



NOGALES AREA TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY 2024



SouthEastern Arizona
Governments Organization

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Introduction

The Nogales Area Transit Feasibility Study (Study) is a product of the SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO), which is focused on the transit needs of the Nogales and Rio Rico communities located in Santa Cruz County.

The Study is comprised of four technical memoranda and a final report. Study activities include engagement with the public, as outlined in the Public Engagement Plan (PEP), and presentations to governing bodies.

Technical Memoranda

- #1 Assessment of Existing Conditions
- #2 Summary of Existing Transportation Services
- #3 Public Engagement
- #4 Service Options
- #5 Preferred Service Option
- #6 Final report

Study Activities

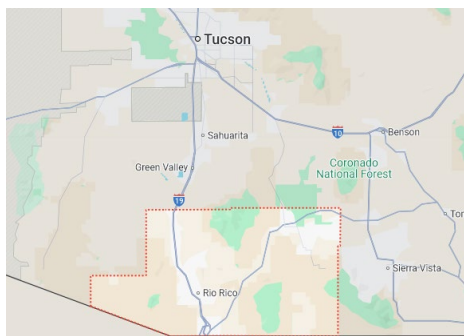
Kick-off meeting with public and stakeholders

Stakeholder meetings

Public meeting to review draft study findings

Public comment period

Access to final Study report



Santa Cruz County is located in south-central Arizona along the border with Mexico. As of the 2020 census, the population was 47,669. The county was established in 1899. It borders Pima County to the north and west, Cochise County to the east, and the Mexican state of Sonora and the City of Nogales Sonora to the south.

The City of Nogales is the County seat with the unincorporated communities of Rio Rico and Tubac lining the I19 corridor, and the Town of Patagonia 18 miles to the east along State Hwy. 82. The I19 corridor from Nogales to Rio Rico is the focus of this study. The Town of Patagonia is included as a potential partner in connecting riders to desired destinations within the Nogales/Rio Rico area.

Interstate Highway 19 runs north/south from the border to Tucson and is the main highway connection to Interstate 10, an east/west interstate that crosses the country from California to Florida. Interstate 19 is the only interstate in the country using the metric system for road signs and is heavily trafficked with cross border commerce, moving roughly \$30 billion dollars of international products across the border in 2023. Add to that over 10.7 million personal vehicles, and nearly 3 million pedestrians crossing in 2023¹, and you find that Nogales is one of the most important ports of entry into the U.S.

The Ambos Nogales region includes thriving cities on both sides of the border with post-COVID recovery in all sectors including the economy and population. As an international community, Nogales Arizona is both the gateway for commerce moving into the US as well as a key border crossing for individuals in personal vehicles and on foot travelling both north and south. With two entries within Nogales (Mariposa and De Concini) the community is inundated with truck, vehicle, and pedestrian traffic.

Within this environment there are limited public transit options available to either residents or visitors in the area. Most programs providing transit have limited client/consumer/riders criteria and/or provide services only from one origination point. These include:

- An informal system of private shuttles moving passengers at the border to Tucson and Phoenix. These shuttles are parked along streets or sell tickets at stands near the crossing.
- Drivers of personal vehicles operating as informal taxi services at the border crossings taking pedestrians to destinations within Nogales. These taxi services are often one-car operations that do not work with a central dispatcher.

¹ [Federal Transit Administration](#)

- A one-vehicle, dial-a-ride program operated by the City of Nogales within the city limits for seniors and disabled persons.
- Four 5310 (federally funded through the state with limited resources for rolling stock and operating funds) operators with services to member clients and/or seniors and people with disabilities.

In 2023, SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) was awarded a transit planning grant from Arizona Department of Transportation (AZDOT) with funds from the Federal Transit Administration to conduct a Transit Feasibility Study. This study is focused on the City of Nogales and the community of Rio Rico and the Interstate-19 corridor that connects them. The Study includes analysis of transportation supply, demand, and recommends a phased approach to increasing transit resources in the area.

Nogales Mayor Maldonado and Santa Cruz County officials have indicated an interest in further developing public transportation in the region and have supported SEAGO's efforts in developing this study.

Purpose

The purpose of the Nogales Area Transit Feasibility Study is to examine the potential for increasing public transit options for residents and visitors in the Nogales/Rio Rico area and recommend strategies that would result in an accessible, affordable, and sustainable public transit system(s).

Goals and Objectives

Goal: Increase access to public transit for residents and visitors to the Nogales/Rio Rico area.

Objective 1 – Identify lead agency to provide core services and coordinate with other providers to maximize transportation access for potential riders

Objective 2 – Examine the utilization of existing transit/transportation modes where possible

Objective 3 – Develop recommendations that are affordable to riders with sustainable funding models for the providers

Objective 4 – Engage all stakeholders and the public in developing strategies and recommendations that further the goal.

1. Technical Memorandum #1 Assessment of Existing Conditions - Working Paper

Background & Previous Studies

In 2000, the Unified Nogales/Santa Cruz County Transportation Plan, 2000, identified public transportation as an important element of the area's transportation system. Public transit was listed as a priority objective to that plan with direction to consider transit with new and upgraded road projects.

In 2002 the City of Nogales General Plan update (updating the 1992 plan) included direction to test the feasibility of a transit system for the city. That General Plan update was never adopted or approved.

The Santa Cruz County Comprehensive Plan, 2004, encouraged commuter-oriented transit bus service in the Rio Rico/Nogales corridor to support existing and growing commercial and industrial development in the area.

As early as 2006, the City of Nogales provided dial-a-ride services to the City's senior and disabled populations. At that time, the City received financial support from the Arizona Department of Transportation's 5310 funding (federal funds passed to the state on a formula basis) and remained funded until 2015 when it no longer received AZDOT funding but continued very limited service.

Nogales Transit Feasibility Study – 2006

In 2006, a Nogales Transit Feasibility Review and Implementation Plan was prepared to determine the viability of a publicly sponsored transit system for the city and outlying areas.

According to the 2006 Nogales Transit Feasibility Review, conducted by Nelson/Nygaard²...

- *Phase 1 of the study determined the feasibility and need for transit service. In Phase 2, an implementation plan for the proposed transit service was outlined. The implementation plan included a system operating plan; system budget; marketing strategy, and implementation schedule.*
- *Phase 1 included review of existing relevant documents, meetings with a technical advisory committee, interviews with stakeholders, and community workshops to determine what type of services would best benefit the community. To determine transit feasibility, a quantitative analysis looked at three key factors:*

² Nogales Transit Feasibility Review and Implementation Plan (2006) Nelson/Nygaard, Consultant

- *Population density – This study reported that fixed route bus service generally requires a population density of 4 to 7 housing units per acre. In Nogales, density is greatest along Grand Avenue and meets the required thresholds.*
- *Transit propensity – This is a measure of the inclination of the population to use transit if it was provided and is a function of the demographic makeup of the community.*
- *Location of employment sites – Commuter trips offer a valuable market for transit as they represent generally five daily trips per week with fixed origins and destinations each day.*

The recommendations of the Phase 1 transit study concluded that there is demand for transit service beyond what is currently provided by the ad hoc transit services between the US/Mexico border and the commercial areas on and in the vicinity of Mariposa Road east of I-19. In fact, there were strong feelings within the community that this service is limited in coverage, unreliable, and potentially unsafe.

- *In the Phase 2 implementation plan, five total routes were recommended with three routes for the initial system (near-term) and two routes for later start-up. The near-term routes connect the locations most frequently utilized by the public as determined in Phase 1. These routes are:*
 - *Purple Route: Wal-Mart to Border via Grand/Morley which would operate during the day at 30-minute intervals and at night every hour. It would also operate on Saturday and Sunday with the same frequencies.*
 - *Green Route: Mariposa Hills and Wal-Mart to Border via Western Avenue and to the Hospital. This route would operate with hourly daytime and early evening service Monday through Saturday. The Green Route would not operate on Sunday.*
 - *Red Route: Wal-Mart to Chula Vista via Monte Carlo and Valle Verde which would provide hourly daytime service Monday through Saturday.*

The study also noted future routes, the need for a complimentary paratransit service for seniors and persons with disabilities, and estimated ridership of over 300,000 per year with a budget of over \$400,000 in the first year of operations. The City of Nogales accepted the plan.

Then Mayor, Albert Kramer, issued Order No. 2006-11-098 authorizing the City Manager to implement the transit plan on the proposed schedule that would seek funding in 2007, and launch the system in 2008. Mayor Kramer's term ended in 2006 when he was not re-elected, and no further action was taken by the City. As of 2024, the City maintains a limited-service dial-a-ride for senior and disabled residents of Nogales, with rides offered to and from points within the city limits. This system now operates using City general fund proceeds and does not receive federal, state, or Area Agency on Aging (AAA) funding.

In late 2008, an update to the 2006 Transit Feasibility Review was initiated. A draft of the study (December 2008) was to look at how to transition the existing demand/response service to provide general public transit to areas where none currently existed and to do so within then-current fiscal constraints. The study agreed with the original 2006 review that the potential for high ridership and the proposed fixed route remained appropriate. It was also recommended that the City take a phased approach starting with dial-a-ride service expansion and a limited fixed or flex-route system. However, the recommendations still advocated for 7 days of service with a budget of nearly \$500,000.

While an economic overview was produced for the region in 2010, which collected data on employment data, it produced no information on the transportation needs of workers or transportation services provided by employers.

Santa Cruz County Long Range Transportation Plan – 2010 & 2021

Also, in 2010, Santa Cruz County published its 2010 Transportation Plan.³ This plan was broader in scope and included roads and streets as well as transit. This 20-year plan highlighted the recommendations from the 2006 study summarized above, and included the following transit recommendations in their Short-, Mid- and Long-Term Projects section:

Short-term

- Develop Park and Ride Lots in Rio Rico
- Establish a Public Transit System (5311) and expand the existing Nogales Rides (Dial-a-ride) program to the greater Nogales area.

Mid-term

- Expand the system to include a fixed/flex route system

Long-term

- Provide daily express service to Rio Rico
- Provide daily express service to Tubac
- Build a Transit Center and Park & Ride facility

These recommendations were based on continued interest by the City of Nogales in applying for 5311 funding with a caveat that no entity was willing to provide expanded services along the I-19 corridor to Rio Rico and Tubac. They also recommended that a connection to the Mariposa Port of Entry be included as a scheduled stop (was not

³ Wilbur Smith Associates, April 30, 2010 - Consulting firm completing the study for Santa Cruz County

included in the 2006 study) and encouraged commuter schedules from fixed locations, vanpools, transfer facilities, pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit and a robust marketing program to the public, employees, and employers.

City of Nogales General Plan – 2020

The adopted 2020 General Plan for the City of Nogales⁴ identified the need for a transit center at the DeConcini pedestrian entry for shuttle vans, commercial buses and taxi services serving the Port of Entry. It also recommended assessing options for public transit and consideration of a transit stop at the visitor center as well as connectivity to different activity centers.

In the funding section of the Plan, it was recommended that the City approve a half-cent sales tax with 33% of proceeds supporting transit.

Southern Arizona Regional Transportation Coordination Plan – 2024-2025

Annually, SEAGO produces the Regional Transportation Coordination Plan for its four-county region. The 2024-2025 update identified needs by geographical area and critical gaps in service across the region. For Santa Cruz County, identified needs included a fixed route service in Nogales, connecting service between Nogales, Rio Rico, and Tubac, and connecting service between Nogales, Patagonia, and Sonoita.

SEAGO- Nogales Transit Needs Survey Report – 2022

SEAGO, in an effort to understand the transit needs of the Santa Cruz County, Arizona community, provided surveys to the public between 5/22 through 09/22 in both English and Spanish. This survey was conducted in 2022.

Surveys were distributed in Nogales, Patagonia, Rio Rico, and other non-incorporated areas of the county. Surveys were collected at the time they were filled out, or respondents could mail their surveys. Additionally, surveys were distributed by human services and health organizations throughout the county, collected by staff, and returned to SEAGO for analysis. In total, 383 surveys were received. Survey summary results can be found in **Appendix B.**

Analysis and trends from this report show that:

- 79% of respondents were from the Nogales and Rio Rico area
- 60% of respondents reported that Spanish was their primary language
- 53% of respondents reported their age as over 65

⁴ The Planning Center, 2020 – Consultant to the City of Nogales

- 15% reported that transportation to employment was their primary concern
- 24% of respondents reported that access to transportation was a concern
- 23% of respondents relied on a friend, relative, or neighbor for transportation
- 13% of respondents who owned a car reported that they do not use their car because of operability issues, cost, insurance, or no driver's license
- 24% of respondents reported that they have no operable vehicle in the household
- 37% of respondents reported that transportation to shopping was a concern
- 33% of respondents reported that transportation to medical services was a concern

Travel Patterns & Destinations

Mapping travel patterns involves examining various factors such as demographics, geography, and transportation infrastructure. The Nogales/Rio Rico area presents a number of diverse elements to be considered. Nogales serves as a border crossing between the US and Mexico while Rio Rico is a growing community with increasing traffic and development.

A major interstate highway, I-19, and local roads connect the two communities with major industrial centers located along the corridor. I-19 is also the main corridor into Nogales from the North. Business 19 forks to the east just outside the north-side city limits, allowing local drivers to avoid traffic moving to the border crossings and, instead, reach shopping destinations at, and south of W. Mariposa Rd. See Figure 4. The Mariposa Rd. corridor runs east and west and includes shopping

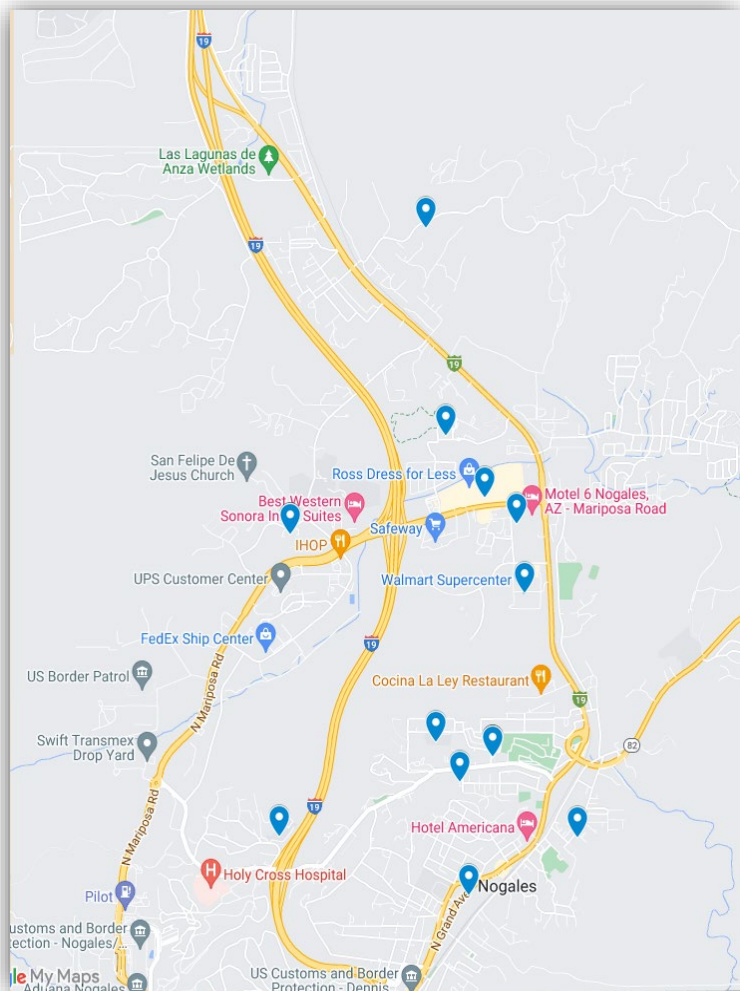


Figure 1 Main traffic corridors - Nogales

destinations as well as the Mariposa Health Clinic campus that is widely used in the area. Access to the Mariposa corridor from the South is from Grand Ave., which originates at the border in downtown Nogales. It can also be accessed from I-19 which has an interchange at Mariposa Rd. Rio Rico residents generally travel south on I-19 to Business 19 when seeking these shopping and health-care resources. For access to downtown businesses (mostly independently owned retail shops), persons in vehicles will enter Grand Ave. or access parking from I-19 as it nears termination. The hospital is located west of I-19 near downtown and is best accessed from Mariposa Rd. to the west or from I-19 using Target Range Rd. Target Range Rd (west of I-19) becomes Western Ave and continues to the east. This corridor connects Mariposa Rd., I-19, and Grand Ave, on an east-west path that meanders around the hilly topography.

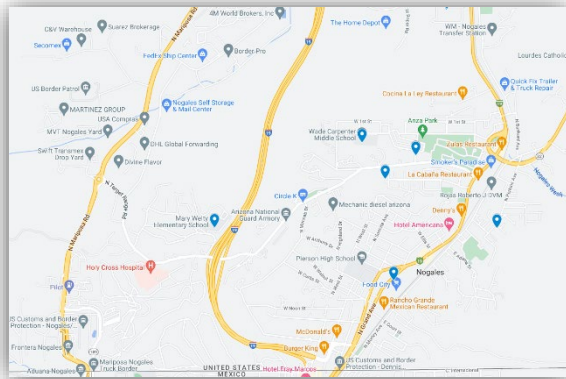


Figure 3 Nogales Ports of Entry access

vehicles and pedestrians is accessed at either the Mariposa crossing, west of the downtown area, or the DeConcini crossing located downtown. See figure 5. The Mariposa crossing is primarily for commercial truck use though private vehicles and pedestrians also have access.

