

**City of Sierra Vista**

# **Short Range Transit Plan**

Prepared for:



**Arizona Department of Transportation  
City of Sierra Vista**

Prepared by:  
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

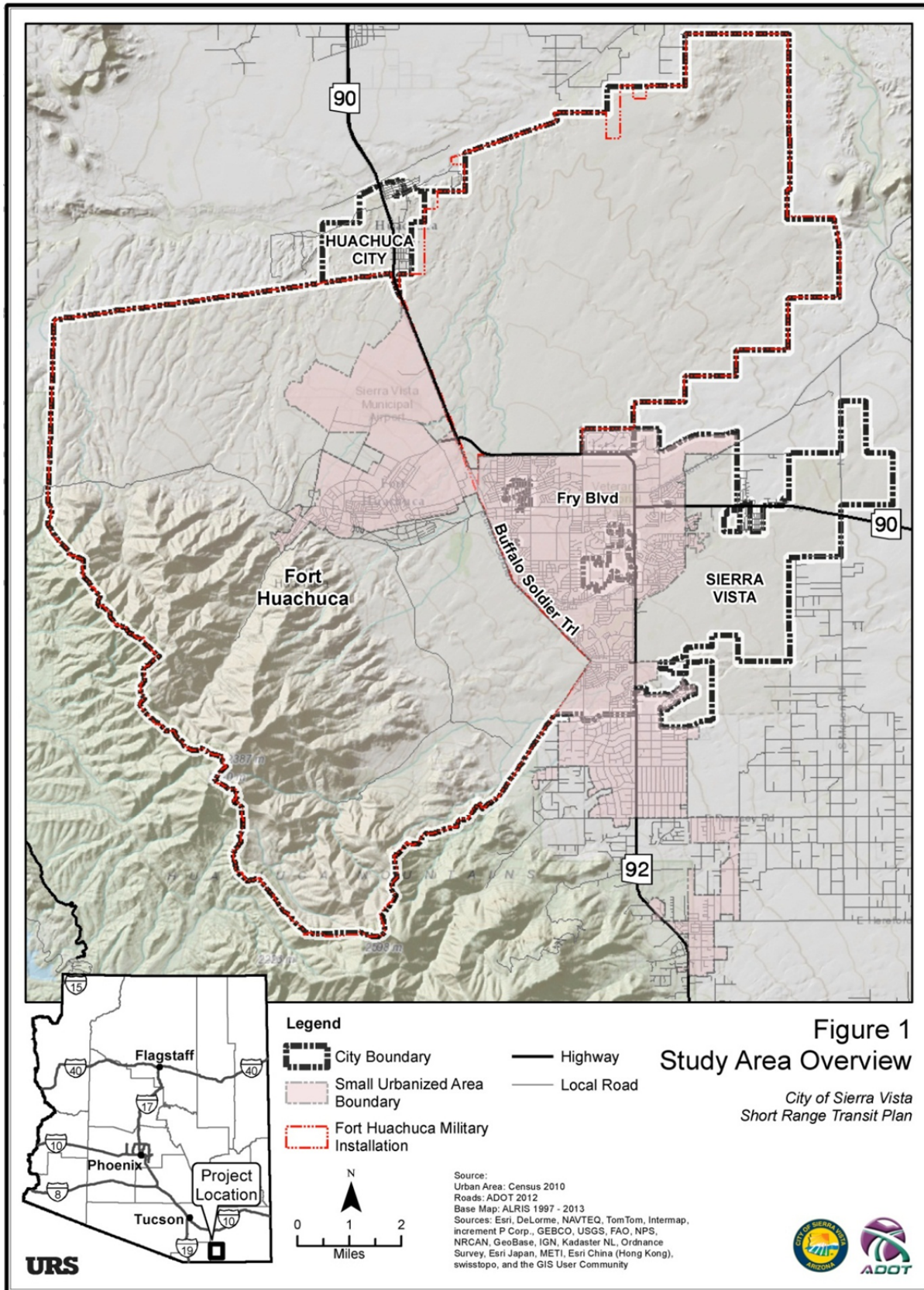
The purpose of the Sierra Vista Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is to guide the operation of transit service for the City of Sierra Vista and Vista Transit between 2015 and 2020. In October 2014, Sierra Vista will transition from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) §5311 General Public Grant Program to the §5307 Small Urbanized Area (UZA) Grant Program. This SRTP includes a summary of the changes associated with this transition as well as recommendations for transit service operations, a financial plan, marketing, and planning for future regional services.

This plan was developed based on recommendations from a study process that was conducted between November 2013 and June 2014. The study was completed through the Planning Assistance for Rural Areas (PARA) program administered by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). The SRTP was developed by the City of Sierra Vista and ADOT in coordination with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), stakeholders, and the public through input at public meetings.

### 1.1 STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

The City of Sierra Vista is located in southern Cochise County, approximately 75 miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona and 15 miles north of Sonora, Mexico. Within Cochise County, the City of Sierra Vista is located approximately 35 miles south of Benson, Arizona; 25 miles west of Bisbee, Arizona; 50 miles northwest of Douglas, Arizona; and 20 miles southwest of Tombstone, Arizona.

The study area encompasses the City of Sierra Vista including Fort Huachuca, which was annexed into the city in 1971, as well as the limits of its census-defined urbanized area as illustrated in Figure 1. The Sierra Vista UZA is defined through the US Census and includes the northeastern portion of Fort Huachuca and stretches south of the city limits along SR 92 past Hereford Road.



## 1.2 STUDY PROCESS

Throughout this study, Working Papers were prepared to document the study tasks and were subject to review and comment from the City of Sierra Vista, ADOT, and members of the TAC. The Working Papers form the basis for this document, and are available from [www.azdot.gov/SierraVista](http://www.azdot.gov/SierraVista).

The primary study tasks are summarized below:

**Task 1: Understand the existing study area characteristics** – In order to identify appropriate service recommendations it was necessary to understand the existing characteristics of the study area. This evaluation provided a summary of the existing population, employment, and land use throughout Sierra Vista. In addition, this task provided an overview of the existing transit system including fixed route system characteristics, fleet and staffing, route profiles, and current marketing efforts. The results of this evaluation are described in detail in Working Paper #1, *Overview of the Existing Transit System*.

**Task 2: Transition from §5311 to §5307 Federal Funding Program** – Due to population growth identified in the 2010 census, Sierra Vista is required to transition from the §5311 General Public Grant Program to the §5307 UZA. This task provided an overview of the differences between §5311 and §5307 and assessed the impact of the transition in funding programs. Details regarding this transition are described in Working Paper #2, *Transition from §5311 to §5307*.

**Task 3: Evaluate existing Vista Transit services** – In order to make recommendations for service improvements and enhancements it was necessary to understand the intricacies of the existing system. This task included a detailed overview of the existing fixed route transit services as well as public and stakeholder outreach to gather information on how residents feel about the current Vista Transit services. These efforts included a public meeting, stakeholder interviews, and driver interviews. A set of goals, objectives and performance measures were developed to help guide improvements to the current network. As a result, key issues were identified through the system assessment and strategies to address these issues were identified. A summary of this evaluation and its results are provided in Working Paper #3, *Vista Transit Service Evaluation*.

**Task 4: Develop operations and financial plan** – Based on the service evaluation conducted in Task 3, this task recommended an Operations and Implementation Plan for Vista Transit services over the next five years. These recommendations for service efficiencies and safety improvements were based upon the findings documented in Working Paper #3 and input from Vista Transit staff. A Financial Plan was also developed to identify a budget that correlates to the service recommendations. A detailed discussion of the operations and financial recommendations is provided in Working Paper #4A, *Operations and Financial Plan*.

In addition, marketing ideas were identified to provide Vista Transit with a framework to increase visibility within the community and create additional revenue streams to support transit services.

An evaluation of current marketing strategies as well as recommendations for additional transit specific marketing efforts that will help support the recommended operations plan are summarized in Working Paper #4B, *Marketing Plan*.

**Task 5: Identify regional partnerships and funding strategies** – An evaluation of potential regional partners and funding opportunities that can support the recommendations in this SRTP. This task included a review of regional and local funding opportunities, a summary of unmet transit needs, peer agency review and the development of funding and partnership strategies that can support the operations recommendations identified in Task 4. A full description of these recommendations is described in Working Paper #5, *Regional Partnerships and Funding Strategies*.

**Task 6: Document final recommendations** – Based on input from the City of Sierra Vista, the TAC, and the public, recommendations for the next 5 years of Vista Transit services are compiled in this document.

### 1.3 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Ongoing public and agency coordination is an important component to developing successful transit improvements. As part of the development of this SRTP, input was solicited from the public, community leaders, stakeholder agencies, and staff from the City to fully understand the issues, problems, and opportunities available.

#### 1.3.1 Technical Advisory Committee

At the beginning of this study, a TAC was formed to provide input into the analysis and development of service recommendations. The members served as a sounding board for recommendations, provided review and guidance, and communicated back to the agencies and groups they represent. The TAC included representatives from ADOT, the City of Sierra Vista, Cochise County, the City of Bisbee, Huachuca City, Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO), the City of Douglas, and Fort Huachuca. Four TAC meetings were held throughout the study process to share information and discuss findings and recommendations.

#### 1.3.2 Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held over the course of the study, one at the Windemere Hotel in February 2014 and the second at the Sierra Vista Library in June 2014. The first meeting, held February 11, 2014, was designed to introduce this study to the public and solicit input on the performance and coverage of the existing system. The second public meeting held June 3, 2014, presented the service recommendations that were developed in response to the evaluation of current services.

During each public meeting, a presentation was made to outline study efforts and questions were solicited from the public. Each meeting also included time devoted to one-on-one conversations in an open house setting. Comment cards were provided and the public was urged to provide input. Summaries of the public meetings are available from [www.azdot.gov/sierravista](http://www.azdot.gov/sierravista).

## 1.4 FINAL PLAN ORGANIZATION

The remainder of this plan is organized as follows:

**Chapter 2: Overview of the Existing Transit System** – Provides a summary level analysis of the existing characteristics of the City of Sierra Vista and surrounding areas as documented in Working Paper #1 – *Overview of the Existing Transit System*. This information provides an understanding of the existing transit network and defines a baseline standard from which recommended improvements can be identified.

**Chapter 3: Service Evaluation** – Summarizes the detailed evaluation of the characteristics of the fixed route transit system. Based on this evaluation, goals, objectives, and strategies were developed to address the system needs as identified in Working Paper #3 – *Vista Transit Service Evaluation*.

**Chapter 4: Operations Plan** – Summarizes recommendations for implementing service changes over the next five years. The Operations Plan is divided into two phases and includes benefits for introducing new service. Working Paper #4A – *Operations and Financial Plan* describes all the recommended service changes in detail.

**Chapter 5: Financial Plan** – Summarizes recommendations for establishing a system budget based on new federal funding match requirements and determines the financial capacity of the system based on recommended service changes.

**Chapter 6: Marketing Recommendations** – Summarizes recommendations for marketing Vista Transit services. Working Paper #4B provides additional detail.

**Chapter 7: Regional Partnerships** – Summarizes recommendations for strengthening regional partnerships and identifying strategic funding opportunities. Working Paper #5 – *Regional Partnerships and Funding Strategies* identifies recommendations for developing these relationships.

**Chapter 8: Implementation Plan** – Summarizes the timeline for implementing the recommendations and making the transition to a §5307 UZA.



## 2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING TRANSIT SYSTEM

An analysis of the existing demographics of the Sierra Vista UZA and the existing Vista Transit network will provide an understanding of the growth potential of the City and how that will impact future transit needs. This section addresses the following:

- Population Size and Characteristics;
- Employment;
- Land Use and Development; and
- Transit Network Characteristics

### 2.1 POPULATION SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS

According to US Census, the City of Sierra Vista had a 2010 population of 43,888 people while Cochise County had a 2010 population of 131,346. Sierra Vista accounts for nearly 1/3 of the total population of the County. Since 2000, both Cochise County and Sierra Vista have experienced population growth. Table 1 summarizes the population growth of both the City of Sierra Vista and Cochise County compared to the State of Arizona.

**Table 1 Total Population – 2010 Census**

Area	2000	2010	Percent Growth
Sierra Vista	37,775	43,888	16%
Cochise County	117,755	131,346	12%
Arizona	5,130,632	6,392,017	25%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2013

The overall population per acre, or population density, throughout the study area is not high. The densest areas of Sierra Vista are located in the northwest part of the city and just east of SR92, where the population is between 11 and 20 people per acre. Generally, population density throughout the city is in the range of six to ten people per acre with less dense areas on the periphery of the city. According to the US Census, 35 percent of the population of Sierra Vista is either under the age of 16 or over the age of 65, which is similar to the proportion of the population within those age classifications throughout the state. It is estimated that over 7,000 (41 percent) of the approximately 17,300 currently occupied housing units have only one or zero vehicles available. These percentages are similar for the state of Arizona and Cochise County as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Zero and One Car Households**

Area	2000 Census		2012 ACS	
	Zero and One Car	% of Total	Zero and One Car	% of Total
Sierra Vista	6,532	46%	7,042	41%
Cochise County	19,251	44%	19,373	39%
Arizona	874,993	46%	1,052,627	45%
	Zero Car	% of Total	Zero Car	% of Total
Sierra Vista	814	6%	1,157	7%
Cochise County	3,119	7%	3,373	7%
Arizona	140,579	7%	159,247	7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 and 2013

According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the median income for the City of Sierra Vista was approximately \$56,000 per household in 2012. In comparison, in Cochise County the median household income was \$45,000 and throughout the State of Arizona it was just over \$50,000. Since 2000, these numbers have increased, most notably in the City of Sierra Vista where the real value (purchasing power) of median income has increased by 10 percent. Table 3 summarizes the median income trends of Sierra Vista compared to Cochise County and the State of Arizona since 2000.

