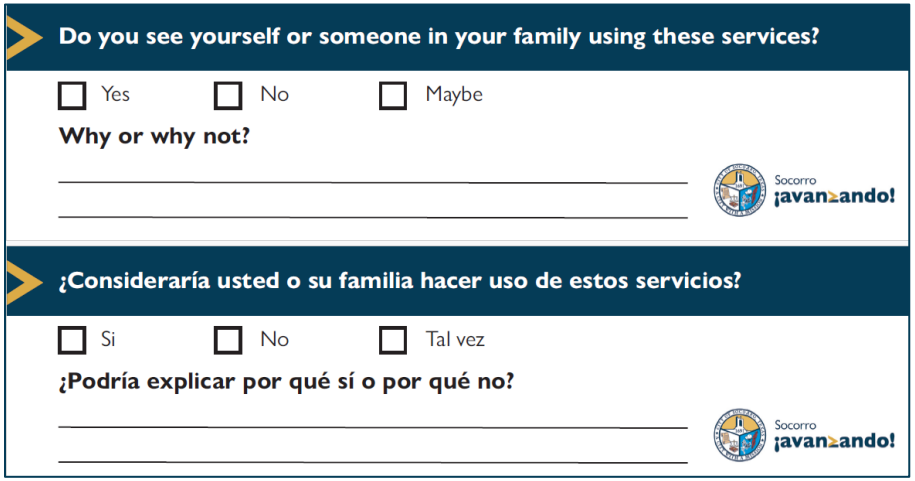
**Community Event.** Given the success of the engagement team's participation in Socorro's annual Fright Farm Halloween community event in October 2024, the City directed the project team to host a pop-up booth at the City's annual Easter Eggstravaganze and Color Run event at Bulldog Championship Park. The goal of this community engagement event, held on April 19, 2025, was to introduce the City's emerging interest in city-wide microtransit and gather reactions from people in attendance.

- People could view a bilingual A-frame display showcasing results from the Fall 2024 survey.
- People could read a bilingual fact sheet with detailed information about the potentially recommended service.
- People who visited the booth were invited to respond to one central question asking whether they or their family might use the potential microtransit service.
- Everyone received an Easter-themed goodie bag.

**Photos from the Easter Eggstravaganza and Color Run:**

**The bilingual fact sheets provided to every person who came by the table at the event in April 2025:**


**The bilingual question slip provided to every person who came by the table at the event:**




A total of 53 people participated. **Figure 51** illustrates how community members responded to the one-question slip.

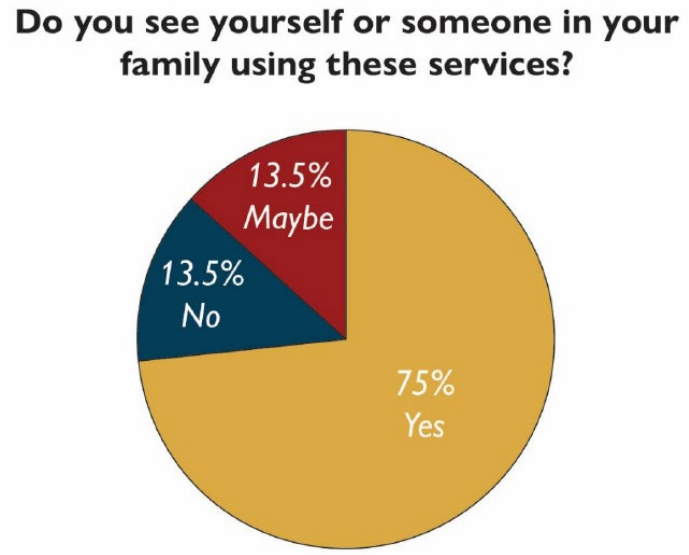



**Figure 51.** April 2024 Opinions on Proposed Transit Scenario

## The overwhelming majority of respondents had a favorable opinion of the Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone on-demand microtransit service.

Three out of every four people prompted said they could see themselves or someone in their family using these services. Many participants noted the service would have particular value for teens and older adults. Some participants noted their support resulted from the discontinuation of long-standing transit options, specifically including Route 84.

Many people provided a comment. The following are highlights of responses about the proposed transit service:

- People responding "yes" or "maybe" that they themselves or someone in their family might ride (N=39 "yes"; N=7 "maybe"):
  - Older family members and residents need transit
  - Good to have an option in an urgent situation or when other people are not around to provide a ride
  - Youths would have an option to get out around Socorro
  - Not everyone owns a care and affordable transportation is necessary
  - Transit is a community priority and asset, also it is environmentally friendly
- People responding "maybe" (N=7):
  - I still drive; we have cars
  - Do not live within Socorro

Refer to Appendix A3 for details about the 2025 engagement activities.

# Step 3. Recommended Transit Service Scenario [Spring 2025]

City staff and the project team regrouped in late April 2025 to discuss the emerging final recommended service based on both technical analysis and engagement findings. The TDP project team provided detailed modeling data about likely ridership, operating cost, capital expenses, and mechanisms for monitoring and improving the service long term. The City and project team held several conversations to iron out details to ensure concurrence that the recommended service would be feasible for the City to fund and operate long-term.

**The TDP project team recommends the City of Socorro implement Scenario A. Socorro+ Zone on or before July 1, 2025.**

The recommended microtransit service will fulfill the needs and expectations of residents and the service is feasible for the City to operate. The City should expect to prove out demand and refine the service over the three-year Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP planning horizon.

- As shown in **Figure 52**, the City should continue to contract with Sun Metro for access into and out of the Mission Valley Transit Center – to connect residents to regional opportunities. The City should also market the Vamonos Vanpool service to residents seeking to access regional destinations routinely for work or education.
- The City should continue to operate the Section 5310 funded Rio Vista Transportation Program for older adults and people with disabilities. Ridership from the general public microtransit may be comingled with Rio Vista program riders as the City tracks both programs moving forward.

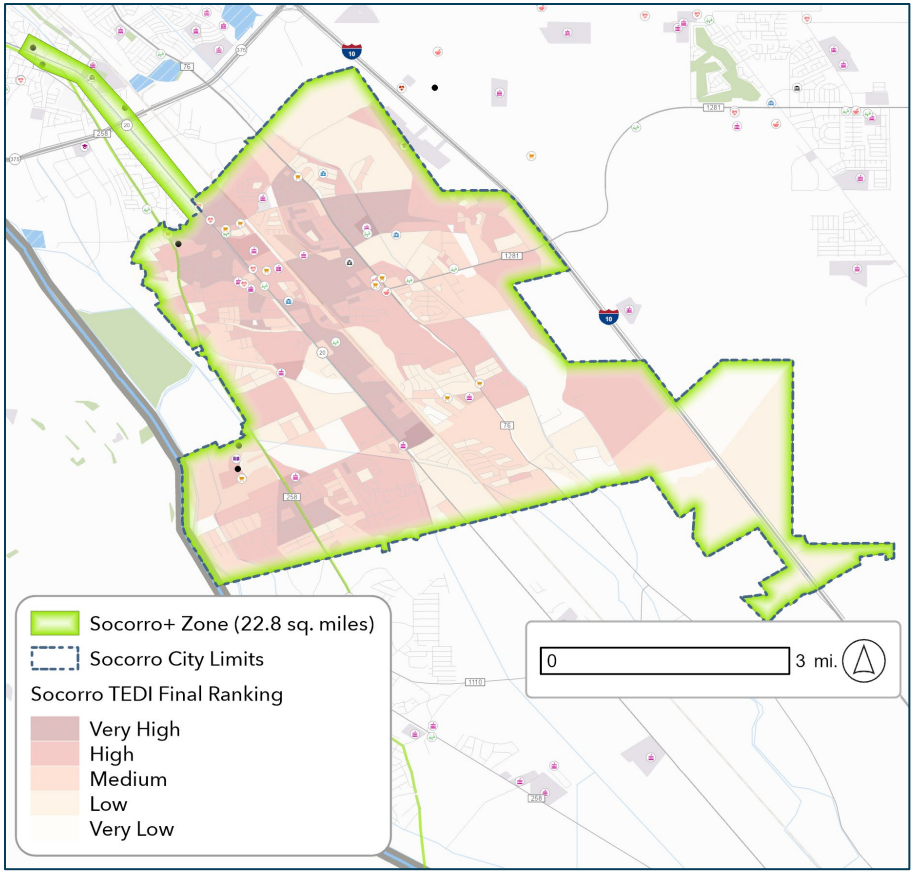



**Figure 52.** Recommendation: General Public Microtransit Service

**Maintaining the Rio Vista services and adding a general public on-demand microtransit service will satisfy both Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP goals:**

1. **Support at least the same level of transit access**
2. **Increase the quality of transit to attract riders by providing a desirable, reliable option**

**Section 5 provides details and implementation steps.**

S

# Section 5. Next Steps for Transit in Socorro

**This section charts the TDP project team's recommended pathway for the City of Socorro to establish a multimodal transit program and to sustain the service for the next 3+ years.**

Section 5.1 provides details about the TDP project team's recommendation for transit services, including modeling results, and summarizes information about service cost and performance, grant resources, managing growth, and regional coordination.

Section 5.2 provides an implementation framework for the City highlighting key topics, considerations, and resources.

# 5.1 Transit Services for Socorro from 2025 to 2028

**This section summarizes key information about:**

- **The three complementary modes**
  - Rio Vista (Section 5310 funded)
  - Vamonos Vanpool (El Paso County)
  - Public Microtransit (City & Section 5307 funded)
- **Model & federal funds access**
  - Modeling analysis summary
  - Important steps for federal funds access
- **Microtransit expenses and likely performance**
  - Ridership, service requirements, & likely performance
  - Operating & capital expenses
- **Socorro local funds and grant resources timeline**
  - Contextual notes about local funds requirement
  - Information about qualitative benefits of microtransit
- **Coordination with regional partners**
  - Sun Metro considerations
  - EPATS considerations
- **Additional considerations**
  - Long-term opportunities
  - Other operational considerations

The City should anticipate making administrative and other updates to the TDP on an annual basis. A substantial update to the TDP will also be required by 2028 to ensure the transit program remains on track for the community for another three year period.

## Three Complementary Modes

The City should continue the existing Rio Vista Transportation Program, assist residents to continue accessing the Vamonos Vanpool program, and establish a new general public on-demand microtransit service. **Figure 53** summarizes who will generally ride each service, the general location and type of destinations served, and additional information.

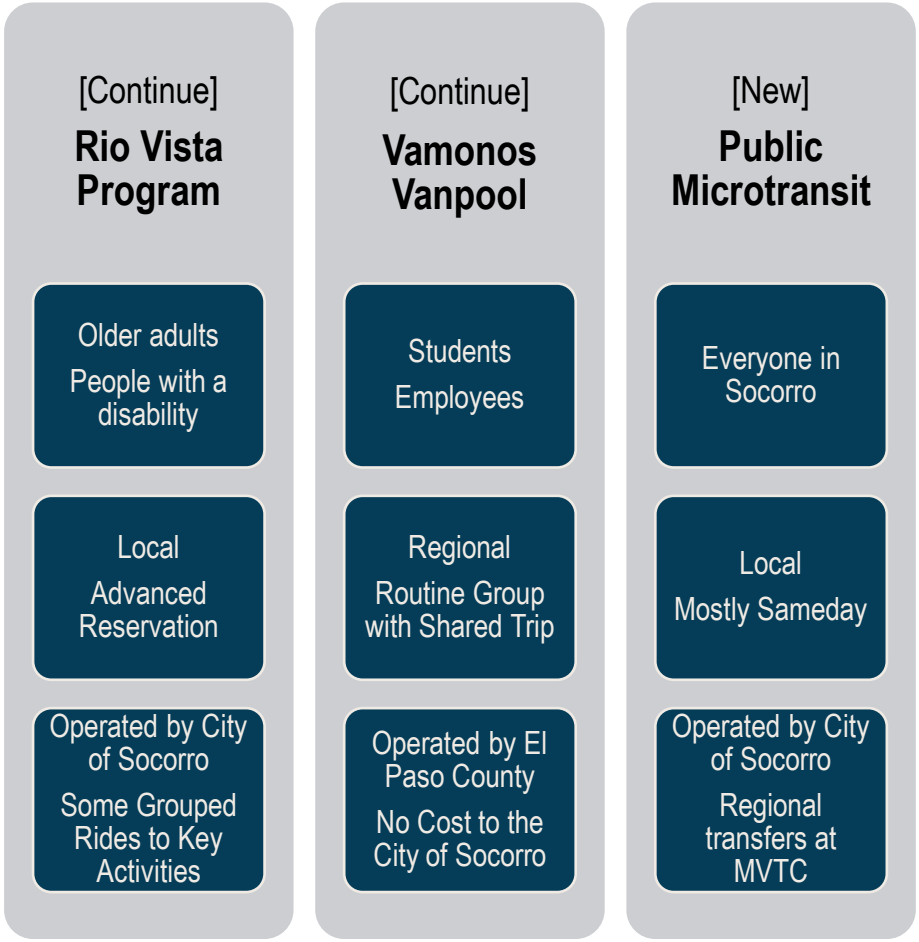



**Figure 53.** Service Parameters for Three Recommended Transit Services

## [Continue] Rio Vista Transportation Program

The City should continue to operate the Rio Vista service as presently constituted and per existing plans for the TDP period from 2025 to 2028. Rio Vista riders, older adults and people with a disability, will also be able to utilize the new microtransit service for same-day trips.


## [Continue] Vamonos Vanpool

The City should train staff to be able to provide residents with travel training to foster the individual's ability to use the Vamonos Vanpool service operated by El Paso County regionwide. Vamonos Vanpool requires no direct involvement of City staff, and yet City staff will ensure they understand the program and can effectively refer people to the service.

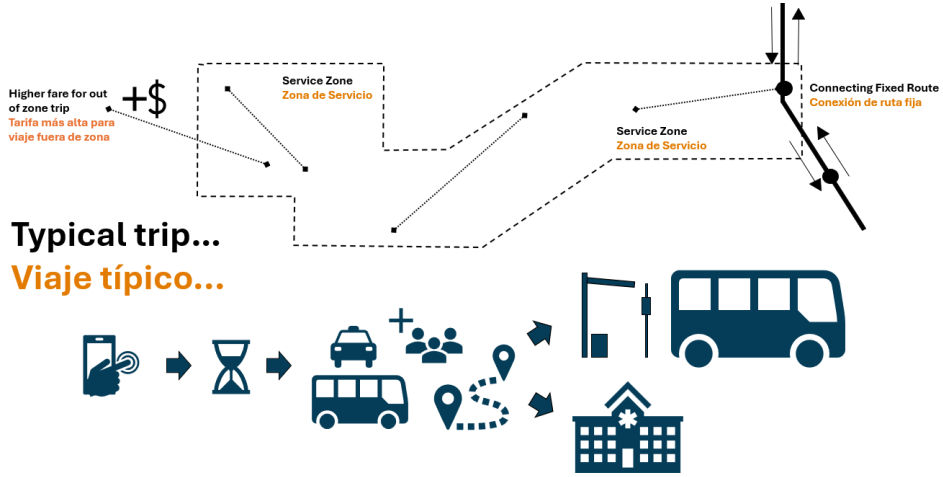

The City will periodically check with El Paso County, with the staff involved in administering the Vamonos Vanpool program, to ensure the service is operating smoothly for residents.