Rio Rico, an unincorporated community north of Nogales, straddles I-19 to the east and west with houses built on hillsides along winding roads that were built into the mountainous terrain. The white lines in Figure 6 are not terrain

The Town of Patagonia is located 18 miles northeast of Nogales on state highway 82. Nogales is the closest destination for shopping and healthcare. The Patagonia Senior Center provides scheduled dial-a-ride services to and from Nogales for seniors and disabled residents. Highway 82 enters Nogales at the Grand Avenue interchange about halfway between Mariposa Rd. to the north, and the De Concini border crossing to the south. Access to the border crossings for

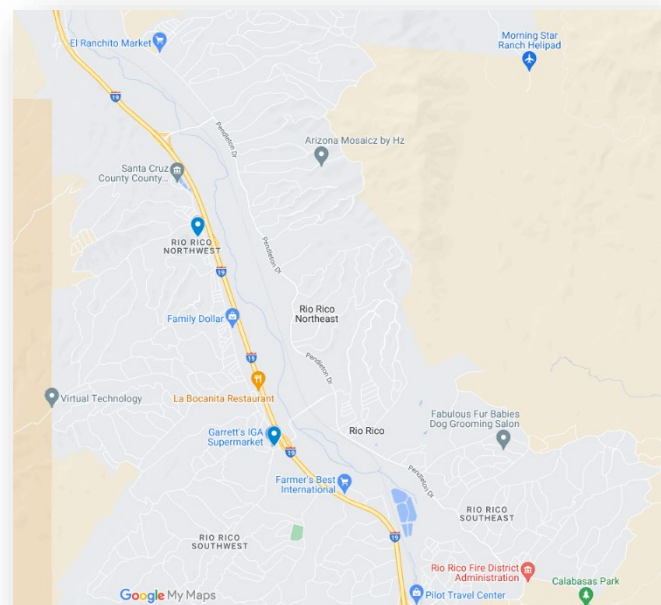


Figure 2 Rio Rico - unincorporated community

markers but rather roads on which most of the community's housing is located. On the east side, most roads go to Pendleton Drive with two access points to I-19. On the west side residential streets go onto Frontage Rd. with two access points to I-19. Santa Cruz County maintains offices on the west side south of Tumacacori-Carmen and north of Nogales. Rio Rico's schools are all located on the west side of the interstate.

There is considerable industry, particularly cold storage for produce coming across the border, along the I-19 corridor between Rio Rico and Nogales. For these industries, employees travel from Rio Rico and Nogales on I-19. Additionally, workers from the area are travelling north to mines in Sahuarita and Green Valley areas. Still others commute to Tucson for employment.

Travel Destinations

The survey suggests that people are most interested in and concerned about transportation to medical and shopping destinations. In Nogales, these destinations include the Walmart and nearby shopping mall, the Mariposa Health clinics, and the hospital. Government offices including Social Security, DES, MVD, and local government offices are also priority destinations for riders. Rio Rico residents can be seen to have

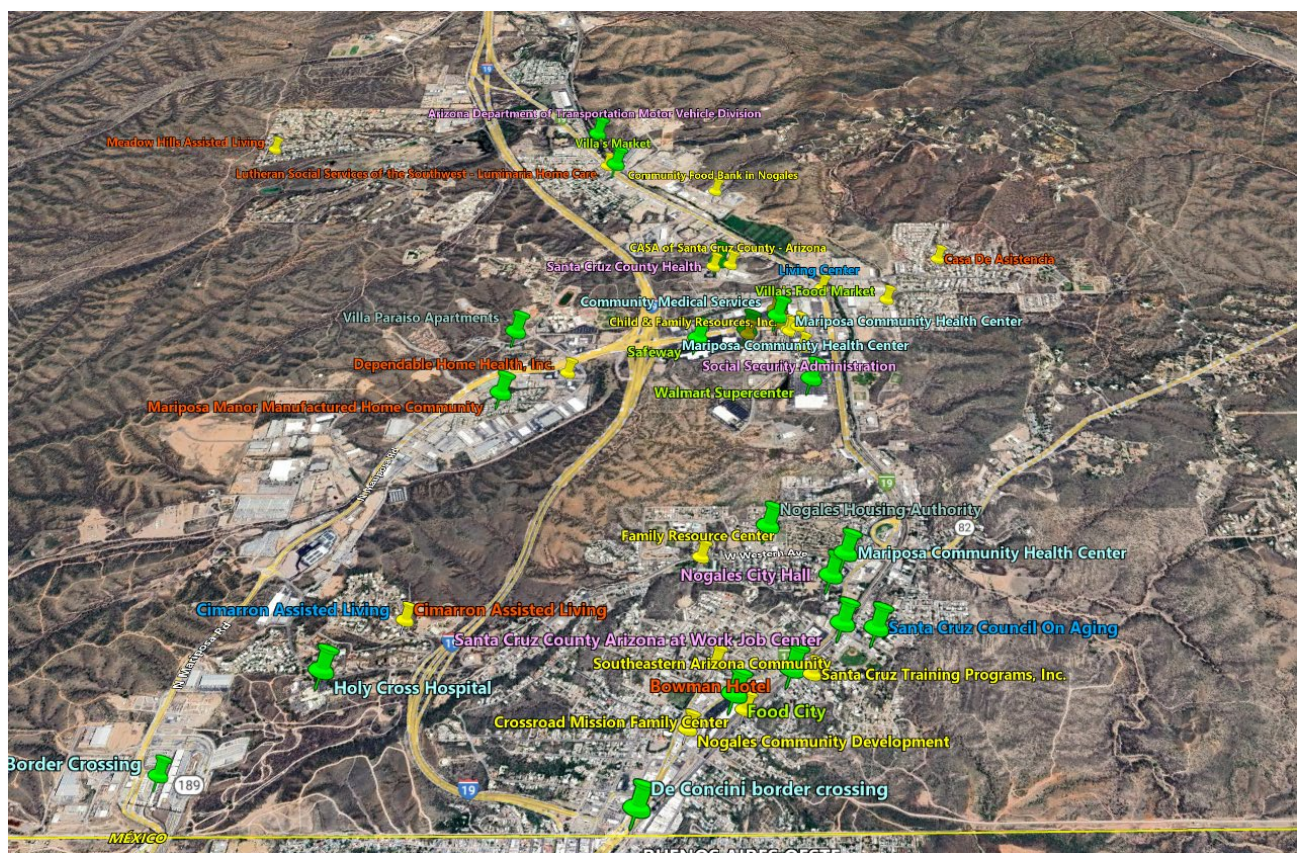


Figure 4 Originations and Destinations Nogales

similar preferences for destinations; however, the services are limited, and many residents of this unincorporated area seek them out in Nogales. In Figure 7, we see the green pushpins indicate high level destination areas with yellow push pins noting second level destinations. Shopping destinations are lettered in green, social and human service destinations are lettered in yellow, health destinations in light blue, and government destinations are lettered in pink.

Demographic Data and Analysis

Population & Density

The City of Nogales density map, see Figure 7, shows the concentrations of population within the City. The darker red areas indicate higher concentrations with lighter colors indicating fewer residents in these census areas. Also noted on this map are the locations of affordable housing assets that have been publicly supported through HUD Section 8, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and USDA. (white circles with house symbols and red house symbols) They are typically multi-housing facilities that provide affordable, low-

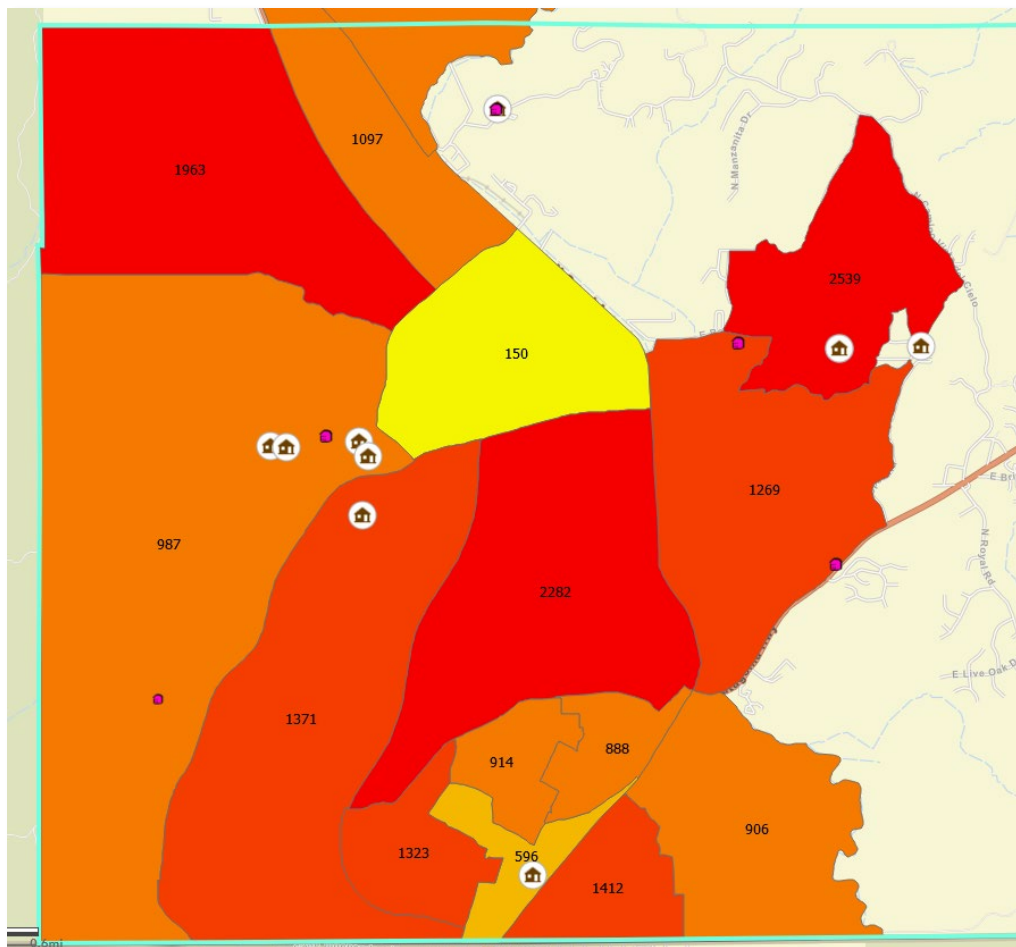


Figure 5 Nogales population density

income housing options in the community. In Nogales, we can see three affordable housing locations in the north-east quadrant that also has a high concentration of population. Assuring public transit access in these and other similar areas should be a priority.

The unincorporated area of Rio Rico shows population concentrations on both sides of I-19 with one subsidized housing location on the west side of the interstate in the north-east sector of the community. (See Figure 8). When assessing transit needs for a region, it is important to consider that ridership may be made up primarily of persons who are elderly,

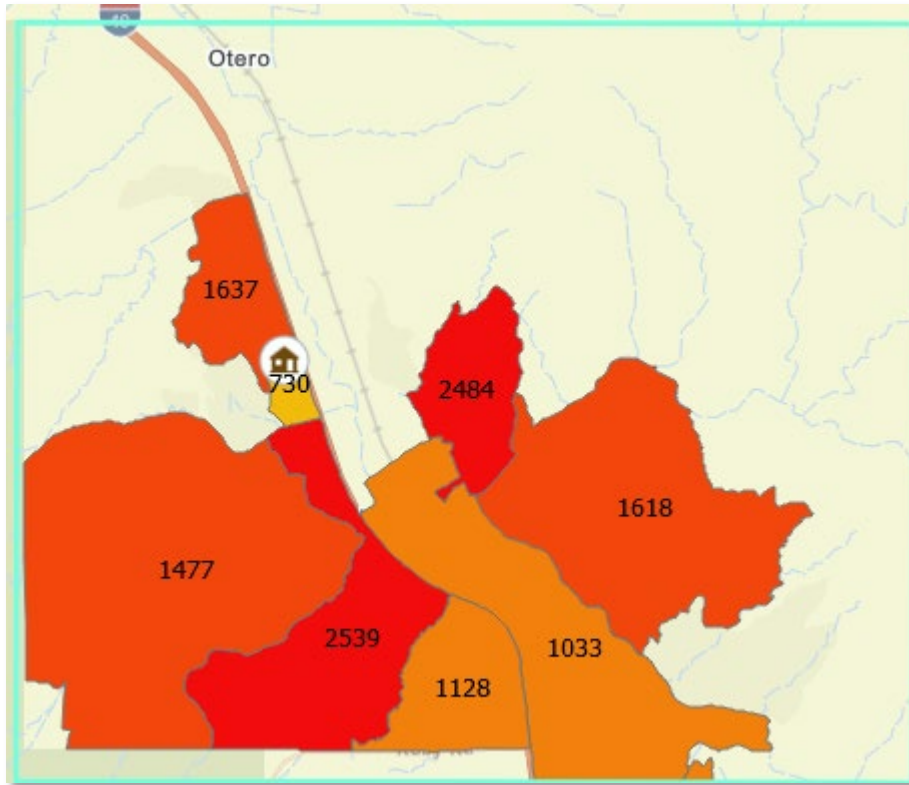


Figure 6 Rio Rico population concentrations

disabled, and low-income. It is also important to look at population concentrations when planning routes and service areas to ensure that the greatest number of residents have access to public transit while also working within any financial constraints for the operating entity.

Subsidized housing units are an indication of

concentrations of low-income households and senior housing units. As such, ridership from these areas could be heavier than in other areas even if densely populated.

The US Census bureau no longer surveys residents for commuting direction but data that is collected shows that a majority of workers living in Santa Cruz county also work within the county. A smaller percentage work in Pima County and fewer than 500 travel into Mexico for work. Still others (less than 1%) work outside the state of Arizona.

The 2020 census data and 2022 updates provide insights into the population of Nogales and Rio Rico areas. Tables were selected for potential ridership analysis which focuses on the elderly, disabled, low-income, and households with no access to a vehicle.

Nogales



Figure 7 Nogales Demographic summary

The summary graphic in Figure 7 identifies key demographic data from the US Census Bureau. With a total population of 19,770, the community is largely Hispanic or Latino (95%). With a median household income at half of the Arizona median (\$72,581), the population is largely in the lower class of income, nationally, with a higher-than-average percentage of families living at or below the poverty level⁵

Age and Sex

36.6 ± 1.5 Median Age in Nogales city, Arizona

[S0101 | 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)

The median age is 36.6, making Nogales a younger community than many rural neighbors.

The number of children between the ages of 15 and 19 is the largest group within the age categories as seen in Figure 8. With a high percentage of residents claiming an Hispanic or Latino background it is not surprising that 93% of the population speaks Spanish in the home. This is an important consideration for any transit system.