**Table 3 Median Income**

Area	2000 Census	2000 Census (2012 \$)	2012 ACS	Percent Change (of 2012 \$)
Sierra Vista	\$38,427	\$51,235	\$56,433	10%
Cochise County	\$32,105	\$42,806	\$45,505	6%
Arizona	\$40,558	\$54,076	\$50,256	-7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2013 and Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator

## 2.2 EMPLOYMENT

According to Cochise County, the Arizona Office of Employment and Population Statistics, and the Cochise College Center for Economic Research, total employment in the City of Sierra Vista is almost 19,000 with an unemployment rate of 7.7 percent. Since 2002, both the total employed and unemployment has risen which suggests that the total population of the city's workforce is growing at a rate higher than the rest of the county and state as a whole. Table 4 compares employment statistics between Sierra Vista, Cochise County and the State of Arizona over the past 10 years.

**Table 4 Total Employment**

Area	2002	2012	Percent Change
Sierra Vista	15,893 (3.5% Unemployment)	18,793 (7.7% Unemployment)	18.2%
Cochise County	52,443 (5.8% Unemployment)	54,079 (8.2% Unemployment)	3.1%
Arizona	2,671,546 (6.0% Unemployment)	2,761,010 (8.2% Unemployment)	3.3%

Source: Cochise College Center for Economic Research, 2013.

### 2.3 LAND USE

According to Vista 2030, the City of Sierra Vista General Plan, the city has five designated land use categories: residential, commercial, industrial, open space, and public. The residential land use category allows for varying densities including low- (0-2.0 dwelling units per acre [du/ac]), medium- (2.01-4.5 du/ac), and high- (4.51+ du/ac). The low density residential areas are located on the periphery of the city, while the medium density developments are more centrally located. The high density residential areas are mostly located along Fry Boulevard and SR 92 in the same general areas as the majority of the commercial land uses. The open space and public land uses are the least concentrated land uses throughout the city. Overall development throughout Sierra Vista has slowed down in recent years. According to the Sierra Vista Planning Department, only 53 building permits were applied for last year.

Low-density residential is also located outside of the incorporated city on unincorporated Cochise County land. Two special planning growth areas are located south of the city. According to the Cochise County Comprehensive Plan, growth areas are tiered based on how close they are from transitioning from rural settings to urban based on presence/absence of infrastructure/amenities and likelihood of future annexation by an incorporated city.

Major activity centers located throughout and frequently visited in Sierra Vista include:

- Veteran's Memorial Park/The Cove Aquatic Center
- Cochise Plaza Shopping Center
- Chamber of Commerce
- Sierra Vista City Hall
- Sierra Vista Regional Mall
- University of Arizona
- Cochise College
- Food City
- Wal-Mart
- Target
- Fry's
- Safeway
- Department of Economic Security
- Sierra Vista Regional Health Center
- Vista Transit Center

### 2.4 TRANSIT SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Vista Transit began serving the City of Sierra Vista and Fort Huachuca in 1994. From 1994 to 2001 the demand response service was operated by Catholic Community Services. In 2007, the Vista Transit Center opened and fixed route service commenced with the current six route configuration. In FY 12 (fiscal year 2012) Vista Transit ridership (including paratransit and fixed route service) totaled just over 158,000 riders, an increase of more than 7 percent from the previous year (Vista Transit Ridership Report, 2013).

### 2.5 EXISTING FIXED ROUTE SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

Vista Transit's service area operates within the city limits of Sierra Vista. Originally providing only demand response passenger service requests, the Vista Transit network has grown to operate a fleet of 15 vehicles over six local fixed routes that connect to a centrally located Transit Center. Fixed route services operate in some capacity from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. The lone Saturday route provides service to Fort Huachuca and operates between

10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.. The weekday routes generally require one bus to complete the approximately 25-minute route cycle time for each route. The existing transit network is radial in design and all weekday routes stop at the centrally located transit center for a timed transfer generally on the top and bottom of the hour. Figure 2 is the Vista Transit Route Map provided to system riders and is available at the transit center as well as online at [www.vistatransit.org](http://www.vistatransit.org). Full route profiles for each existing Vista Transit route are available as part of Working Paper #1 – *Overview of the Existing Transit System*.

### 2.5.1 Fixed Route Fare Policy

The general adult fare is \$1.25 per trip. The fare for senior citizens over the age of 65, disabled citizens, and students is \$0.75 per trip. Military personnel are \$1.00 per trip. A one-way fare includes one transfer. Day passes are available for \$3.00. Monthly passes are available for purchase for \$40 (regular adult), \$24 (senior, disabled, student), and \$32 (military) which provide unlimited trips. Table 5 summarizes the fixed route fares for Vista Transit.

**Table 5 Vista Transit Fixed Route Fares**

	One-Way Trip	Monthly Pass	Book of 20 Trips
Regular Adult	\$1.25	\$40.00	\$25.00
Senior 65+	\$0.75	\$24.00	\$15.00
Disabled	\$0.75	\$24.00	\$15.00
Student	\$0.75	\$24.00	\$15.00
Military	\$1.00	\$32.00	\$20.00

Source: City of Sierra Vista, 2013

## 2.6 FLEET AND STAFFING

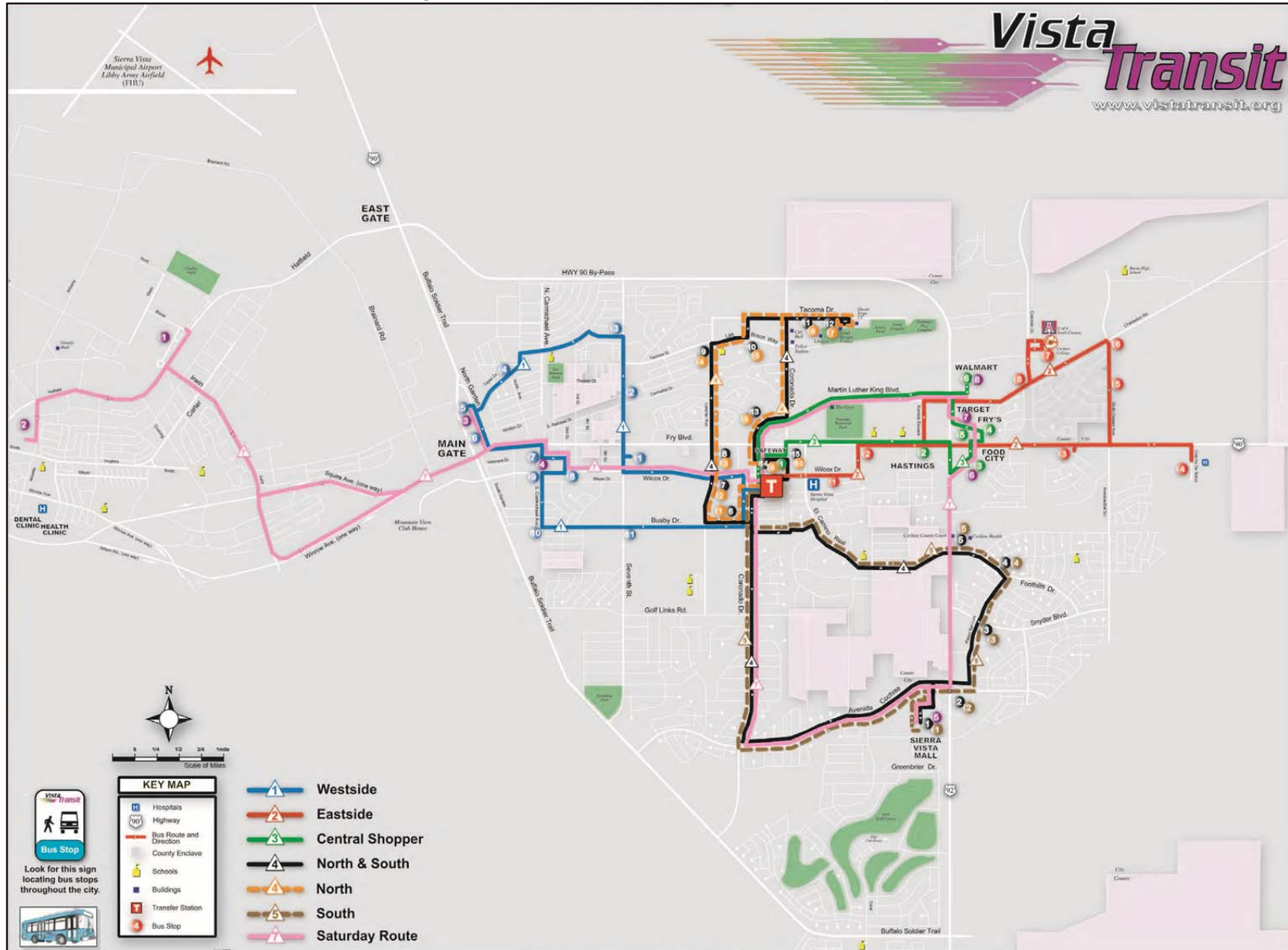
Currently, Vista Transit operates 15 vehicles and employs 18 total drivers (seven full-time and 11 part-time) and two dispatchers. Table 6 lists the fleet that serves all six fixed routes within the Vista Transit network.

**Table 6 Fleet List**

Year	Model	Capacity	Quantity
2000	Crown Victoria – Auto	N/A	1
2003	EZ Rider – Bus	30 Passengers	1
2007	International – Bus	22 Passengers	5
2010	Arboc – Bus	18 Passengers	2
2010	El Dorado- Bus	16+ Passengers	3
2010	Dodge Grand Caravan (1/2 ton)	Wheelchair	1
2013	Arboc- Bus	12+ Passengers	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>15</b>

Source: City of Sierra Vista Public Works Department

Figure 2 2013 Vista Transit Network Map



## **2.7 CURB TO CURB SERVICE/PARATRANSIT**

In addition to fixed route service, Vista Transit provides curb to curb (paratransit) services to qualified citizens. Three buses operate the paratransit service from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. Curbside pick-up services are available to customers with disabilities for travel within the Sierra Vista city limits. All buses are wheelchair accessible and passengers are required to prequalify for curbside service. Vista Transit curbside service is offered as part of the federally required Americans with Disability Act (ADA) services. In FY 12, curbside service accounted for nearly 10,000 rides or just over 6 percent of the total ridership on the Vista Transit network (Vista Transit Source Data).

Curb to curb service is provided Monday through Friday for \$2.00 per one-way trip. A reservation must be made 24 hours in advance. Vista Transit operates two paratransit buses 8 hours per day on weekdays and a third bus for 8 hours on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and for 4 hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

## **2.8 CURRENT MARKETING EFFORTS**

The current Vista Transit marketing efforts include advertising services on the radio, banners on buses and the Vista Transit website at [www.vistatransit.org](http://www.vistatransit.org). The ability to disseminate information on Fort Huachuca appears to be limited. Most of the ridership Vista Transit experiences come from established riders who use the system every day.

### 3.0 SERVICE EVALUATION

As part of the development of the SRTP, a Service Evaluation was conducted to identify issues to be addressed in the recommended service plan.

#### 3.1 OPERATING METRICS

Table 7 presents operating statistics and performance indicators for Vista Transit in 2012. The fixed-route bus system had 154,842 riders with an average of almost 15 passengers per hour. The farebox recovery ratio for the fixed-route system was 11 percent and the cost per revenue hour was \$61.42. The paratransit service had 10,417 trips and 2.2 passengers per hour. The farebox ratio in 2012 was 11 percent, which is equal to the fixed-route service. The cost per revenue hour for paratransit service was \$82.52.

Data for the years prior to 2012 were not available with the paratransit and fixed-route service separated. It is important that Vista Transit establishes a system to monitor the operating statistics and performance measures for both services to Vista Transit separately in order to track the performance trends over time.

**Table 7 Vista Transit Annual Operating Statistics, 2012**

	Fixed Route Bus	Paratransit
Passenger Trips	154,842	10,417
Operating Costs	\$642,120	\$385,277
Farebox Revenue	\$71,352	\$42,811
Revenue Miles	159,663	77,405
Revenue Hours	10,454	4,669
Fleet Age	4.9	5.3
<b>PERFORMANCE AND COST EFFECTIVENESS</b>		
Passengers per Revenue Hour	14.8	2.2
Operating Costs per Passenger	\$4.15	\$36.99
Operating Costs per Revenue Hour	\$61.42	\$82.52
Farebox Recovery Ratio	11.1%	11.1%
Subsidy per Passenger	\$3.69	\$32.88

Source: National Transit Database

#### 3.2 FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP PATTERNS AND SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

Vista Transit drivers manually record passenger boardings on all trips each day. The data presented in this section are the average daily boarding per stop over an eight month period from February to September 2013. Alighting data are not currently collected by Vista Transit, thus deboarding trends will not be summarized. For more detailed individual route maps and data, refer to Working Paper #3 – *Vista Transit Service Evaluation*.