## [New] Public Microtransit

The new microtransit service is recommended to begin operation with the following characteristics:

- Days: Monday to Friday (except major holidays)
- Hours: 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM
- Fare: None (through at least Fiscal Year 2026)
- Reservations: Same day (limited advance reservations allowed)
- Wait Time: Target for 100% riders waiting less than 30-minutes
- Zone Coverage: Citywide, plus EPCC Million del Paso Campus and along Alameda Avenue to Sun Metro's MVTC
- Anchor Stops: Establish anchor points with shade and seating as federal capital funds or other local resources are available

The TDP project team recommends for the City to plan to adapt the service zone periodically to balance ridership demand with resources.




**The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP demonstrates how the portfolio of complementary transit services is the result of the project team's iterative public engagement, balanced with technical analysis.**

# Modeling & FTA Funds Access

**The project team conducted detailed modeling to understand the likely cost and performance for the new microtransit service.** Expenses for the Rio Vista Transportation Program were also considered based on the existing service's requirements and the City's existing pipeline of grant funds, which are expected to be sufficient to sustain the program for the TDP period. Vamonos Vanpool is offered regionally at no cost to the City and therefore is not reflected in this section.

**The consultant team's analysis summarizes the new microtransit service's requirements by Fiscal Year (FY), including the last quarter of FY 2025 and full FYs from 2026 to 2028.** The TDP project team generalized values to an expected range based on assuming the actual outcomes will likely fall within plus or minus 15 percent of the modeled outcome.

The next two subsections provide operational and fiscal details for the new microtransit service. Appendix A4 provides detailed modeling documentation.

### Becoming a Direct Recipient of FTA Grant Funds

The City will begin the process to become a direct recipient of Federal Transit Administration grant funds if the City of Socorro City Council accepts the TDP and then later issues a supportive resolution for the action. The process to become a recipient will likely require 6-12 months and is a necessary first step for the City before obtaining the FTA's Section 5307 and Section 5339 formula funds to support the microtransit service. The FTA funding will flow first to the City of El Paso/Sun Metro, and then per the Service Expansion Policy the City of Socorro will be provided with a portion based on Socorro's percent of the urbanized area population.

**The project team recreated FTA's apportionment math to identify that approximately $360,000 in Section 5307 and $26,000 in Section 5339 funds may be made available to Socorro annually when the City is a direct recipient of FTA funding and the TDP is maintained compliant with Sun Metro's Service Expansion Policy (SEP).**

In other words, each of the following need to align before the City will be able to access federal funds for the microtransit program:

- City Council accepts the TDP.
- Concurrently…
    - **SEP Agreement.** The City forms an SEP Agreement with Sun Metro and seeks federal Section 5307 and 5339 funds, the portion of which is determined objectively by staff at the El Paso MPO (per written policy).
    - **Direct Recipient Status.** City Council issues a resolution to begin seeking FTA direct recipient status.
    - The City establishes the requisite policies and procedures to comply with FTA's Master Grant Agreement and receives the official status from FTA (takes ~6-12 months) – see Section 5.2 for more details.

*Note: The City may simultaneously seek FTA Direct Recipient status while establishing the SEP agreement with Sun Metro.*

**The project team's cost ranges and local share requirements conservatively assume the City begins receiving federal urbanized transit funds either halfway through FY 2026 (i.e., by March 2026) or in FY 2027 (i.e., by October 2026).** Meaning, the dollar ranges for the City's local share in FY 2026 include the range of potential local funds required with and without a partial year of federal funding. **The project team assumes the City will utilize local general revenues to begin the new microtransit service in the last quarter of FY 2025 and will consistently invest the required non-federal matching funds into the future.**

# Microtransit Expenses & Likely Performance

**Table 12** summarizes the project team's expectations for the new microtransit service during the 2025-2028 TDP period.

**Table 12.** Microtransit Performance and Expenses

| VRH = Vehicle Revenue Hour<br>VRM = Vehicle Revenue Mile | (July-Sep. '25)<br>**FY 2025** | (Oct. '25-Sep. '26)<br>**FY 2026** | (Oct. '26-Sep. '27)<br>**FY 2027** | (Oct. '27-Sep. '28)<br>**FY 2028 and beyond** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Estimated Ridership** | **~20 rides per day**<br>~103 rides per week<br>(~1,200 period total) | **~39 rides per day**<br>~ 186 rides per week<br>(~9,700 annual total) | **~58 rides per day**<br>~288 rides per week<br>(~14,900 annual total) | **~65 rides per day**<br>~305 rides per week<br>(~15,900 annual total) |
| **Service Requirements** | **1-2 vehicles**<br>(~2 vehicles at peak)<br><br>~67-87 VRH weekly<br>~700 VRM weekly | **Mostly 2 vehicles in service**<br>(always 2 vehicles at peak)<br><br>~100-119 VRH weekly<br>~1,100 VRM weekly | **2 vehicles in service**<br>(monitor for 3 vehicles at peak)<br><br>~120 VRH weekly<br>~2,100 VRM weekly | **2 vehicles in service**<br>(monitor for 3 vehicle at peak)<br><br>~120 VRH weekly<br>~2,2200 VRM weekly |
| **Likely Performance** | **~$32 per ride**<br>~$39 per VRH<br>~$4.41 per VRM<br>~1.22 boardings per VRH | **~$29 per ride**<br>~$40 per VRH<br>~$4.04 per VRM<br>~1.33 boardings per VRH | **~$19 per ride**<br>~$45 per VRH<br>~$2.60 per VRM<br>~2.4 boardings per VRH | **~$18 per ride**<br>~$45 per VRH<br>~$2.46 per VRM<br>~2.54 boardings per VRH |
| **Microtransit Operating Expenses** | ~$32k Labor (full-time)<br>~$2k Fuel<br>$0 Maintenance<br>$0 Technology<br><br>**$28-38k Total**<br>**(~$11k monthly)** | ~$187k Labor (full-time)<br>~$10k Fuel<br>~$20k Maintenance<br>~$0 Technology<br><br>**$185-250k Total**<br>**(~$18k monthly)** | ~$212k Labor (full- & part-time)<br>~$15k Fuel<br>~$30k Maintenance<br>~$24k Technology<br><br>**$239-323k Total**<br>**(~$23k monthly)** | ~$214k Labor (full- & part-time)<br>~$16k Fuel<br>~$32k Maintenance<br>~$36k Technology<br><br>**$253-342k Total**<br>**(~$25k monthly)** |
| **Microtransit Capital Expenses** | $0<br>None planned | *(if FTA 5307/5339 available)*<br><br>Create shade/seating at three anchor points (~$75k) | *(Assume FTA 5307/5339)*<br><br>Create shade/seating at two more anchor points (~$50k)<br>Maintain technology (~$24k)<br>Procure two vehicles (~$178k) | Maintain technology (~$36k)<br>Procure two vehicles (~$178k) |

# Socorro Local Funds and Grant Resources Timeline

**Table 13** details the project team's analysis for the City's likely commitment from local general revenues to sustain the new microtransit service, including likely federal funds. The following page contains important notes to contextualize the dollar amounts.

**Table 13.** City of Socorro Local Funds Requirements & Grant Resources

| | (July-Sep. '25)<br>**FY 2025** | (Oct. '25-Sep. '26)<br>**FY 2026** | (Oct. '26-Sep. '27)<br>**FY 2027** | (Oct. '27-Sep. '28)<br>**FY 2028 and beyond** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Microtransit Operating Expenses Summary** | **$28-38k Total**<br>(~$11k monthly)<br><br>**$21k City of Socorro**<br>*(remainder offset initially by 5310 Rio Vista dual-purpose staff)* | **$185-250k Total**<br>(~$18k monthly)<br><br>If partial year 5307 funds:<br>**$90k FTA 5307**<br>**$94k City of Socorro**<br><br>Without 5307 funds:<br>**$184k City of Socorro** | **$239-323k Total**<br>(~$23k monthly)<br><br>Full year 5307 funds:<br>**$140k FTA 5307**<br>**$140k City of Socorro** | **$253-342k Total**<br>(~$25k monthly)<br><br>Full year 5307 funds:<br>**$149k FTA 5307**<br>**$149k City of Socorro**<br>*(could be partially offset by ~$12k if a modest fare is introduced for certain riders)* |
| **Microtransit Capital Expenses Summary** | **$0**<br>*(none planned)* | **~$75k Total**<br><br>If partial year 5307 funds:<br>**$60k FTA 5307**<br>**$15k City of Socorro**<br><br>Without 5307 funds:<br>**City delays improvements** | **~$252k Total**<br><br>Full year 5307/5339 funds:<br>**$176k FTA 5307**<br>**$26k FTA 5339**<br>**$50k City of Socorro**<br><br>*~$44k FTA 5307 reserved, potentially for planning needs* | **~$214k Total**<br><br>Full year 5307/5339 funds:<br>**$145k FTA 5307**<br>**$26k FTA 5339**<br>**$43k City of Socorro**<br><br>*~$66k FTA 5307 reserved, potentially for planning needs* |
| **City of Socorro: Total Matching Funds** | **~$21k period total** | **~$109k annual total**<br>(with partial year of federal)<br><br>**~$184k annual total**<br>(with no federal funds) | **~$190k annual total** | **~$192k annual total** |

**Important Notes: Matching Funds Requirements**

- A portion of FTA Section 5307 funding may be used for operating assistance by the category of agencies in which the City of Socorro will be included (i.e., small operators). Operating assistance requires 50% matching funds.
- The portions of FTA Section 5307 applied toward vehicle capital may cover up to 85%, with 15% from the City as matching funds.
- Section 5307 funds applied to non-vehicle capital improvements – such as stops, transit centers, facilities, technology, etc. – may cover up to 80%, with 20% City matching funds.
- The City will be eligible, as an FTA Direct Recipient, to continue to use Section 5310 funding and also to pursue the various competitive grant programs by the FTA (i.e., more capital).

## Important Context Notes

***Context Note 1: EPATS Local Revenues Requirements for Member Cities (provided for comparison only)***

*The draft interlocal agreements offered by EPATS to the City of Socorro required the City make a local contribution. The amount requested in FY 2022 was $115,734. The amount for FY 2023 was $151,706. The amount sought for FY 2024 would have increased again to approximately $230,000.*

*The fiscal requirement from member governments varies year-to-year based on a formula focused on the proportion of vehicle revenue miles in each city and the overall budget requirements for EPATS services based on the LGC Board of Directors' decisions for capital improvements and operations each year. EPATS' long-term plans and scenarios reflected that the City of Socorro's local match requirement may have potentially increased to between $371,000 and $557,000 annually and thereafter remained at or near that level.*

***Context Note 2: City of Socorro's Intent to Leverage Local Funds & Urbanized Area Transit Funding***

*El Paso County is a State of Texas designated Rural Transit District and receives state and federal funding for transit services. The county, now through EPATS, has long served portions of the urbanized area but without pursuing or receiving the corresponding portion of federal grant funds for urban services.*

*The TDP project team recommends that the City of Socorro leverage the City's local revenues applied to transit expenses to pull down federal urban transit grant funds. Federal grants will be eligible to pay for between 50 to 85 percent of expenses, depending on expense type and match requirements. In this way, the project team expects the City will be able to rely primarily on local general revenues and federal grant funds generated by the City's urbanized population. The consultant team does not recommend for the City to seek any State of Texas funding currently provided to El Paso County/EPATS for rural transit services.*

# Microtransit's Qualitative Benefits

## Rider Experience

A new on-demand microtransit zone may or may not see more trips per revenue hour over the existing lower performance ETA fixed routes operated by EPATS. While performance may be better or the same, what will be true about on-demand microtransit compared to the infrequent and circuitous fixed routes is that the new zone based service's ability to provide a significantly better experience to Socorro's transit riders.

Riders will be able to more reliably and flexibly connect from any origin within the zone to any destination within the zone, or to transfer to the fixed route of Sun Metro or EPATS. Additionally, even with an average wait time of up to 30 minutes, riders will generally still spend less time waiting for microtransit than for the infrequent fixed routes. Riders will also spend less time reaching microtransit because the service generally will pick-up or drop-off at curb locations near the rider or destination. The convenience of the new daytime microtransit may well attract new riders who are not presently willing or able to use the ETA fixed routes.

## Operational Ease & Safety

On-demand microtransit will utilize smaller vehicles than fixed routes. The smaller vehicles can more safely and nimbly navigate the relatively narrow streets and tight corners common in many Socorro neighborhoods. The smaller vehicles have a lower capital cost and require less expensive maintenance to maintain in a state of good repair. The City can also opt to utilize operators without a commercial driver's license.

# Coordination with Regional Transit Partners

## Sun Metro

The City of Socorro has an active interlocal agreement with Sun Metro for access into and out of the Mission Valley Transit Center. The agreement mostly pertained to the Route 84 fixed route that ceased operation at the end of calendar year 2024. The TDP project team recommends that the City continue to maintain the longstanding agreement for access to MVTC. The MVTC access agreement is recommended to also begin including access for microtransit vehicles to pick up and drop off at a designated shared spot. The City should also coordinate with Sun Metro to ensure the location utilized at MVTC is readily identifiable for microtransit riders. The addition will ensure operational efficiency for the City's vehicles and provide clarity and ease of use for riders.

Additionally, the project team understands Sun Metro's concerns about ADA riders being dropped at MVTC for transfers into the Sun Metro network. The consultant team recommends that the City participate in conversations about regionally coordinated ADA services. Simultaneously, the TDP team recommends that the City provide Socorro residents with an accessible ride beyond the microtransit zone via the Section 5310 funded Rio Vista Transportation Program.

## EPATS / ETA

Some residents of Socorro utilize EPATS' ETA fixed routes to reach destinations in adjacent communities (e.g., Clint, San Elizario, Horizon City, etc.). The City will support these residents in ways found to be amenable to the City and EPATS. For example, this could look like City vehicles dropping riders at ETA fixed route bus stops.

## Regional Fare Coordination

The TDP project team recommends that the City requires no fare for the new microtransit for at least the first 15-month pilot period. A zero fare service will reduce organizational complexity to begin the service. A zero fare will also reduce risk to drivers in vehicles who would otherwise be handling some cash. The consultant team also recommends this course of action to support seamless comingling of Rio Vista riders and general public microtransit riders. Finally, zero fare will ensure all riders transferring to Sun Metro or EPATS ETA routes pay only one care when accessing the regional partner's services.