⁵Arizona poverty level for a family of four in Santa Cruz County is \$31,200 for 2024

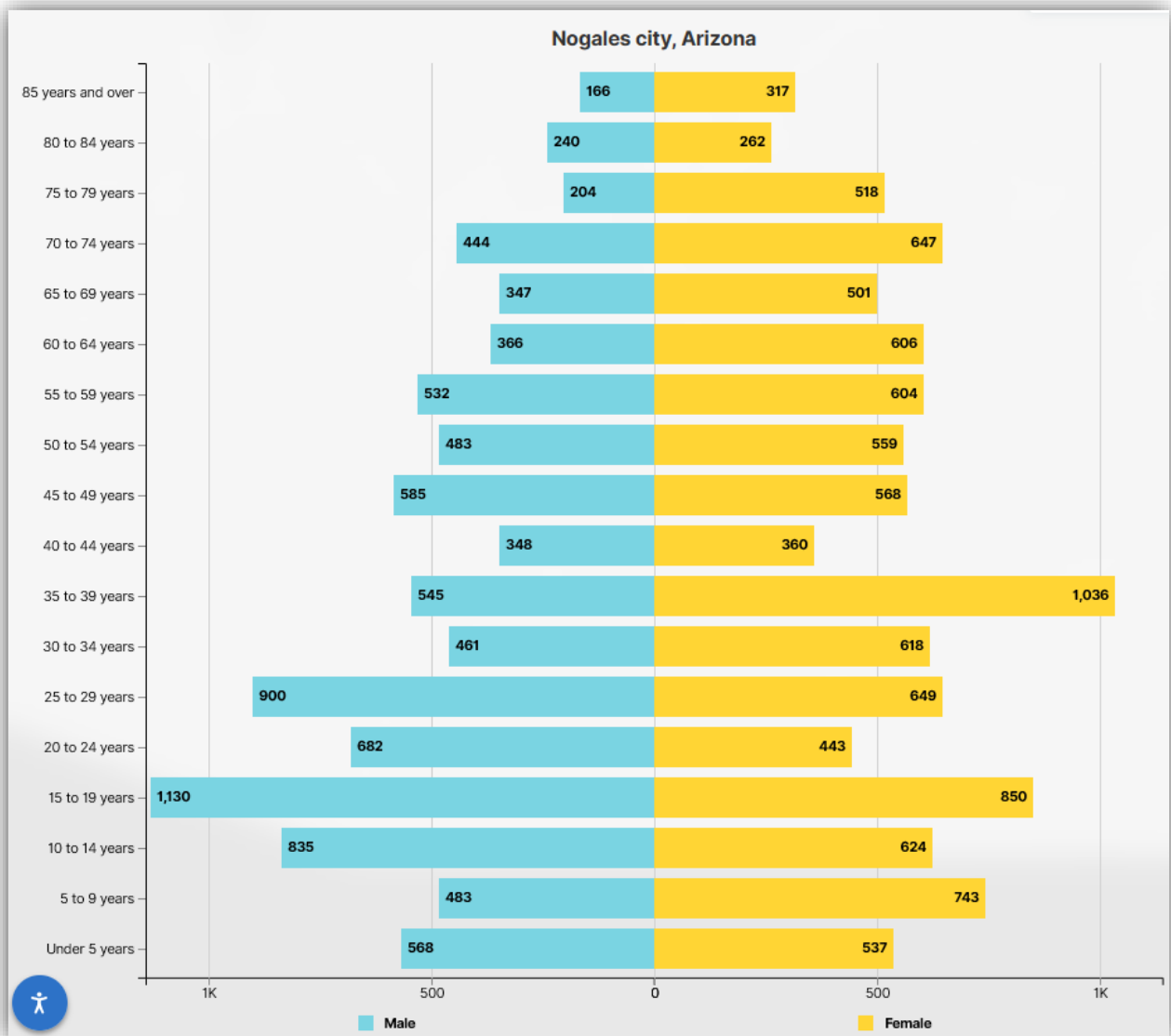


Figure 8 Population by age and sex

Language Spoken at Home

93.2% Language Other Than English Spoken at Home i

Estimate for Language Other Than English Spoken at Home in Nogales city, Arizona. 93.2%. plus or minus 1.5%
English only - 6.8% Spanish - 93.0%

[S1601 | 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)

Elderly & Veterans

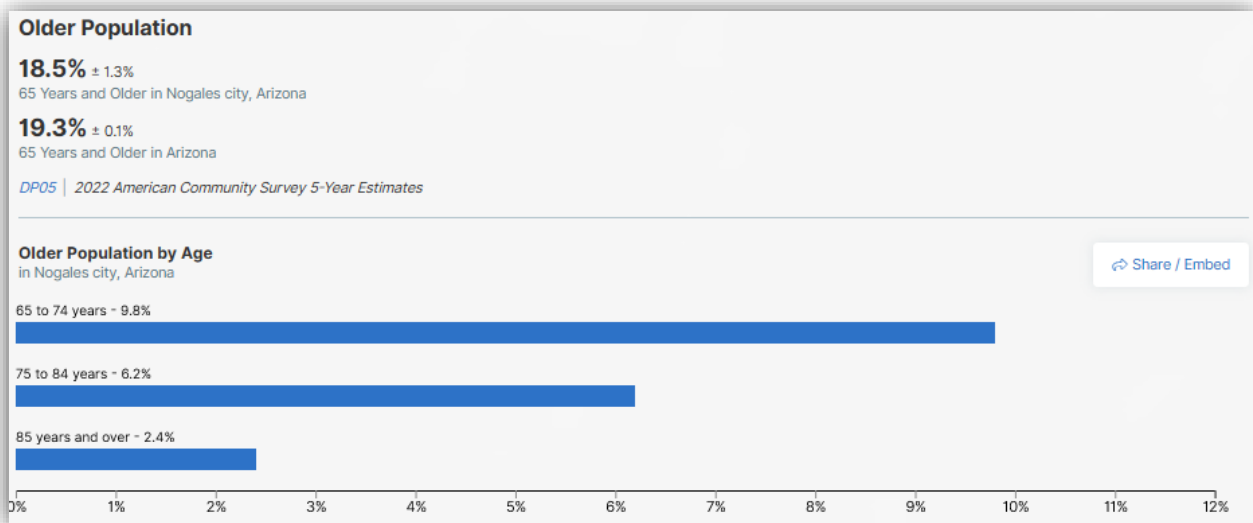


Figure 9 Elderly population

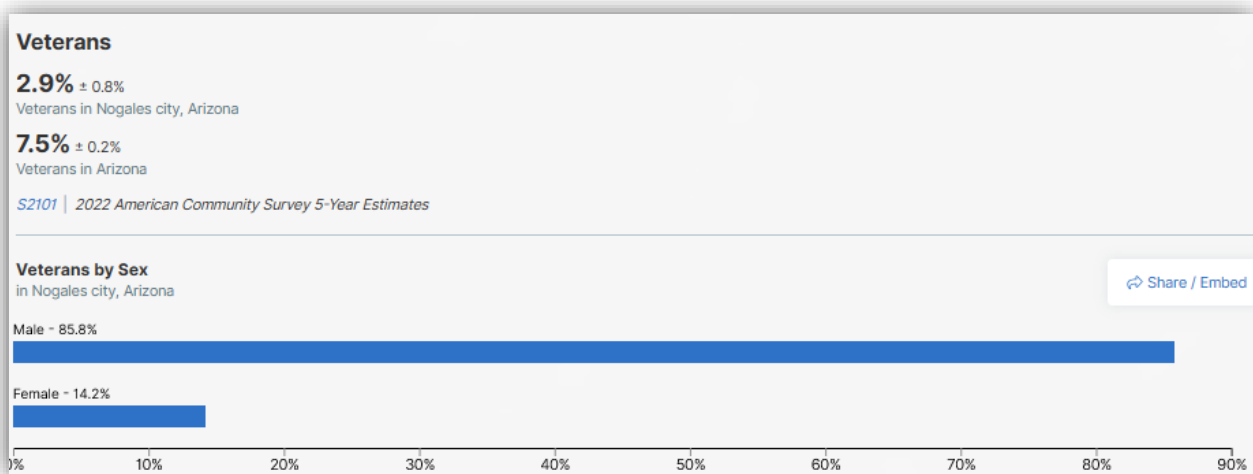


Figure 10 Veteran population

When focusing on transit provision, the number of elderly, disabled, and veterans seeking services is a priority when developing a successful and impactful transit system.

The number of elderly people (over age 65) is roughly 18%, slightly lower than the state's average. See Figure 9. The elderly and veteran population (See Figure 10) rely heavily on dial-a-ride or paratransit services that provide additional service when boarding, disembarking, and scheduling rides. Common destinations are for groceries and other shopping and medical care, visits to pharmacies, and access to services like senior centers.

Income

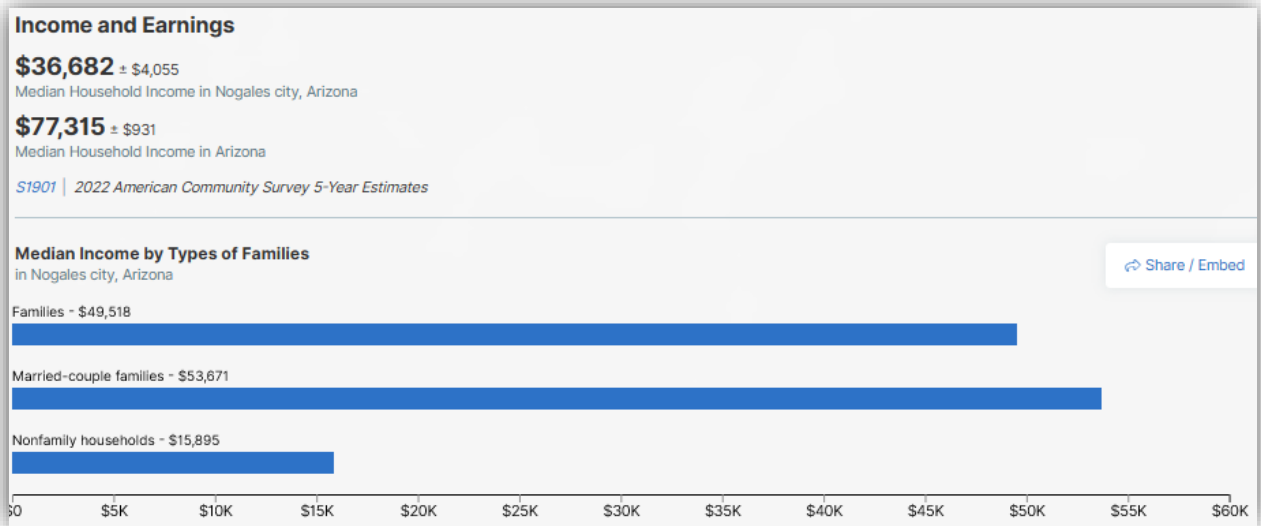


Figure 11 Income and Earnings

As mentioned in the summary, the median income for households in Nogales is far below the state's average. Median incomes for households with a single person are only a few hundred dollars above the poverty level (\$15,060). See Figure 11. It can be expected that these non-family households may have a large number of elderly living alone and younger people with very little resources or capacity to maintain their own vehicles. For this potential ridership group, it will be important to offer reduced or free rides, often supported by the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) which is managed by SEAGO.

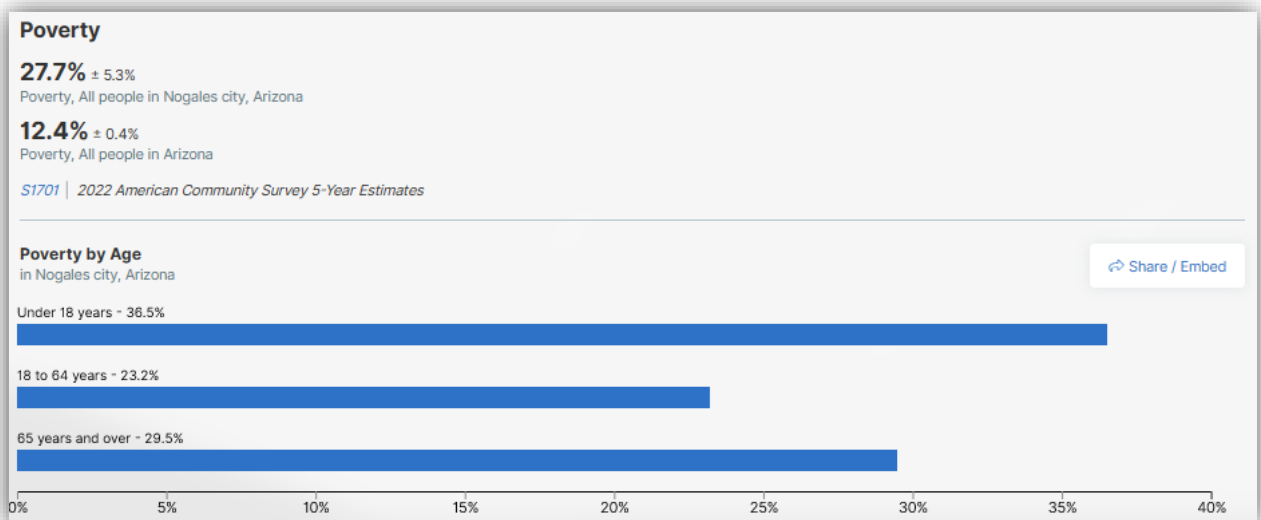


Figure 12 Poverty rate

With a poverty rate over twice that of the State, the need for reduced fare or free-fare transit in Nogales will be essential for riders and the ridership success of the transit program. See Figure 12.

While the educational attainment of potential riders does not have a direct impact on transit system performance, it can impact the planning. See Figure 13. Marketing and ridership documents like schedules and routes may need to be written with a lower literacy rate in mind. This is a separate consideration from language with the assumption that all documents will be available in both English and Spanish.

Education

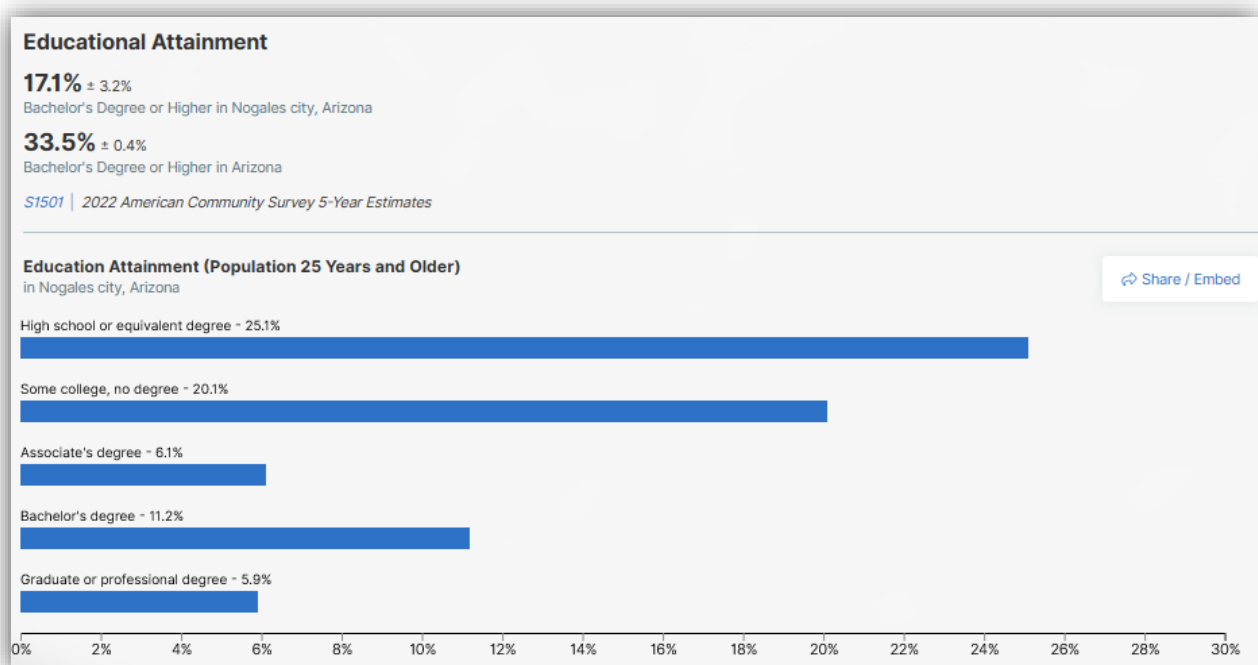


Figure 13 Educational Attainment

This may also be a consideration for hiring employees in support of the transit program. Will the entity managing the transit system require minimum education thresholds for drivers, dispatchers, mechanics, and other positions? Will management positions be marketed to a field of potential applicants that are capable but may have not attained higher education?

Workforce

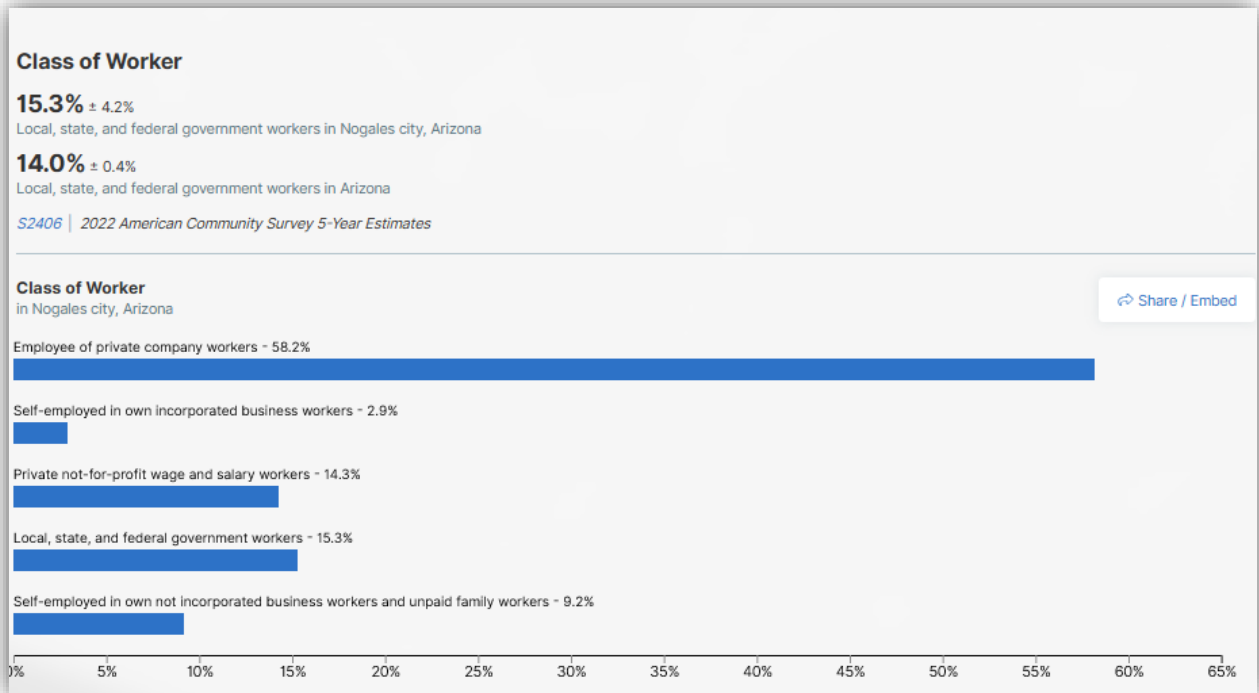


Figure 14 Employer classes

In Nogales, over half of the residents that are employed work in the private sector. As the state's busiest port-of-entry, this comes as no surprise as industries supporting transportation of goods and products must be located near the border. These include storage facilities, fleet maintenance and repair, food storage, customs brokers, logistics management, and others. Another sector in the private company class is retail outlets. The more common destinations are grocers and Walmart. Workers here are paid minimum wage or slightly higher, are often not full-time jobs, and offer few to no benefits. Workers as well as shoppers in this demographic share common destinations and common low-income levels.