##### 3.2.1 Route 1 – Westside

- Route 1 averages 197 daily boardings.
- Boarding activity is consistent throughout the route with strong boarding activity south of Fry Boulevard on Carmichael Avenue.

- Boardings peak in the afternoon between 2:00 p.m. (21 boardings) and 3:00 p.m. (23 boardings).
- Strongest performing route of the system.

### 3.2.2 Route 2 - Eastside

- The route averages 104 daily boardings.
- Most of the ridership activity occurs at Cochise College and the multi-family housing south of the campus.
- Map shows large segments of the route along Fry Boulevard and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway with no stops or no boardings.
- Ridership ranges from eight to 11 boardings per hour from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m..

### 3.2.3 Route 3 – Central Shopper

- The route averages 148 daily boardings.
- Similar to Route 2, there are long segments with no ridership activity (there are no stops or no boardings) along Fry Boulevard and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.
- This route maintains a high ridership 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (13 to 17 passengers per hour).

### 3.2.4 Routes 4 & 5 – North & South

- These routes combined have 161 average daily boardings.
- Route 4 has 122 daily boardings and Route 5 has 39 daily boardings.
- Other than the Transfer Center, Sierra Vista Mall, and Safeway all other stops have less than seven passengers per day.
- Ridership is highest during the mid-day when the two routes are combined as one route.

### 3.2.5 Route 7 – Saturday Route

- Route 7 average 157 daily boardings.
- 74 of the total boardings are on Fort Huachuca.
- The 2:00 p.m. trip has the highest ridership (26 boardings).
- Route only operates on Saturdays.

Table 8 and Table 9 present the stops on the fixed route system with the highest and lowest daily boardings. As anticipated, the Transfer Center is the best performing stop as all routes begin and end each trip there. Five of the bus stops in the system recorded an average daily boarding of less than one rider. This indicates that over the eight month period, these stops had more days without any boarding activity than the total boardings on the days with ridership activity.



**Table 8 Top 5 Stops by Average Daily Boardings – Weekdays**

Rank	Route	Station	Average Daily Boardings (weekday)
1	1,2,3,4,5	Transfer Center	297
2	3	Walmart	24
3	1	Carmichael Ave. and Wilcox Dr.	16
3	1	Quail Hollow and 7 <sup>th</sup> St.	16
4	4,5	Sierra Vista Mall	13
5	2	Cochise College	12

**Table 9 Low Ridership Stops by Average Daily Boardings – Weekdays**

Rank	Route	Station	Average Daily Boardings (weekday)
1	4.5	Mooreman Ave.	0
1	4.5	V.A. Clinic (Coronado)	0
1	4.5	Oscar Yrun Center (Tacoma)	0
1	4.5	Rodeo Dr.	0
1	3	VA Clinic	0

### 3.3 SYSTEM ASSESSMENT AND KEY ISSUES

The current service provides basic transit coverage to most parts of the City and is designed to be most useful to transit dependent populations. It is difficult for transit to compete with the private automobile due to limited traffic congestion, convenience of driving, and free parking throughout the City. Although with increasing gas prices, a focus on sustainability and a generational shift towards transit for the younger population, Vista Transit has an opportunity to attract new riders while improving the service for current passengers.

The following is an overall assessment of the transit system based on findings from the existing conditions assessment, the service observations, and from community input. A more detailed summary is available as part of Working Paper #3 – *Vista Transit Service Evaluation*.

**Fixed route buses operate on shopping center parking lots** – All bus routes currently travel through shopping center parking lots to provide direct access for passengers to the major retail stores. Although the service provides a convenience for passengers, there are a number of safety and travel time issues caused by the deviations through parking lots. In most cases, transit providers drop off and pick up passengers at designated stops on the street adjacent to the shopping center.

**On-time performance issues on Routes 1 and 2** – Routes 1 and 2 have little time built into the schedule to allow for delays along the route. Since the entire system depends on a pulse at the Transfer Center every half hour, routes that run late can have an impact on transfers.

**Routes 2, 3, and 5 operate closed door service** – Routes 2 and 3 operate on segments of Fry Boulevard and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway with no designated bus stops, essentially traveling express service through the eastern core of the City. Route 5 has only three bus stops

between Coronado Drive and Busby Drive to the Sierra Vista Mall, essentially operating closed door service for half of the entire loop. The transit service may benefit from re-routing the lines along parallel or nearby roadway corridors with stronger ridership potential.

**Timed transfer system works** – Overall the pulse every half hour at the Transfer Center works very well. Typically buses arrive at the Transfer Center at 25 minutes past the hour to allow for a 5 minute window for transfers between buses.

**New opportunities for transit service** – The largest employer in the City of Sierra Vista, Fort Huachuca, is an underserved transit market. Only the Route 7 Saturday service operates on the base. Vista Transit and Fort Huachuca should look for partnering opportunities to address the unmet needs of daily fixed-route service on the Fort and connections to the City of Sierra Vista medical and shopping areas. Competition from private shuttle services and the lack of marketing of transit on the Fort are key challenges to implementing new service. In addition to service to the Fort, there may be opportunities to provide service to the growing residential centers to the south (Canyon de Flores) and east, to the new multi-family development at the northwest corner of Coronado Drive and Tacoma Drive, and to the important regional communities of Bisbee, Douglas, Benson and possibly Tucson.

**System could benefit from more direct and bi-directional service** – The existing system is made up of large one-way loops that often provide out of direction service between major transit generators. The system could benefit from a simpler, more easily understandable service where routes are designed to operate two-way service on major activity corridors.

**Marketing materials and transit pass sales** – Feedback from the driver interviews and the public meeting provided suggestions for improved marketing materials and fare sales. Currently the Vista Transit system information is provided primarily through the system map/schedule which is available for free at the Transfer Center. In addition, attendees of the public meeting also recommended more options for purchasing fare passes such as day passes and monthly passes.

**System monitoring and tracking process** – Service quality and efficiency measures such as on-time performance, load factors, schedule adherence, and paratransit denials and cancelations are important to the effective management, evaluation, and planning of transit service. Vista Transit currently does not formally track any of these measures. A well-defined process of tracking origins and destinations of paratransit passengers would also help to optimize the scheduling of trips and to monitor the efficiency of the service.

**Bus stop spacing and stop locations** – Vista Transit currently does not have defined standards for bus stop spacing and placement. A consistent approach to placement and location of bus stops provides a more predictable and user friendly system for passengers and automobiles operating behind or in the proximity of the buses. There is no consistency to the stop spacing on the current system.

**Bus stop access** – A major component of a successful transit system is the quality of the pedestrian environment. Most passengers are pedestrians at one or both ends of their trip. Their ability to access stops safely and comfortably is important to the transit service. Sidewalks should be uninterrupted to allow for passengers to walk safely to and from their origins and destinations.

## 4.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Transit system performance must be measured based on goals and standards that reflect the operating environment and values of the community it serves. The recommended goals and objectives were created to be a starting point for Vista Transit to build on and refine in the future. In order to make these goals and objectives successful, Vista Transit will need to establish performance measures and begin tracking and monitoring service performance.

### 4.1.1 Fixed Route Goals and Objectives

**Goal 1:** Provide a safe, effective, efficient, and accessible transportation options for residents of and visitors to the City of Sierra Vista.

**Objective:** Improve service efficiency and reliability for existing service by meeting or exceeding established standards of performance.

**Objective:** Ensure safety of people using transit as well as of non-riders.

**Goal 2:** Increase/address the mobility needs of the residents of the City of Sierra Vista.

**Objective:** Improve access to employment, healthcare, shopping, and recreation.

**Objective:** Promote regional connectivity

**Goal 3:** Increase Vista Transit visibility within and outside Sierra Vista.

**Objective:** Improve knowledge about the service and its benefits to the residents of Sierra Vista.

**Objective:** Raise awareness among neighboring communities about Vista Transit services.

**Goal 4:** Maximize resource utilization and operational efficiency with respect to system administration and operations.

**Objective:** Maintain capital assets in State of Good Repair.

**Objective:** Streamline administrative activities to improve efficiency.

**Objective:** Implement performance monitoring system.

**Goal 5:** Identify reliable, sustainable, and adequate funding for continued transit operations in the City of Sierra Vista.

**Objective:** Minimize impact of transition from §5311 to §5307 on transit operations of Vista Transit.

### 4.1.2 Paratransit Goals and Objectives

**Goal 1:** Provide a paratransit system that effectively meets the community needs.

**Objective:** Meet or exceed established performance measures.

**Goal 2:** Operate and manage the transit system efficiently.

**Objective:** Implement performance monitoring system.

#### **4.2 PERFORMANCE MEASURES RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommended performance measures are designed to monitor operational efficiency and productivity as they relate to key data collected annually for the National Transit Database (NTD). The standards have been selected to provide the necessary benchmarks to guide service improvements in the future.

It is difficult to quantify the existing standard performance for Vista Transit at this time since some of the data has not been collected on a regular basis over the past five years. The recommended measures are based on incremental and achievable improvements for Vista Transit and reflect a starting point for a more robust data collection effort. It is recommended that Vista Transit track these performance measures over the next six months and update and adjust the benchmarks to reflect the goals and objectives of the agency over time.

Table 10 and Table 11 summarize the recommended performance standards for both Fixed Route Bus and Paratransit Service within the Vista Transit network.

**Table 10 Fixed Route Performance Measures**

Performance Measure	Proposed Standard	2012 Vista Transit Performance (NTD)	Comments
<b>Efficiency Standards</b>			
Operating Cost/Passenger	\$4.00	\$4.15	Standard should be higher for Flex Service – standard should be set after monitoring the Flex service over a six month period.
Operating Cost/Hour	\$60.00	\$61.42	This standard should be achieved over the five year period of the SRTP.
Passengers per Hour	17	14.8	Introduction of two-way service should help achieve standard.
Farebox Recovery Ratio	15%	11%	15% - 20% should be achieved over the five year period of the SRTP.
Revenue to Non-Revenue Hour	< 10%	N/A	Non-revenue hours should not exceed 10% of total revenue and non-revenue hours.
<b>Service Quality Standards</b>			
On-time Performance	90%	N/A	*Buses must arrive at each stop no later than 5 minutes of published time in the schedule. *Buses should not depart a timepoint prior to the time published in the schedule. *Should be monitored at the Transfer Center and by point checks along the route.
Number of Complaints per Month	No more than two verified and valid complaints	N/A	Requires monitoring and recording passenger complaints.
Missed Trips per Month	1/month	N/A	Monitor and record missed trips. Continue to provide adequate operator spare board to ensure no missed trips.
<b>Service Design Standards</b>			
Peak Passenger Loads	125%	100%	Maximum passenger loads should not exceed 125% of seating capacity.
Bus Stop Design	N/A	N/A	*All stops should be clearly marked with bus stop signs. *Standards should be established for the addition of benches and shelters. (minimum of 10 boardings per day = bench, 17 boardings per day = shelter)
New Service	N/A	N/A	New service should be introduced as a one-year pilot program with a focus on ridership and productivity.

Source: URS, 2014

**Table 11 Paratransit Performance Measures**

Performance Measure	Proposed Standard	2012 Vista Transit Performance (NTD)	Comments
<b>Efficiency Standards</b>			
Operating Cost/Hour	\$75.00	\$82.52	Fixed route and paratransit should be closer in cost per hour than is currently reported since the hourly operator rate is similar. Over the next year closely monitor the allocation of staff between fixed route and paratransit services.
Passengers per Hour	4	2.2	Efficiencies in service and adopting the 3/4 mile from a fixed route service area boundary for new riders should help to increase the productivity of the service.
Farebox Recovery Ratio	12%	*11.1%	The current farebox recovery ratio is relatively high for a paratransit system the size of Vista Transit. Continue to monitor and separate farebox recovery between fixed route and paratransit.
Revenue to Non-Revenue Hour	< 10%	N/A	Non-revenue hours should not exceed 10% of total revenue and non-revenue hours.
<b>Service Quality Standards</b>			
Service to all ADA Eligible Customers within 3/4 mile of a Fixed Route	100%	100%	Vista Transit currently operates paratransit service within the Sierra Vista city limits which exceeds the minimum ADA service area.
Service Denials	0	N/A	Trips need to be accommodated within one hour of request. Denials need to be monitored.
Missed Trips per Month	1/month	N/A	Monitor and record missed trips.
Percent of Pickups within 15-minutes of Scheduled Time	90%	99%	Vista Transit service exceeds the benchmark.
Miles per Preventable Accidents	20,000	N/A	A benchmark is set at 20,000 miles, however the goal should be no preventable accidents.

