



MOBILITY FOR ALL FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) received \$128,624 in grant funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to educate the community about transportation options and available technology for a touchless transit experience. The FTA's Mobility for All grant was used to fund a mobile training lab to bring RTC mobility trainers and resources to members of the community, including veterans, persons with disabilities, and populations with low incomes.

The final project cost was \$230,755.81, with a 65% federal and 35% local funding split. The RTC procured a new, low-floor ARBOC CNG vehicle that is equipped with fixed-route transit technology that will provide customers with the tools to travel safely and effectively throughout the greater Las Vegas area. The vehicle's construction was originally scheduled to be completed and ready to deploy by summer 2022; however, supply chain issues pushed completion and deployment to the 1st quarter of 2024. The RTC's goal is to provide at least two trainings per month to community partner organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The RTC opened its one-of-a-kind Mobility Training Center (MTC) in 2016 to help train individuals, particularly those with disabilities, to navigate the bus system safely. While approximately 6,000 Southern Nevada residents have received training since the MTC opened, transportation to and from the facility can often be a challenge for customers. The new mobile training lab will help the RTC meet our customers where they are and bring the training experience directly to them.



BACKGROUND

The Regional Transportation Commission originated from a 1965 state statute, and 16 years later, in 1981, the RTC was named the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Southern Nevada. As the region's MPO, the agency is responsible to state and federal governments for maintaining a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process ensuring that transit plans and programs involve public input and recommendations and conform to approved air quality standards.

In 1983, state legislation deemed the agency capable of owning and operating a public mass transit system that today carries more than 64 million riders per year and expands as needed with careful planning to better serve the Las Vegas Valley.

The MPO oversees the federally mandated transportation planning process for Southern Nevada and plans the Valley's roadways and transit infrastructure to accommodate the demands of the region's current population in addition to that of 50 years from now. Included in the MPO planning process are projects that require state and federal funding.

Additionally, the RTC also manages distribution of funds from the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway Trust Fund, the County Option Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax for regional, street, and highway construction, and county sales tax designated for transportation.

On July 3, 2004, RTC became the official administrator of the Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation (FAST). The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the RTC became full-fledged funding partners, contributing to the operations and management of FAST.

In spring 2015, the RTC also became the administrator of Southern Nevada Strong, the valley's first and only regional plan to build complete communities that provide transportation choices, employment opportunities, housing options, and quality education.

The RTC provides mass transit that connects throughout Southern Nevada and administers programs that encourage sustainability, such as Club Ride Commuter Services that promote walking, biking, carpooling, vanpooling, and taking transit to and from work.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The RTC has taken steps to implement up-to-date technology and provide unique transportation options; there is an unmet need to increase awareness and provide training in how to utilize these systems. The mobile learning lab will target disadvantaged populations such as persons with disabilities, older adults, veterans, populations with low incomes, and Medicaid recipients who may not have the ability to independently access the information they need to successfully navigate the RTC's transit system. The RTC has implemented this pilot project to expand training and increase awareness of services, understanding that availability is not the same as accessibility. While regional resources are available throughout the community, without the awareness and knowledge of how to efficiently use the reliable transportation options available, it becomes difficult to utilize these services.

With 26,014 customers currently certified for RTC Paratransit service, the continued demand for service is growing exponentially, and there is an urgent need for expanded and creative solutions to reach this population. Southern Nevada's underserved populations, who are reliant on public transportation, need innovative means to receive training and education in how to efficiently use the transit system to access vital resources. The capital investment in a mobile learning lab will help to meet a need in our community, not only for disadvantaged groups but also for all users of the public transportation system.

The RTC has been recently faced with funding challenges that have vastly impacted the agency's services. With the onset of Transportation Network Company (TNC) service, the agency faced decreased ridership, which has translated to a significant revenue shortage. This application is a pilot program investment that cannot be reasonably funded by the FTA formula apportionments and state/local resources, as the formula funding is allocated to capital investments in the replacement of fixed-route vehicles and replacement/expansion of paratransit vehicles to sustain transit operations.