# Additional Considerations

## Long-term Opportunities

### Future Premium Fare for Regional Connections Concept

The TDP project team heard some interest from stakeholders and the public for establishing transit services designed to connect Socorro residents to regional centers, such as downtown, the El Paso Airport, University of Texas at El Paso, military installations, etc. The City should consider exploring the opportunity to pilot regional connections with its fleet but at a premium fare in the future. The interest in this type of service may be studied as part of a future update to the TDP.

### Future Fixed Route + Microtransit Concept

As previously documented, the TDP project team determined that a fixed route along Alameda Avenue, or elsewhere in Socorro, was not feasible given expected resources for the transit program during the 2025-2028 TDP planning horizon. If resources and/or demand proved to become potentially sufficient then the City should revisit a fixed route spine plus citywide microtransit concept in a future TDP update.

# Other Operational Considerations

## About Paratransit & Fixed Routes

The City of Socorro should satisfy all requirements for accessible public transit services by offering their services citywide using a fleet with a sufficient number of wheelchair accessible vehicles. There will be no requirement to operate ADA paratransit as the consultant team is recommending for the City not to operate any fixed routes during the TDP planning horizon from 2025 to 2028.

The public and City staff expressed interest in a future fixed route should resources come available and ridership demand on the microtransit service exceed the capacity of an on-demand service. The TDP project team recommends that the City plan to permanently operate microtransit citywide and the Rio Vista Transportation Program locally and to regional destinations. As a result, even if a fixed route was established in the future, microtransit and Rio Vista services would be operated so as to comingle trips for individuals determined to be eligible for ADA paratransit. Comingling ADA riders and general public on-demand riders would require careful attention to detailed requirements to remain FTA compliant.

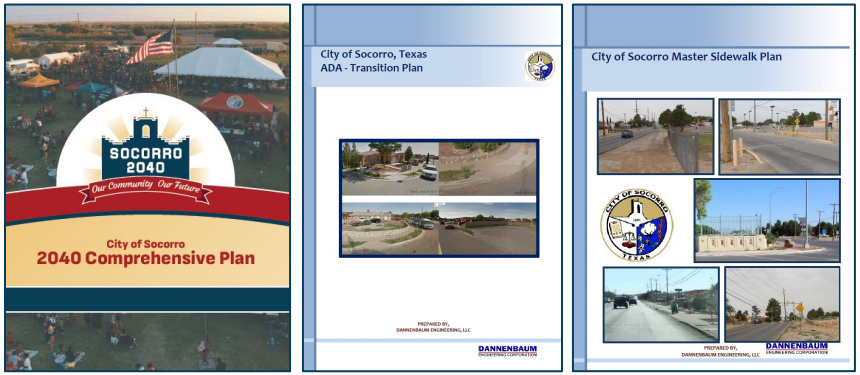
## About Cost Allocation & Reporting

The City will need to establish policies and procedures to track and report on Rio Vista and microtransit services separately, even if many trips comingle riders of both services. The City will also need to ensure sufficiently detailed reporting is captured so as to enable an accurate allocation of costs and performance between the two services during required annual reporting to the region and to FTA.

The City will be a reduced reporter to FTA's National Transit Database because the City's vehicle fleet will remain under 30 total vehicles in the foreseeable future. Section 5.2 provides more information on reporting.

## About Multimodal Accommodations

As detailed in Section 1, the City is proud of its recent comprehensive plan, sidewalk master plan, and ADA transition plan. The TDP project team should continue to identify and leverage opportunities to improve multimodal accommodations in services and the built environment – such as by continuing to strategically improve the accessible sidewalk network. The Rio Vista and microtransit programs will generally offer a curb-to-curb service to riders. Curb-to-curb services ensure any limitations in the built environment will not hinder a Socorro residents' mobility within the City.




As the pilot microtransit service enters operation the City may desire to inquire of riders if they would use a bicycle rack onboard the vehicle or at key anchor points if the City offered such in the future.

***Section 5.2 provides more details related to these and other topics pertaining to service implementation.***

# **5.2** Service Delivery Options & Implementation Framework

**The Service Delivery Options section summarizes the project team's recommended course of action for the City's initiative to stand up the improved transit services and to administer the program long-term, including a brief discussion of the implications for how service is operated (i.e., direct or by contract).**

**The Implementation Framework follows and describes the path the City will need to take to begin the recommended new microtransit service, including a closer look at staffing, staff capacity building, back of house considerations (i.e., for technology, fares, marketing, service control, coordination, reporting, etc.), funding opportunities, and concluding with federal compliance considerations.**

# Service Delivery Options

**Table 14** highlights the City's options for service delivery – meaning directly operating service, purchasing service, or some combination thereof.

The project team determined that the City of Socorro possesses the requisite resources to operate both the Rio Vista program and to implement the new general public microtransit service directly with City vehicles and staff. **The project team recommends the City implement the new microtransit service with Direct Operation to maintain service control, manage service quality, and control transit program costs.**

*Please note that additional variations for each service model exist. The TDP project team provides this table to highlight the relative advantages and disadvantages of major types of service delivery available to the City of Socorro.*

**Table 14.** Service Delivery Options (select examples)

| Service Delivery Option | Project Team Observations |
|---|---|
| **City of Socorro, Direct Operation (DO)**<br>(i.e., city control, city runs all functions and trips)<br>**RECOMMENDED** | Advantages<br>• High control; use of local funds for local priorities<br>• Leverages close knowledge of community & needs<br>• Opportunity to comingle 5310 Rio Vista riders<br>• Will leverage 5307 urbanized area formula funds<br>Disadvantages<br>• Must fulfill all functions<br>• Responsible for adapting to any changing conditions |
| **City of Socorro, Purchased Transportation (PT) Contract**<br>(i.e., city control, contracts all service functions and trips; contractor public or private sector) | Advantages<br>• Moderate control of service, contractor performance<br>• Leverage expertise of contracted partner(s)<br>• Will leverage 5307 urbanized area formula funds<br>Disadvantages<br>• Must monitor contractor performance<br>• Fee will include some profit<br>• Degree of separation from riders/service quality |
| **City of Socorro, DO & PT**<br>(i.e., city control, city runs some aspects/trips and contracts others) | Advantages<br>• Control of service with contractor experience<br>• Opportunity to comingle 5310 Rio Vista riders<br>• Contract terms/duration may insulate cost fluctuations<br>• Capital cost of contracting leverages federal funds<br>Disadvantages<br>• More complex to manage<br>• Portion of costs will have profit |
| **Join Sun Metro**<br>(i.e., vote to dedicate sales tax and meet other requirements to join the agency; services determined by Sun Metro board) | Advantages<br>• Complex to form agreement; thereafter simple to sustain<br>• Leverage expertise of metropolitan transit authority<br>• May leverage 5307 urbanized area formula funds<br>Disadvantages<br>• Degree of separation from riders/service quality<br>• Service design dependent on agreement from board |
| **Join EPATS LGC**<br>(i.e., pay variable annual fee for services determined by partner; one vote amongst large board) | Advantages<br>• More seamless connections to nearby communities<br>• Establishing membership is straightforward<br>• May benefit from service enhancements (long-term)<br>Disadvantages<br>• Varying fee based on regional priorities; one vote of many<br>• Historically low quality (i.e., infrequent, low reliability)<br>• Does not leverage 5307 urbanized area formula funds |
| **Some other combination of the above methods is possible too.** | |

# Implementation Framework

This subsection outlines the staffing needs, back of house considerations, federal funding opportunities, and civil rights considerations for the City of Socorro's new transit program.

## Staffing Requirements

The City of Socorro will need to provide the transit program with dedicated staffing to administer the service, handle customer feedback, coordinate maintenance needs across the department, and to track ridership and perform reporting as the City operates the service. The transit program will require a mix of part- and full-time staff. The following bullets summarize the modeled minimum likely staffing requirements, expressed as full-time equivalent (FTE) effort:

- **Management / Supervision** (shared with Rio Vista program in FY25-26)
  - Transit coordinator – 40 hours per week or 1.00 FTE
- **Operations**
  - Lead driver supervisor – 40 hours per week or 1.00 FTE
  - Regularly scheduled drivers
    - Full-time driver – 40 hours per week or 1.00 FTE
    - Part-time driver – 25 hours per week or 0.63 FTE
  - Extraboard part-time drivers – undetermined
    (i.e., fill in drivers; City will adapt to this need during pilot period)
  - Call intake / dispatch – 60 hours per week or 1.5 FTEs
    (40 of the hours covered by existing roles)
- **Other Functions** (generally covered by existing roles/budgets)
  - Vehicle maintenance – ~10 hours monthly or 0.06 FTE
    (i.e., to coordinate preventative maintenance and other repairs)
  - Administration support - ~10 hours monthly or 0.06 FTE
    (i.e., human resources, senior management time, etc.)
  - Grant management – ~30 hours monthly or 0.17 FTE
    (i.e., tracking FTA grants, local/regional/federal reporting, etc.)

The requisite staff for the transit department will modestly increase over time as ridership demand increases. Staffing requirements will increase primarily in terms of dispatch and driver position requirements.

- The City will be able to mitigate most increases for dispatch by having a strong mobile app partner and a clear phone protocol.
- The City will need to add additional operators and vehicles when ridership increases and/or employ tactics to increase shared rides or increase average wait times to manage demand with existing operators and vehicles (discussed in more detail below).

## Staff Capacity Building (Training)

The City will need to utilize a variety of informational sources for training during the startup phase of the new microtransit service, and for additional training as needs arise. The following highlight the key resources available at no cost to the City:

- FTA Circulars
  *FTA circulars provide instructions to grantees on how FTA grants are administered. This guidance provides grantees with direction on program specific issues and is a resource for grantees on how to comply with statutory and regulatory requirements. Grantees are required to comply with all circulars after signing the agreement accepting federal financial assistance.*
- National Transit Institute (NTI)
  *NTI, at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, was established [in] 1991 to develop, promote, and deliver training and education programs for the public transit industry.*
- National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP)
  *National RTAP's overarching mission is to address the training and technical assistance needs of rural and tribal transit operators across the nation, and to support the state RTAP programs. Our comprehensive set of free technical assistance programs and resources includes training materials, webinars, newsletters and technical briefs, peer resources, research, and innovative technology initiatives.*

National RTAP's resources target rural and tribal transit operators (i.e., lean organizations with varying service area characteristics) and will be especially useful to the City of Socorro during the 2025-2028 TDP period.

Operating the Rural Transit Agency

*A technical brief that raises many of the important operational and regulatory issues facing [small] transit agencies. It introduces transit managers to topics and resources required to run a transit agency under federal regulations, as well as coordinating the development and delivery of services.*

eLearning Portal

Self-guided, online courses where transit managers can assign and track learner progress on a wide variety of topics.

2 The Point Training

*2 the Point Training cards are designed for quick refresher training for drivers that can be reviewed during safety meetings, while parked and waiting for a passenger to finish an appointment, or at the beginning of the day before starting a route. Each card has training information on the front and a quiz on the back. There is space at the bottom for both the driver's and their supervisor's signature*. Training cards are available in English and Spanish on the following topics: ADA and sensitivity, customer service, bloodborne pathogens, and defensive driving.

National RTAP also provides a suite of technology tools, including:

- Cost Allocation Calculator
- ProcurementPRO
- Website Builder
- RideSheet

# Back of House Considerations

## Trip Scheduling and Dispatching Software

The City of Socorro recently procured a technology partner, TripMaster, to provide a software tool capable of supporting the Rio Vista and microtransit services. The City's license includes up to ten unique users. The platform is expected to be sufficient at least through the end of FY 2026. Long-term, the City will explore ensuring riders can book trips in advance or same day via phone and a smartphone app. There are administrative advantages to reducing reliance on phone bookings because the app will enable drivers to communicate with riders and the app will automatically track all critical information for reporting purposes.

Many existing riders also appreciate and hope the City will ensure cash fares and phone reservations are available long-term – should a fare be introduced for some riders in the future. While the City of Socorro will not implement a fare during the pilot period, the City will ensure their technological ability to support fare collection exists in the future before considering a fare.

The City may consider the following during technology procurements in the future:

- A reporting function is accessible by the City to review the number of trips, trip lengths, and other service tracking data.
- The technology provider includes resources and a commitment to provide training in year one and for any major updates.
- The technology provider includes the ability to seamlessly incorporate high-quality Spanish translation and function into the rider-facing app.

- The technology provider can assure the availability and security of data collected about riders and their trips, including whatever the personally identifiable information is retained.
- The City may opt to procure a white labeled app with City branding (i.e., appears as a City service but with terms and conditions spelling out role of the City and the app provider – the technology provider being responsible for data security assurance).

## Fare Payment

**The project team recommends that the City of Socorro's new transit service be zero fare during the initial start-up period.** As detailed previously, the zero fare beginning reduces organizational complexity during the startup phase and reduces risk to drivers in vehicles who would otherwise be handling some cash. The consultant team understands that the City is also interested in beginning the service with no fare so as to:

- Enable seamless comingling of Rio Vista riders (i.e., older adult and people with a disability riders), and
- Ensure riders transferring to Sun Metro or EPATS' ETA routes only pay one fare during each one-way trip.

The project team does recommend, however, that the City incorporate fare policy and payment features into the transit program on a compliant timeline before implementing any future fare system. The City will also need to ensure all desired fare payment methods – such as in-app, online, and cash – are feasible. This will include the City needing to anticipate outfitting vehicles with onboard equipment (i.e., fare boxes/electronic fare validators), to ensure unbanked passengers may effectively continue to use the service. The City will also need to work with their technology provider(s) on the use and disbursement of fares obtained through online systems.

## Transit Service Marketing

For the new service to succeed, the City will need to seek out and apply active marketing tactics. Marketing and outreach efforts will be necessary to ensure using EPATS riders can learn how to utilize the new microtransit service. The following are some examples of some ways the City may target potential rider populations and the community overall:

- Press releases / newspaper articles
- Website page specific to the service
  (including specifics on booking a trip, zone map, rider guide, etc.)
- Promotional shortform videos on social media channels
- Promotional radio advertisements
- Providing information to stakeholder partners (e.g., Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, EPCC, employers, etc.)
- Wrapping each vehicle with a discernible, eye-catching brand
- Bringing a vehicle to community events, like the Halloween Fright Farm or Eggstravaganza, and providing promotional materials to the public

The TDP project team recommends the City also provide travel training support to Rio Vista riders. Travel training is active marketing. Travel training will assist older adults and people with disabilities in Socorro to know about and utilize the same day microtransit service as well.