Source: URS, 2014

The recommended Vista Transit performance measures provide a defined structure to monitor and evaluate services. These measures were developed to provide achievable benchmarks that will help guide service over time and comply with ADA regulations.

## 5.0 OPERATIONS PLAN

The recommended service plan focuses on improving the overall system with more direct and two-way service to increase ridership and improve productivity. It is divided into two phases. Phase 1 outlines the service recommendations for the first three years of the SRTP (2015-2018). Phase 2 focuses on the last two years of the planning horizon (2019-2020). Recommended performance standards for Vista Transit are identified in Section 4.2 to help evaluate the service and continually plan for future improvements for fixed-route and paratransit services.

The recommendations outlined in this Operations Plan are designed to improve service and to help meet the standards. These standards and measures are meant to be a starting point for Vista Transit to build on over the next five years.

### 5.1 FIXED ROUTE RECOMMENDATIONS

The basis of these recommendations is to provide a higher level of service with more direct one-seat trips. The first phase is a cost neutral solution (from an operations perspective) for improving the level of service to riders, in that it maintains the same number of revenue hours that are currently in service. Capital funds would be required for new bus stops in some locations. The next phase will require increased funding, and is focused on providing longer term improvements for Vista Transit. Both phases will require a marketing plan to advertise and help launch the new service, which is described in Section 7.0.

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1 Recommendations

Phase 1 is recommended for implementation in the short term with a focus on improving the level of service and increasing ridership. While the focus is to maintain service to key markets and activity centers, this phase uses existing fixed-route and paratransit resources to create bi-directional service with reduced travel times. The proposed service will operate 30-minute headways all day on all routes and preserve the timed-transfer system at the Transfer Center. Five buses are needed to operate the system. In an effort to create more one-seat trips and crosstown routing, the routes will be interlined or paired together.

The route structure proposed in Phase 1 provides a base structure for service growth. It can be seen as a strategy to build ridership through improved productivity, without increasing annual revenue hours. Phase 1 is recommended for implementation in April 2015.

Key components of Phase 1 recommendations are as follows:

- Introduces new routing without an increase in revenue hours or fleet size.
- Introduces new bi-directional linear routing in the north, south, and east service areas.
- Provides one-seat rides from the west to the shopping in the east and from the Lenzner corridor and the library to Walmart through the interlining of routes.
- Discontinues fixed-route service on shopping center parking lots to improve travel times and reduce bus conflicts with cars and pedestrians.



- Adds pedestrian enhancements to provide safe access to and from new bus stops. As service is shifted away from the shopping center parking lots pedestrian improvements such as longer walk signals, improved crosswalks, and pedestrian walkways will need to be added.
- Maintains service levels on the westside of Sierra Vista.
- Proposes to add bus stops on Fry Boulevard west of State Highway 92 and bus turnouts east of State Highway 92.
- Continues the timed transfer system at the Transfer Center.
- Introduces Saturday paratransit service.
- Provides additional coverage on Saturdays including a westside route and a flex service in the north central area of the city.

One of the primary strategies to implement the Phase 1 operations plan is to reallocate some resources from paratransit to fixed-route service. This should be an incremental approach and should be implemented without disruption to the paratransit service. Currently Vista Transit operates an average of 22 hours of paratransit per weekday which represents about one-third (30 percent) of the total daily revenue hours. If the City opts to reduce the initial impact to paratransit service in Phase 1, Vista Transit may also consider phasing in changes by operating Routes 4 and 5 as a combined route with 60-minute headways for four to five hours per weekday. Similar to the current operations, Routes 4 and 5 would operate at 30 minute headways with two buses during the mid-day and at 60-minute headways with one bus during the a.m. and p.m. peaks. The extra bus would then shift to paratransit service. If the City opted to retain the third bus for paratransit service, then one option would be to operate Routes 4 and 5 on a 60-minute frequency all day.

### **Recommended Phase 1 Weekday Service**

The recommended weekday service provides a higher level of service for passengers without the need for operating additional vehicles. Additionally, most routes will be interlined to allow for more one-seat trips and crosstown routes. The routes will interline as follows:

- Route 1 interlines with Route 3
- Route 2 interlines with Route 4
- Route 5 will continue to operate a round trip from the Transfer Center to the mall.

Figure 3 illustrates the proposed Phase 1 routing. For a detailed description of proposed routing changes as they relate to the existing Vista Transit system, refer to Working Paper #4A – *Operations and Financial Plan*.

### **Proposed Phase 1 Saturday Service**

The focus of this proposed service is to provide expanded coverage and more direct access from Fort Huachuca to shopping and other points of interest in Sierra Vista. Phase 1 Saturday service introduces complementary ADA paratransit service and additional coverage to the west side of Sierra Vista, the library, and areas that are not currently being served on Saturdays. In

order to provide this additional service and coverage, Saturday headways have been increased from 30-minutes to 60-minutes.

Figure 4 illustrates the proposed Phase 1 Saturday routing including the paratransit service area. For a detailed description of the proposed routing and service changes to the Saturday service as they relate to the existing Vista Transit service, refer to Working Paper #4A – *Operations and Financial Plan*.

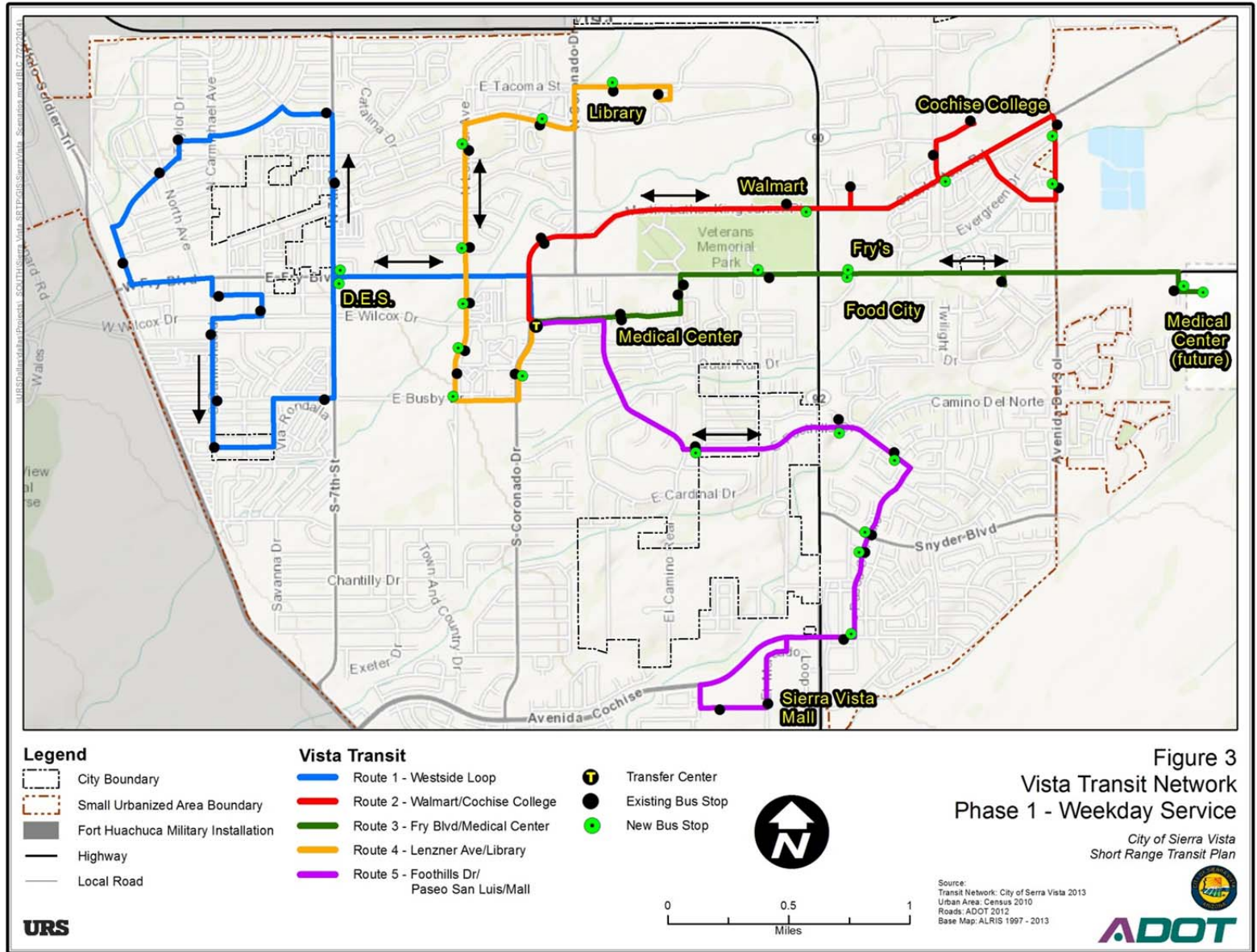
A flex zone was created for the northern area currently served by Route 4 on weekdays. The flex service operates general public and ADA paratransit service in the zone with a fixed-stop at the Transfer Center. The flex zone is bordered by Tacoma Street to the north, the library and Coronado Drive to the east, Busby Drive to the south, and Lenzner Avenue to the west.

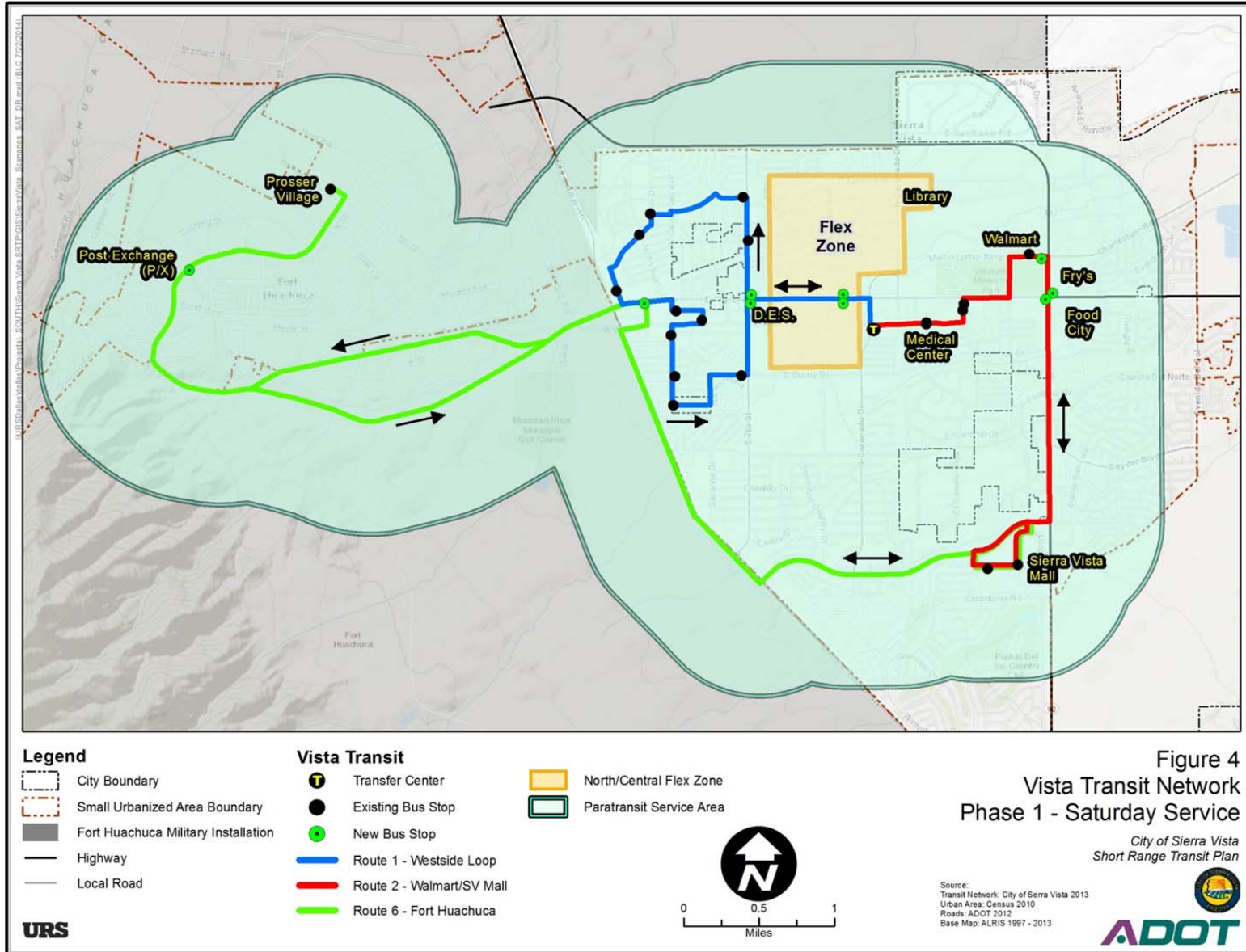
Passengers can call ahead to reserve a pickup and drop off location within the zone at a specific time within the service hours. The Vista Transit dispatchers create a route for each time period that picks up the passengers at the requested location following a routing that is most direct. Each trip of the day will most likely follow a different routing to the Transfer Center depending on where the pickups drop-offs were scheduled.

