



CAG Gila County Transit Governance Study

TWG Meeting

December 9, 2020





Safety Moment



CAG Title VI Notice



Introduction



Existing Conditions

Updated Information and Comments

Nnee Bich'o Nii Transit (*San Carlos Apache Tribe*)

- Largest source of funding is FTA Tribal Transit Program and 5311
- Governed by a Transportation Advisory Committee and the Tribal Council – approves all budgets, purchase, service changes, etc.
- Looking to include a direct route to Wal-Mart in Globe to reduce passengers need to transfer to Copper Mountain Transit
- New route planned to connect San Carlos to Oro Valley (potential pick-ups in Hayden and Winkelman)

Updated Information and Comments

Fort Apache Connection Transit (FACT) *(White Mountain Apache Tribe)*

- Three routes – currently on hold due to COVID
- Five full-time staff and have been having difficulty hiring additional drivers
- Constructing a new Department of Transportation building which will house the transit agency and provide a storage area for buses
- Governed by a Transportation Advisory Committee
- Council approval on schedule changes or when applying for grants

Updated Information and Comments

Fort Apache Connection Transit (FACT) *(White Mountain Apache Tribe)*

- Planned improvements:
 - New route to Show Low would need two additional buses and drivers. This route was scheduled to open this year, but is delayed due to COVID19
 - Potential substations to reduce bus travel times
 - SCAT and FACT have a strong working relationship and have plans to expand and better coordinate service
 - New stop at Seneca
 - Seasonal route to SCAT
 - New Route to take members directly to the SCAT Health Center



Stakeholder Interview Summary

Stakeholder Interview Summary

- Conducted ten interviews with elected officials and city or town managers
 - Generally supportive of existing public transportation services
 - Expanded regional transit service may be warranted, recognizing financial and operational challenges
 - Regional governance structure should ensure equity of monies, resources, and services
 - Complex nature of different agency types and large distances between communities
 - Would consider financially supporting the system if it were cost-effective and ridership warranted service
 - Current transit agency staff brings specialty - local understanding and experience to operate a system

Stakeholder Interview Summary

- Conducted four interviews with transit managers and individuals with transportation planning responsibilities
 - Need for expanded local service and for increased regional activity
 - Interested in learning more about the pros and cons of different governance structures
 - Pooling resources and having administrative support would be beneficial
 - Need to have local control over system operations



Governance

Peer Agency Overview

List of Peer Agencies

- Yuma County Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (YCIPTA) – AZ
- City of Cottonwood – AZ
- Cobre Valley Institute of Technology (CVIT) – AZ
- North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) – NM
- Lincoln County Transit – OR

Yuma County Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority

Jurisdictions Served	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Yuma, San Luis, Somerton, Town of Wellton- Unincorporated communities of Yuma County- Cocopah Nation and Quechan Nation
Population	195,751 (2018 NTD)
Service Area	5,522 Sq. Mi.
Year Formed	2011
Governance Model	Arizona IPTA (population 200K or less) (A.R.S. Title 28 Chapter 26 IPTA)
Board Structure	A nine-member board from each city, county, tribe and educational institution (Includes Arizona Western College and Northern Arizona University)

Yuma County Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority

Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Federal (5307, 5311, 5310)- General revenue from cities (<i>NTD 2018</i>)- Indian tribes (5311 (c) funding used to reimburse YCIPTA at \$49.10/op hour)- University and College
Tribal Participation	Cocopah Indian Tribe and Quechan Indian Tribe
Services Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fixed route, vanpool and YCAT On Call demand responsive bus service throughout the service area, including Gadsden, Fortuna Foothills and Ligurta- YCAT also provides service into Winterhaven and El Centro, CA and on the Quechan/Fort Yuma Indian Reservation- Serves several colleges

City of Cottonwood

Jurisdictions Served	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Local transit services for Cottonwood, Clarkdale and Verde Villages- Verde Lynx - Direct Bus Service between Cottonwood and Sedona
Population	12,253 (2019, US Census Bureau)
Service Area	16.7 Sq. Mi.
Year Formed	2012 (Cottonwood-Sedona IGA first executed)
Governance Model	City department; Cottonwood-Sedona IGA (renewed 2019) (A.R.S. Title 40 Chapter 6 Article 5)
Board Structure	City Council

City of Cottonwood

Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Federal (5311)- State- City of Cottonwood and City of Sedona
Tribal Participation	N.A.
Services Provided	Verde Lynx service connects central Cottonwood with the major employers in Sedona along 89A and northern portions of SR 179.