## Microtransit Control Levers

A microtransit service's operating cost changes with ridership. As shown in the previous tables, the City will experience some increased service efficiency as the new microtransit service attracts more riders – meaning it will be easier to increase the portion of rides with multiple riders (aka shared rides) as more rides are requested. The project team recommends that the City prepare to follow their peers' examples for how to manage high demand by understanding and applying one or several cost control levers:

- **Encourage shared rides**
  (track and encourage shared rides in scheduling)
- **Manage wait times**
  (shorten or lengthen the average wait time allowed in scheduling)
- **Introduce a fare**
  (deploy a for all or certain groups of riders, either flat fare or distance-based)
- **Limit service**
  (provide individual riders with set number of trip vouchers for a period after which they cannot ride or must pay a fare)
- **Monitor prebooking**
  (pros: prebooked trips are nice for riders with known appointments)
  (cons: too many prebooked trips can effect ability to meet same day demand)

The project team recommends that the City use the cost control levers primarily to protect the quality of the service for riders. The City should reserve the right to, when prudent, deploy one or several control levers should ridership demand approach challenging levels to sustain or in cases where other operational challenges become apparent.

## Internal Operations Coordination

The City will need to establish protocols for operations staff to follow day-to-day. Communication will be key to both internal coordination and to ensuring all riders experience as consistent an experience as is feasible.

- The transit coordinator will need to coordinate offset schedules to ensure at least one supervisor is on duty at all times.
- Drivers will need to report for duty on a reliable basis; allowing time to check-in/check-out, perform pre-/post-trip vehicle inspections (if first or last to use vehicle each day), and participate in training.
- An extraboard driver will need to be present, or rapidly on-call, to ensure the City is responsive to trip requests during peak periods or when a driver is not available for duty (i.e., falls ill, etc.).
- The call center/dispatch staff member will help the on-duty supervisor to monitor and coordinate services.

## Annual FTA National Transit Database Reporting

The FTA has required all transit agencies providing transit operations to report to the National Transit Database (NTD) since 1974. **The City will be considered an urban reduced reporter due to having a vehicle fleet of fewer than 30 vehicles.** The FTA's 2024 NTD Reduced Reporting Policy Manual is the most recent guidance on how and what to report. The policy manual is updated every year, though most changes are minor. Reduced reporters have far fewer requirements with which to comply but still must meet all requirements in the policy manual each year. The City of Socorro's fiscal year ends on September 30th and so the annual NTD forms will be due to FTA no later than January 31 the following calendar year.

### Performance Evaluation Program

**The project team recommends that the City implement a Performance Evaluation Program (PEP) utilizing the information collected for NTD reporting to provide City Council and regional partners with any required periodic updates.** The following are the planned potential performance indicators that together ensure high-quality, effective, and efficient transit services are operated:

- Ridership (i.e., number of unlinked passenger trips (UPT))
- On-time performance (i.e., percent of trips begun within target wait time)
- Passengers per mile (i.e., UPT per VRM)
- Number and nature of complaints received from customers
- Number and nature of incidents
- Number of vehicle breakdowns
- Operating expenses per VRM
- Operating expenses per VRH

The City of Socorro may also opt to utilize the additional performance measures specifically useful for on-demand microtransit services:

- Average response time (in minutes)
- Percent shared rides

The transit service updates will follow a template, with clear tables and charts. Each new period of data will be built on previous so a trend line is clear for public discussion.

# Funding Opportunities

FTA Section 5307 and Section 5339 formula funds, and certain other federal discretionary funding opportunities, will be available to the City. The FTA uses population, population density, low-income population, and vehicle revenue miles to determine the amount of Section 5307 funds apportioned to the El Paso Urbanized Area. The El Paso MPO and Sun Metro coordinate to suballocate the split portion of Section 5307 and Section 5339 funds based on urbanized area population ratios in the region.

## Options to Access Federal Funds

Sun Metro is the region's sole FTA Designated Recipient. As such, Sun Metro has established a Service Expansion Policy[29] (SEP). The SEP outlines four principal scenarios whereby the City could seek to benefit from the federal funds generated by the urbanized population of Socorro.

1) **Join the Sun Metro Service Area**
   The City could seek voter approval to formally join the Sun Metro service area and to dedicate the requisite 0.5 percent sales tax. In this scenario, the City is part of Sun Metro, and all service planning, operations, and fiscal/compliance responsibilities belong to Sun Metro. The City has no path to pursue discretionary grants for transit and has little direct control of transit services provided.

2) **Contract with Sun Metro:**
   The City of Socorro forms an interlocal agreement with Sun Metro. Sun Metro identifies the recommended services and operates the service. Sun Metro retains the federal Section 5307 funds generated by Socorro's population and is responsible for federal compliance. The City pays Sun Metro for the portion of

[29] Sun Metro, City of El Paso. November 9, 2021. Service Expansion Policy.

expenses not covered by the Section 5307 funding retained by Sun Metro. In this scenario, the City has no clear path to pursue discretionary grants and has the least degree of control of transit services provided.

3) **Form or Join a Local Government Corporation (LGC)**
This is the course of action offered by EPATS. EPATS does not yet seek Section 5307 urban transit funds from Sun Metro but may seek such funds in the future. In this scenario, the City has no path to pursue discretionary grants and has a low degree of control over the transit services provided in Socorro.

4) **[Recommended] Become an FTA Direct Recipient and Directly Operate Transit:**
The City becomes an FTA Direct Recipient eligible to receive Section 5307 funds directly from FTA. The City defines all transit services and directly operates and/or contracts for all services. The City is responsible for the management of funds and assumes all responsibility for federal compliance, reporting, and local matching funds. Grant funds would be programmed into the El Paso MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and after being included in the Statewide TIP by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) would be transferred from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to FTA accounts, at which time the City of Socorro would directly coordinate with FTA via the Transit Award Management System (TrAMS) to utilize grant funds to reimburse eligible expenses. In this scenario, the City has the most opportunities to pursue additional discretionary funding and maximum control of transit services and funding.

**The TDP project team recommends that the City of Socorro pursue option four, namely, to become an FTA Direct Recipient and directly operate transit services. The City should plan on achieving FTA Direct Recipient grantee status by sometime during the latter half of FY 2026.**

Even with option four, the Sun Metro SEP process will still apply due to the El Paso MPO and Sun Metro determining the funding to "split" each year for each FTA Direct Recipient in the El Paso UZA. The Service Expansion Policy and attendant requirements are discussed in detail in the next section of the TDP.

## Discretionary Grant Programs

The following are additional discretionary grant programs the City of Socorro may pursue in the future:

- El Paso MPO (not limited to transit)
  - Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)
- Federal Transit Administration (specific to transit)
  - Section 5339(c) Low or No Emission Grant Program
  - Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP)
- U.S. Department of Transportation (not limited to transit)
  - Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)
- U.S. Congressional (not limited to transit)
  - Community Project Funding (CPF)

Readers should note that the above programs are generally highly competitive and funds are generally to complete funding for capital purchases of vehicles or for facility construction.

# Complying with Sun Metro Service Expansion Policy

The City of Socorro's Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP provides a data-informed and community directed transit service recommendation. The TDP identifies the transit service needs of the City not being met or insufficiently met by existing services. The TDP was a key initial step for the City to identity how to improve transit most strategically for the community, especially existing riders.

## SEP Agreement

Sun Metro is the FTA's Designated Recipient for federal urban transit funds coming into the El Paso Urbanized Area. In that role, Sun Metro, like the designated recipient in other regions, has established a Service Expansion Policy. The SEP lays out how transit stakeholders in the El Paso region may access federal urban transit funds. The City of Socorro will need to form an SEP Agreement with Sun Metro, regardless of which method of service expansion is utilized to support transit in Socorro. The City's selected expansion method may alter some of the details required in the final agreement (service expansion options were outlined in the previous section). The SEP agreement between the City and Sun Metro must be approved by the City of El Paso Mass Transit Board, with recommendation from the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization, and must meet the SEP's minimum requirements.

## Proposal for Service Expansion

The Sun Metro SEP will require the City to provide a "Proposal for Service Expansion". The Proposal for Service Expansion is to formally demonstrate sufficient need and support for transit services envisioned in the TDP. **The consultant team recommends that the City prepare and submit their initial proposal early in the period between September 1, 2025, to March 30, 2026** (i.e., proposals are considered during the same months long period each fiscal year).

The City's proposal will be required to include the following:

1. A resolution demonstrating City Council's commitment
    a. Funding commitment
    b. Community support
    c. Support of a regional fare structure
    d. Acknowledgement of ADA requirements
2. A completed TDP (details below and in Appendix B of the SEP)
3. "Additional information pursuant to FTA requirements or when requested by the review team to further supplement or clarify information included in the proposal may be required."

## TDP Time Period

The Sun Metro SEP will require that the City's TDP accounts for at least three years of service. The SEP will also require the City of Socorro to provide an administrative update to the TDP each year by the anniversary of the execution date of the SEP Agreement between the City and Sun Metro. **The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP meets this requirement.**

## TDP Required Content

According to Sun Metro's SEP, the TDP shall include the following:

- *Transit vision, mission and goals of the local government entity*
- *Documentation of a public participation process in development of the TDP*
- *Review of state and local transportation plans and how they will affect the TDP*
- *How transit service will connect with other transit systems in the UZA and how service will complement regional transit goals, as documented by MPO*
- *Identification of opportunities for transit service with other local agencies, communities, or private entities*

- *Detailed description of FTA-required paratransit services within the service area*
- *Explanation of how service will be integrated in a regional transit network that increases connectivity, closes gaps and minimizes duplication of service*
- *Analysis of transit-supportive growth patterns in the area of service*
- *Analysis of multimodal accommodations that support transit service, such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities*
- *Estimates of demand for transit services in the service area*
- *Performance evaluation of any existing transit service in the service area*
- *Analysis of transit service alternatives, including financial impacts of each alternative*
- *Maps of services areas and types and levels of transit service provided or proposed*
- *Three-year strategic plan that includes policies to support the provided or proposed service*
- *Three-year funding plan for staff, vehicles, and capital improvements for mass transit in the service area*

**The Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP meets or exceeds the expected TDP content per the Sun Metro SEP.**

## Performance Evaluation Program

The SEP policy also requires the City of Socorro to develop and maintain a performance evaluation program to track and report on transit services. The PEP must evaluate system performance, quality of service, and level of customer satisfaction. The policy puts forward required measures. The City adapted the list of required measures based on not operating fixed routes or paratransit.

**The project team's recommended PEP, in an earlier section of the TDP, meets this requirement.**

## Annual Updates to TDP & Progress Report

**The project team recommends that the City of Socorro make annual updates to the Socorro ¡Avanzando! TDP and provide a progress report to include at least the following information:**

- *Detailed description of goals achieved*
- *Identification of areas of TDP that need to be addressed, based on implementation challenges, and description of proposed action items to ensure the TDP is implemented as planned*
- *Analysis of service based on performance measures identified in the PEP*
- *Description of any proposed changes to transit service for the upcoming year*
- *Any revisions to strategies and policies*
- *Any revisions to funding plan*

# FTA Direct Recipient Process

The project team strongly recommends that the City seeks to establish direct recipient grantee status with the FTA. **Direct recipient grantee status will be useful to the City regardless of transit service delivery mechanism.** This is because some discretionary grants are only available to established grantees, regardless of the local government's relationship with the transit service in their community. For example, there are cities and special government districts in Texas who are FTA direct recipient grantees who receive Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP) grant funds from the FTA to create first- and last-mile pedestrian and bike improvements around transit services operated by other local governments in their community.

The following bulleted list outlines the essential steps for the City of Socorro to become a direct recipient of FTA funds and is adapted directly from FTA information:

**Step 1: New Grantee Request Letter**

To initiate the New Recipient Process, the City will need to send a letter to FTA Region VI outlining their intentions with regard to their FTA funding requests. The letter should contain the following elements:

- Identify what types of activities FTA funds will be used to complete
- Identify the type of FTA funds that new recipient will seek for these activities
- Cite the planning basis for the activities being funded (i.e., feasibility study, transit service analysis, long-range transportation plan)
- Identify a point of contact at the City to work with FTA through the review process.

**Step 2: Demonstrate Legal Capacity**

Before FTA may award a grant, FTA must make a finding that the grant applicant has or will have the legal capacity to carry out the project.

- Opinion of Legal Counsel – identifies the legal authority of the grant applicant, citing, for example State and local statutes, and states whether any significant legislation or litigation is pending that may affect the legal status of the applicant.
- Authorizing Resolution – resolution from the City Council to show the City has the authority to file an official grant application, showing who has the authority to act on behalf of the application, and supporting the application.
- Annual Certifications and Assurances – before FTA may award Federal funding, the City must provide to FTA all certifications and assurances required by Federal laws and regulations.
- FTA Master Agreement – the FTA Master Agreement is the FTA official document containing FTA and other cross-cutting Federal requirements applicable to the FTA recipient and its project(s).

**Step 3: Demonstrate Financial Capacity**

The City must have financial policies and procedures; an organizational structure that defines, assigns and delegates authority; and financial management systems in place to match, manage, and charge only allowable cost to the award.

- Documentation of Local Match – must show documentation through City Council resolution that the City has the required local match for the grant application.

**Step 4: Demonstrate Technical Capacity**

Technical capacity involves the capability of the grant applicant to property carry out and manage Federal grants.

- Organizational Chart – the organizational chart should illustrate which positions and offices will carry out grant-related activities such as procurements, reporting, equipment maintenance, and operations.

**Step 5: Comply with Other Requirements**

- Meeting with FTA Region VI – as a follow up to the letter submitted to FTA Region VI to show the intent of the City being a FTA grantee, the City should meet with Region VI representatives to review the application and discuss the project.
- System Access Request
  - Transit Award Management System (TrAMS) – TrAMS is FTA's platform to award and manage federal grants.
  - Electronic Clearing House Operation (ECHO) – a web application that allows FTA grant recipients to request payments from their grant awards.
- Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) – a unique, nine-digit series of numerals that identifies a business. The

federal government uses the DUNS number to track how federal money is allocated.

- System for Award Management (SAM) – SAM is an official website of the Federal Government, and the City must register to do business with the government.