**Flex service** offers the advantages of fixed route service, plus the convenience of curbside service. Flex routes are designed to allow for a flexible schedule with formal time points. Flex routes provide coverage service to lower density areas without the higher cost of operating fixed-route services.

The service will alternate between flex service and paratransit service every half hour creating a combined one hour headway for each service.

# Sierra Vista Short Range Transit Plan





### Affected Stops

For most riders, the recommended service plan will provide a clear improvement in bus service. However, the plan does eliminate service in a few low ridership areas. Table 12 provides the number of average boardings that were eliminated as part of the weekday Phase 1 implementation. Approximately six average daily boardings would be impacted as a result of Phase 1, which is less than 1 percent of total average daily boardings. No stops were eliminated as part of Phase 1 Saturday service. All eliminated stops except for Coronado/Sunburst and Coronado/Crestwood are within 1/4 mile of another bus stop which is considered the general walk distance from a stop. Other stops such as Safeway, the Department of Economic Security (DES), and Fry's have been removed from the parking lots of the shopping centers; however nearby stops have been added to continue to provide service.

**Table 12 Stops Eliminated or Shifted in Phase 1 Recommendations**

Stops Eliminated		
Stop	Route	Average Daily Boardings
N. Garden Ave	1	2
Coronado/ Sunburst	5	2
Coronado/Crestwood	5	1
Mooreman Avenue	4	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>6</b>

Source: URS, 2014.

### Phase 1 Operations

Phase 1 will operate weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with 30-minute headways on all routes. Saturday service will operate from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with 60-minute headways on all routes. Table 13, below, illustrates the proposed schedule for fixed route service. Conceptual schedules for all routes are included in Working Paper #4 – *Operations and Financial Plan*.

**Table 13 Phase 1 Fixed Route Schedule**

Route	Headways (in minutes)			Span of Service
	a.m. Off-peak (7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)	Base	p.m. Off-peak (5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)	
<b>Weekday</b>				
1	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
2	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
3	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
4	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
5	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
<b>Saturday</b>				
1	N/A	60	60	11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
2	N/A	60	60	10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
6	N/A	60	60	10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Flex	N/A	60	60	10:15 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.

Source: URS, 2014

The proposed Saturday service under Phase 1 will include three routes and a flex/demand response service, an upgrade from one existing Saturday route. Phase 1 utilizes the same revenue hours as the existing service. Table 14 presents the operations plan for the proposed weekday and Saturday services.

**Table 14 Proposed Phase 1 Fixed Route Operations Plan**

Route No.	Proposed Route Name	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles
<b>Weekday</b>			
1	Westside Loop	11	150
2	Walmart/Cochise College	11	144
3	Fry Boulevard/Medical Center	11	138
4	Lenzner Ave/Library	11	147
5	Foothills Drive/Paseo San Luis/Mall	11	120
<b>Phase 1 Weekday Fixed Route</b>		55.0	*699
<b>Phase 1 Weekday Paratransit</b>		16.5	N/A
<b>Total Weekday Phase 1</b>		<b>71.5</b>	<b>699</b>
<b>Existing Weekday Fixed Route</b>		49.5	601
<b>Existing Weekday Paratransit</b>		22	N/A
<b>Total Existing Weekday Service</b>		<b>71.5</b>	<b>601</b>
<b>Saturday</b>			
1	Westside Loop	3.5	40
2	Walmart/Sierra Vista Mall	3.5	54
6	Ft Huachuca/Sierra Vista Mall	7.0	119
Flex	Flex Service	3.5	**42
<b>Phase 1 Saturday Fixed Route</b>		17.5	255
<b>Phase 1 Saturday Paratransit</b>		3.5	N/A
<b>Total Saturday Phase 1</b>		<b>21.0</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Existing Saturday Fixed Route</b>		21.0	791
<b>Existing Saturday Paratransit</b>		0	0
<b>Total Existing Saturday Service</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>791</b>

Source: URS, 2014

\* The total number of revenue miles in Phase 1 may be offset by reduced paratransit revenue miles.

\*\* Mileage on flex service will vary by trip and by day. Assuming seven trips per day with six miles per trip, the flex service would average 42 miles per Saturday.

### Phase 1 Capital Needs

Additional capital investment is needed to implement the two-way service in Phase 1. New bus stop signs and poles will need to be purchased and installed across from existing stops and at proposed stops throughout the network. Vista Transit does not have an adopted policy for the location of bus stops, however it is recommended that the new stops be placed at the far-side of an intersection to allow the buses to clear the intersection before stopping to pick up or drop off passengers. A total of 31 new bus stops (signs) and two turnouts (in front of Fry's and Food City) are needed for Phase 1. No additional vehicles will be needed to operate Phase 1.

### Phase 1 Benefits

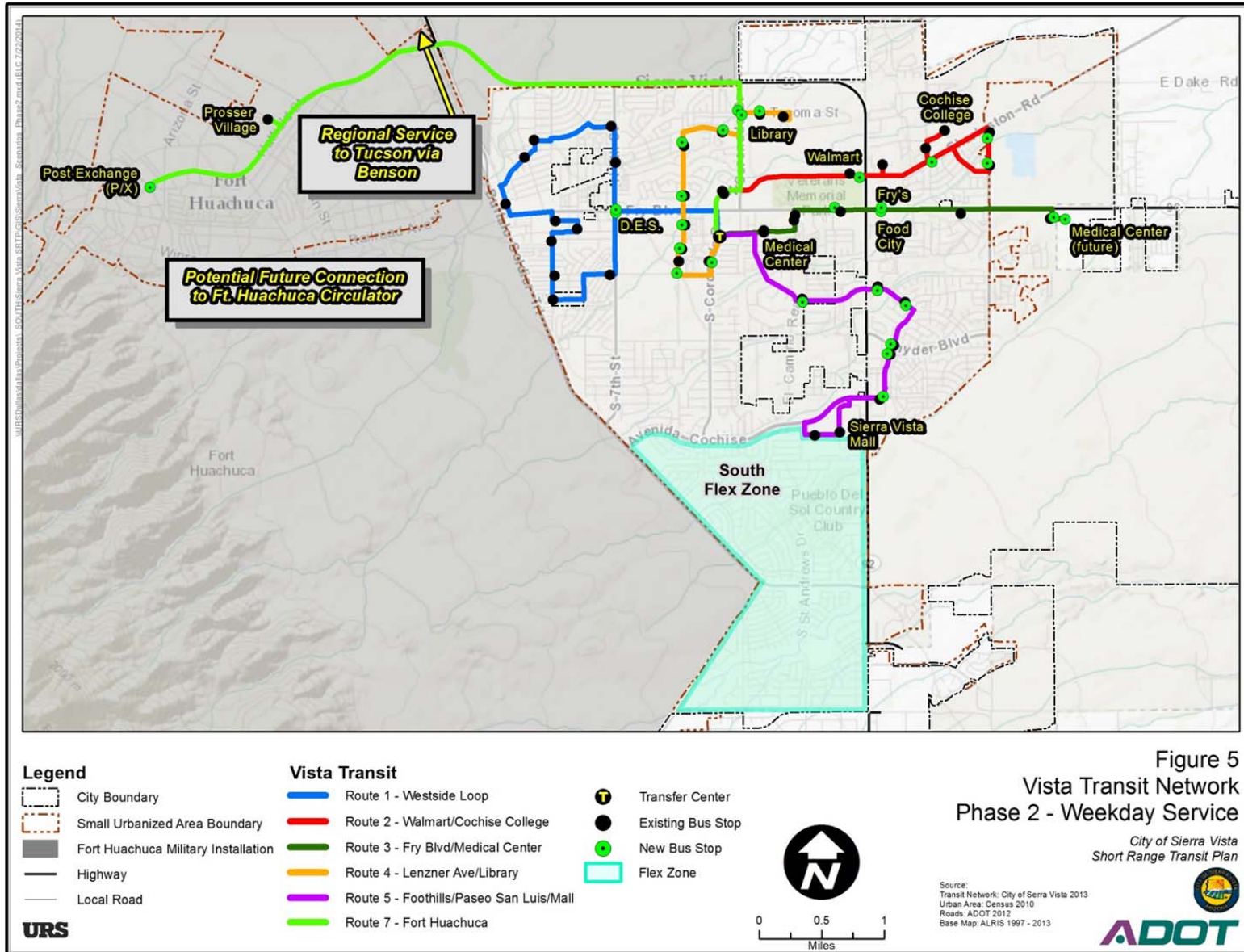
- Travel times have been shortened with bi-directional service on four of the five routes.
  - Trip from Cochise College to Walmart – 31-minute trip with existing routing and 6 minutes in Phase 1 recommended routing.
  - Trip from Foothills County Complex – 23-minute trip with existing network and 8 minutes in Phase 1 recommended routing.
- Direct trips between major activity centers have been added including Cochise College to Walmart and DES to the Transfer Center in both directions.
- Elimination of out-of-direction travel on one-way loops.
- Interlining of routes creates crosstown service and one-seat rides between the westside and the shopping on the eastside and the northside (library) and Walmart.
- New routing on Saturdays introduces service to the westside and the northside.
- New paratransit service on Saturdays.
- Faster, direct Saturday service from the Fort to the mall.

### 5.1.2 Phase 2 Recommendations

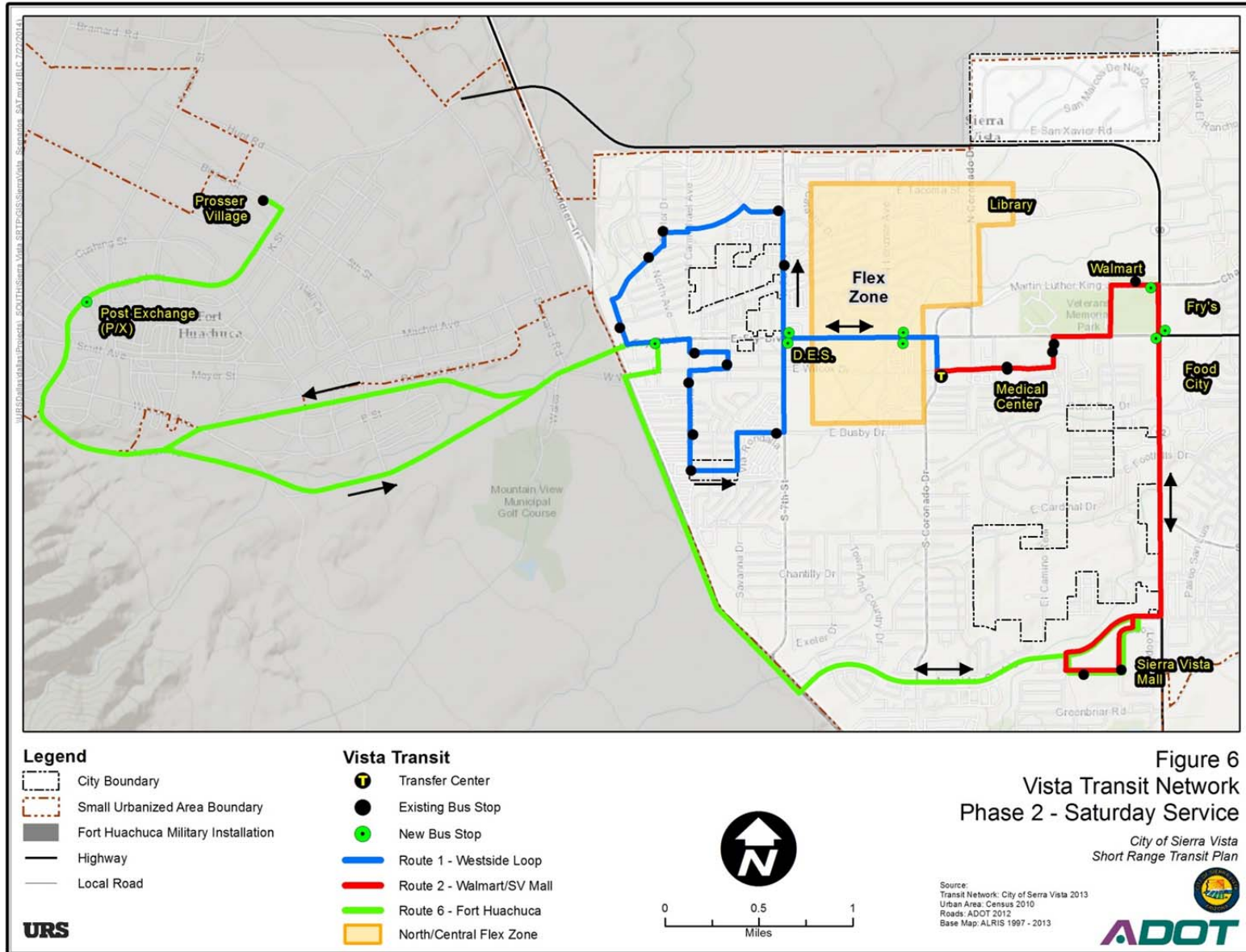
Recommendations made as part of Phase 2 will further improve the operations by extending service to new markets and improving service hours. Phase 2 adds service to the Fort on weekdays and adds a new flex route to the growing communities in southern Sierra Vista. The final two years of the SRTP should also focus on developing a regional service to provide the connections from Douglas to Benson via Bisbee and Sierra Vista. This is an opportunity for Sierra Vista residents to have direct connections to the services and shopping in Bisbee, to Greyhound and Amtrak in Benson and to the Douglas campus of Cochise College. It is equally as important that the bus service will provide trips from the neighboring cities to Sierra Vista for the regional medical services and shopping opportunities.