The mobile learning lab is built inside of an ARBOC low-floor cutaway CNG vehicle that the RTC procured as part of this project. The vehicle is ADA accessible, equipped with fixed-route technology, and operated by staff who will provide learning tools to customers, so they can efficiently travel throughout the greater Las Vegas area.



Training with the Clark County School District.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Through partnerships and collaboration with members of the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), the RTC will enhance the availability, accessibility, and efficiency of transportation for underserved populations in our community who face transportation challenges. Veterans, persons with disabilities, Medicaid recipients, populations with low incomes, and dislocated or disadvantaged individuals who are unemployed and seeking work are the clients that will be targeted for mobility improvement during this pilot program. As the RTC combines the sharing of resources with community partners, it will reduce duplicated efforts and streamline the mobility process for many people. Key partners involved in the planning and implementation of this project include the Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation (DETR); Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR); Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); Workforce Connections (WIOA); and local Medicaid/Medicare Providers (HHS). The Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, with five locations throughout the greater Las Vegas Valley, assists more than 4,500 persons with disabilities annually with a primary focus on providing necessary services to help customers work and live independently. An important part of independence for their customers is developing a plan for transportation and ensuring that each client in need of public transportation assistance can navigate and have access to the systems.

The RTC will bring the mobile lab to each of the partner's agency locations on a rotating basis to provide on-site training. Community partners will have the opportunity to collaborate with the RTC in providing information about their resources, creating a more expanded one-stop experience. Removing barriers for customers who are required to access resources from multiple locations is key to their success.



IMPLEMENTATION

The FTA's Mobility for All grant allowed the RTC to create a mobile learning lab to teach targeted groups of customers who rely on public transportation to access basic needs and resources in our community. The RTC envisions a learning environment that can go anywhere in the community, creating additional opportunities to educate on public transportation options, provide training on how to leverage emerging technology to access the various options available, and assist customers in enrolling in services that meet their unique needs.

Benefits to Clark County residents include helping them build confidence and independence, increase socialization, improve access to health and wellness opportunities, and encourage usage of fixed-route transit over paratransit when possible. Teaching existing riders how to use current technology and new customers how to navigate all of their mobility options can assist in removing the barriers that are keeping individuals from receiving needed services and help them make informed transportation decisions. Removing these barriers can impact their overall health and well-being by ensuring access to appointments and resources, including healthcare and employment.

The RTC provides on-site mobility training and certification at the MTC for customers, with a focus on disabled persons, including persons with low vision. The mobile learning lab will allow the RTC to connect with customers who are challenged in traveling to the MTC and increase awareness of the services that are offered. The RTC currently funds transportation to and from the MTC for individuals applying for paratransit services. With expanding our reach into the community to connect directly with disadvantaged populations, our goals include reducing costs of transportation for MTC services, increasing fixed-route ridership for customers currently utilizing paratransit, and leveraging services offered by community partners.



Vehicle unveiling event at Opportunity Village with the winning artist Caesar G.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For this project, the RTC was able to meet or exceed all required performance measures during the reporting period.

Project promotion was delayed due to supply chain issues. Once the vehicle was received, the RTC began engaging our partners through community outreach events where the vehicle was staged to introduce the benefits of mobile travel training. Those events helped drive registration for training by allowing the community to get hands-on with the technology that is provided on the vehicle.

The RTC also staged the vehicle for events that were held at the RTC Mobility Training Center. The first event was a transit peer exchange program that brought transit professionals from all over the United States to our facility. Attending agencies were impressed with the concept and had questions as to how the RTC acquired funding for the project.

The second event was for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Executive Retreat that was held in Las Vegas. The APTA Executive Committee had the opportunity to tour the vehicle, receive information regarding funding, and were given demonstrations on how training would take place.