Workers are using multiple means to reach their worksites. As expected, most are using vehicles and drive alone. See Figure 15. Nearly 5% of the population use means, other than vehicles, to get to work including walking, biking, and transit services. An additional 4% use taxis, motorcycles, or other means. This figure represents approximately 700 adults. This population is a potential focus for marketing of future general public – fixed route transit services.



Figure 15 Commuting time and method

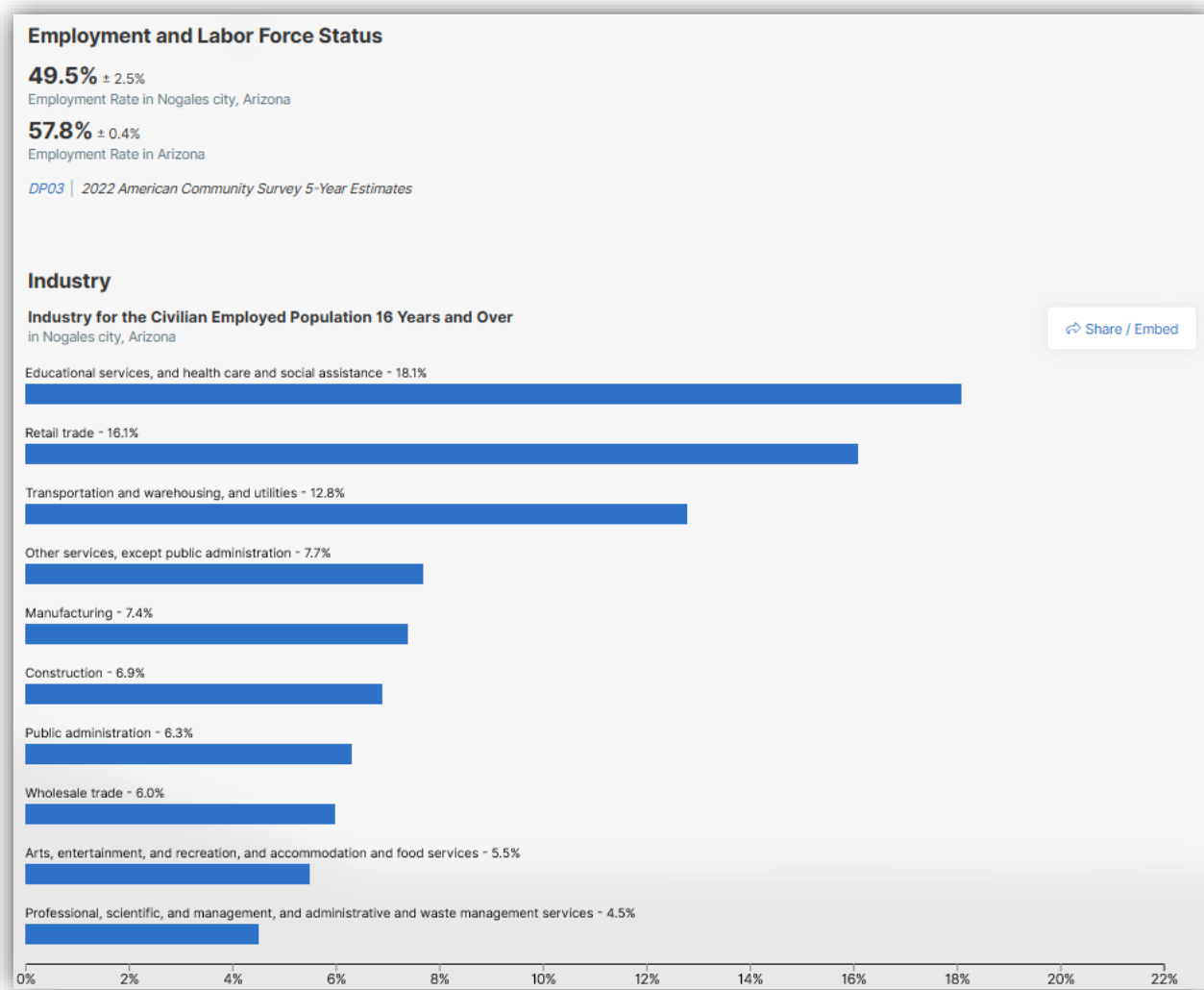


Figure 16 Industry employer types – non-government

The top employer industries are education/health/social services, retail, and transportation/warehousing. These industries employ nearly half of the workforce. See Figure 16. While this phase of study will not be recommending workforce transit, it will be included as a future phase endeavor once a lead entity is identified and interest in workforce transportation is confirmed.

Because workforce transportation requires strict on-time performance and can benefit multiple riders going to the same destination, a van-pool concept might also be useful for this population.

The occupational data for the non-governmental workers sees the highest distribution among sales and office occupations. These would include retail shops, groceries, and support positions for service businesses. See Figure 17.

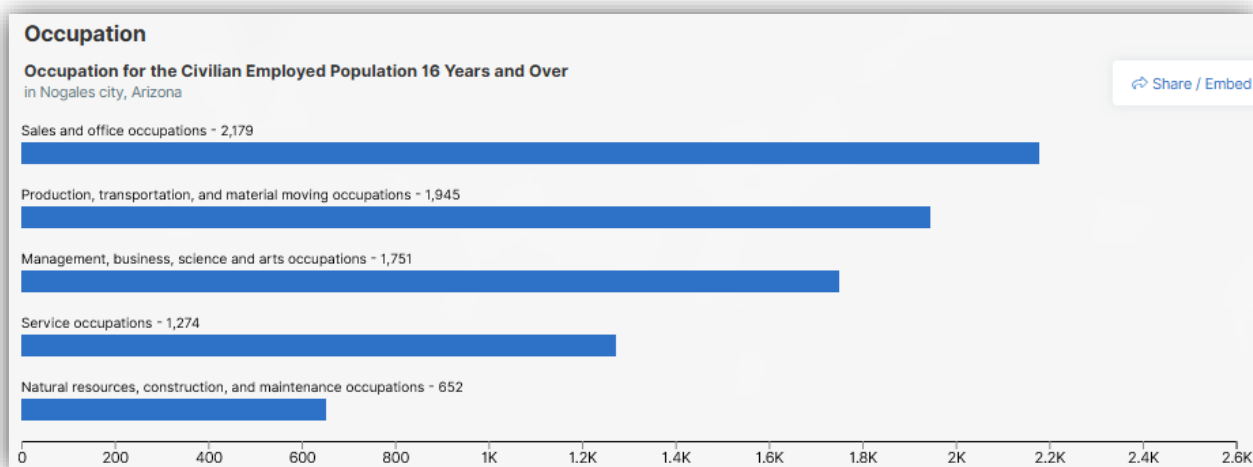


Figure 17 Occupations for non-government workers

Disability

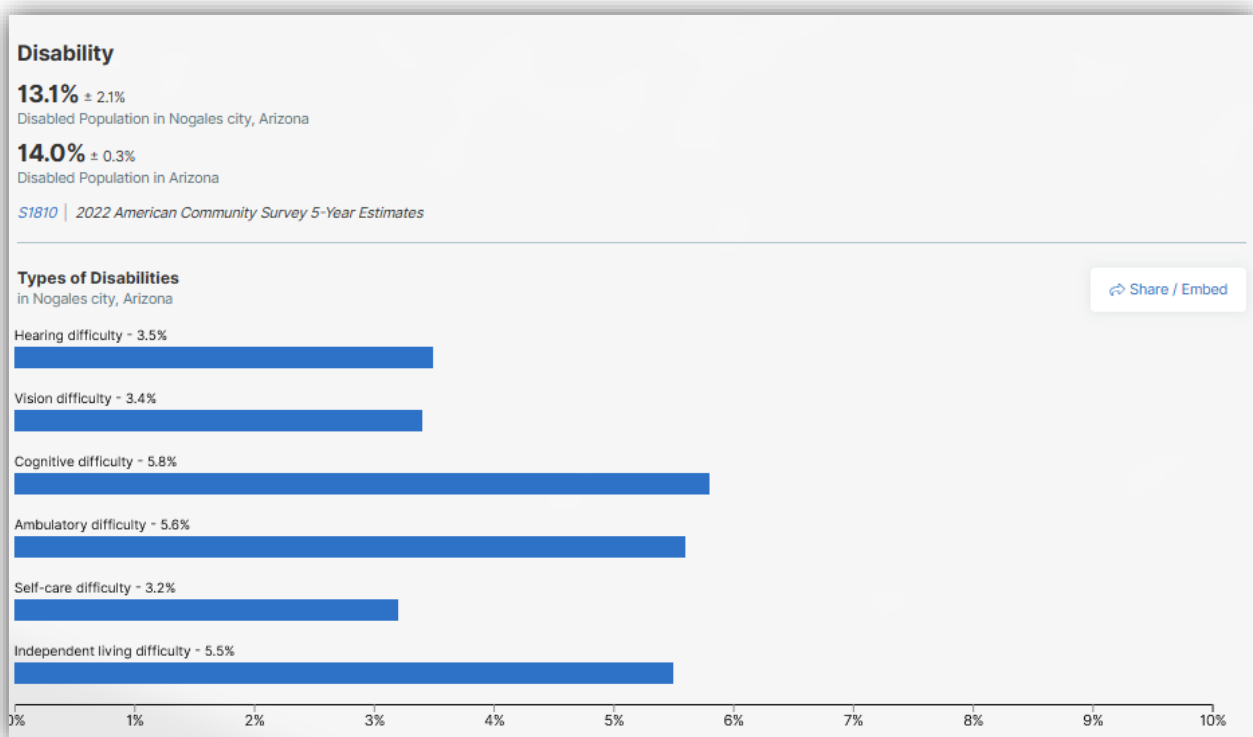


Figure 18 Disabled Population

These figures are extremely important for transit planning as they are an indication of the need for flexible or deviated fixed routes and/or paratransit. This figure is slightly below the state average which could be attributed to the younger age median of the population.

Health Insurance

21.1% ± 3.5%

Without Health Care Coverage in Nogales city, Arizona

9.9% ± 0.3%

Without Health Care Coverage in Arizona

S2701 | 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The number of residents without health insurance is more than twice the state average. This creates a vulnerability for the workforce and puts additional pressures on local clinics and the hospital to provide care without immediate or full compensation. The number of people without health insurance may also be in the lower-income strata of the population and unable to afford a vehicle and/or its operation. A transit system would, ideally, work with health-care providers to ensure that vulnerable patients have scheduled rides to and from their appointments.

Summary

Overall, we see that the Nogales demographic has significant potential for public transit ridership. The responsible entity or Transit provider will have to implement thoughtful marketing strategies in multiple languages, for readers whose literacy levels may be low, and who have different motivations as well as different destinations for any ride opportunity.

While the elderly and disabled populations are not above state averages, this is a most vulnerable population that have few reliable transportation options. This population should be a priority when designing a transit system in the area. Coordination with health and human services providers will also benefit transit development and riders from this sector.

Based on the demographics reviewed, popular destinations will include

- Groceries (Safeway – Central; Villa’s Market – north; and Food City – south),
- Health care (Holy Cross Hospital – central, and Mariposa Community Health Centers – north and south), and
- Shopping (Mariposa Shopping Center – central, Walmart – central, and Nogales Plaza – south
- Employment - These will be determined in a later phase of transit development.

Rio Rico



The Rio Rico area is not an incorporated area, so the census data is made up of census tracts that include two sections east of I-19 (north and south), and two sections west of I-19 (north and south). The region is north of Nogales and stretches to the Tumacacori-Carmen communities to the north. It is sometimes described as a suburb of Nogales, and while many of its residents work in Nogales, it also has its own schools, limited shopping centers, and a community of residents who take great pride in the community. The area of Rio Rico has a population slightly larger than the City of Nogales, about the same number of households, but with a higher median household income. The following data includes, like the Nogales data, census data from 2020 with some data from 2022.



Figure 19 Rio Rico area

Age & Sex

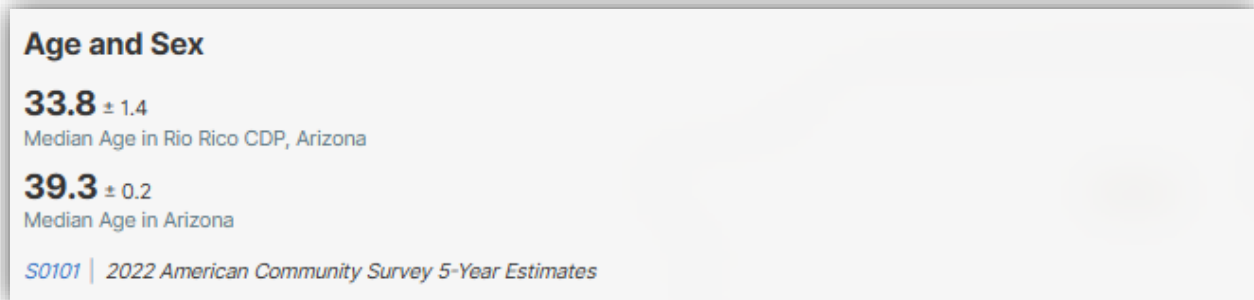


Figure 20 Age Rio Rico

The median age is three years younger than Nogales. In Figures 20 & 21 we can see the age sex ratios and find that spread of data shows a similar but still unique pattern. There are over 5,000 school-age children in the area and few elderly.

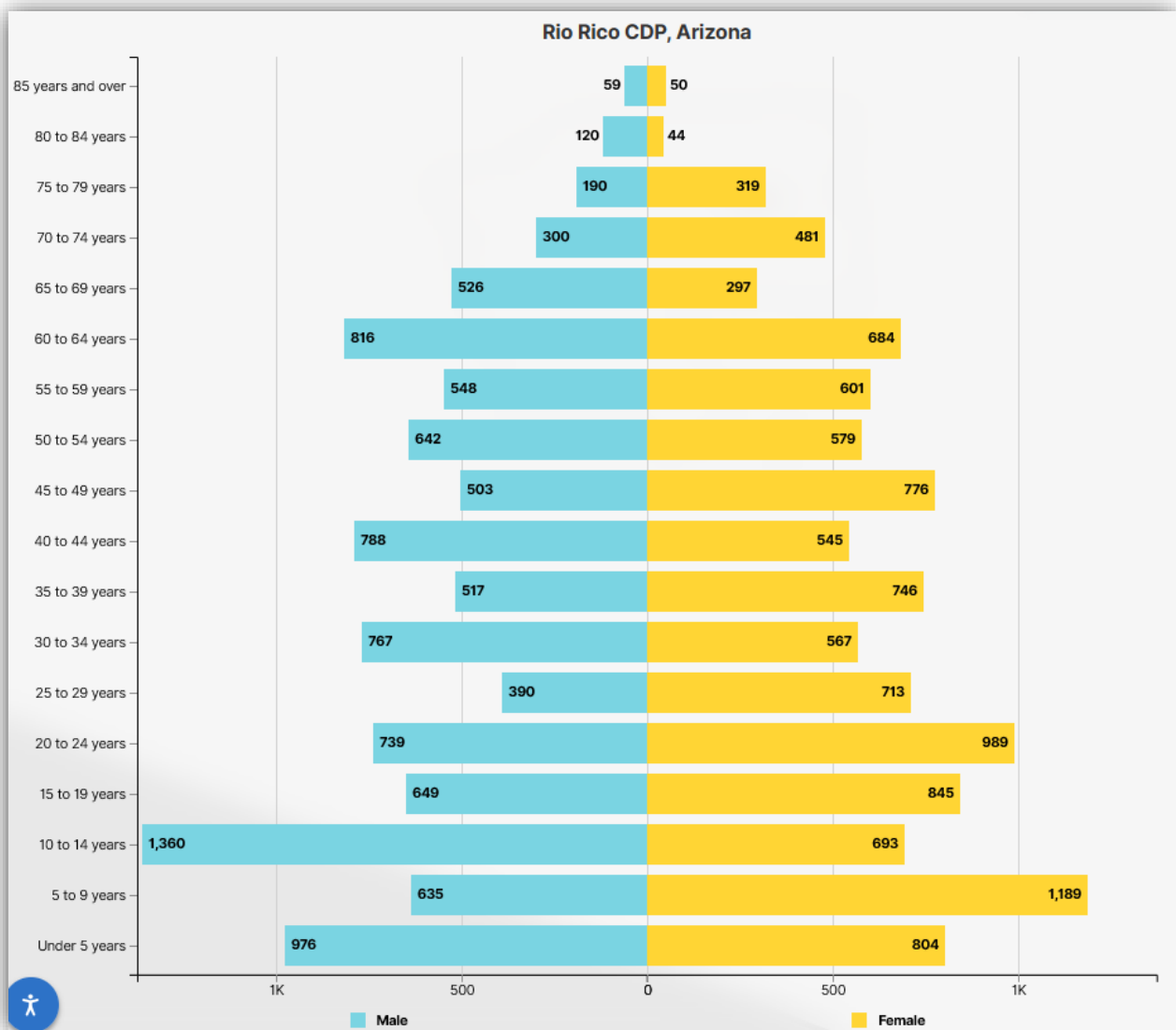


Figure 21 Age by sex – Rio Rico

Language spoken at home

The number of English-only speakers is much higher in Rio Rico at 20% compared to Nogales at 1.5%. See Figure 22. The number of people speaking Spanish in the home is 80%, a still significant number of persons who will benefit from transit services that are bi-lingual.