**Step 6: Comply with Civil Rights**

New recipients must agree to comply with all applicable civil rights statutes and implementing regulations as a condition of receiving any FTA funding, regardless of type.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – new recipients are required to submit a Title VI plan with the following elements:
  - Title VI Notice to the Public, including a list of locations where the notice is posted
  - Title VI Complain Procedures (instructions to the public on how to file a Title VI discrimination complaint)
  - Title VI Complaint Form
  - List of transit-related Title VI investigations, complaints, and lawsuits
  - Public Participation Plan, including information about outreach methods to engage minority and limited English proficient populations (LEP)
  - Language Assistance Plan for providing language assistance to person with LEP
  - A table depicting the membership of non-elected committees and councils, the membership of which is selected by the recipient, broken down by race, and a description of the process the City uses to encourage the participation of minorities on such committees
  - A Title VI equity analysis if the recipient has constructed a facility, such as a vehicle storage facility, maintenance facility, operation center, etc.
  - A copy of City Council meeting minutes, resolution, or other appropriate documentation responsible for policy decisions reviewed and approved the Title VI program
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Plan and Annual Goal – all FTA recipients of federal funding over $250,000.00 in one year must comply with Department of Transportation (DOT) regulation 49 CFR part 26, "Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in Department of Transportation Financial Assistance Programs."
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan – the EEO plan is developed to establish a strong company policy and commitment to equal employment opportunities. FTA requires all recipients of FTA funding, which meet certain thresholds, to develop and submit for approval an EEO Plan every three years. The thresholds are:
  - 100 or more transit-related employees AND,
  - Receives capital or operating assistance in excess of $1 million, OR planning assistance in excess of $250,000.00.
  - Agencies with 50-99 transit-related employees who meet the monetary threshold are required to prepare and maintain an abbreviated EEO program but are not required to submit to FTA unless requested.
  - Agencies with between 50-99 transit-related employees that do not meet the monetary threshold are not required to prepare and maintain an abbreviated EEO Program. However, FTA applicants, recipients, subrecipients, and contractors who do not meet EEO Program thresholds are still required to comply with all EEO statutes and regulations.
  - The employees that would be considered for these requirements would be any City employees who assist in the execution of the transit services

including financial, legal, operations, and other services.
        - The City would most likely not meet the lowest threshold necessitating an EEO plan.
    - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) – All transit vehicles and facilities must meet the accessibility requirements laid out in ADA and FTA requirements. The City must also agree to comply and assure the compliance of each third-party contractor and each subrecipient at any time of the project complies with access to ADA accessible vehicles. No specific submittal is required during the New Recipient Process, these requirements are incorporated into the FTA Master Agreement and Annual Certifications and Assurances.

# Federal Civil Rights Compliance

The City of Socorro is implementing a federally funded transit service and so the project team recommends the City ensure compliance with federal civil rights regulations by considering the following:

- **Environmental Justice / Title VI:** The City will need to complete Environmental Justice analysis to ensure any future program service changes do not adversely affect minority and low-income populations.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The City will need to ensure services comply with ADA requirements.

- **Unbanked Population:** To ensure individuals with no debit or credit card can access the service, in the future if a fare is required, vehicles should be equipped with fareboxes, in which passengers are permitted to use cash while boarding the vehicle. Where the program is cashless, customers should be permitted to use cash to purchase pre-paid and re-loadable credit cards from local retailers that can be used to pay for a trip (i.e., the City might partner with key local retailers near designated anchor points).

- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** The City will need to follow LEP procedures as deemed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ensure that the important information for the service including announcements, booking language, and other service information in any language identified as a Safe Harbor language in the service area. The safe harbor threshold is any eligible LEP language that makes up 5% or 1,000 people of the total population served.

- **Smartphone/Internet Access:** A call center must be available for those customers without a smartphone or internet access. The City can utilize its existing customer service mechanisms to reserve a trip, or a procured contractor can host a call center for trip bookings. Either option requires customer service personnel to be trained to understand the intricacies of the service and compliance requirements.

# Procurement Considerations

The project team recommends that the City of Socorro directly operate the on-demand microtransit service, similar to how the City already manages the Rio Vista 5310 Transportation Program.

- Should the City ever decide to partner with a private sector operating partner, the City will be required to procure the operations service through fair and open procurement competition, including the contractor agreeing to all relevant federal clauses.

- If the City procures non-federally funded services – such as deciding to use local funds exclusively – then the City would only be required to follow its internal procurement policy.

**The City will need to move through the three stages of FTA-compliant procurements:**

1. **Preparation and planning**
2. **Pre-award activities**
3. **Post-award activities**

## Preparation and Planning Phase

The City should utilize planning documents such as this report and other resources to develop a scope of services for procurement documentation. To be compliant with FTA funding, the City will need to maintain a written procurement history documenting the activities undertaken by the City. During this phase of the procurement process, the City will identify the scope of services through advanced planning, funding source identification, and any environmental or civil rights clearance needed for the project.

As required by the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR Part 200, all federally funded projects must identify four critical items prior to releasing a procurement:

- **Method and Rationale of Procurement –** With either service moving forward, the City would elect to use a Request for Proposals. Since price is not the only consideration and there will not be a clearly defined specification (as required by the Invitation for Bid), a Request for Proposal procurement would allow the City to consider other criteria such as operational plans, past performance, and references along with the proposed cost to operate and maintain the service.

- **Contract Type –** The Federal Government has certain contract types that are allowed and some that are strictly forbidden when developing a compliant agreement. The two most common types of contracts are firm fixed price and cost reimbursement. The procurement for either service would most likely move forward with a firm fixed price contract setting a set cost per revenue hour or revenue mile with a not to exceed set amount per month.

- **Contractor Selection Type –** The Contractor Selection Type falls in line with the Method of Procurement. As a Request for Proposal is recommended, the selection type would be considered a "Best Value" contract. A "Best Value" contract allows for the City to consider price as a criterion while also allowing for other selection criteria to be considered in the evaluation period. While all contractors must be responsive and responsible through the procurement process, the best value selection provides more flexibility in evaluating the responses and not requiring the City to move forward with the lowest bidder.

- **Basis of Contract Price –** When considering proposals, the City will evaluate the proposed costs based on a price analysis system. A price analysis system allows for proposed costs to be compared against one another along with other estimates, as long as there is adequate competition.

During the preparation and planning phase, the City will need to create an independent cost estimate to determine an estimated cost to execute the service with either service type. This will be used to compare against proposed costs in the evaluation phase to ensure that pricing is reasonable. This estimate also allows for the City to budget for the future costs of the service prior to the execution of a contract.

Throughout this phase, the City will be creating the documentation for the procurement. This will include the developed scope of services but also the requirements of both the City and Federal Government. The solicitation will include federally required contract clauses, certifications, and other necessary language for a successful procurement. This phase includes all activities up until the procurement is released.

## Pre-Award Phase

After the initial development of the procurement, the pre-award phase includes all activities from the advertisement of the Request for Proposal through the evaluation process and award recommendation.

The City will need to properly advertise the procurement to ensure full and open competition, whether this includes print advertising or ensure the advertisement is in online publications. All advertisements should be documented for the procurement folder. The City would also provide any documentation and sign-in sheets if a pre-proposal meeting is held. Any interactions with potential Contractors including email notifications should all be properly documented.

Once proposals are submitted and the due date has passed, the City will need to evaluate the proposals for both responsiveness and responsibility as well as on the listed criteria in the procurement and price analysis, as detailed above. The City will establish an evaluation team to rank and score each proposal against the listed criteria to determine the proposal with the best value to the City.

## Post-Award Phase

To ensure a successful delivery of services, the City should continue to move through the procurement process through the post-award phase. This phase will include all initial startup activities, contract oversight and management, and compliance review throughout the lifetime of the contract. The City will monitor monthly invoicing, budget constraints, service complaints, change orders, and compliance with federal requirements to ensure contract compliance. These activities happen on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

# Appendices

The following appendices contain deeper information generated by the TDP project team and utilized in conversations with the City of Socorro during the development of the Socorro ¡Avanzando! Transit Development Plan. The project team provides this information to ensure the City has documentation of the key details behind recommendations.

## A1. Principle Methods

The TDP planning process included collecting information through proactive public engagement and compiling technical information of various types. Each type of information was applied harmoniously to identify desired, feasible transit solutions for Socorro.

### Primary Engagement Methods

The City's TDP planning effort repeatedly engaged the public. A Public Participation Plan (PPP) guided engagement and followed recommended practices per the Transportation Research Board: Transit Cooperative Research Program's *TCRP Synthesis 170: Inclusive Public Participation in Transit Decision-Making* report.[30] As a result, engagement activities implemented that report's three conclusions:

- Meeting people where they are
- Vary the frequency of times and days of the week
- Employ multiple methods to maximize participation

The City's engagement included:

- Interacting with transit riders at bus stops
- Pop-ups at existing community events
- Traditional public meetings
- Public presentations

The City held engagement opportunities at diverse locations at differing times/days of the week. Approximately 87% of Socorro households speak a language other than English at home (primarily Spanish). Additionally, per the 2018-2022 American Community Survey, approximately 83% of households have broadband internet access at home. All engagement materials were produced in English and Spanish and deployed electronically and in print. Both rounds of engagement included virtual and in-person contact with the public.

### Primary Technical Data Sources

The principal data sources for the development of the TDP:

- U.S. Census Bureau[31]
  - 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
  - 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census
  - 2020 Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics[32]
- Federal Transit Administration
  - 2023 National Transit Database[33]
- Various data provided by Sun Metro and El Paso County
  - Ridership Reports
  - ArcGIS Shapefiles
  - General Transit Feed Specifications (GTFS)
- Other
  - Center for Neighborhood Technology[34]
  - ArcGIS Business Analyst
  - LINK Houston's Transportation Equity Demand Index.[35]

[30] https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26940/inclusive-public-participation-in-transit-decision-making
[31] https://data.census.gov/
[32] https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/
[33] https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles
[34] https://htaindex.cnt.org/
[35] https://linkhouston.org/reports-briefings/equity-in-transit-2022/

# A2. Existing Conditions Analysis

## Transportation Equity Demand Index

The City's project team assessed the city- and county-wide need for transit affecting and/or influencing equitable mobility outcomes. Equity in transportation is proactively ensuring fair and equal access, regardless of income, race, disability, or other socio-economic factors. Equity focuses on strategically improving the quality of affordable and accessible mobility options. Additionally, equity involves engaging diverse populations in the planning and decision-making processes to understand, preempt, and rectify disparities.

The TEDI is a means of identifying areas of a given community warranting more equitable transportation investments through the observation of human- and built environmental-related characteristics.

- The City's Socorro focused TEDI is represented at the Census Block level.
- The City's El Paso County focused TEDI is represented at the Census Block Group level.

The TEDI analysis is comprised of 13 unique indicators, detailed in **Table 15**. The table describes each indicator, along with the geographic analysis level and data source. Data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census, American Community Survey, and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, and the Center for Neighborhood Technology's (CNT's) Housing+Transportation Index dataset. The primary statistical method is transforming each block or block group's values for the 13 indicators into a percentile rank between one and 100, and then to average all 13 indicators to arrive at a combined rating for each geography. The result is a rank order of each geographic unit in comparison to all others in the respective study area. Higher values mean higher relative priority and feasibility for equitable transportation.

The original TEDI methodology included three built environment indicators concerned with walkability: street intersection density, average block perimeter, and compact neighborhood score. All three factors originated from CNT.[36] However, CNT's most recent data release included only the average block size, with an explanation that statistical analysis had revealed the prior three measures essentially measured the same observation. Therefore, indicators 1 to 12 were given equal weights, while Indicator 13, Average Block Size, is given triple weight. The result is an index following the intent of the original 15 equally weighted indicators. In other words, a built environment development pattern potentially more conducive to walking, measured by block size, has the same 20% overall weight in the TEDI result.

The index does not capture actual walking conditions as no sufficient datasets exist about intersection safety, sidewalk existence and quality, and infrastructure accessibility – the three key factors for actual walkability necessary to connect people to active transportation facilities and the transit network.

**Figure 54** to **Figure 66** map each Socorro TEDI indicator, depicted at the smallest geographic unit possible for each respective indicator.

[36] Center for Neighborhood Technology, Housing+Transportation Index. https://cnt.org/tools/housing-and-transportation-affordability-index

**Table 15.** TEDI Indicator Details

| Category | Indicator | Format | Geography | Year | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fundamental Demographic Demand** | Households in Poverty | Percent | Block Group | 2018–2022 | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey |
| | Homes of Workers with Jobs Paying Less Than $15,000 Annually | Number | Block | 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| | Work Sites of Workers with Jobs Paying Less Than $15,000 Annually | Number | Block | 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| | Single Parent Female Headed Households with Children Under Age 18 | Percent | Block Group | 2018–2022 | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey |
| | Households with One or More Persons with a Disability | Percent | Block Group | 2018–2022 | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey |
| **Likely Higher Active Transportation Use** *(i.e., propensity, latent demand, or induced demand)* | People of Color Population | Percent | Block Group | 2018–2022 | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey |
| | Zero Vehicle Available Households | Percent | Block Group | 2018–2022 | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey |
| | Workers Commuting by Transit | Percent | Block Group | 2018–2022 | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey |
| | Homes of Workers with High School Education or Less | Number | Block | 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| | Work Sites of Workers with High School Education or Less | Number | Block | 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| **Human and Built Environment Suitability** | Population Density | Number | Block Group | 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| | Household Density | Number | Block Group | 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| | Average Block Size | Number | Block Group | 2020 | Center for Neighborhood Technology |