### Additional Revenue Hours

The proposed Phase 2 recommendations improve Vista Transit services with 25 percent additional revenue hours by adding a weekday route to the Fort and a flex route in south Sierra Vista for 18 hours per day. In addition, Phase 2 extends service hours on Saturdays by one hour in the morning. Figure 5 and Figure 6 illustrate the proposed Phase 2 weekday and Saturday route network.







As shown in Table 15, Phase 2 fixed route service will operate the same headways and span of service as Phase 1 on weekdays (every 30 minutes from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.). The new south Sierra Vista South Flex Route will operate at 60-minute headways from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the mid-day high ridership period on weekdays only. Saturday service hours will be extended by one hour in the morning. Service will operate every 60 minutes from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Nine buses are required to operate the service on weekdays during the peak (six fixed route, one flex, and two paratransit) and three buses on Saturdays. Full details of individual route recommendations for Phase 2 are described in Working Paper #4 – *Operations and Financial Plan*.

**Table 15 Phase 2 Fixed Route Schedule**

Route	Headways (in minutes)			Span of Service
	a.m. Off-peak (7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)	Base	p.m. Off-peak (4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)	
<b>Weekday</b>				
1	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
2	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
3	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
4	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
5	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
7	30	30	30	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
S. Flex	60	60	60	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
<b>Saturday</b>				
1	N/A	60	60	9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
2	N/A	60	60	9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
6	N/A	60	60	9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
N. Flex/DR	N/A	60	60	9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Source: URS, 2014

In addition to local routes, Vista Transit should begin exploring partnerships with other communities. A pilot program can be implemented to gauge demand for regional mobility within Sierra Vista and surrounding communities. Regional bus service between Douglas, Bisbee, Sierra Vista, and Benson is recommended for the pilot service. The operations of a regional route are not included in the Financial Plan since the cost to operate and implement the service will most likely be through a partnership of the four cities and possibly other entities. For the purposes of this Operations Plan, it is introduced as a conceptual plan in Year 4 of the SRTP.

### Phase 2 Operations

Operating differences are a consequence of adding another fixed route (Fort Huachuca) and flex route. As a result, this phase requires 18 additional weekday revenue hours (25 percent) and four additional Saturday revenue hours over Phase 1 fixed route service. Table 16 provides a summary of the proposed fixed route service.

This phase will continue to utilize bi-directional service on all routes except Route 1 Westside Loop.

**Table 16 Proposed Phase 2 Fixed Route Operations Plan**

Route No.	Proposed Route Name (Corridor)	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles
<b>Weekday</b>			
1	Westside Loop	11	150
2	Walmart/Cochise College	11	144
3	Fry Blvd/Medical Center	11	138
4	Lenzner Ave/Library	11	147
5	Foot Hills/Paseo San Luis/Mall	11	120
7	Ft Huachuca	11	308
Flex	South Flex Route	7	*70
Para	Paratransit	16.5	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>89.5</b>	<b>1,077</b>
<b>Saturday</b>			
1	Westside Loop	4.0	45
2	Walmart/Sierra Vista Mall	4.0	62
6	Fort Huachuca	8.0	136
Flex	North Flex	4.0	**64
Para		4.0	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>24.0</b>	<b>307</b>

Source: URS, 2014

\* Mileage on flex service will vary by trip and by day. Assuming seven trips per day with 10 miles per trip, then the flex service would average 70 miles per day.

\*\* Mileage on flex service will vary by trip and by day. Assuming eight trips per day with 8 miles per trip, then the flex service would average 64 miles per Saturday.

### Phase 2 Capital Needs

Phase 2 will require an increase in capital expenses to purchase two additional buses to operate the proposed system. This includes one bus each for the two new routes. Two new bus stops will be needed in Phase 2 to accommodate the new service from the Fort with a stop in each direction at Coronado Drive and Tacoma Street near the library.

### Phase 2 Benefits

- New flex route covering much of southern Sierra Vista
- Weekday route serving Fort Huachuca
- Extended service hours on Saturdays
- Regional service between Douglas, Bisbee, Sierra Vista and Benson.

Other improvements that should be considered with additional resources include the following:

- Create corridor based bi-directional linear routing to replace one-way loop on the westside

- Extend service hours to 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. weekdays and 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays
- Introduce a premium corridor service along Fry Boulevard
- Further expand regional service that may include trips to Tucson
- Add paratransit vehicle to the system

### Reduced Revenue Scenario

The FTA contribution to Vista Transit will change in October 2014 with the transition from \$5311 to \$5307 funding. It is still uncertain if Vista Transit will have to reduce operating costs to make up for a shortfall from FTA funding. The primary goal of a service reduction would be to maintain coverage and reduce the headways from 30-minute to 60-minute. Although this is a reduced level of service, the system will continue to provide the basic service to the passengers in Sierra Vista. Strategies that could be implemented to reduce service hours and costs in the near term include the following (not in a prioritized order):

- Eliminate Saturday service = 5 percent reduction in revenue hours
- Operate Routes 2 and 3 at 60-minute headways all day = 9 percent reduction in service hours
- Operate Routes 4 and 5 at 60-minute headways all day = 8 percent reduction in service hours
- Reduce paratransit operations by 10 percent by adhering to the ADA requirements of 3/4 mile of fixed route service area = 3 percent reduction in service hours

These options could be implemented incrementally to address any reductions in service hours if necessary. Any reductions of service will need to comply with Title VI requirements.

While a detailed review of fare increases is not part of the scope of this plan, a reduced revenue scenario may be partially offset by a fare increase. However, a fare increase may also result in fewer riders, and it is recommended that a thorough analysis be conducted regarding effects of fare increases if such a step is considered.

## 5.2 PARATRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Vista Transit currently operates an ADA complementary paratransit service to all locations within the City of Sierra Vista and Fort Huachuca. The paratransit service operates three paratransit buses eight hours per day on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the service has two buses operating eight hours and one bus operating four hours per day. The paratransit system operates an average of 22 daily revenue hours on weekdays. Phase 1 introduces complementary ADA paratransit service on Saturdays.

The service area boundary exceeds the required service area of the ADA regulations. ADA only requires that paratransit services operate within a 3/4 mile service area of a fixed route. According to data collected from March 31 to April 4, 2014, 10 percent of all paratransit trips were outside the 3/4 mile area.

In order to accommodate the new bi-directional weekday service, one paratransit vehicle will be shifted to fixed route operations. This action will result in two buses serving paratransit operations instead of three buses on weekdays. Therefore, under Phase 1, paratransit weekday revenue hours will be reduced from 22 hours to 16.5 hours. This shift in resources will reduce paratransit hours from 30 percent of the total system hours to 22 percent of the system hours. To reduce the initial impact to paratransit service in Phase 1, Vista Transit may also consider phasing in changes by operating Routes 4 and 5 as a combined route with 60-minute headways for four to five hours per weekday. Similar to the current operations, Routes 4 and 5 would operate at 30-minute headways with two buses during the mid-day and at 60-minute headways with one bus during the a.m. and p.m. peaks. The extra bus would then shift to paratransit service. If the City opted to retain the third bus for paratransit service, then one option would be to operate Routes 4 and 5 on a 60-minute frequency all day.

The following options are provided for consideration by Vista Transit to improve the efficiencies of the paratransit service:

- Consider implementing paratransit procedures that are more closely aligned with ADA requirements such as extending passenger wait times (3/4 mile of fixed route boundary).
- Monitor and track paratransit performance and origin and destination trends to better optimize the service and to identify efficiencies.
- Consider purchasing scheduling software to assist with paratransit trip assignments.
- Utilize the existing Zonar System so dispatchers know where the operators are in order to best reassign trips and monitor late pick-ups.
- Offer rider training to help transition ambulatory passengers onto the lower cost fixed-route system.
- Assess conditional certification as a tool to encourage a higher level of fixed route use by paratransit users who can safely ride fixed route service at certain hours or in good weather conditions. Vista Transit can also provide incentives for using fixed routes such as reduced fares

### **Glossary of Terms**

**Demand Response** – Curb-to-curb service that is open to the general public, with no specific allowance for preference to persons with disabilities or seniors and no eligibility requirements. People using this service do not have to say that they can't make it to a regular stop or are unable to use fixed route, although rules regarding scheduling or service may be established by the operator.

**Paratransit** – Systems with fixed route service are required by FTA to provide curbside paratransit service during the same hours as fixed route service, at a minimum within ¼ mile of fixed route service. Eligibility for this service is limited to persons with disabilities.

**Flex Route/ Deviated Fixed Route** – This service would be open to general public, although rules or stipulations may be established that limit the number or location of deviations.

## 6.0 FINANCIAL PLAN

The financial plan for the SRTP has been designed to achieve two primary goals: to establish a system budget based on new federal funding match requirements attributable to the transition from FTA §5311 Rural Formula Program to §5307 Small Urban Formula Program; and, to determine the financial capacity of the system, considering the potential recommended service improvements over the next five years (FY 2015-2019). The primary challenges for Vista Transit will be how the system handles a significant decrease in the annual allocation for federal dollars and new matching requirements.

The financial plan centers on a Base Budget which was derived from the City's FY 15 budget submitted in April 2014. The Base Budget optimizes the matching requirements under §5307, maintains the current level of service and does not include the purchase of any replacement vehicles for the system. It also differs slightly from the City's FY 15 budget. The City's fiscal year (July 1-June 30) is offset from the federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30). There are some Surface Transportation Program (STP Flex) dollars remaining from the federal FY 14 that are available to Sierra Vista for capital maintenance with a lower local matching requirement that will be used in the City's FY 15 budget.

### 6.1 BASE BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS/OBSERVATIONS

- During a site visit, it was discovered that there were some expenses currently being incurred by the City that were not showing up in the budget. Most of these expenses relate to maintenance, which the City will be switching to a burdened hourly rate plus parts, in order to capture the full cost of maintaining the transit fleet at the City's Fleet Maintenance Facility. The City may be transitioning to new fleet maintenance software which should help tracking maintenance activities. As a result, the Base Budget has an additional \$75,000 over the FY 14 budgeted amount of \$100,000 to account for higher burden rate for maintenance as well as no replacement vehicles being added that would reduce the average age of the fleet.
- Under §5307, FTA will require the City to prepare an allocation formula in order to cover indirect expenses that are not fully charged to Vista Transit. Expenses such as labor charges for administrative personnel, support from the City Finance Department, utilities, and other indirect expenses must be incorporated into an allocation rate which is used to burden direct costs. The Base Budget does not include this allocation formula but does have expenses in the budget to serve as placeholders until the City is able to prepare an FTA approved Allocation Plan.
- The budget utilizes the provision within §5307 which allows up to 10 percent of the system's allocation of funding to be used for ADA paratransit O&M costs at an 80/20 percent match (FY 2014 allocation \$716,112 allows \$71,611 in federal funds to be allocated to ADA).
- If it were determined that a replacement vehicle was needed the City could apply for §5339 funds or could use the allocation from FY 14 for federal match. Either scenario would require additional local funds at 20 percent of the vehicle cost.

- The Base Budget underutilizes the federal FY 13 allocation of urban formula funds of \$702,922. If the City opened a grant at the beginning of FY 15 (October 1, 2014) there will be \$16,331 of unused allocation which would be swept by the State and added to the \$5339 Program in FY 15. The Phase 1 recommendations include potential strategies for using these funds.
- Future years would only need modification based on inflation, changes in the allocation plan or the addition of new capital expenses; otherwise the budget could remain relatively static with small forfeitures of federal allocations.

The Vista Transit Base Budget is summarized in Table 17.