The number of elderly persons is also lower than Nogales. 11% of Rio Rico's residents are elderly while Nogales has an elderly population that represents 18.5% of the population. See Figure 23.

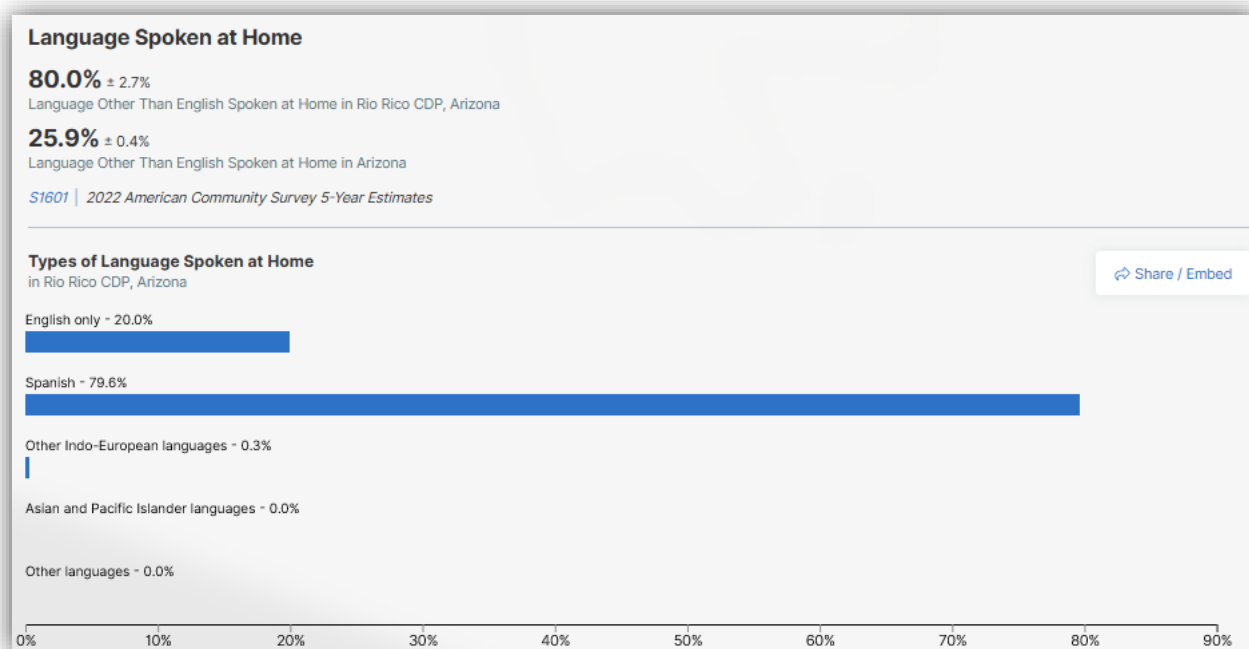


Figure 22 Language spoken at home – Rio Rico

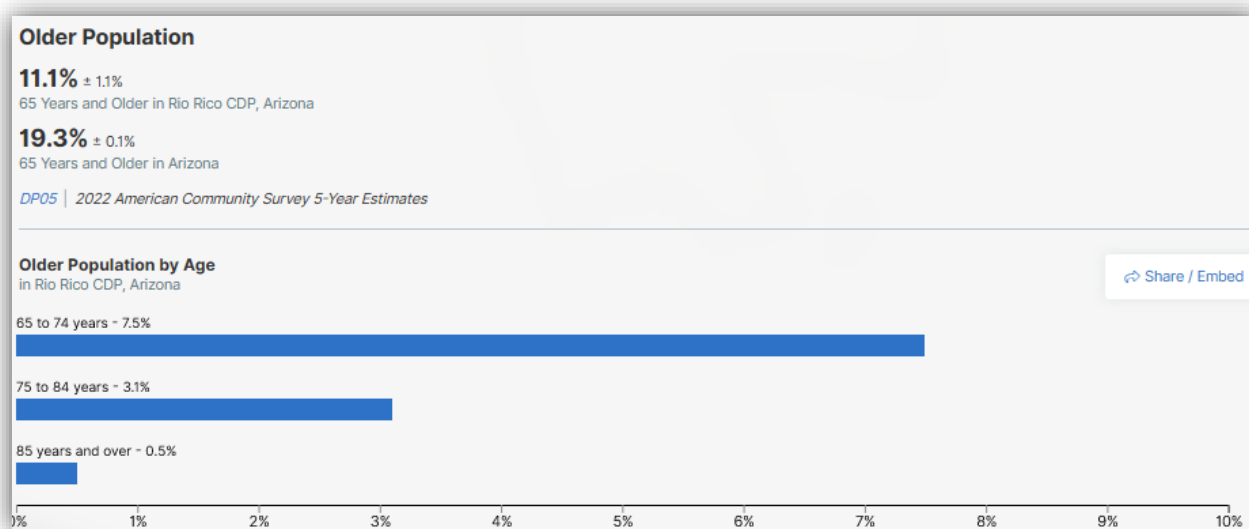


Figure 23 Elderly population – Rio Rico

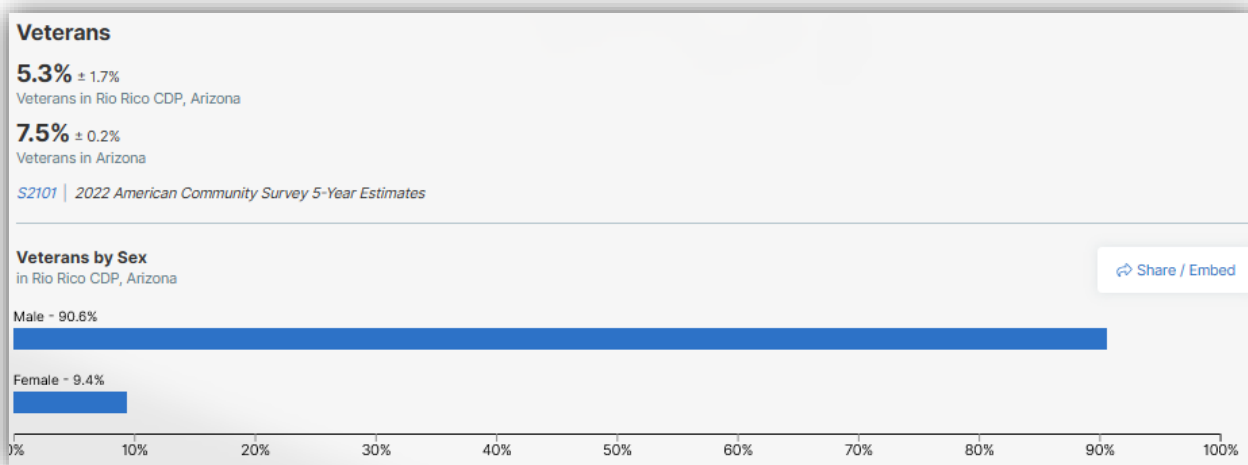


Figure 24 Veterans - Rio Rico

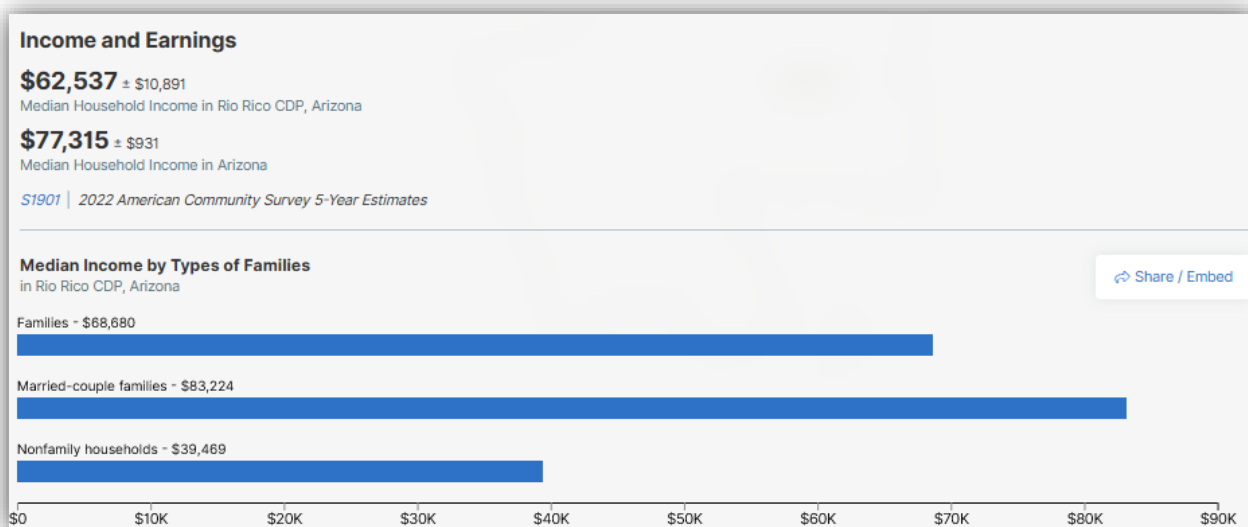


Figure 25 Income – Rio Rico

The income earnings in Rio Rico are significantly higher than in Nogales. See Figure 25. The single-member household income is more than double that of Nogales. With the family median income of 68,680, households are earning 25% more than their counterparts in Nogales. The poverty rate in Rio Rico (16.5%) is also lower than Nogales (27%). See Figure 26. These figures help us understand the potential for priority transit service when using low-income figures. However, transportation need is still great in Rio Rico for the low-income and vulnerable residents who are elderly and disabled.

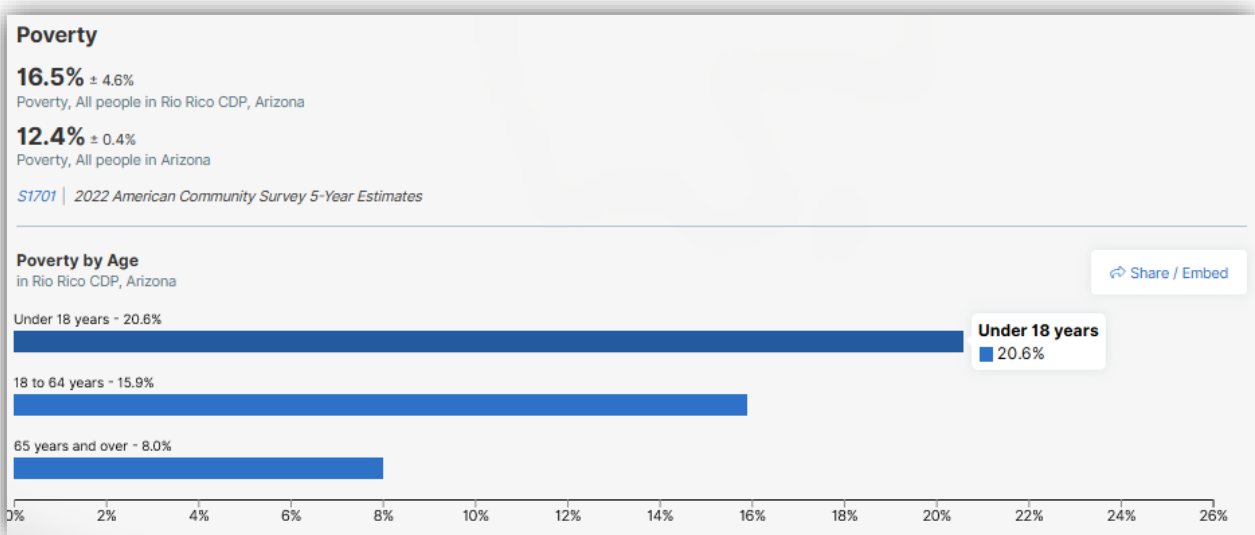


Figure 26 Poverty rate - Rio Rico

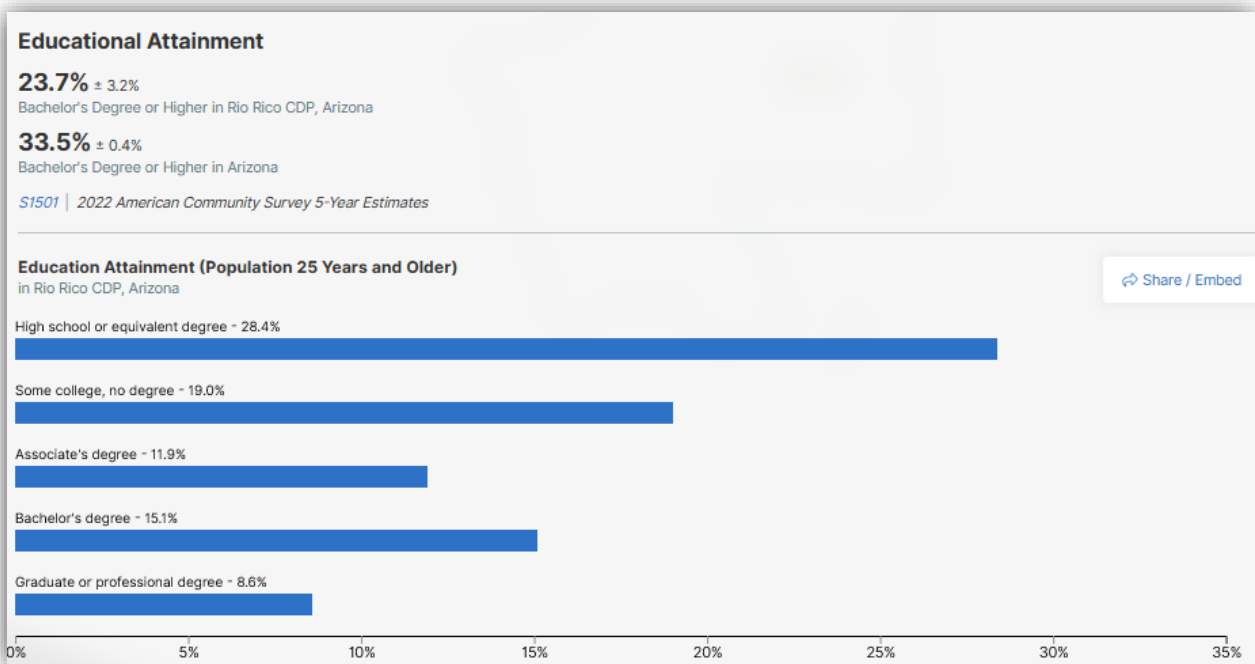


Figure 27 Education - Rio Rico

Like Nogales data, educational attainment does not have a critical bearing on transit usage. It is fair to assume that higher educated residents may also have better paying jobs, but this data does not confirm that outright. The rates of higher education are higher in Rio

Rico in most categories but not so significantly to make a direct correlation between education and income. (See Figure 27)