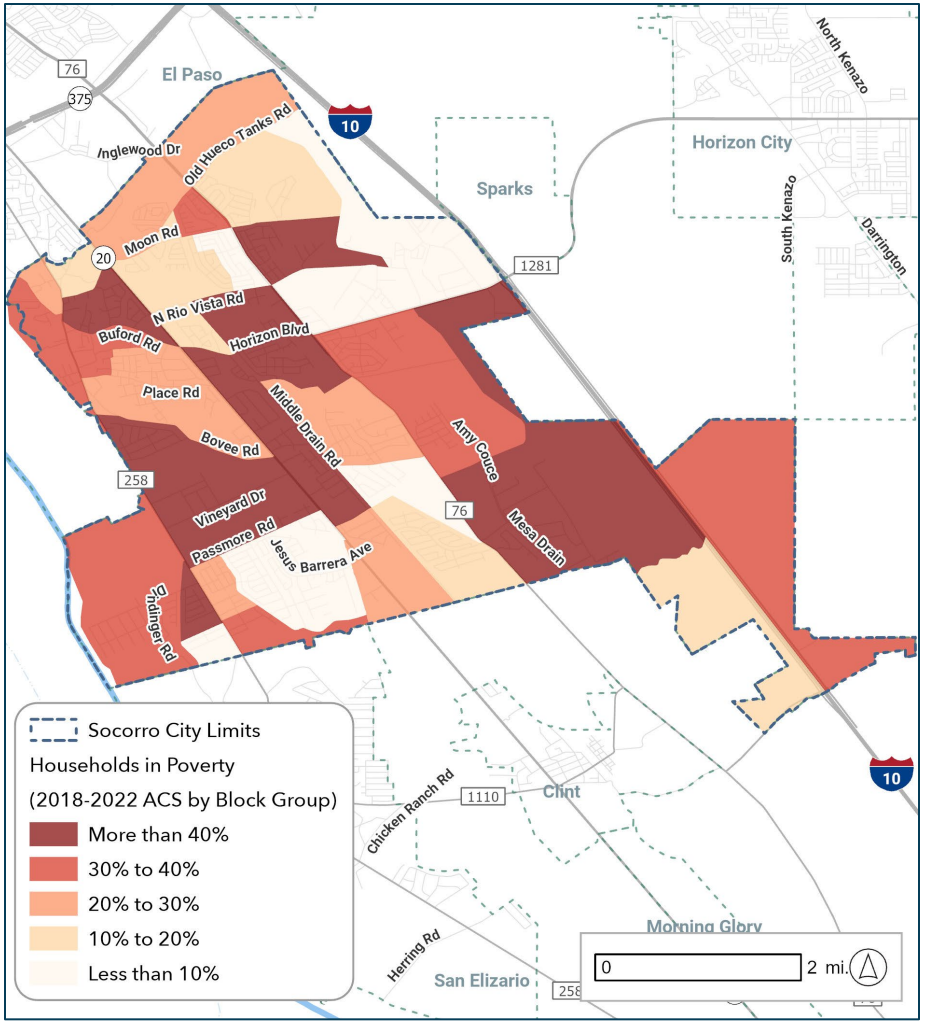



**Figure 54.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 1 – Poverty

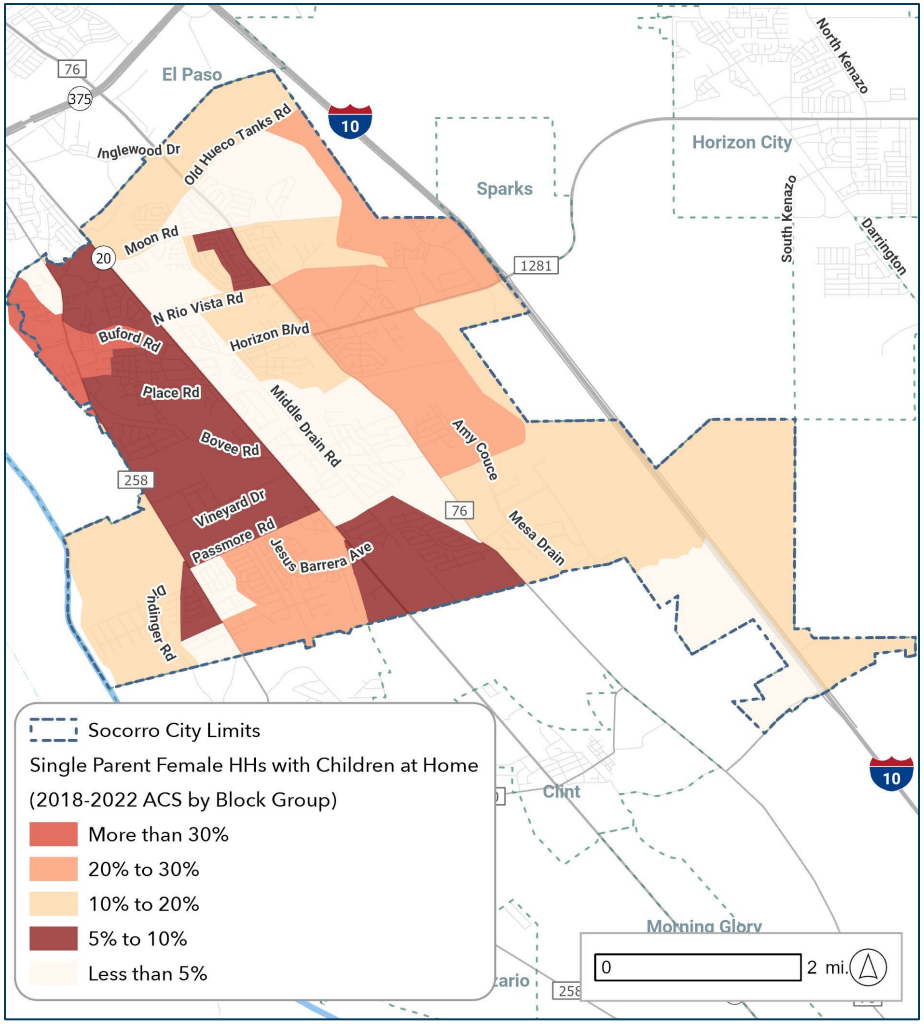



**Figure 55.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 2 – Single Female Headed Households w/Children

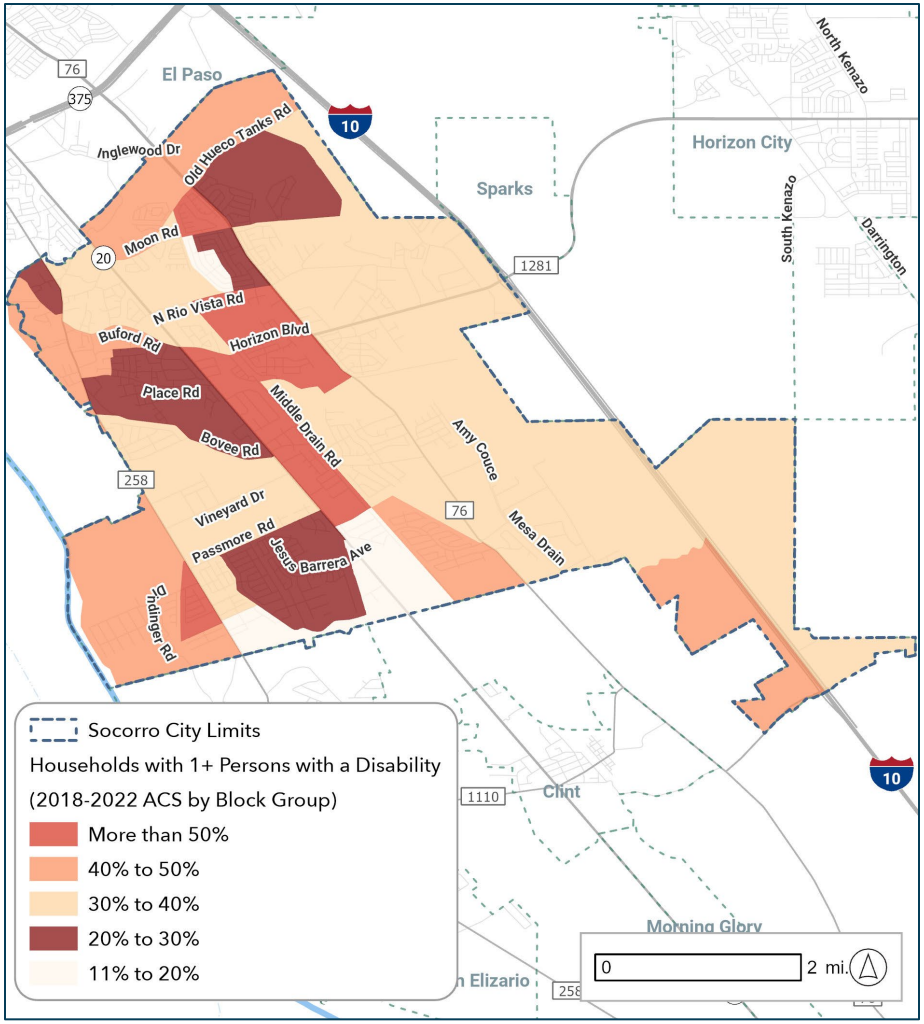



**Figure 56.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 3 – Households with a Person with a Disability

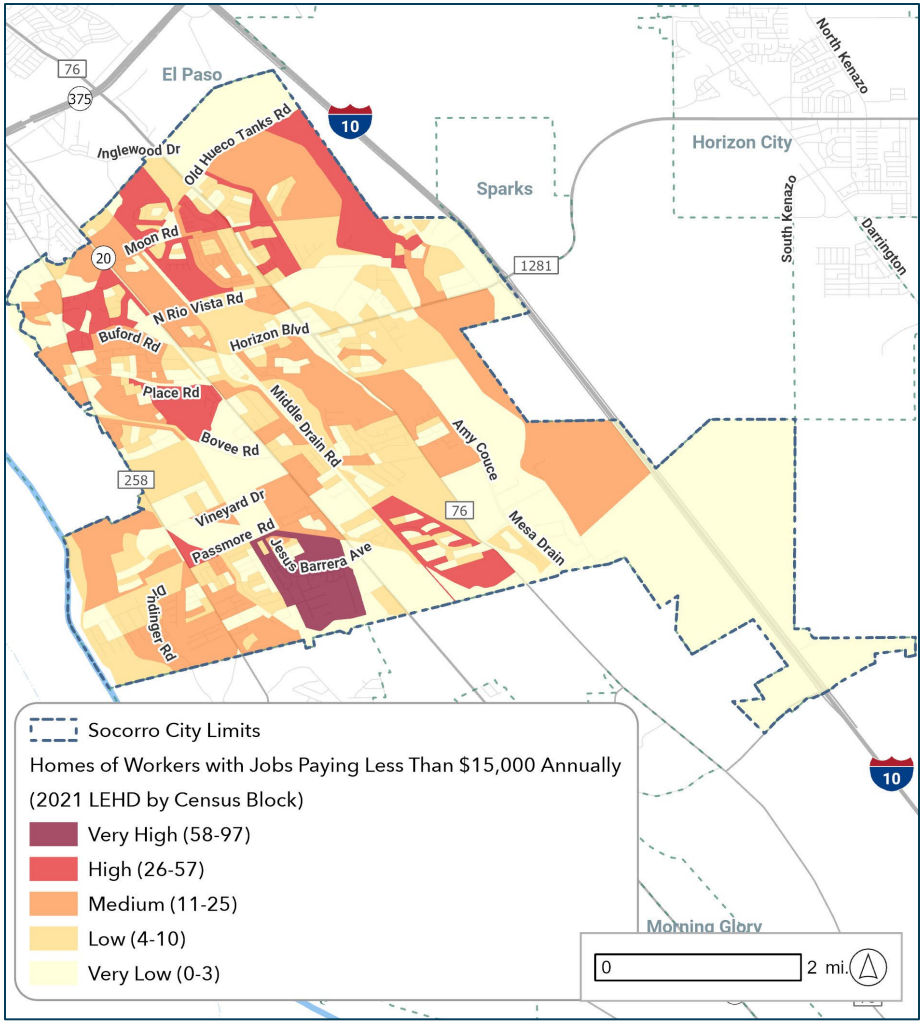



**Figure 57.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 4 – Home Location for Low Wage Workers

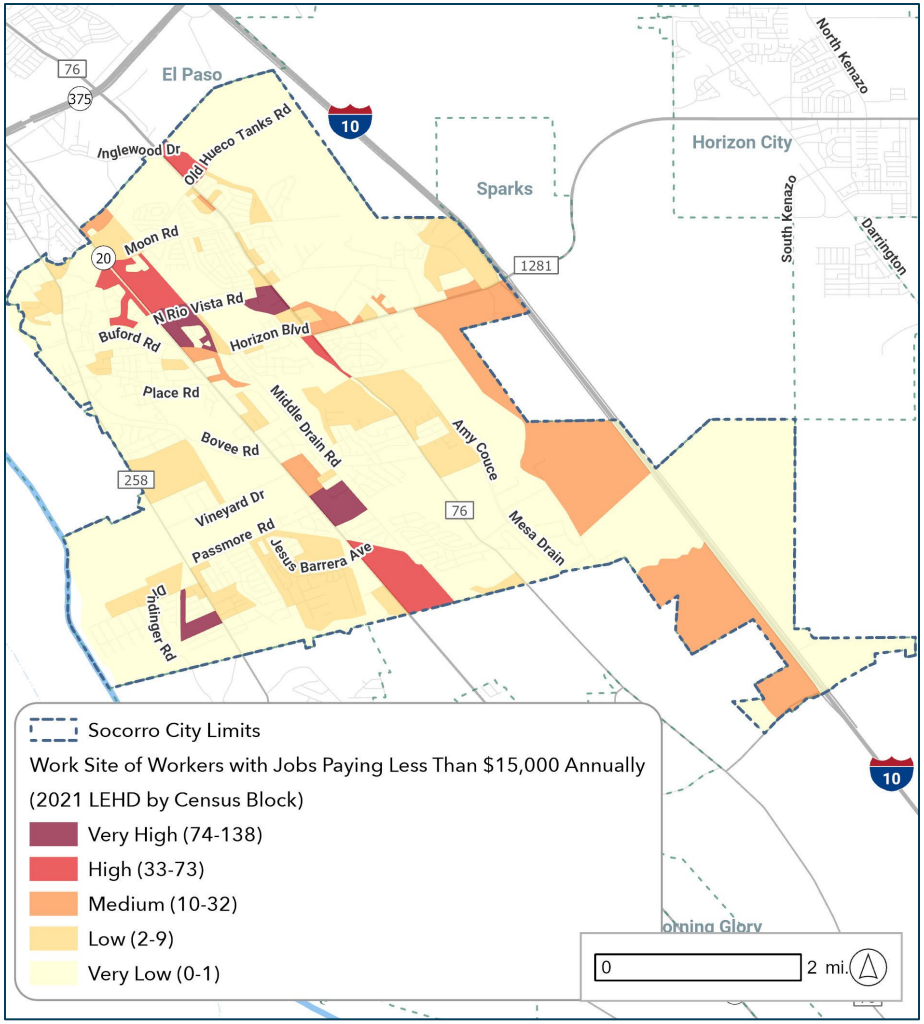



**Figure 58.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 5 – Work Location for Low Wage Workers

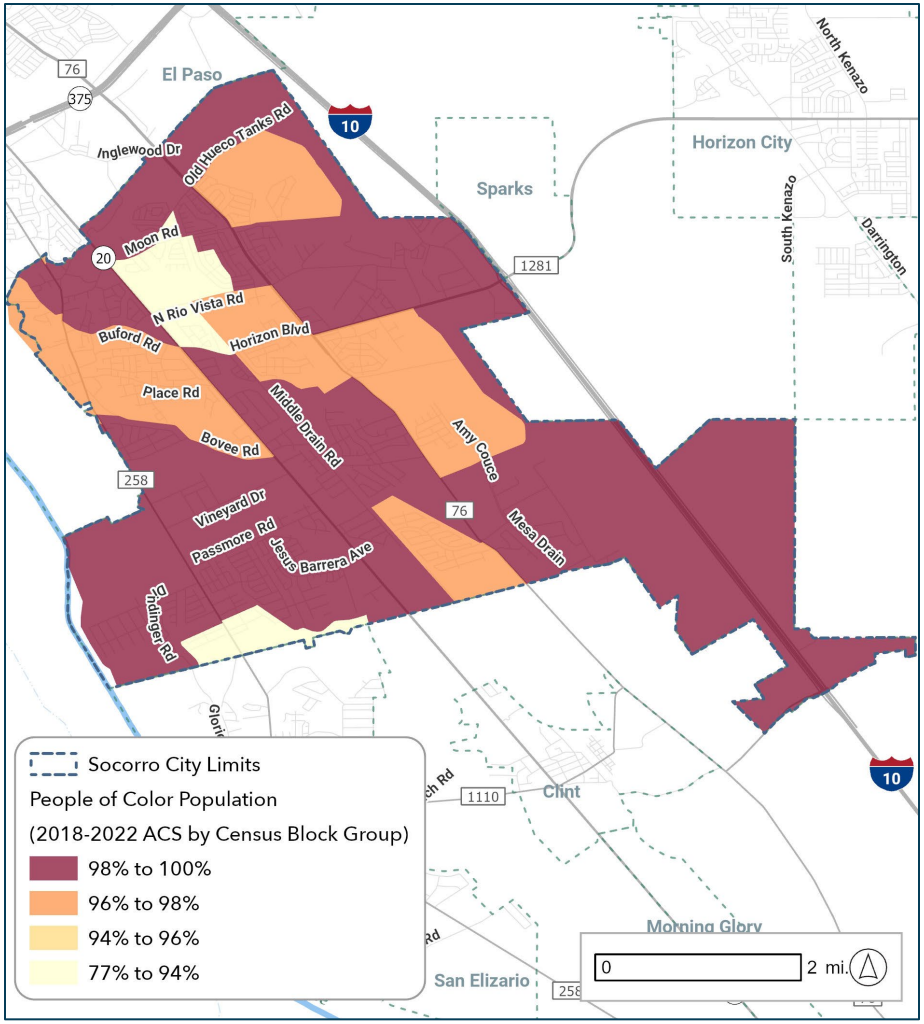



**Figure 59.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 6 – People of Color

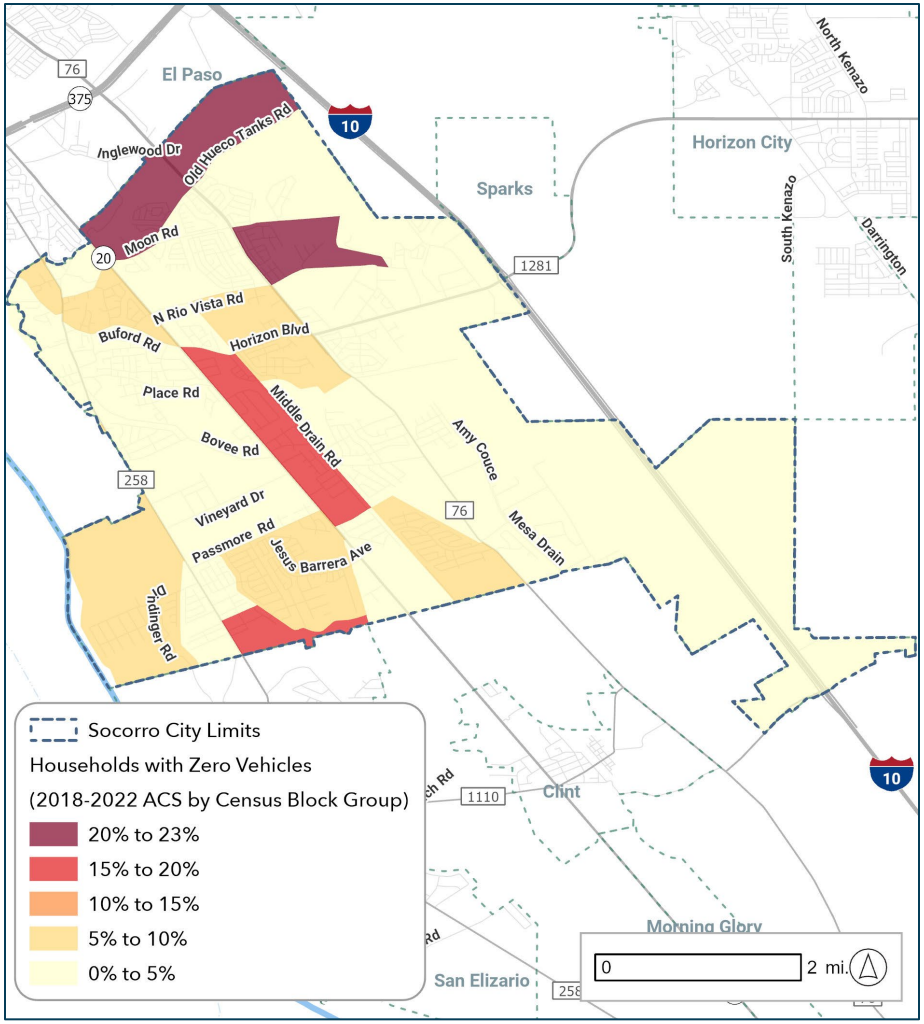



**Figure 60.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 7 – Zero Vehicle Households

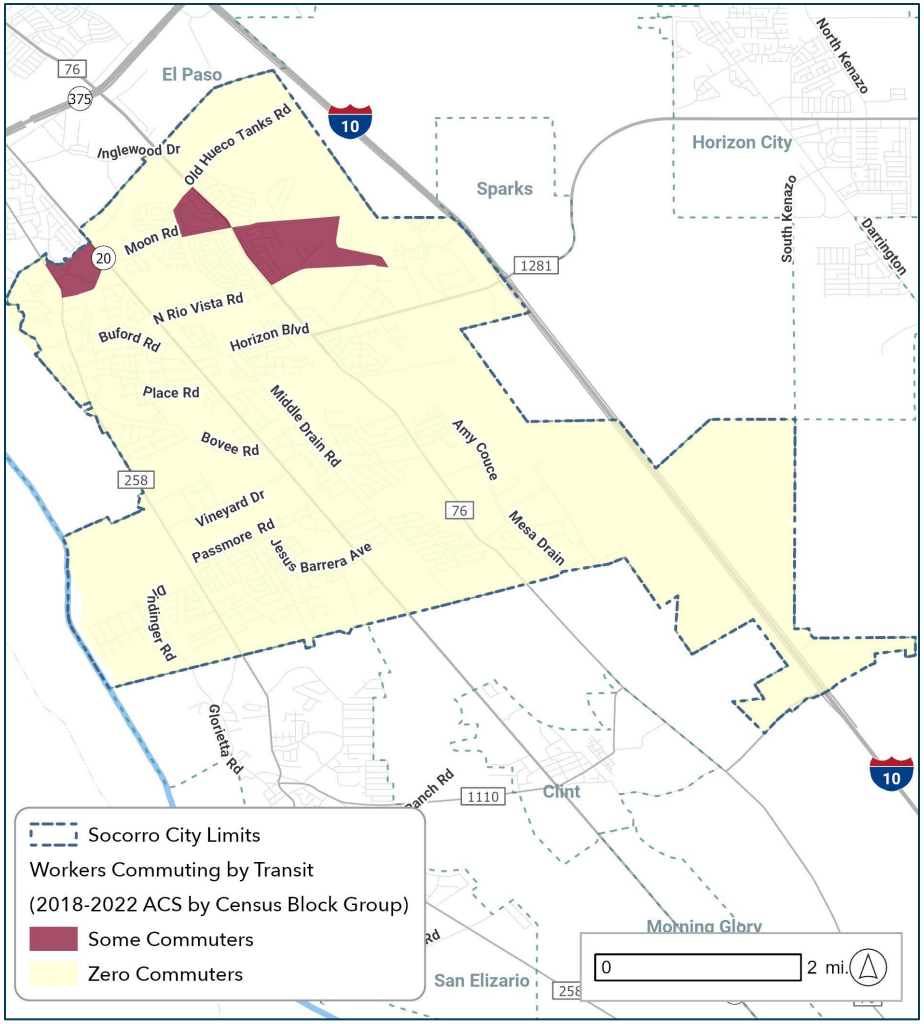



**Figure 61.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 8 – Transit Commuters

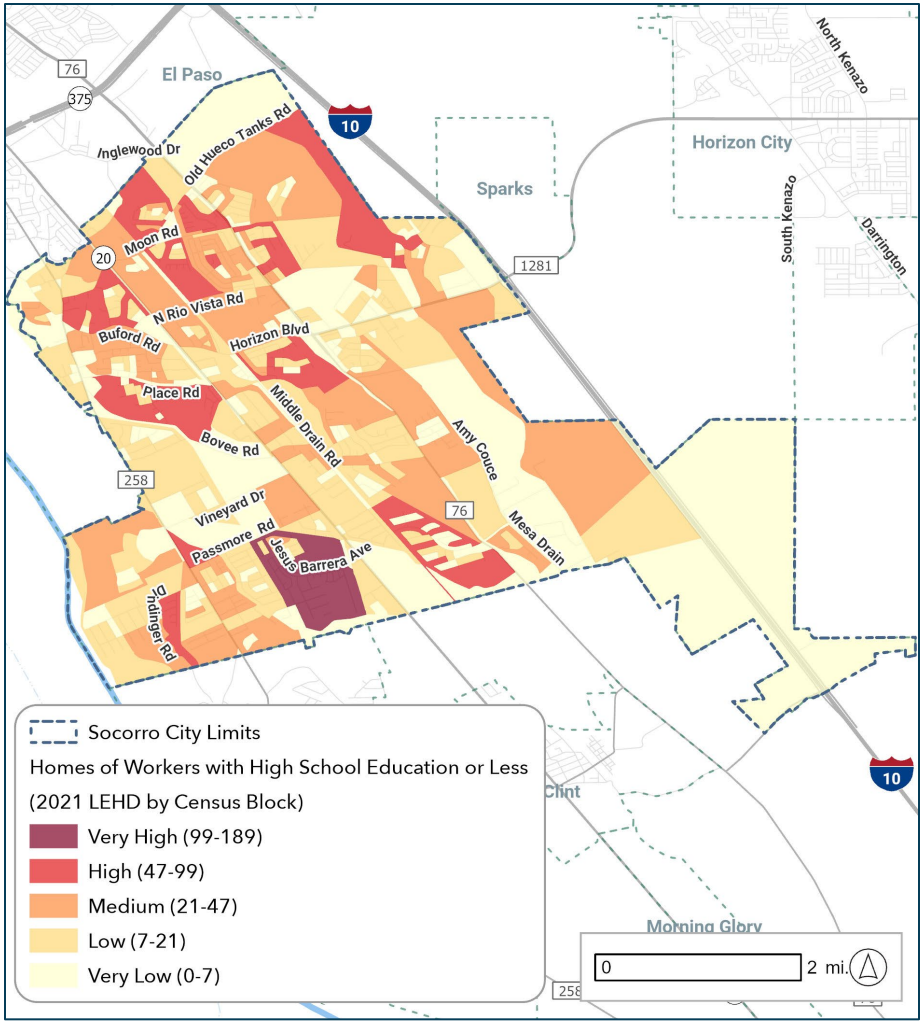



**Figure 62.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 9 – Home Location for Low Education Workers

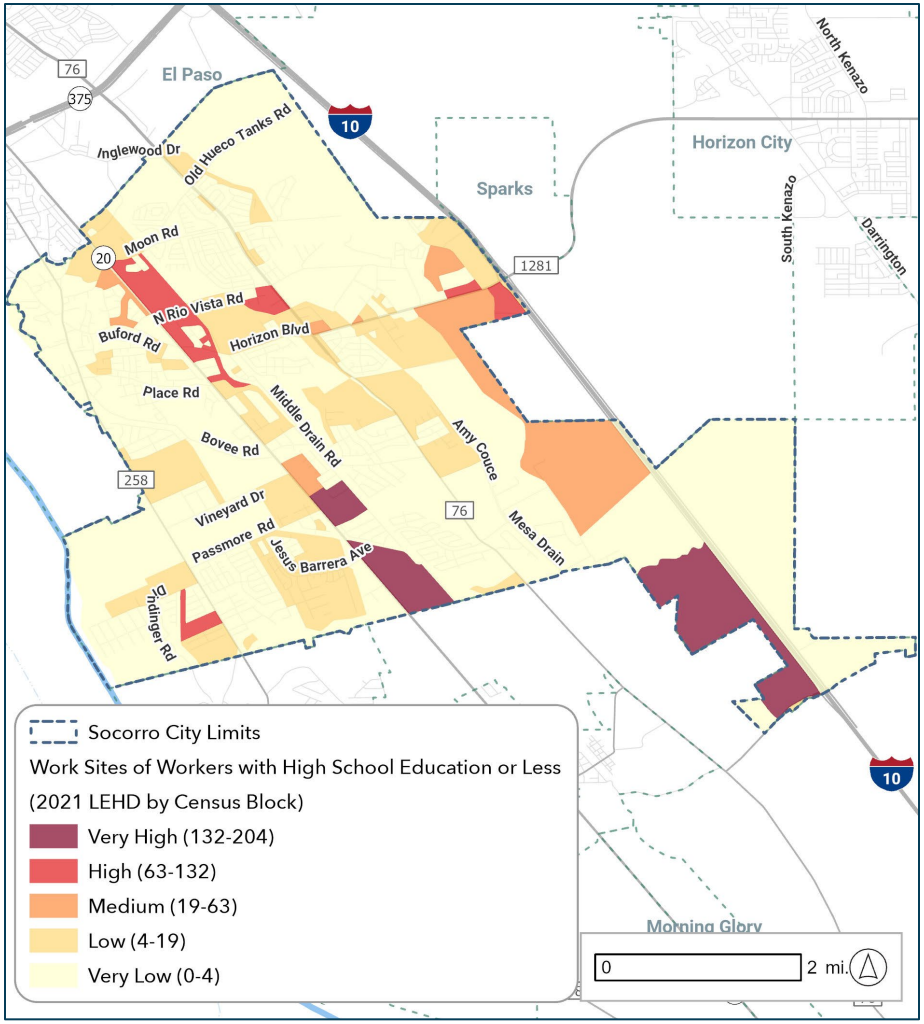



**Figure 63.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 10 – Work Sites of Low Education Workers

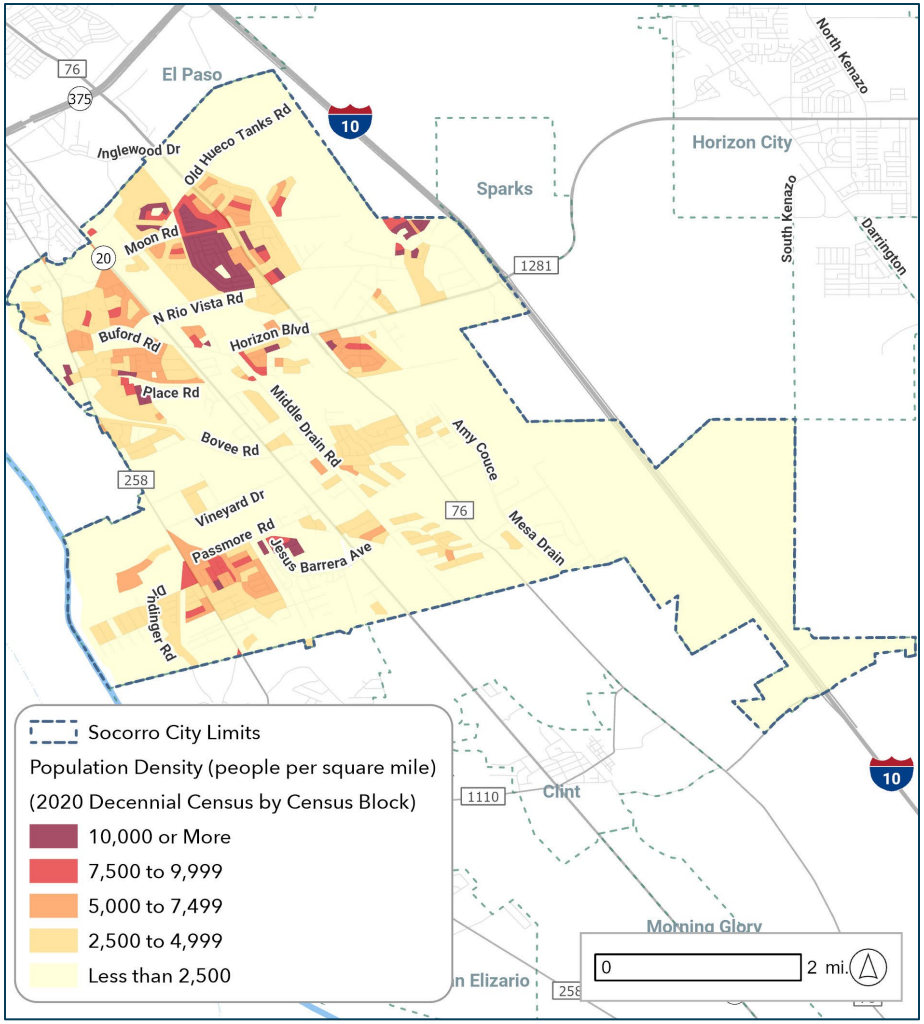



**Figure 64.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 11 - Population Density

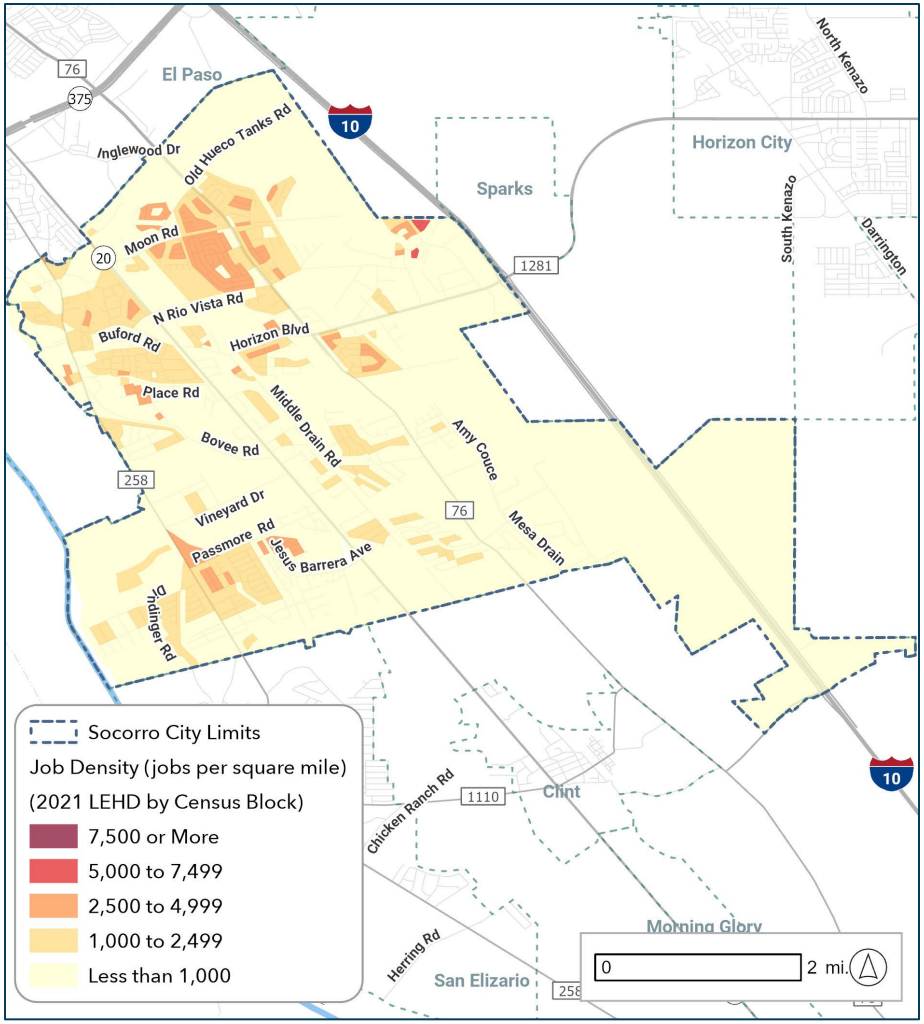



**Figure 65.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 12 - Job Density

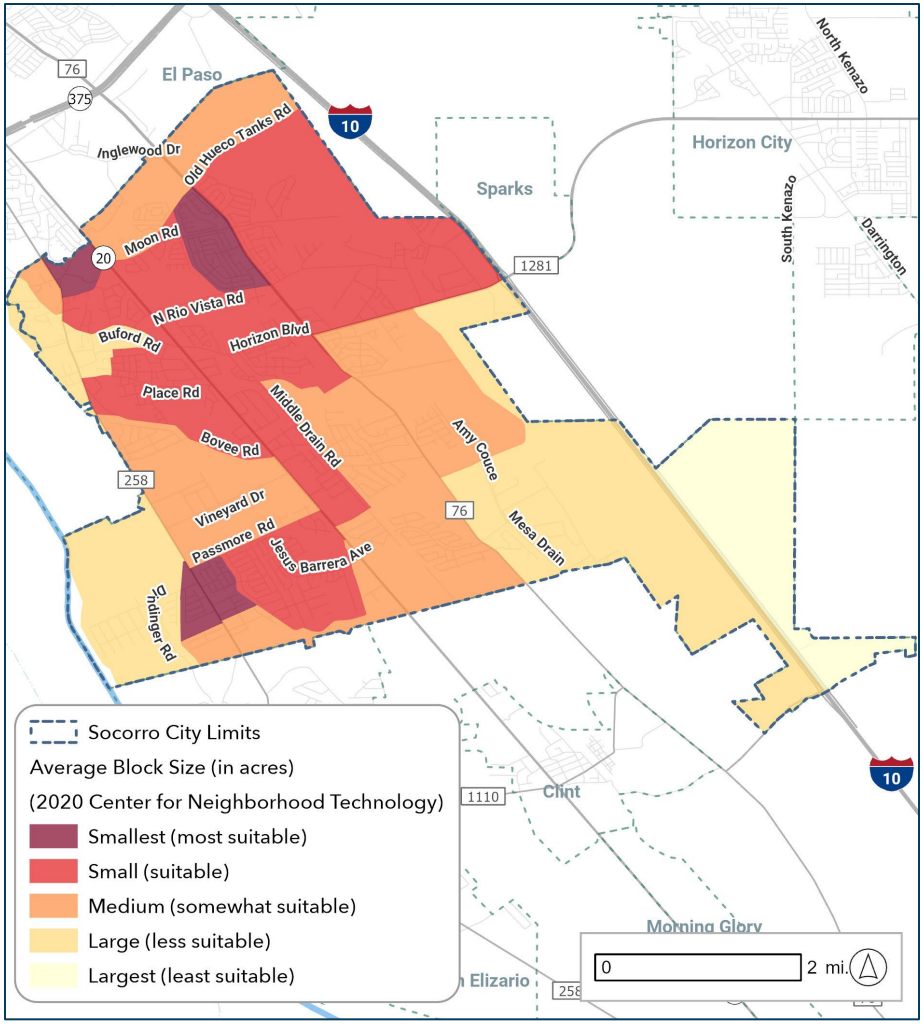



**Figure 66.** Socorro TEDI, Indicator 13 – Walkability

# A3. Engagement Documentation

## Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The City of Socorro's project team created a PPP in August 2024. The document was nine pages and contained the following information:

- Introduction
- Public participation initiatives (FTA, TCRP best practices)
- Public participation goals (language accommodation, etc.)
- Key messages at outset of TDP development
- Potential stakeholder interviews (internal and external)
- Public engagement opportunities
    - Project website
    - Virtual map and survey engagement
    - Event pop-ups
    - Burritos at the Bus Stop
    - Public workshop
- Notification methods
- Materials development
- Logistics and additional resources plan
- Documentation of meetings
- Communications protocol & approval process
- NEPA, Title VI, and ARPA assumptions

## Fall 2024: "Window 1: Public Engagement Activities" Technical Memorandum

The City's project team documented the first complete round of engagement in a thorough technical memorandum. The memo is available upon request and is not included in the TDP due to its 66 pages of content. The contents of the December 2024 memo:

- Introduction
- Project branding process
- Online engagement site
- Media relations and social media
- Stakeholder interviews
- Pop-Up at Fright Farm
- Open House Public Meeting
    - Participatory budgeting
    - Draw your perfect route
- "Burritos at the Bus Stop"
- Overall Findings
- Appendix

## Spring 2025: "Window 2: Public Engagement Activities" Technical Memorandum

The City's project team also documented the second round of engagement in a technical memorandum. The memo is also available upon request and is not included in the TDP due to its 20 page length. The contents of the April 2025 memo:

- Introduction
- Online engagement site
- Pop-up at Easter Eggstravaganza and Color Run
- Overall Findings
- Appendix

# A4. Microtransit Modeling Details

## New Microtransit Service Details

**Operator:**

City of Socorro

**Days:**

Weekdays (except major holidays)

**Hours:**

6:00 AM to 6:00 PM

**Wait:**

30-min. initial target for average wait time

**Stops:**

Generally curb-to-curb, except at predefined stops in locations with multiple destinations sharing large parking areas (i.e., pick the agreed spot to use routinely, on- or off-street)

**Staffing:**

Utilize mix of full-time and part-time positions, current listings show ~$15.00 per hour for a non-CDL driver

**Fare:**

Zero fare (for initial period at least; to avoid cash management and reduce complexity)

**Partnerships:**

Collaborate with EPCC to reach students/staff

Continue agreement with Sun Metro for MVTC access (including defined shared pick-up/drop-off point)

Allow for drop-offs at EPATS bus routes at stops that remain in-service either within Socorro or nearby

## Vehicle & Maintenance Assumptions

**Revenue Vehicles:**

Begin using existing and incoming City fleet

Procurement of additional/replacement vans in years 2+ are similar in specification and cost to the newest Chrysler Pacifica wheelchair accessible vehicle

- Seats: driver, front passenger, 1-3 rear passengers (1 if wheelchair tie-downs in-use)
- Capital cost: $89,000
- Service life: eight years (at least 120,000 miles)

**Onboard Equipment:**

Every vehicle has branded wrap, extinguisher, first aid kit, defibrillator, and customization by City specification

**Vehicle Fuel Economy & Cost:**

Gasoline Chrysler economy 19 MPG at $3.00 gallon

Electric Cutaway economy 21 MPGe at $0.18 per mile (about 2.5x lower fuel cost than fossil fuel equivalents)

**Maintenance Performed By:**

Vehicle maintenance is by contractors

**Maintenance Budget:**

Routine maintenance at $0.10 per VRM

Tire rotation & replacement at $0.20 per VRM

Extensive wear & tear repairs at $0.15 per VRM (in part due to newness of fleet for current TDP period)

## Operating Assumptions

**Vehicle Miles:**

Average trip length is 4.8 miles due to 22.8 sq. mile zone
Vehicle revenue miles include 50% additional miles for repositioning the vehicle for the next pick up

**Driver Supervision:**

FY25-26: Transit Coordinator drives ~25 hours a week
FY27: Transit Coordinator drives ~18 hours a week
Coordinator or lead driver on duty at all times

**Driver Staffing:**

City employs one full-time lead drivers
City employs one additional full-time driver
City employs 1+ part-time drivers as required by year

**Call/Dispatch Staffing:**

Generally covered by existing roles/responsibilities
New microtransit service operates earlier and later so requires additional four hours per day for this function

**Labor Unit Cost:**

Transit Coordinator: $23 base wage + $6.58 fringe
Lead/Full-time Drivers: $19 base wage + $6.58 fringe
Part-time Drivers: $15.00 base wage only
Call/Dispatch: $15.50 wage + $6.58 fringe (existing staff)
Part-time Call/Dispatch: $15.50 wage (for new/backup)
All other functions supporting the program supported by existing staff and budget

**Operating Expense per VRH:**

$38.68 per VRH in FY25
$40.00 per VRH in FY26
$45.00 per VRH in FY27+
(Includes labor for roles detailed above, fuel, maintenance, and portion of technology costs)