Cobre Valley Institute of Technology

Jurisdictions Served	Five unified school districts: Globe, Hayden-Winkelman, Miami, San Carlos and Superior
Population	-
Service Area	-
Year Formed	2000
Governance Model	Career Technical Education District (CTED)
Board Structure	Board members are elected within the District

Cobre Valley Institute of Technology

Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Receives funding through local, state and federal monies- The costs are shared between state and local property tax- State portion is based on a formula tied to student enrollment
Tribal Participation	San Carlos Apache
Services Provided	Delivers career and technical education (CTE) course offerings to secondary students

North Central Regional Transit District

Jurisdictions Served	City of Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe and Taos Counties
Population	289,292 (2018 NTD)
Service Area	10,119 Sq. Mi.
Year Formed	2007
Governance Model	Regional transit district (see N.M.S.A. 1978, Section 73-25)
Board Structure	One board member from each city, county, village, town, and pueblo (17 in total)

North Central Regional Transit District

Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4-County Transit Gross Receipts Tax- Tribal Transit- Federal grant- Local match from member jurisdictions <p><i>(NCRTD website financial data tool)</i></p>
Tribal Participation	Pueblos: Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso and Santa Clara
Services Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provides free and premium fare-based bus transit connecting communities and pueblos.- RTD Blue Buses provide connections to New Mexico Rail Runner, Santa Fe Trails, NMDOT Park and Ride, Los Alamos Atomic City Transit, Po' Pay Messenger Service and Red River Miner's Transit.

Lincoln County Transit

Jurisdictions Served	Within Lincoln County
Population	49,962 (2019, US Census Bureau)
Service Area	992 Sq. Mi.
Year Formed	2010 (five county partnership started)
Governance Model	County transportation service district; operates as a county department
Board Structure	County board of commissioners; Transit Advisory Committee for planning

Lincoln County Transit

Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Federal (5311)- State- Property tax assessed by the district (2018 TDP)
Tribal Participation	Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
Services Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provides fixed-route and demand response service connecting the main communities in Lincoln County.- Services consist of four intra-county routes,- Two intracity loop routes in Lincoln City and Newport- Two Dial-A-Ride services that operate within Lincoln City and Newport.



Status of Transit before Regionalization

Status of Transit before Regionalization

YCIPTA	The MPO owned and operated transit for the county.
City of Cottonwood	<p>Cottonwood is authorized to provide public transportation services, and operates a system known as the Cottonwood Area Transit System.</p> <p>Provides local bus service in Cottonwood, Clarkdale, Bridgeport and Verde Village.</p>
North Central Regional Transit District	Each city/county, and one of the eight pueblos, had their own transit service.
Lincoln County Transit	<p>Started out as a transportation program for senior and people with Disabilities.</p> <p>It evolved into a public transit operator. Five independent, county-owned rural transit operators in the region.</p>



Initiation and Formalization of Regional Transit

Initiation and Formalization of Regional Transit

YCIPTA	Motivated to form a governing board dedicated to transit to better address goals and priorities for transit and riders.
City of Cottonwood	City of Sedona and City of Cottonwood first entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) in 2012 for the operation of an intercity commuter transit service, initiated by Sedona. The IGA was renewed in 2015 and 2019.
North Central Regional Transit District	The regional economic development organization facilitated consensus building regarding goals and agency structure. The RTD was formed with a planning grant. 11 municipalities and tribes formed the RTD initially. An easy process for accepting new members was established.
Lincoln County Transit	Five transit operators jointly applied for a Department of Energy grant for regional transit projects. The five operators executed an IGA - one operator coordinates and submit grant applications for all; cost allocation arrangement formalized to get match funds from all.



Regional Governance Structure

Regional Governance Structure

YCIPTA	<p>The board members are the city/town administrators, appointed by the city council and town council. None of the board members are elected officials.</p>
City of Cottonwood	<p>Cottonwood manages and operates the Verde Lynx service, in consultation with Sedona, and with Sedona's financial support.</p>
North Central Regional Transit District	<p>Board members are elected officials appointed by their county/city/pueblo. Each member has an alternate who may not be an elected official. Some actions require vote from the elected officials.</p> <p>Board members have different voting power – each has a number of voting units depending on the population of the jurisdiction they represent.</p>
Lincoln County Transit	<p>County Board of Commissioners is the governing body, with one commissioner focusing on transit. Five-county IGA governs the coordination of regional transit projects, e.g. bus stop improvement, regional fare passes, and grant applications.</p>



Transit Funding and Cost Allocation

Transit Funding and Cost Allocation

YCIPTA	Each locality pays a portion based on population mainly.
City of Cottonwood	Cottonwood apply for funding from ADOT. Any funds received by Cottonwood on behalf of Sedona and/ or the Verde Lynx system is credited to Sedona in the annual budgeting process for the CAT system. Cottonwood develops operating budget based on Sedona’s desired service, including costs required and Sedona’s share of funding contribution after grant funding.
North Central Regional Transit District	Initially each member jurisdiction contributed funding until the regional tax passed (tax not levied in tribes). Tax revenue is allocated among RTD, and three other transit operators in the region. RTD can use the tax revenue for any service within the RTD regardless of the proportions levied in each jurisdiction. RTD makes tribal transit grant application on behalf of the pueblos and enter MOUs to transfer those grant funds.
Lincoln County Transit	State payroll tax (STIF) dedicated to transit started in 2018. The funds cannot be used to supplant pre-existing funding sources, so essentially additional funds for transit. Introduction of STIF created the need to decide how to use the additional funds, which motivated the local tribe to participate in the advisory committee, which advises the county board on transit issues. Other sources of funds include FTA funding through the state, tribal transit funds, state funds (STF) for paratransit, county property tax dedicated to transit, two cities’ contribution (Newport \$90,000/year; Lincoln City \$35,000/year), and in-kind contributions.