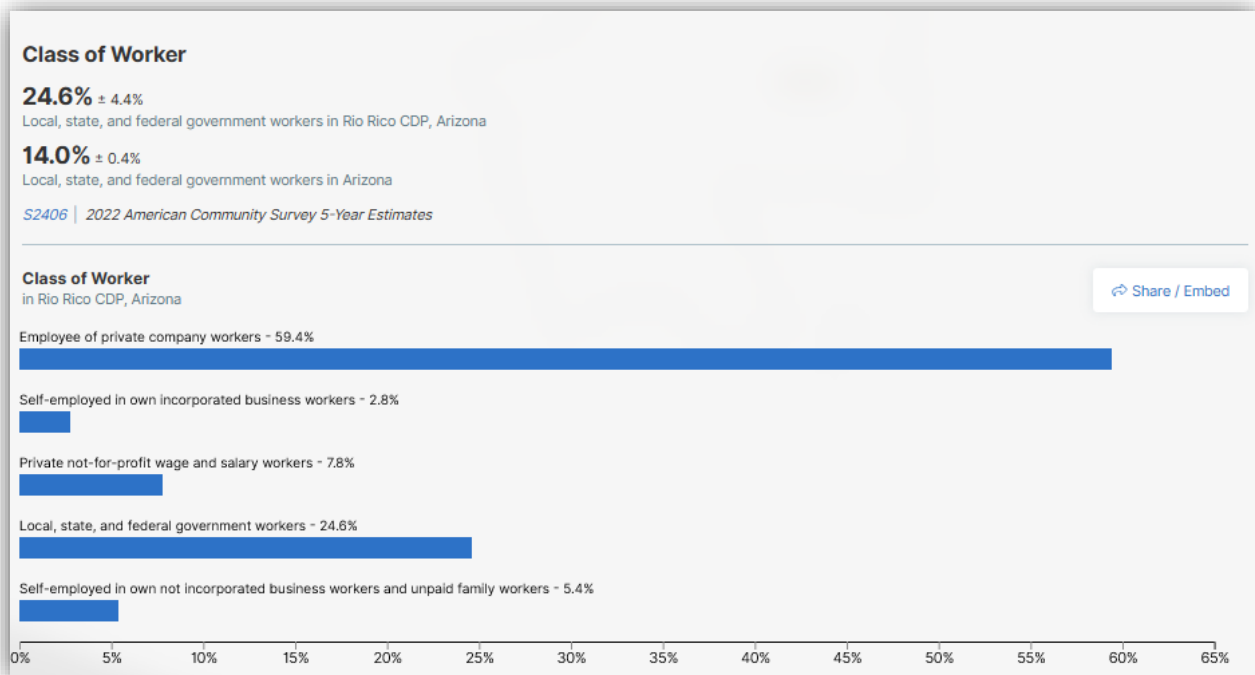


Figure 28 Employment Class - Rio Rico

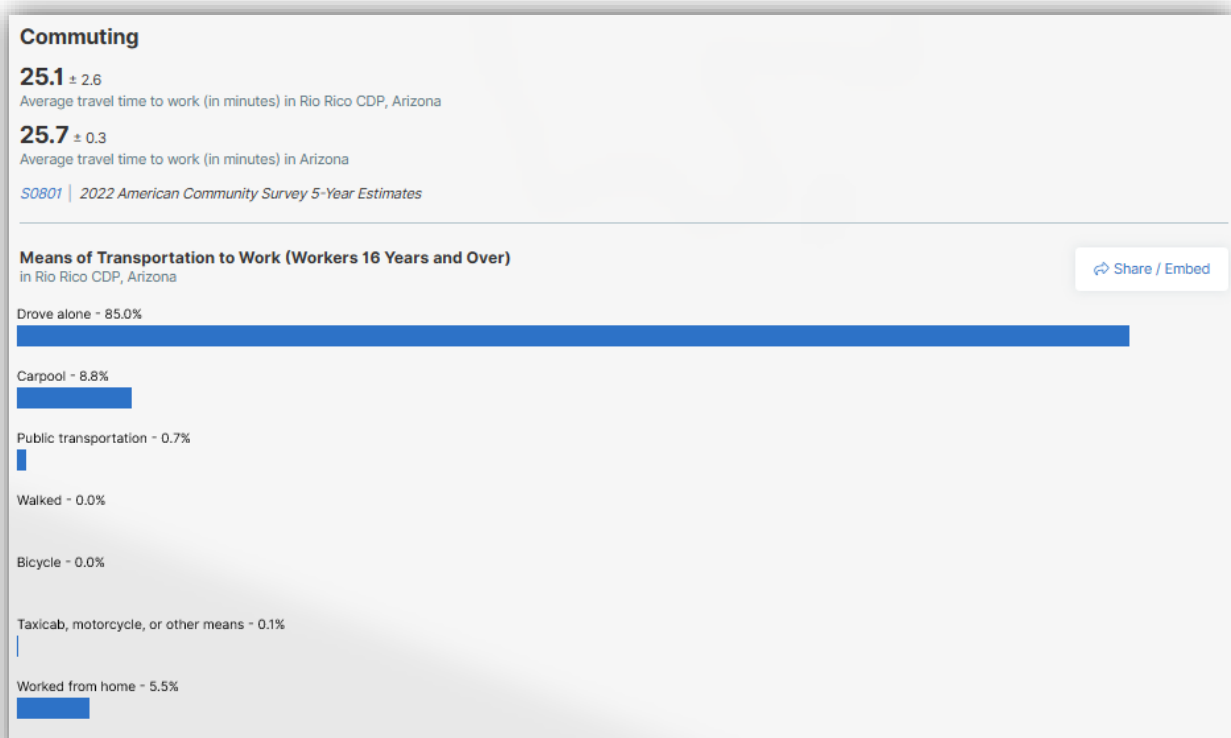


Figure 29 Commuting - Rio Rico

As with Nogales, most Rio Rico workers are employed in the private sector. However, 25% are employed in either local, state, or federal government jobs. (See Figure 28.) This is likely due to the County offices located in Rio Rico. Additionally, most workers drive to work alone in a car. Unlike Nogales, alternative forms of getting to work (public transportation, walking, biking, and other motorized options) are practically non-existent. This may be attributed to the layout and terrain of the community making it difficult to walk or bike in the hilly residential areas, and also to higher incomes which may allow a higher capacity to own and maintain a vehicle. (See Figure 29).

Like Nogales, most workers are in the Education/Health/Social Services sector. The differences appear in public administration (much higher in Rio Rico) and retail (much lower in Rio Rico). (See Figure 30).

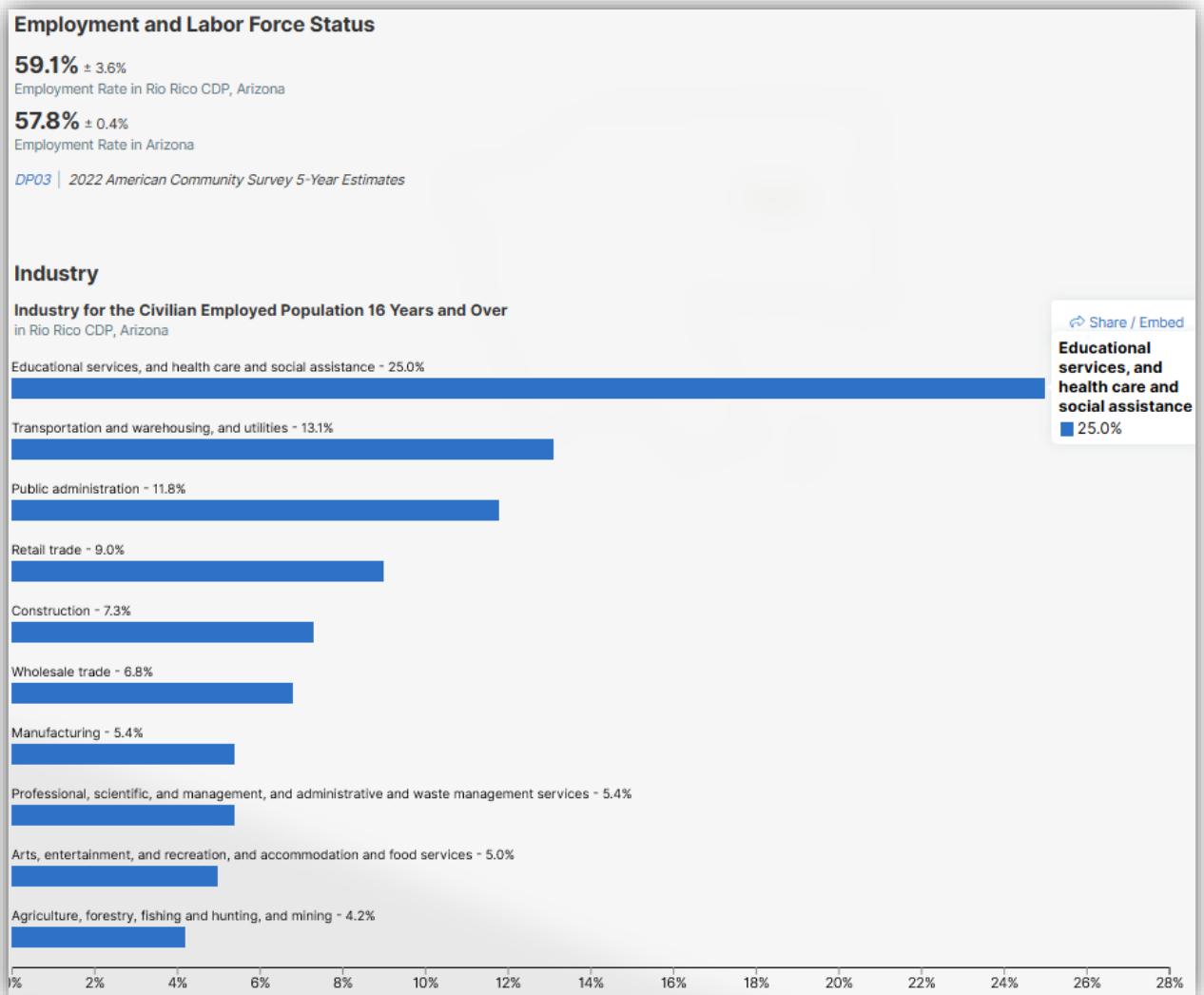


Figure 30 Industry sectors - Rio Rico

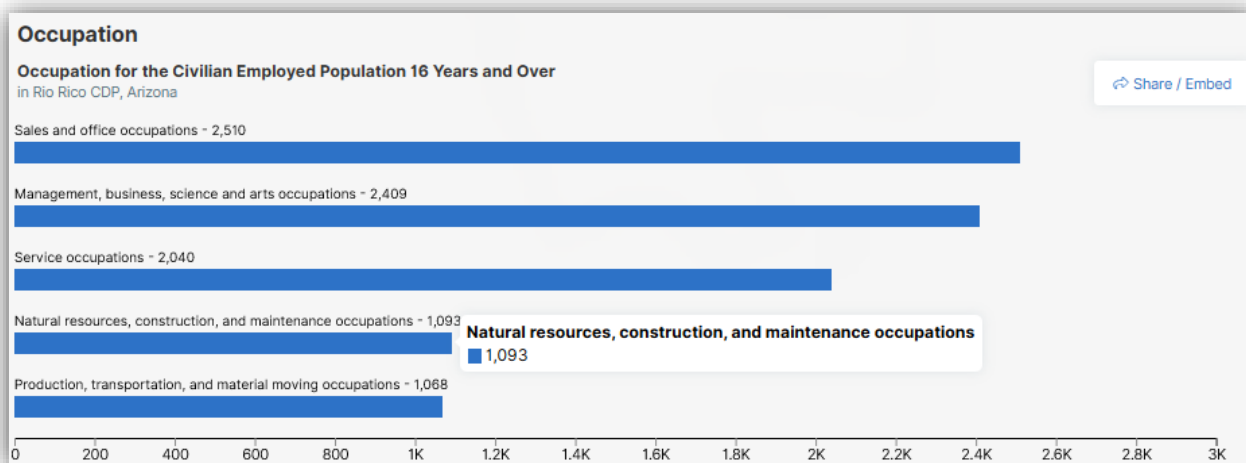


Figure 31 Occupation - Rio Rico

As a significant number of workers in Rio Rico are employed in government jobs, the number of office and management, business, science, and arts occupations are higher than in Nogales. (See Figure 31). The number of persons with disabilities is also less than Nogales. (See Figure 32). This figure will be important in transit service planning.

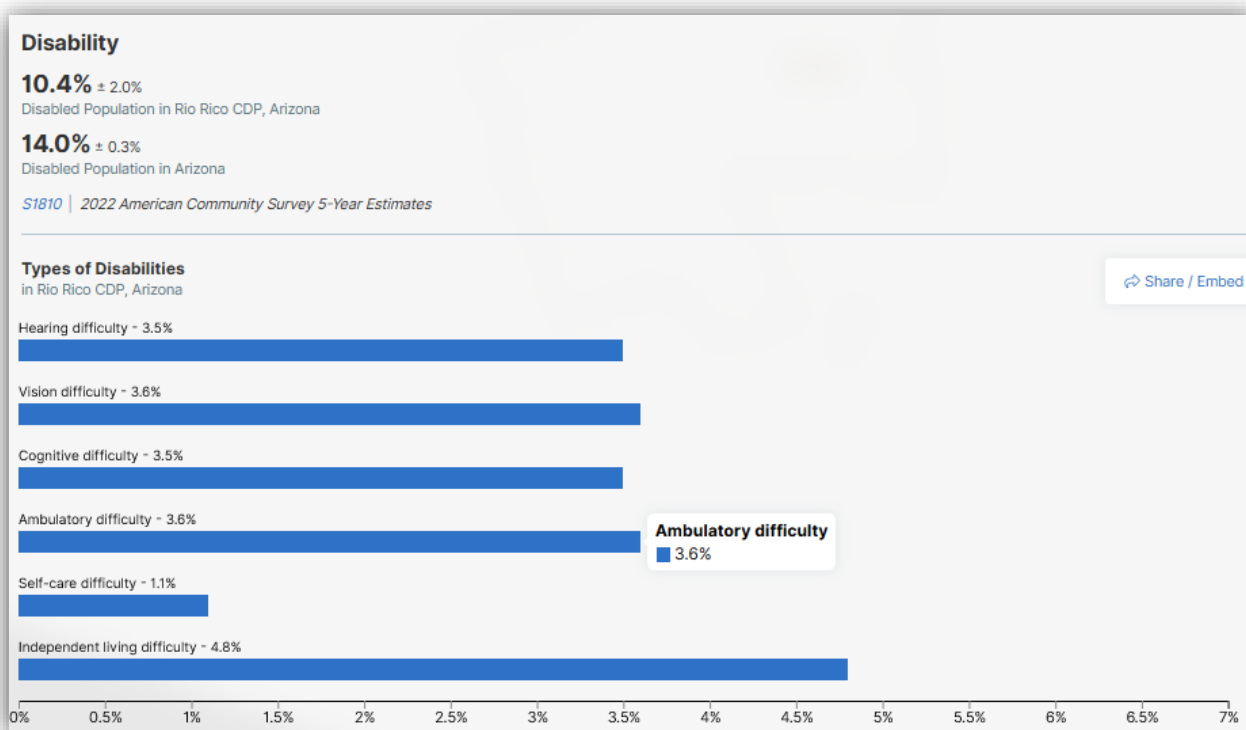


Figure 32 Disability - Rio Rico

Health Insurance

9.3% \pm 2.6%

Without Health Care Coverage in Rio Rico CDP, Arizona

9.9% \pm 0.3%

Without Health Care Coverage in Arizona

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Figure 33 Persons without Insurance - Rio Rico

Demographic Data Summary and Analysis

While both Nogales and Rio Rico have similar population counts and share some key demographic data points, for the purposes of transit feasibility, both have significant numbers of people who are identified in four demographic categories that are important in transit development. They are language, age, disability, and income. While these are not the only factors, they carry significant weight in determining the feasibility of transit for a region. When we look at the demographic data for Nogales and Rio Rico, then add to that the number of non-residents coming into and out of the region through the border, we can determine that, based on demographic data, a transit system is feasible.

The Transit Demand models found in a subsequent chapter will use formulas that estimate the number of riders that could be expected based on this demographic data.

2. Technical Memorandum #2 Inventory of Existing Services - Working Paper

Summary

The Nogales/Rio Rico area has pockets of transportation that are primarily rider/type influenced. Local taxis and shuttles are available to pedestrians crossing the border but have no public marketing to assist in scheduling return trips. The City of Nogales offers limited transportation for seniors and people with disabilities using a dial-a-ride program, Nogales Rides, serving only originations and destinations within the city limits. One non-profit organization provides general-public transportation but focuses on the northern parts of the County. Local human service agencies with transportation vehicles focus on the clients of their organizations. While there is a keen awareness of each other's programs, collaboration or coordination of services remains extremely limited. As an example, If Nogales Rides cannot transport a senior to a medical appointment because they are booked beyond capacity, they may contact Santa Cruz Training (SCT) and arrange a ride for that senior but only if SCT has the driver, van, and schedule capacity to provide the ride.

Publicly Supported Transportation Providers

City of Nogales

The City of Nogales operates a dial-a-ride program, Nogales Rides, Monday through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. within the city limits. While the City of Nogales has two fourteen passenger cut-away vans, one being accessible, they operate a single vehicle with one back up vehicle and schedule rides on a first-come-first-served basis, for seniors and persons with disabilities. Ride requests must be made 24-48 hours in advance. The program is funded by the City and has no state or federal financial support. The City operates Nogales Rides within its Public Works department under the guidance of Juan Guerra, the City Engineer. The system provides services in English and Spanish but because it does not operate a public fixed route or outside the city limits, does not address the ridership needs of the general non-senior/non-disabled public, pedestrians crossing the border, or the needs of riders seeking destinations like Rio Rico which lay outside the city limits. The City does not keep ridership data as part of their system practices.

Mayor Jorge Moldonado has expressed interest in expanding public transportation services in the region and also in seeking resources outside the City to support expansion. The City reported financial expenditures for Nogales Rides (See Figure 3) in FY 2022 at \$57,366; FY

2023 at \$66,846, and an approved FY 2024 budget of \$68,987 plus \$110,000 in capital rolling stock expenditures to replace one vehicle. The proposed FY 2025 budget calls for \$88,378 in operating and administrative costs plus an additional \$130,000 to replace the second vehicle. At this time, Nogales Rides receives no AZDOT or Federal Transit Administration funding (5310-5311) or Area Agency on Aging (AAA) funding for its program.