## Technology Assumptions

**Software:**

Existing TripMaster license and tools sufficient FY25-26
City spends between $24k and $36k annually thereafter

**Device Hardware:**

City continues to use AT&T for employee smartphones
Every employee has device for duty use (incl. drivers)

## Microtransit Mode Capture

**Mode capture is the percent of all potential vehicle trips which a transit service serves – or "captures" by attracting the individual or group to choose transit over the other travel mode.** The most common travel mode being driving alone in a personal vehicle.

The City used location-based mobile phone data from Locus to identify the total number of trips on a typical Thursday in quarter four in 2024. Filters removed all trips less than 0.5-miles long and which occurred outside the 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM weekday service hours. The short trips were removed as people are unlikely to wait for an on-demand service for longer than it would take to walk or bike to complete the trip.

The filters identified that approximately 38k total trips occurred in the service hours and could reasonably be assumed to have both their origin and destination within the City's microtransit service zone, including the extension along Alameda Avenue to the Mission Valley Transit Center.

The City identified Sun Metro's local bus mode capture for 2023. Sun Metro transported about an average of 21k unlinked passenger trips each day. A quarter-mile buffer around the agency's routes determined about 1.48 million total trips were made each day during the hours when Sun Metro routes operate. The result is about a 1.42 percent mode capture for the fixed route network in El Paso. The City assumed the mode capture for a weekday microtransit service with 12-hour span would likely be about 1/5$^{th}$ that of the fixed routes (due to service type, denser locations, and based on the project team's knowledge of peers in other regions).

**As a result, the City's microtransit service is assumed to realize about 0.18% mode capture in FY25-26; 0.23% in FY27; and to level off somewhere around 0.30% in FY28 and beyond.**

Some cities achieve a higher mode capture; other cities see lower. The City will learn about microtransit's ability to convert trips from other modes during the FY25-26 pilot period. The TDP can be updated if significantly higher or lower demand manifests. The program has a general baseline cost that will occur regardless of the number of trips. Operating costs will increase commensurate with demand.

The mode capture rate for each fiscal year was applied and is reflected in the modeled demand documented in Section 5.1.

## Microtransit Funding Assumptions

**City of Socorro, General Fund:**

Variable dollar amount

(City will prioritize maximizing use of Section 5307 for operation assistance at 50% match requirement; remaining funds will be used for capital and planning)

**FTA Section 5307 Urban Formula:**

(operating assistance, capital, planning)

~$360,000 annually

**FTA Section 5339 Bus & Bus Facilities Formula:**

(capital only)

~$26,000 annually

(Sun Metro may not desire to split these funds)

**Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ):**

Variable, project/initiative specific

(real dollars but only for pilot years)

**Transportation Development Credits (TDCs):**

Up to match requirements

(not real dollars; match only; depend on MPO support)