Tribal Participation

Tribal Participation

YCIPTA	Quechan and Cocopah nations are represented on the board.
City of Cottonwood	
North Central Regional Transit District	<p>Six of eight pueblos are represented on the board. The other two chose not to join the RTD, but they can always join if they decide to. Reasons for not joining may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frequent turnover of tribal leadership - Requires more education/communication of the benefits of regional transit - Don't need to be a member to get service; tax dedicated to transit not levied in the tribes <p>MOU for funding transfer include provisions that stipulate adjudication will take place in tribal court system.</p>
Lincoln County Transit	<p>Even though LCT had always provided transit to Siletz, it took 10 years to build the relationship with the tribe, and eventually got the tribe's participation in the transit advisory committee. New state payroll tax for transit helped to get tribal participation in the committee to plan how to use the funds. The tribe pays fully for one route, about \$275,000/year of tribal transit funds. Tribal members with tribal ID can ride at no cost.</p>



Coordination with Regional Partners

Coordination with Regional Partners

YCIPTA	YCIPTA, Quechan Tribe, and Imperial County of California formed a partnership to provide transit service in eastern Imperial County, operated by YCIPTA.
City of Cottonwood	Sedona is planning to start its own transit service, but the Verde Lynx service will continue.
North Central Regional Transit District	<p>A new maintenance facility under development, which may provide vehicle maintenance for other regional transit operators.</p> <p>A study is underway that considers merging with Santa Fe Trails.</p>
Lincoln County Transit	The five-county partnership has developed and rolled out one website for all five systems, is improving pedestrian access for bus stops throughout the region and implemented a transit pass accepted by all five systems.



Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned

Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned

- Effective regional governance of transit is typically driven by **shared policy goals** among participating municipalities and tribes, e.g. need for a new governing board dedicated to transit, increasing demand for regional transit service, effective use of additional dedicated funding for transit.

Question: What are shared policy goals for Gila County transit service?

Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned

- Need for regional service, funding commitment, and governance structure are closely tied to each other. Governance structure should reflect funding commitment, which should be based on the need for regional service.

Question: Where do you see the greatest needs for regional transit service and the greatest potential for regional governance?

Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned

- The choice between forming an independent regional transit operator and executing an intergovernmental agreement (IGA):
 - An **independent regional transit operator** has been chosen where increasing demand for regional transit services requires *ongoing joint decision-making* at both strategic and operational levels.
 - **IGA** has been used for specific cooperative purposes, e.g. operating one route that serves mainly commuters from one city to another, implementing a regional transit pass, establishing a regional brand, etc., but *planning, management, and operations for most services remain independent*.

Question: Would a regional transit operator or an IGA for a specific purpose be better suited for Gila County?

Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned

- Minimal institutional/legal barriers found for tribes to participate in regional governance, but relationship building with tribes is key to productive tribal engagement and it takes time.

Question: How best to integrate tribes and tribal transit service into regional governance structure and decision-making process?



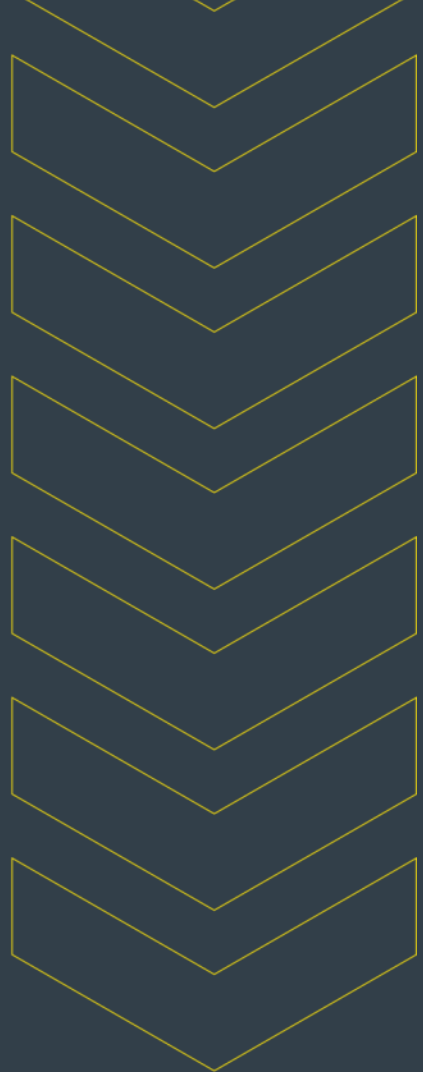
Open Discussion



Next Steps

Next Steps

- Next TWG Meeting – week of January 18th
- Final Working Paper – Governance Peer Agency Review
- Governance Structure Recommendations
- Stakeholder Workshop - February



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