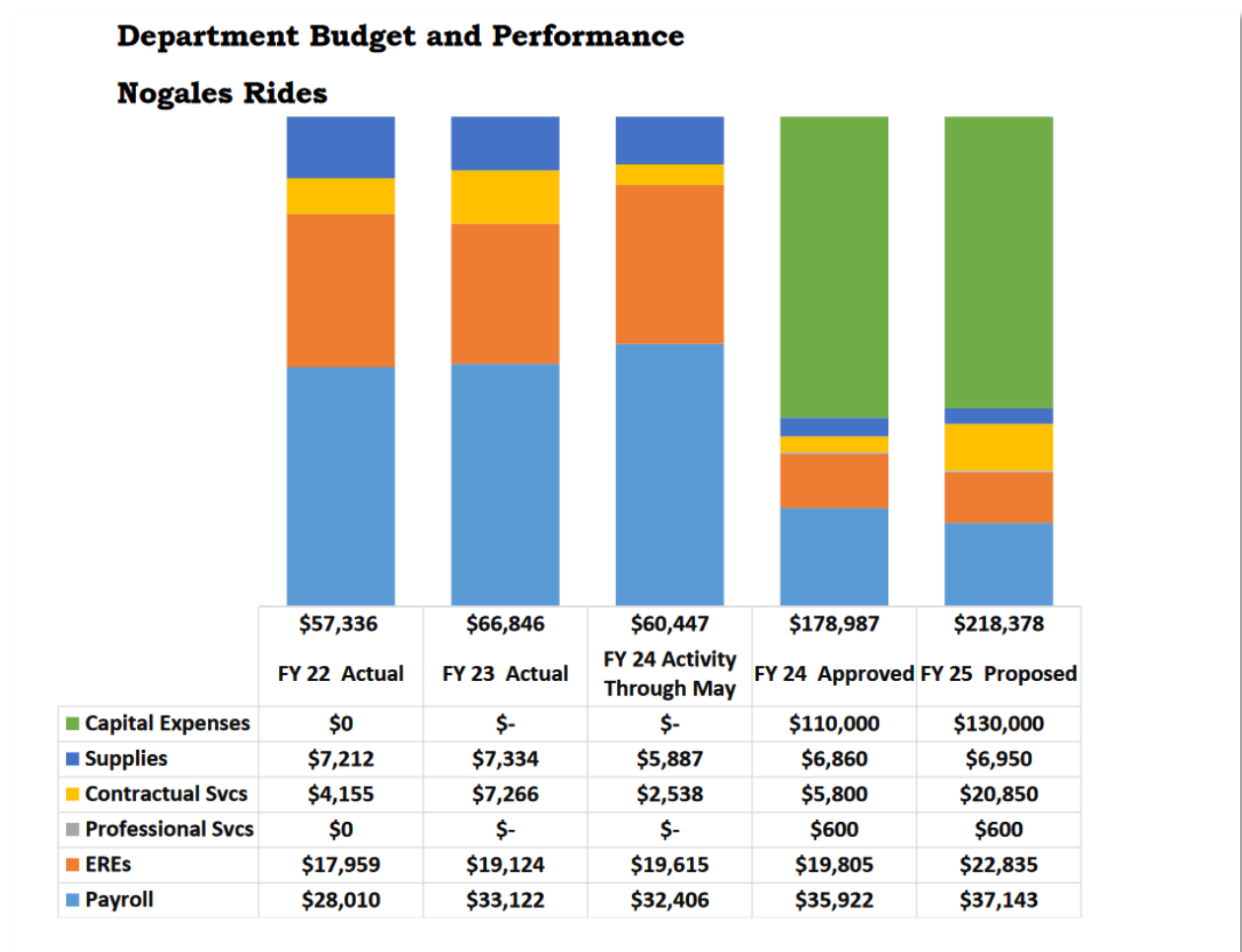


Figure 34 Nogales Rides Budget years 22-25

Other Providers

For a time, in 2023-24, a small transit system operated out of Rio Rico to provide rides to persons traveling between Rio Rico and Nogales. In late summer, 2024, this provider suspended service stating that ridership had not developed to sufficient numbers. The Director cited that a number of potential riders with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) were hesitant to use the service as they were unfamiliar with how to use the system, had an innate fear of drivers, and were more comfortable, ironically, with hitch-hiking or using costly taxi service from the border to the Rio-Rico area or for trips into Nogales. While a more robust bi-lingual marketing effort may have mitigated the loss of this system, the owner did not have the financial or administrative capacity to educate the ridership market and to partner with other providers in a collaborative effort to build trust among potential riders.

The Senior Citizens of Patagonia organization provides rides for Patagonia residents wishing to go to Nogales and Tucson. These scheduled trips, utilizing volunteer drivers, are largely for health care and shopping with annual ridership for 2023 at 1,287.

Valley Assistance Services (VAS) is a non-profit organization serving the senior population in its service area. Using volunteer drivers, the program focuses on transportation along the I-19 corridor from Sahuarita to Rio-Rico. Much like Senior Citizens of Patagonia, they will also transport riders from their north-county service area to Nogales and Tucson.

Rides for both the Patagonia and VAS programs are limited by access to volunteer drivers. Additionally, these two programs provide rides originating from their service areas and are not available to riders originating in Rio Rico or Nogales.

Collaboration and Coordination

Transportation providers have developed over the years as a means to address client needs, particularly those of the elderly and disabled. Providers build up system capacity to the extent allowed by their available financial resources and, while aware of each other's services, have limited ability to provide rides outside of their client base. They do, however, assist one another as often as possible when urgent needs arise for a rider, when vehicles are unavailable or down, and when a rider needs to move across service areas. These coordinated efforts are informal in nature as there are no formal agreements that such assistance will be provided when requested.

Additionally, organizations providing transportation for clients, but are not members of the Transportation Coordination Council (SEAGO), actively work with existing providers to enhance their client resources with regard to transportation. One example, Mariposa Health Clinic, is seeking ways in which transportation for patients in the region may be

made more available. While discussions about a sustainable approach are ongoing, Valley Services assists where possible.

Overall, existing providers have not collectively determined ways in which a more robust and efficient use of transportation resources could be developed outside of their current models. The lack of a coordinated and collaborative, county-wide transportation system is based on a number of factors including:

- Transportation resources are provided by various entities that are awarded funding for specific ridership (i.e., senior/disabled) and for use in specific service areas (i.e., north county or Nogales City limits).
- Transportation resources are provided by State entities, outside of ADOT, that limit how organizations can bill for rides provided (i.e., Arizona Department of Economic Security – Division of Developmental Disabilities – DDD), are often limited to the types of riders they support (VA and ACCESS Medicaid and Medicare rides) and themselves do not coordinate across state departments and divisions.
- ADOT/FTA 5310 and 5311 resources are very limited and becoming more competitive, leaving systems that have high ridership costs to compete against larger, lower-cost systems for scarce resources.
- With the loss of dedicated state resources from Lottery earnings in 2010 (Local Transportation Assistance Fund – LTAF), no additional state funding has been made available to rural providers. Santa Cruz County-based resources do not currently exist for public transit though a significant number of rides originate outside either Patagonia or Nogales.
- Providers operating with 5310 funding are seeing increased costs unmatched by increasing awards from FTA funding. The estimated financial need for transportation services (including capital, operating, and preventive maintenance) in 2022 was \$227,250 and in 2025 is \$302,470⁶. Applicants are expected to provide 50% of costs for operating from other sources and up to 20% of capital costs from other sources. In 2024, AZDOT awarded two non-profit providers a total of \$50,000 for operations; \$54,000 for preventive maintenance; and \$126,929 to replace a vehicle. Both organizations must provide the match requirements and all administrative costs for their transportation service.
- Programs relying on volunteer drivers can keep operating costs down but are limited to service provision by the availability of drivers for ride requests and who may not wish to expand the service area in which they drive.

⁶ SEAGO Coordination Plan 2024-25

- The capacity of any one agency or entity to coordinate transit/transportation across major communities in the county is limited. The City of Nogales and Santa Cruz County officials would need to play leadership roles in developing a coordinated transit program. Such coordination requires political will that is not always available. Inventory of Existing Transit/Transportation Service as new Council members and Supervisors are elected every two years.

The inventory of existing transit/transportation services in the Nogales/Rio Rico area can be categorized as those that are privately owned and those that receive public funding or are operated by a public/non-profit organization.

Private Transportation Services

Private transportation services come in various forms including small independent taxi-type service, regional shuttle service, and commercial bus lines. Uber and Lyft are also considered private forms of transportation brokerages. Owners and operators of these private services are primarily centered around the ports of entry, moving travelers coming across the border to destinations local and regional.

The City of Nogales' Finance Department oversees licensing taxis and shuttles operating within the City of Nogales. Presently, they have 543 currently registered taxi and shuttle licenses. Of these, there are 100-150 taxis – with some operating both types of service. A review of transportation services listed online found only seven providers with an online presence. It is expected that the large majority of providers are not marketing their services but, rather, waiting at points of entry for pedestrians crossing and seeking rides. In reading comments and reviews, it appears that many riders have favorite providers and are return customers.

Shuttles typically provide service from the two ports of entry to destinations beyond Nogales including Tucson and Phoenix including the international airports in both cities. Some offer door-to-door services, particularly when originating in Phoenix and heading south.

While some taxis will provide intercity rides, most are providing trips within Nogales and to Rio Rico. One service, Uberfast Transportation, originates from Rio Rico.

Shuttles

An online review of shuttle services found the following. All services are provided with vans unless otherwise noted.

Premier Shuttle – Nogales – operates seven days a week, from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Marvin Shuttle – Nogales – operates seven days a week, from 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Uberfast Transportation & Tours – Rio Rico – operates M-F 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Shuttle Mexico – Nogales – provides rides from north to south into Mexico.

Arison Shuttle – Nogales to Phoenix by appointment

Natty's Shuttle - Nogales – operates seven days a week, from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Sonora Shuttles – Nogales – no information provided

Taxis

An online review of taxi services found only two. Both also operate shuttle services. It is expected that most taxi services are run by individuals with vehicles and are not actively marketing their services, rather, obtaining riders at points of entry as pedestrians cross. The disparity of the number of registered taxis with the City and the number that can be found online can be attributed to two conditions. The first is that the majority of taxi providers are independent, one-car owner/operators that focus on hailed rides at the border crossings. They are not centrally dispatched and do not rely on local marketing of their services. They provide rides, primarily, to shopping destinations. A rider who hails a taxi from the border must make an arrangement for a return ride with the driver before disembarking or receive a personal cell phone number to call for the return ride.

Otherwise, a rider must look for a vehicle dropping another passenger and try to hail a ride back to the border. These vehicles are not often marked as taxis, making the identification difficult once a return ride is needed. Secondly, these independent taxi services are focused on rides originating from the border and do not rely on local resident rides and therefore do not advertise or market, and do not provide door-to-door service for residents of Nogales. The two operators listed below provide taxi services while also providing shuttle and/or tour services.

Uberfast Transportation & Tours – Rio Rico – operates M-F 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Nattys Shuttle Nogales – no data available

Uber/Lyft

Uber had no drivers in the Nogales area at the time of this study. Lyft shows one driver.

Commercial Bus Lines

Tufesa is a commercial passenger bus line operating internationally in the western US states of Arizona, Nevada, California, Texas, New Mexico, Utah, and Idaho and locations

within Mexico. They provide five departures per day from Nogales to Tucson and Phoenix. Ticket purchases can be made online as well as at their Nogales station.

Greyhound no longer provides a bus service from Nogales.

SEAGO Transportation Coordination Council

The Coordination Council is made up of transportation/transit providers who work collaboratively to coordinate service in the region. Federal funding mandates that FTA awards be provided to awardees who are part of the coordination council and whose needs have been made a priority by the council.

5311 Providers

Annually, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allocates federal funds under Section 5311 that are allocated to states on a formula basis. These funds support the administrative, operating, and capital costs of public transit services in rural areas. The AZDOT Planning Division manages these funds and accepts applications on a two-year cycle. Most often, 5311 funds are awarded to government entities operating public transit systems.

At the time of this study, there were no 5311 providers operating in Santa Cruz County

5310 Providers

Like the 5311 program, FTA allocates federal funds through the 5310 Section to states on a formula basis. The 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program supports capital and operating assistance to entities serving seniors and persons with disabilities. Most of these funds go to non-profit organizations serving a specific client base (seniors, disabilities organizations, etc.). Governmental organizations may also receive these funds if no private non-profits provide similar services.

At the time of this study, there are five 5310 recipients in Santa Cruz County:

- HOPE, Inc – Mental Health disabilities operating M-F from 8-4. Client-based services
- Pinal Hispanic Council – Behavioral Health provider operating M-F 8-5. Client-based services.
- Santa Cruz Training Programs – Developmental Disabilities provider operating M-F 5 a.m. to 6:30p.m. Client-based services with very limited public access.
- Senior Citizens of Patagonia – Seniors and Disabled provider operating M-F 7-7. Client-based services

- Valley Assistance Services – A human services provider operating M-F 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. serving the north county region along the I-19 corridor between Pima Mine Road and Rio Rico.

The 2024-2025 Transportation Coordination Plan, developed by SEAGO and revised annually, provides the following data for these providers. For more information on these and other providers, visit the [Mobility Management website](#).

5310

HOPE, Inc.



SEAGO COUNTIES SERVED

Cochise and Santa Cruz

SERVICE AREAS

Sierra Vista, Douglas and Nogales

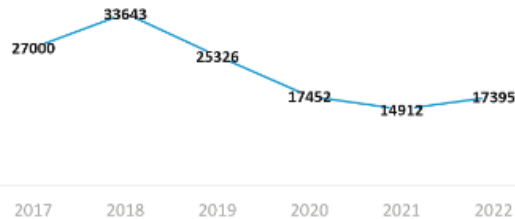
STATUS

Private Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

SERVICE DAYS/HOURS

Mon – Fri 8am – 4pm

RIDERSHIP



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SOURCES

5310 ADOT

PROVIDING SERVICE SINCE

1980

NUMBER OF VEHICLES

18

VEHICLES UNDER LEIN

8

SERVICE SITES

3

HOPE Inc. is a non-profit 501 (C) 3 organization that serves seniors and adults with mental health disabilities; including members with co-occurring developmental, physical or substance abuse related disabilities. HOPE Inc. programs include Community Outreach, Re-entry, Employment Services, Navigator & Peer Support, Counseling/Therapy, and Intakes in the regions we serve. HOPE is currently in the PAG, SEAGO/SVMP, MAG, YMP, NACOG and CYMP regions. Our programs serve individuals enrolled in the Arizona public behavioral health system of care ACC Plans (Arizona Complete Health, Banner Health/UAHP), Care First and ALTCS – enrolled members (Banner Health/UAHP, UFC_ACC, UNHC_ACC). Services are provided through HOPE Inc. on a 1:1 basis or within groups led by certified peer specialists and counselors. Programs provide members with opportunities to enhance their mental health and wellness, achieve goals for personal growth and increase their ability to live as independently as possible in the community. Services include counseling, peer support, health groups, life skills, pre-vocational training, job coaching and transportation assistance to medical appointments, food resources, relieve isolation and to support members needs while they strive to enrich their lives. HOPE Inc. provides Reentry support and services in the seven regions we serve through coordination with Drug Court/Probation, Mental Health Care Court, Care Court, and Opioid addiction programs.

HOPE Inc. staff work in close collaboration with other local agencies to ensure transportation and other needs of our members are met. The staff participates in bi-monthly regional coordination meetings. All staff providing transportation services are required to complete driver training, CPR and First Aid training. They have also received training in psycho-social rehabilitation and peer support.

An Opioid Outreach program for individuals who are either un-insured or under-insured and living with an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). Individuals identified are provided transportation and assistance in accessing Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) services. The Community Re-Entry Team provides diversion and re-entry services for individuals being released from incarceration and those who are identified as being eligible or in need of behavioral health services. Staff provide peer support, transportation and assist with completing applications for AHCCCS.

Individuals identified are provided transportation and assistance in accessing Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) services. The Community Re-Entry Team provides diversion and re-entry services for individuals being released from incarceration and those who are identified as being eligible or in need of behavioral health services. Staff provide peer support, transportation and assist with completing applications for AHCCCS. The Peer After Care Team (PACT) provides peer services for individuals coming out of a crisis or hospital setting and works with these individuals for up to 45 days, providing in-home and community-based services. The Warm Line is an over the phone support line available to all residents of Southern Arizona. Staff provide peer support and resources to individuals over the phone.

Members can engage in therapeutic, recovery services and employment services from:

- 8 AM -4 PM Monday through Friday
- 9 AM – 2 PM Saturday (Pima and Yuma counties)

HOPE's unmet needs in the SEAGO region include: Requesting maintenance funds for vehicle repairs and maintenance as well as operating funds to support additional drivers and the coordinator to help facilitate the fleets regular maintenance, documentation, and reporting requirements. The need for services is increasing quickly and there is a need for more vehicles as the census increases post-COVID. The support of capital, preventive maintenance, and operational funding to meet the subsequent increase in trips, mileage, fuel and increased overall costs is important to HOPE's on-going mission to serve those in need.