**Table 17 Vista Transit Base Budget (FY 15)**

<b>Capital Expenses</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>Activity Line Item Code</b>	
Burdened Wages for Grant Administration/Planning	\$ 88,865	44.2X.XX	
Allocated Costs (Estimated)	\$ 23,300		
Planning - Projects	\$ -		
Preventative Maintenance - Spare Parts	\$ 175,000	11.17.XX	
Rolling Stock - Vehicles Replacement	\$ -	11.12.XX	
Rolling Stock - Vehicles Expansion	\$ -	11.13.XX	
Bus Stops/Bus Shelters (39 Stops)	\$ -	11.3X.XX	
Bus Turn-Outs (2)	\$ -		
Other Capital Expenses	\$ -	11.XX.XX	
	\$ -		
	\$ -		
ADA Operations - 10% Provision	\$ 89,500	ALI TBD	
		Federal \$ (80%)	Non-Federal \$ (20%)
<b>Capital Expenses Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 376,665</b>	<b>\$ 301,332</b>	<b>\$ 75,333</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>			
Burdened Wages for Management/Supervisory	\$ 53,605	30.09.XX	
Burdened Wages for Drivers	\$ 528,763		
Burdened Wages for Dispatch/Transit Tech	\$ 133,903		
Allocated Costs (Estimated)	\$ 17,950		
Marketing	\$ 23,000		
	\$ -		
	\$ -		
Fuel/Oil	\$ 152,000		
Direct Expenses - Uniforms, Insurance, etc	\$ 61,750		
Utilities - Transfer Center	\$ 11,200		
<b>Gross Operating Expenses Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 982,171</b>		
less Operating Revenues (Fares)	\$ (111,000.00)	Does not include potential fare increase from service improvements	
ADA Operations - 10% Provision	\$ (89,500.00)	Added to Capital Above	
		Federal \$ (50%)	Non-Federal \$ (50%)
<b>Net Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$ 781,671</b>	<b>\$ 390,835</b>	<b>\$ 390,836</b>
<b>Total Base Budget</b>	<b>\$ 1,158,336</b>	<b>\$ 692,167</b>	<b>\$ 466,169</b>

Source: Vista Transit, 2014

## 6.2 PHASE 1 FINANCIAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Phase I recommendations entail service improvements that will require several capital expenses, reallocation of some operating expenses and small increases in fuel costs. Changes to the Finance Plan as they relate to implementation are outlined below. It is assumed that implementation of these changes would occur on or after April 1, 2015 (halfway point of FY 15).

- Develop a system to monitor and track data for NTD and the performance measures for both fixed-route and paratransit – funded through the work of the Transit Administrator.
- Implement Phase 1 service changes – reallocates some O&M expenses from paratransit to fixed route service. No additional labor hours are expected since this is a reallocation. The change does mean that the vehicle will be utilized more since it will be on route. As a result, there is a net increase of 98 miles per weekday of service which is incorporated into the fuel cost. The new maintenance budget should be able to accommodate the additional wear and tear on the vehicles.
- Add new stops and turnouts for bi-directional service – The Phase 1 operating plan assumes 31 new stops (\$350/stop) and two turnouts completed sometime in 2015.
- Change policy to allow for on-street stops on Fry Boulevard west of SR92 – no financial impact beyond stop improvements.
- Adopt new paratransit policies to allow two vehicles to operate paratransit on weekdays – financial impact indeterminable and not reflected. Assumes that ADA demand can be accommodated with two (2) vehicles on weekdays and one vehicle that would rotate between flex service and paratransit on Saturdays.
- Initiate marketing campaign to promote new service – maintained FY 14 budget for publishing new system map/bus schedules.
- Update marketing materials to reflect changes to the system – see note above.

Table 18 summarizes the 5-year Financial Plan based on the recommendations in Phase 1.



Table 18 Phase 1 Five Year Financial Plan

Capital Expenses (80% Fed/20% Loc)		FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Burdened Wages for Grant Administration/Planning		\$ 88,865	\$ 91,264	\$ 93,728	\$ 96,259	\$ 98,858
Allocated Costs (Estimated)		\$ 23,300	\$ 23,929	\$ 24,575	\$ 25,239	\$ 25,920
Planning - Projects		\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Preventative Maintenance - Spare Parts		\$ 175,000	\$ 179,725	\$ 184,578	\$ 189,561	\$ 194,679
Rolling Stock - Vehicles Replacement		\$ -	\$ 295,324	\$ 151,649	\$ 155,743	\$ 155,743
Rolling Stock - Vehicles Expansion		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bus Stops/Bus Shelters (31 Stops - 2015)		\$ 10,850	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bus Turn-Outs (2015 or 2016)		\$ 140,000	\$ 143,780	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Capital Expenses		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,945	\$ 36,916
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
ADA Operations - 10% Provision		\$ 89,500	\$ 91,100	\$ 92,800	\$ 94,600	\$ 96,300
<b>Capital Expenses Subtotal</b>		<b>\$ 527,515</b>	<b>\$ 875,123</b>	<b>\$ 582,330</b>	<b>\$ 597,348</b>	<b>\$ 608,417</b>
Operating Expenses (50% Fed/50% Loc)		FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Burdened Wages for Management/Supervisory		\$ 53,605	\$ 55,052	\$ 56,539	\$ 58,065	\$ 59,633
Burdened Wages for Drivers		\$ 528,763	\$ 543,040	\$ 557,702	\$ 572,760	\$ 588,224
Burdened Wages for Dispatch/Transit Tech		\$ 133,903	\$ 137,518	\$ 141,231	\$ 145,045	\$ 148,961
Allocated Costs (Estimated)		\$ 17,950	\$ 18,435	\$ 18,932	\$ 19,444	\$ 19,969
Marketing		\$ 23,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fuel/Oil - slight increase converting bus from Paratransit to Transit		\$ 167,371	\$ 187,261	\$ 192,317	\$ 197,509	\$ 202,842
Direct Expenses - Uniforms, Insurance, etc		\$ 61,750	\$ 63,417	\$ 65,130	\$ 66,888	\$ 68,694
Utilities - Transfer Center		\$ 11,200	\$ 11,502	\$ 11,813	\$ 12,132	\$ 12,459
<b>Gross Operating Expenses Subtotal</b>		<b>\$ 997,542</b>	<b>\$ 1,026,225</b>	<b>\$ 1,053,663</b>	<b>\$ 1,081,842</b>	<b>\$ 1,110,782</b>
less Operating Revenues (Fares 12.5% 2017-2018, 15% 2019)		\$ (111,000.00)	\$ (117,676.66)	\$ (131,707.92)	\$ (135,230.29)	\$ (166,617.30)
ADA Operations - 10% Provision		\$ (89,500.00)	\$ (91,100.00)	\$ (92,800.00)	\$ (94,600.00)	\$ (96,300.00)
<b>Net Operating Expense</b>		<b>\$ 797,042</b>	<b>\$ 817,449</b>	<b>\$ 829,155</b>	<b>\$ 852,012</b>	<b>\$ 847,865</b>
<b>Total Base Budget</b>		<b>\$ 1,324,557</b>	<b>\$ 1,692,571</b>	<b>\$ 1,411,486</b>	<b>\$ 1,449,360</b>	<b>\$ 1,456,281</b>
<b>Non-Federal Funding Required</b>		<b>\$ 504,025</b>	<b>\$ 583,749</b>	<b>\$ 531,045</b>	<b>\$ 545,476</b>	<b>\$ 545,616</b>
<b>Additional Local Funding Needed</b>					<b>\$ 25,000</b>	<b>\$ 25,675</b>
<b>5307 Funding Required</b>		<b>\$ 820,532</b>	<b>\$ 1,108,822</b>	<b>\$ 880,441</b>	<b>\$ 903,884</b>	<b>\$ 910,665</b>
<b>5339 Funding Need</b>			<b>\$ 118,130</b>	<b>\$ 121,319</b>	<b>\$ 124,595</b>	<b>\$ 124,595</b>
5307 growth rate	1.87%					
						<i>Note: Draw down earlier allocation first</i>
5307 Allocation FY 13		\$ 702,977	\$ (820,532)			
remaining balance		\$ -	\$ -			
5307 Allocation FY 14		\$ 716,112	\$ (117,555)	\$ (990,692)		
remaining balance		\$ 598,557	\$ -			
5307 Allocation FY 15		\$ 729,492	\$ -	\$ (392,135)	\$ (880,441)	
remaining balance		\$ 729,492	\$ 337,357	\$ -		
5307 Allocation FY 16		\$ 743,123		\$ (543,084)	\$ (779,289)	
remaining balance			\$ 743,123	\$ 200,039		
5307 Allocation FY 17		\$ 757,008			\$ (579,250)	\$ (760,395)
remaining balance				\$ 757,008	\$ 177,758	
5307 Allocation FY 18		\$ 771,153				\$ (582,638)
remaining balance					\$ 771,153	\$ 188,515
5308 Allocation FY 19		\$ 785,561				
remaining balance						\$ 785,561
<b>Federal Funding Balance</b>		<b>\$ 1,328,049</b>	<b>\$ 1,080,480</b>	<b>\$ 957,047</b>	<b>\$ 948,910</b>	<b>\$ 974,076</b>

Source: URS, 2014.

### 6.3 PHASE 1 FINANCIAL PLAN ASSUMPTIONS/OBSERVATIONS

- Costs are escalated at a 2.7 percent rate to account for inflation.
- Farebox recovery is increased beginning in 2016 (12.5 percent) and in 2019 (15 percent) which assumes some increase in ridership but then they would also potentially require a fare increase.
- Assumes a growth rate in §5307 dollars of 1.87 percent annually (equals growth between 2013 and 2014).
- Maintains the use of the 10 percent ADA allocation.
- Use of federal allocations remain consistent with about half of the prior year's allocation preserved each year. Uses entire amount of any two year old allocations and maintains a balance of \$950,000 to \$1.1M at the end of next year.
- Beginning in 2016, assumes one vehicle is purchased through §5339 each year. The §5307 balance could backstop procurements should one or two of the §5339 applications not be awarded to Vista Transit.
- Local funding requirement increases about 10-12 percent over the base budget for increase in marketing and the new capital expenses related to bus stop improvements.

### 6.4 PHASE 2 FINANCIAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 19 shows the 5-year Financial Plan based on the recommendations in Phase 2.

- Adds 25 percent additional service. In addition to increased labor there is a provision to add a dispatcher for increased service hours.
- Outpaces §5307 allocations to a degree. It would require an overmatch on operating costs with non-federal dollars. There is also a higher dependence on the §5339 program.
- Increases City outlay of funds significantly. Plan is recommended if \$100,000 to \$200,000 can be identified from other sources including but not limited to the educational and vocational institutions, major employers, Cochise County and Fort Huachuca.

Table 19 Phase 2 Five Year Financial Plan

<b>Capital Expenses (80% Fed/20% Loc)</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>FY 2018</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>
Burdened Wages for Grant Administration/Planning	\$ 88,865	\$ 91,264	\$ 93,728	\$ 96,259	\$ 98,858
Allocated Costs (Estimated)	\$ 23,300	\$ 23,929	\$ 24,575	\$ 25,239	\$ 25,920
Planning - Projects	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Preventative Maintenance - Spare Parts	\$ 175,000	\$ 179,725	\$ 184,578	\$ 189,561	\$ 194,679
Rolling Stock - Vehicles Replacement	\$ -	\$ 295,324	\$ 151,649	\$ -	\$ 155,743
Rolling Stock - Vehicles Expansion	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 311,487	\$ 159,949
Bus Stops/Bus Shelters (31 Stops - 2015)	\$ 10,850	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bus Turn-Outs (1 - 2015, 1-2016)	\$ 140,000	\$ 143,780	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Capital Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,945	\$ 36,916
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
ADA Operations - 10% Provision	\$ 89,500	\$ 91,100	\$ 92,800	\$ 94,600	\$ 96,300
<b>Capital Expenses Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 527,515</b>	<b>\$ 875,123</b>	<b>\$ 582,330</b>	<b>\$ 753,091</b>	<b>\$ 768,365</b>
<b>Operating Expenses (50% Fed/50% Loc)</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>FY 2018</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>
Burdened Wages for Management/Supervisory	\$ 53,605	\$ 55,052	\$ 56,539	\$ 58,065	\$ 59,633
Burdened Wages for Drivers	\$ 528,763	\$ 543,040	\$ 557,702	\$ 715,950	\$ 735,280
Burdened Wages for Dispatch/Transit Tech	\$ 133,903	\$ 137,518	\$ 141,231	\$ 174,054	\$ 178,753
Allocated Costs (Estimated)	\$ 17,950	\$ 18,435	\$ 18,932	\$ 19,444	\$ 19,969
Marketing	\$ 23,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fuel/Oil	\$ 167,371	\$ 187,261	\$ 192,317	\$ 246,887	\$ 253,553
Direct Expenses - Uniforms, Insurance, etc	\$ 61,750	\$ 63,417	\$ 65,130	\$ 66,888	\$ 68,694
Utilities - Transfer Center	\$ 11,200	\$ 11,502	\$ 11,813	\$ 12,132	\$ 12,459
<b>Gross Operating Expenses Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 997,542</b>	<b>\$ 1,026,225</b>	<b>\$ 1,053,663</b>	<b>\$ 1,303,418</b>	<b>\$ 1,338,341</b>
less Operating Revenues (Fares)	\$ (111,000.00)	\$ (117,676.66)	\$ (120,822.97)	\$ (195,512.77)	\$ (200,751.11)
ADA Operations - 10% Provision	\$ (89,500.00)	\$ (91,100.00)	\$ (92,800.00)	\$ (94,600.00)	\$ (96,300.00)
<b>Net Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$ 797,042</b>	<b>\$ 817,449</b>	<b>\$ 840,040</b>	<b>\$ 1,013,306</b>	<b>\$ 1,041,290</b>
<b>Total Base Budget</b>	<b>\$ 1,324,557</b>	<b>\$ 1,692,571</b>	<b>\$ 1,422,371</b>	<b>\$ 1,766,397</b>	<b>\$ 1,809,655</b>
<b>Non-Federal Funding Required</b>	\$ 504,025	\$ 583,749	\$ 536,487	\$ 657,273	\$ 674,319
<b>Other Local Sources</b>				\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000
<b>5307 Funding Required</b>	\$ 820,532	\$ 1,108,822	\$ 885,884	\$ 1,109,124	\$ 1,135,336
<b>5339 Funding Need</b>		\$ 236,259		\$ 249,190	\$ 127,959
	1.87%	<i>Note: Draw down earlier allocation first</i>			
5307 Allocation FY 13	\$ 702,977	\$ (820,532)			
remaining balance	\$ -	\$ -			
5307 Allocation FY 14	\$ 716,112	\$ (117,555)	\$ (872,562.70)		
remaining balance	\$ 598,557	\$ -			
5307 Allocation FY 15	\$ 729,492	\$ -	\$ (274,006)	\$ (885,884)	
remaining balance	\$ 729,492	\$ 455,487	\$ -		
5307 Allocation FY 16	\$ 743,123		\$ (430,397)	\$ (759,934.47)	
remaining balance		\$ 743,123	\$ 312,726		
5307 Allocation FY 17	\$ 757,008			\$ (447,209)	\$ (807,377.18)
remaining balance			\$ 757,008	\$ 309,799	
5307 Allocation FY 18	\$ 771,153				\$ (497,578)
remaining balance				\$ 771,153	\$ 273,574
5308 Allocation FY 19	\$ 785,561				
remaining balance					\$ 785,561
<b>Federal Funding Balance</b>	<b>\$ 1,328,049</b>	<b>\$ 1,198,610</b>	<b>\$ 1,069,734</b>	<b>\$ 1,080,952</b>	<b>\$ 1,059,136</b>

Source: URS, 2014.