An unveiling event for the vehicle took place at Opportunity Village (OV) in Las Vegas. OV is a local non-profit organization that provides vital services and training for people with disabilities in Las Vegas. As part of the unveiling, the RTC partnered with OV for an art contest. Customers with disabilities who were a part of OV's art program would have the opportunity to submit pieces that would be judged by the community. The top three pieces won cash prizes, and the overall winner's piece was used to wrap the outside of the new mobile learning lab. This event garnered a lot of local media attention. Attached is a link to the event to copy and paste into a browser.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qBFNTNI6HQ

Project deployment started in the following month. Local community partners that have participated in training to date are the Clark County School District, OV, various local senior centers and living facilities, and the VA. Additional community partners are slated to come online in 2025.



OUTCOMES

FTA grant goals included improving access to healthcare and essential services for disadvantaged populations within Clark County through a 25% increase in customers trained through the mobile learning lab on emerging technology and the use and benefits of affordable fixed-route transportation.

Tracking fixed-route ridership for customers who have participated in mobility learning lab trainings with the goal of 25% of previous non-riders trying fixed-route transportation for the first time.

The first metric had a goal of increasing the number of customers trained by 25% through the use of the mobile learning lab.

The RTC was able to train 826 customers in 2024 as compared to 531 customers in 2023, which was a 55.56% increase over the same time period as last year.

The agency set a personal goal to provide a minimum of two trainings per month in the community. To date, the mobile learning lab is averaging 3.65 trainings a month.



The second metric had a goal of tracking fixed-route ridership for customers who have participated in training provided by the mobile learning lab with the goal of 25% of previous non-riders trying fixed-route transportation for the first time.

The RTC found that 31.42% of customers who participated in training provided through the mobile learning lab took at least one ride on fixed-route transit.

This data was calculated by issuing reduced fare photo ID cards to trainees that can be tapped on validators located inside fixed route coaches, which allows for the capture of ridership data.



MOVING FORWARD/ SUSTAINABILITY

The RTC is very pleased and encouraged by the community support for the mobile learning lab and is committed to providing transportation options to underserved populations in the Las Vegas Valley. As Las Vegas continues to grow, and our roads continue to become more congested, public transportation's role in our city's development will be paramount.

The RTC's future goal for the mobile learning lab will be to increase outreach with the target of a 25% increase in agencies served.

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The RTC's grant project was set to launch in the 1st quarter of 2021. Once COVID-19 hit, the world was forced to readjust due to virus limitations. Businesses started to reopen, but they were faced with supply chain shortages that affected the automobile industry especially hard. The RTC was unable to get chassis and parts to build the vehicle, which caused monumental delays in launching the project.

The RTC was forced to reach out to the FTA to request an extension of the grant's period of performance to allow the time needed for the build and data collection.

The RTC was forced to look at the design of the interior and exterior of the vehicle itself, as it was an enclosed space, not knowing what limitations would be placed on people gathering in tight spaces due to social distancing. UV air purifiers were added to the build, as well as the equipment necessary to be able to teach classes on the outside of the vehicle, such as external TV monitors, power supplies, and retractable awnings for shade. All of these items increased the cost to build the vehicle and the time it would take to complete.



LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned included the impact of the severe heat in Las Vegas. The vehicle's air conditioning system is designed to drop the interior temperature 30 degrees below the ambient outside temperature while idling. Summer temperatures can reach over 110 degrees in Las Vegas, which created an internal atmosphere that was uncomfortable to hold classes in. This issue caused the RTC to have to pause training during the month of August.

The RTC was also challenged with some unforeseen mechanical issues with the vehicle. The ARBOC vehicle was the first vehicle of its kind within the RTC's fleet and included some systems that the RTC did not have a previous history with. These mechanical issues caused the vehicle to be out of commission for repairs at times, which in turn caused the cancellation and rescheduling of some trainings.

In hindsight, there wasn't much that could have been changed to alleviate the issues the agency faced, but it forced staff to think outside of the box to make sure the RTC had a vehicle that could handle any challenge it faced in the future.



Training session with Opportunity Village customers.