## 7.0 MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-term marketing strategies should be implemented within Year 1 of the SRTP and are intended to increase the visibility of current Vista Transit services. Long-term marketing strategies have been identified not only to increase community awareness for Vista Transit, but to increase ridership in the future. These initiatives are aimed to promote Vista Transit services by engaging the community in ways to encourage use of the transit system. Since limited budget is available for marketing efforts, a menu of strategies is provided to allow choices for Vista Transit to take advantage of partnership opportunities or additional funding that may become available.

### 7.1 SHORT-TERM MARKETING STRATEGIES

Immediate, focused short-term marketing efforts can re-energize any brand. In coordination with recommended changes identified in *Working Paper #4A: Operations and Financial Plan*, some short-term marketing strategies are presented below. The proposed budgets for marketing activities identified in *Working Paper #4A* are shown in Table 20. These strategies are recommended to be implemented within the next calendar year to support service changes to the Vista Transit network as well as improve the visibility of the service within the community as a way to increase potential ridership.

**Table 20 Proposed Marketing Budget**

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Marketing (Operating)	23,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000

Source: Draft Working Paper 4A: Operations and Financial Plan, April 2014

#### 7.1.1 Website Improvement

Internet and technology focused marketing are essential to the growth of any business. A website is the face of a company or agency and is the first place many people look for information on services offered. The current Vista Transit website is part of the Public Works webpage and is not user friendly, difficult to navigate, and often provides out-of-date information. It is recommended that Vista Transit develop a standalone website that is separate from other city departments and linked to the City of Sierra Vista website. An independent website will provide Vista Transit with the following benefits:

- More control over providing necessary information to riders and the community as needed, so that potential riders can readily understand the service and how to use it.
- A new website in coordination with service changes will create the opportunity to re-launch the Vista Transit brand to the community and provide a new, fresh way to interact with existing and potential riders.
- Provide a space where local businesses can purchase advertising space to increase revenue for Vista Transit.
- Provide a space to sell online tickets and passes for riders.

The cost for developing a new website for Vista Transit may range from \$15,000 to \$20,000 depending on how detailed the website is and who is hired for the task. It is recommended to hire a professional website developer to ensure the website is developed correctly. The initial cost for setting up, designing, and customizing the website makes up the majority of the estimated costs. The remaining cost would be considered for maintenance and support as updates and changes are needed. It can be assumed that web support and maintenance could range from 4 to 6 hours per week or between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year if an outside consultant is hired to maintain and update information depending on how much information is changed once the site is developed.

Vista Transit should also consider a mobile version of the website. Typically, the mobile version is simpler and can be developed as part of the regular website. Many transit systems have moved toward mobile versions of their websites, and even mobile applications, because data indicates that smart phones have become the primary method for low income individuals to connect to the web. In the past, web-based methods of information dissemination have been criticized because many households do not have computers. Statistics show that pay by the minute data plans and reduction in the cost of smart phones have improved access to the internet for all sectors of the population.

### **7.1.2 Information Updates**

In coordination with recommended service changes, all marketing materials including maps, schedules and signage will need to be updated to reflect the new system. These materials are important to inform riders where routes go and the frequencies at which they operate. Since some of the changes are significant, it will be necessary to notify and market the recommended service changes to the public in advance. Having these materials ready to aid in that communication will be helpful during the transition to the new routing and schedule structure. Including information on an updated website as part of these marketing materials is also an opportunity to let riders know where new (and continually updated) information can be found.

## **7.2 LONG-TERM MARKETING STRATEGIES**

Long-term marketing strategies are meant to consistently remind the customer about a brand and entice them to continue purchase those services. The following long-term marketing strategies are recommended for Vista Transit to maintain and expand their ridership base into the future. These improvements are designed to increase community awareness of Vista Transit services and encourage ridership in areas where it is currently lacking such as students and Fort Huachuca residents.

### **7.2.1 Student Discount Pass Program**

A discount pass program may promote the service, incentivize new riders, and ultimately increase transit ridership. By developing partnerships with educational institutions in Sierra Vista, reduced fares can be provided to students at Cochise College, the University of Arizona, and Buena High School. In many transit agencies, partnerships are developed to include the cost of monthly passes or even semester passes as part of student fees. Including the cost of monthly passes in student fees allows the school to increase existing fees slightly to cover the

cost and provide every student with a bus pass to ride the system. The benefit of this type of program is to increase student ridership and provide another mode of access to the local schools. It is recommended to explore these types of partnerships with each education institution to which Vista Transit provides service.

Revenue from institutional pass programs can be paid directly from the institution to Vista Transit and be used as local match rather than fare revenue. This will allow the City to leverage more federal dollars and is an incentive to provide a deep discount for rides. If established as a formal fee paid by all students, revenue from these arrangements would be generated whether the student uses the transit system or not.

### **7.2.2 Partnerships with Local Businesses**

Partnerships with local businesses have been commonly used by transit systems to promote transit ridership. For example, businesses could partner with Vista Transit to advertise and provide discounts for customers that use Vista Transit to get to the store. Businesses can provide their employees with bus passes to commute to and from work as a benefit of employment. Local businesses can also purchase advertising space on the Vista Transit website, on vehicles, at bus stops, or in the Transfer Center. Developing strong relationships with the local business community can not only help to maintain current ridership, but attract new riders by offering incentives to use the transit system. It is recommended to approach and discuss developing partnerships with the local business community on an ongoing basis.

### **7.2.3 Fort Huachuca Outreach Program**

Fort Huachuca is an important stakeholder in Sierra Vista. Soldiers are frequently coming to live on base for extended periods of time and may not have access to automobiles. It is recommended that Vista Transit develop a partnership with the Fort to increase awareness of available services by providing Vista Transit schedules and maps to every soldier who arrives on base as part of their welcome paperwork. A promotion program should include free ride coupons so that new trainees to the Fort can try the transit service. Vista Transit should approach the Fort about including a bus pass for temporary soldiers posted at the Fort for training. Vista Transit could offer passes in return for some payment from the Fort based on the number of temporary personnel. These efforts in coordination with improved service to Fort Huachuca will increase the ridership over time.

### **7.2.4 Summer Pass Program**

In addition to providing discount fares to students as identified in Section 5.1, it is recommended to develop a summer pass program for the youth in Sierra Vista. For a discounted rate, a summer pass could be purchased that is good for the months when school is out of session. This type of program will increase mobility for students during the summer who don't have access to an automobile. The development of this program will raise the awareness of Vista Transit in the community and increase ridership in summer months.

### 7.2.5 Community Outreach Activities

Community outreach is a good way to increase the visibility of a business. For a transit agency, it is a way to increase awareness of the services provided and potentially attract new ridership. As identified in Section 2.0, the relationships that Vista Transit drivers have built with their riders is a vital component of community outreach. In addition to continued excellent customer service, it is recommended that Vista Transit participate in and organize community outreach events to promote the Vista Transit brand. The following are ideas for potential community outreach activities, one or more of these items could be initiated in the short term as well.

- Providing maps and schedules at community gatherings is an inexpensive way to advertise.
- Organize a 'Free Ride Day' where all riders ride Vista Transit at no cost for one day. This type of outreach program will encourage new riders to try the system at no cost and may result in return customers. Developing partnerships with local businesses could result in a sponsorship of a 'Free Ride Day' that could benefit both Vista Transit as well as the local economy.
- Organize a 'Stuff the Bus' event. 'Stuff the Bus' is an event where the community is encouraged to deliver donated, non-perishable items to a bus in a specific location on a specific day. The items collected will then be delivered to a local charity of choice and is a good way to engage the community with the local transit system. Vista Transit could opt to give a free ride pass to people who make donations as a way to encourage participation and attract new riders.

Community outreach events should be scheduled in conjunction with other community activities or celebrations. Engaging in community activities will improve the awareness of services provided by Vista Transit in Sierra Vista.

### 7.2.6 Rider Satisfaction Survey

Customer satisfaction is vital to the success of any business. Once proposed service changes have been implemented, it is recommended to conduct a rider satisfaction survey. This survey could collect information on how the service changes are being received by riders. In addition, surveys could be conducted multiple times throughout the calendar year after service changes are made to determine if new riders have started to access the system. This information could provide data on where the best use of marketing dollars may be spent in the future.

### 7.2.7 On-Board/Stop Advertising Program

Many transit systems attempt On-Board/Stop Advertising Programs. There are contractors that will place and maintain shelters for the opportunity to sell advertising. Contracts can be designed for third party management of the advertising program as well. These types of programs have generated small amounts of revenue for larger transit systems and are typically not viable for smaller systems like Vista Transit. In fact, Vista Transit has approached potential contractors in Tulsa to gauge interest without much success.

However, advertising programs can be done in-house and generate some revenue for the system. They present legal challenges, depending on those wishing to advertise, and require a formalized set of policies to govern them. Long-term, an advertising program should be re-explored but it is not recommended during the 5-year timeframe of this analysis.



## 8.0 REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

As part of the development of the SRTP, a consideration for Vista Transit is to explore opportunities to fund services including through regional partnerships. Regional partnership agreements could take a variety of forms. An intergovernmental agreement (IGA) may be the basis for partnership among the public and private entities that fund and oversee the regional services. An Interagency Public Transportation Authority (IPTA) also may be formed among partners.

While there are definitive benefits associated with the implementation of an IPTA, it may be a longer term priority for the City while it focuses on the institutional and operational changes associated with the transition into the 5307 program. Coordination with colleges, rural transit agencies and Fort Huachuca will not require the formality of an IPTA for the foreseeable future. Coordination can be consummated through IGAs until the need for an IPTA arises.

Implementation of this five-year SRTP includes investigation of regional/intercity service in the latter part of the 5 year timeframe. However, changes in governance will not be required until the service needs extend beyond the City geographically. It will be at that point, when the system's financial needs exceed the City's willingness to fund them, that the benefits to other approaches to governance become attractive.

## 9.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Based on an evaluation of the existing characteristics and service provided by Vista Transit, the following implementation timeline is suggested for the recommendations identified in this SRTP.

### Year 1 – FFY 2015 (October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016)

- Develop a system to monitor and track data for NTD and the performance measures for both fixed-route and paratransit
- Prepare Title VI review to ensure that the level and quality of fixed-route and paratransit services are provided in a non-discriminatory manner
- Add new stops and turnouts for bi-directional service
- Add pedestrian enhancements including crosswalks and longer walk signals to provide safe access to and from new bus stops
- Change policy to allow for on-street stops on Fry Boulevard west of SR92
- Initiate marketing campaign to promote new service
- Update marketing materials to reflect changes to the system
- Implement Phase 1 service changes in April 2015

### Year 2 – FFY 2016 (October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017)

- Continue to monitor performance of fixed-route and paratransit services to track the system after the Phase 1 implementation
- Update Goals, Objectives, and Strategies with input from staff
- Update performance measures based on data collected after Phase 1 implementation

### Year 3 – FFY 2017 (October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018)

- Continue to update Goals, Objectives and Strategies
- Begin outreach to Douglas, Bisbee, and Benson to develop a joint regional bus service
- Begin outreach to employers and Cochise College to establish students and employee pass programs
- Monitor fleet needs to plan for adequate inventory to operate Phase 2 recommendations

### Years 4 and 5 – FFY 2018-2019 (October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2020)

- Implement Phase 2 with service to the Fort and flex service in South Sierra Vista
- Add new regional route between Douglas, Bisbee, Sierra Vista and Benson
- Update marketing materials to reflect Phase 2 changes
- If additional funding is available, add service back to paratransit and to fixed-route to establish bi-directional service on the Westside Loop
- If additional funding is available, add evening and Sunday service