5310

Pinal Hispanic Council



SEAGO COUNTIES SERVED

Santa Cruz and Cochise

SERVICE AREAS

Nogales, Rio Rico, Douglas and Elfrida

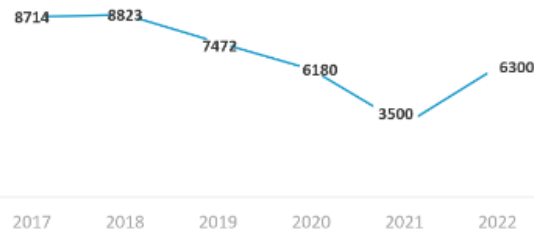
STATUS

Private Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

SERVICE DAYS/HOURS

Mon – Fri 8am – 5pm

RIDERSHIP



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SOURCES

5310 ADOT
AZCH
Intermountain

PROVIDING SERVICE SINCE

2010

NUMBER OF VEHICLES

6

VEHICLES UNDER LEIN

2

SERVICE SITES

2

Pinal Hispanic Council is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) behavioral health agency licensed by the State of Arizona to provide an array of outpatient services in Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Cochise Counties. Pinal Hispanic Council has been in operation for over twenty years. Pinal Hispanic Council serves serious mentally ill individuals elderly, families, children, and adults receiving various types of counseling services in the Douglas, Elfrida, and Nogales, Rio Rico area.

Pinal Hispanic Council provides transportation services to its members to maximize the treatment services we offer by allowing the members to consistently keep vital appointments for their wellbeing. By assisting them with daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly transportation the agency assures their mental well-being is secure.

Pinal Hispanic Council would like to request preventative maintenance funds for Nogales and Douglas sites. Pinal Hispanic Council would like to request a total of four vehicles, two vehicles for Douglas replacing 6318 & 6527 and two vehicles for Nogales replacing 5678 & 5892. (1 vehicle per site Year One, 1 vehicle per site for Year Two)

5310

Santa Cruz Training Programs, Inc.



SEAGO COUNTIES SERVED

Santa Cruz

SERVICE AREAS

Nogales, Rio Rico

STATUS

Private Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

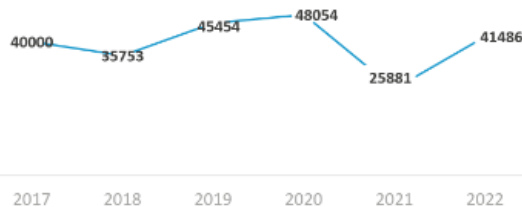
SERVICE DAYS/HOURS

Group Homes (3) 24x7x365

Day Programs

Mon – Fri 4:45am – 6:30pm

RIDERSHIP



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SOURCES

5310 ADOT
AAA DDD

PROVIDING SERVICE SINCE

1968

NUMBER OF VEHICLES

20

VEHICLES UNDER LEIN

20

SERVICE SITES

1

By working in partnership with others in the community, Santa Cruz Training Programs, Inc. (SCTP) carries out its mission to provide training, care and support for people of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Services include group homes that provide round-the-clock care within the community we offer a variety of employment opportunities, Day program offers rehabilitation, recreational, semi-retirement services and finally, we provide In-Home support providing Respite, Attendant care, and Habilitation. Spanish is the primary language for 98% of SCTP members, 50% live outside the Nogales city limits, and the majority are low income.

Santa Cruz County does not have any type of public transportation services, therefore SCTP offers door-to-door transportation for all of its members. Transportation is provided Monday-Friday 4:30am and ending by 6:30pm for all members who participate in Day and Employment programs. We also provide Transportation service for our group homes is twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. We take our members to Tucson, Green Valley and Sierra Vista for doctors/dentist appointments and we also provide weekend outings for each group home.

SCTP has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with other agencies in our community and beyond. We help out with special events, when called upon by partners, or to coordinate special transportation needs across counties. SCTP representatives attend quarterly coordination meetings and regular trainings.

2023 Identified unmet transportation needs include: Preventative Maintenance funding, Operating funding and a replacement for our StarCraft Bus VIN# ending in 3705

2024 Identified unmet transportation needs include: Preventative Maintenance funding, Operating funding and a replacement for our Chevy Silverado VIN# ending in 3108

5310

SENIOR CITIZENS OF PATAGONIA



SENIOR CITIZENS OF PATAGONIA

SEAGO COUNTIES SERVED

Santa Cruz

SERVICE AREAS

Patagonia, Sonoita, Elgin and Canaleo

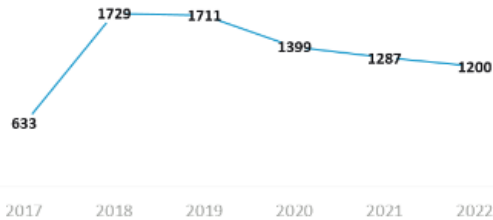
STATUS

Private Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

SERVICE DAYS/HOURS

Mon-Fri 7am - 7pm
Weekends as needed.

RIDERSHIP



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SOURCES

5310 ADOT

PROVIDING SERVICE SINCE

1992

NUMBER OF VEHICLES

4

VEHICLES UNDER LEIN

4

SERVICE SITES

2

The Senior Citizens of Patagonia, Inc. is a 5013 (c) non-profit organization located in Patagonia Arizona. The mission of the Senior Citizens of Patagonia, Inc., is to serve and support senior citizens and disabled persons of any age who live in the Patagonia, Sonoita, Elgin and Canelo areas through assistance with transportation, nutrition, health, education and social services. The Patagonia Senior Center provides a location for congregate meals and social events.

The transit program has been in place since 1992, and is sustained by a volunteer transportation manager and several volunteer drivers. The service area is defined by the northern, eastern, southern county lines, and by a north south line running through mile marker 12 on Arizona highway 82. Clients are taken anywhere within a one hundred mile radius of Patagonia, excluding Mexico.

This transportation service is the only non-commercial option available to seniors and medically disabled in this area. Most of the service is performed between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm, M-F. However because volunteer drivers are the base of our staffing, most transportation needs can be met with planning. Services are only limited by the ability to secure a volunteer driver.

The Transportation Director participates regularly in Transit Coordination meetings held in Benson or Zoom meetings and fully appreciates the information shared at these gatherings in terms of cost savings and service enhancement.

Identified unmet needs include operating and preventative maintenance funds to support the existing transportation program, a web based dispatch scheduling system, and funding to effectively market the program.

5310

Valley Assistance Services



SEAGO COUNTIES SERVED

Santa Cruz

SERVICE AREAS

I-19 Corridor, Pima Mine Rd to Rio

Rico

STATUS

Private Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

SERVICE DAYS/HOURS

Mon – Fri 8:30am – 5pm

RIDERSHIP



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SOURCES

PROVIDING SERVICE SINCE

1964

NUMBER OF VEHICLES

0

VEHICLES UNDER LEIN

0

SERVICE SITES

1

Valley Assistance Services is a 501(C)(3) located at a primary office in Green Valley with satellite offices in Tubac and Sahuarita . The mission of VAS is: combining social service and community health programs, Valley Assistance Services guides seniors, individuals, and families to live healthy, resilient, and vibrant lives, while remaining safe and independent.

The transportation program has been in place since the late 1990's and is sustained by volunteer drivers and VAS Administrators. The service area of the program is along the I-19 Corridor from Pima Mine Rd north of Sahuarita to Rio Rico, AZ. Clients can be transported to Tucson; Nogales, AZ; and anywhere in between along the I-19 Corridor. Clients cannot be transported across the international border.

This transportation service is one of only two non-commercial options available in the northern half of VAS's service area, and the only option in the southern half. Hours of service are Monday-Friday 8:30AM-5:00PM. Services are only limited by the ability to secure a volunteer driver.

Identified unmet needs include operating funds to support the existing transportation program, funding to effectively market the program, and funds for volunteer engagement.

No ridership data was available for Valley Assistance Services at the time the Coordination Plan was published.

NON-FTA - Publicly Funded Providers

In addition to the FTA/AZDOT supported programs listed above, The City of Nogales operates a Dial-a-ride program for seniors and people with disabilities. They do not currently receive either 5311 or 5310 funding but, instead, fund their services with general funds from the City's budget. This program operates M-F from 8-5. Rides must be scheduled 24-48 hours in advance. They have one vehicle, a 14-passenger cutaway, to provide this service.

Port of Entry

A number of considerations must be explored when considering the development and/or expansion of public transit in the Study area. While there is ample data on potential ridership, common destinations, and political and public will in supporting public transit, none of this data considers the number of non-residents moving in and out of the Study area on a daily basis from Mexico. These are not illegal crossers but residents of Mexico with the required visas and documentation that allows them to cross for any number of reasons. These include visiting friends and family, shopping, services, education, tourism, and access to other, larger, cities within Arizona and the extended transportation opportunities they provide (train, bus, and air transportation – largely out of Tucson and Phoenix).

The data in Figures 1 and 2 provide information on the number of people crossing the border on an annual and monthly basis. In Figure 1, we see the number of bus passengers,

Measure	Port Name	2023
Bus Passengers	Nogales	185,293
Buses	Nogales	9,002
Pedestrians	Nogales	2,934,216
Personal Vehicl..	Nogales	7,149,833
Personal Vehicl..	Nogales	3,689,661

Figure 35 Annual Border Crossings 2023

buses, pedestrians, vehicle passengers, and vehicles crossing both the De Concini and Mariposa crossing stations. The pedestrian numbers are the most relevant in that these people will need transportation, once crossed, to reach destinations beyond the immediate area. Destinations including Walmart, grocery stores, and various other franchised or national outlets are not easily reached on

foot. Independent car services operate, most often, as one-car taxi services queue up along the streets near the border and wait for pedestrians in need of rides. Shuttle services, too, are visible with some having ticket stations, prepared to move people to Tucson and Phoenix. In 2023, nearly 3 million people walked across the border legally. Some coming on a daily basis for employment, others coming on a weekly basis for shopping and services, still others coming during holiday seasons to be with friends and

family, and more who are coming to reach further destinations and other types of transportation modes (trains, buses, airports).

Figure 2 provides quarterly data from 2023 and 2024 on pedestrians crossing per month. These numbers are not typically counted in standard US forecasting models for transit ridership but provide indications that ridership for routes including ports of entry could be substantially higher than those using standard forecast models.

Port Name	Measure	2023				2024	
		March	June	September	December	March	June
Nogales	Bus Passengers	16,896	15,588	12,687	15,945	18,787	16,049
	Pedestrians	256,018	224,178	247,319	267,036	271,364	251,540

Figure 36 Quarterly border crossing data 23-24

3. Technical Memorandum #3 Public Engagement & Involvement – Working Paper

The public involvement strategies for the Study are outlined in the Public Engagement Plan (PEP) that was formulated in advance of the survey activities and include public engagement throughout the study period. As such, the plan was developed as a separate document which is found in Appendix A.

4. Technical Memorandum #4 Service Options – Working paper

Transit Demand

The City of Nogales, in providing its dial-a-ride program for elderly and disabled residents, does not keep ridership records for its service. Therefore, transit demand models will be limited to data from census-based formulas used across the industry in planning and feasibility studies. These formulae generate estimates based on census data for the region and are adjusted for conditions in the area. **These estimates do not include potential ridership from cross-border pedestrian traffic.**

Inputs included population numbers for Nogales and Rio Rico combined and include:

- The number of persons residing in households with income below the poverty level.
- The number of households owning no vehicles
- The number of persons aged 60 and over
- The number of persons between the ages of 16 & 64 with disabilities
- The general population of the area

This formula focuses on the most vulnerable within the population: the elderly, disabled, and those without vehicles.

Outputs include:

- The number of persons who need transportation service
- An adjustment for those households without a vehicle
- An adjustment for persons with disabilities
- A mobility gap adjustment based on the number of trips taken by people with vehicles as compared to those without. This establishes the number of trips per year which might be taken by people without vehicles and is based on data collected for Arizona.
- An estimate of the number of annual one-way passenger trips that could be expected to be provided by a rural dial-a-ride transit system serving the area.
- An estimate of the number of annual one-way passenger trips that could be expected to be provided by a fixed route system operating in the area.

Census-based Transit Demand/Need

Transit Need Inputs		
Number of persons residing in households with income below the poverty level:	8,972	
Number of households residing in households owning no vehicles:	Households	Persons
1-Person households:	651	651
2-Person households:	202	404
3-Person households:	65	195
4-or-more-Person households:	50	200
Mobility Gap:		
Enter State (from drop-down list):	AZ	
General Public Rural Non-Program		
Population Age 60+	8,484	American Community Survey Table Number B01001
Population Age 18 - 64 with a Mobility Limitation	2,086	S1810
Persons Living in Households with No Vehicle Available	1,450	B08201
General Public Rural Passenger Transportation		
Need:	Referenced from Mobility Gap analysis	
Annual Vehicle-miles of Service:		Annual Revenue-Miles
Small City Fixed Route Inputs		
Population of City:	41,208	Persons
College and University Enrollment (Total):		Students
Annual Revenue-Hours of Service:		Annual Revenue-Hours
Demand - Commuter by Transit to an Urban Center		
Workers Commuting from Rural County to Urban Center		
Distance from Rural County to Urban Center		Miles
Is the Urban Center a State Capital?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Box for Yes

Figure 37 Transit Demand Inputs

RURAL TRANSIT NEED/DEMAND ESTIMATION - OUTPUT TABLE		
Service Area:		
Analysis Description:		
Additional Description:		
Estimation of Transit Need		
Total need for passenger transportation service:	10,400	Persons
Total households without access to a vehicle:	968	Households
State Mobility Gap:	0.8	Daily 1-Way Psgr.-Trips per Household
Total need based on mobility gap:	770	Daily 1-Way Passenger-Trips
	232,300	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
General Public Rural Non-Program Demand		
<i>Estimate of demand for general public rural transportation</i>		
Rural transit trips:	31,700	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
General Public Rural Passenger Transportation		
<i>Estimate of demand for rural transportation</i>		
Total Rural Non-Program Demand	0	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
Small City Fixed Route		
Annual Ridership:	44,100	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
Demand - Commuter by Transit to an Urban Center		
Proportion of Commuters using Transit:		
Commuter trips by transit between counties:		Daily 1-Way Passenger Trips
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
Rural Program Demand		
<i>Annual Program Trip Estimation</i>		

Figure 38 Transit Demand Outputs

Survey Data

The survey data supports the transit demand, destinations, and expansion into the Rio Rico area. The data and analysis points to a need among older adults to gain more accessible access to shopping and medical care as a number of respondents listed these as a concern. Survey data can be found in **Appendix B**.

Service Options & Recommendations

Area Strengths, Weaknesses, & Opportunities

Strengths

The Nogales/Rio Rico region are thriving, and robust communities built around the international border economies of international trade and commerce and the health/government/services sectors that support the growing populations of both communities. In fact, one of the region's most significant strengths is the resilience of its populations. Residents of Ambos Nogales and Rio Rico have a strong sense of cultural pride and understanding of different customs and traditions in a region with a rich cultural tapestry. This close relationship promotes cooperation and collaboration between residents which can lead to shared resources, joint initiatives, and a stronger sense of unity among neighbors.

Nogales and Rio Rico are strategically located on the US-Mexico border making it an important gateway for trade and commerce. The region has access to major markets in the US and beyond, making it an attractive location for businesses looking to expand their reach. The presence of Interstate 19 provides a corridor with direct access to communities north of the region, to Tucson and to Interstate 10, a major east west corridor from Los Angeles California to Jacksonville Florida.

The area has a diverse and skilled labor force, with expertise in industries such as manufacturing, healthcare, and agriculture.

It is the site of the County's government infrastructure and business.

The infrastructure in the area is undergoing improvement. The De Concini border crossing is being slated for renovation and updating. The Mariposa crossing station has relieved commercial traffic burden in the downtown area and continues to provide economic growth opportunities in the region.

There are several revitalization projects in the planning and development phases. Nogales aims to revitalize the historic downtown area by improving infrastructure, enhancing public spaces, and attracting new businesses. Rio Rico has a town center project creating a mixed-use town center that will serve as a hub for commercial, retail, and residential activities. Road improvements and utility upgrades are planned for both Nogales and Rio Rico.

Strengths pertaining to public transit development in the region include:

- Strong political will through the Mayor of Nogales.
- The existence of and the continued funding of the Nogales Rides dial-a-ride system that has been a growing priority for the City of Nogales in its budget cycles.
- Potential for County support of transit development in non-incorporated areas of the region.
- A twenty-four-year history of study and needs assessments and analysis supporting the development of a public transit system for the region.
- The potential for collaboration with the Port Authority to include public transit in the design of the De Concini crossing revitalization.
- The potential for greater coordination and collaboration among non-profit transportation providers, local health care facilities, and human services organizations. from these organizations is strong.
- The potential for collaboration among commercial, for-profit businesses providing transportation including taxi, micro-transit, shuttle, and bus companies.
- The availability of SEAGO to provide on-going technical assistance throughout the transit system development phases.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses found in the region are similar to that of many small urban areas across the US and especially among southern border towns. These include:

- Limited economic diversification means that the region is heavily reliant on the manufacturing industry related to commercial transportation and Maquiladora plants in Mexico. This makes the region particularly vulnerable to economic downturns.
- High poverty rates and income inequality continue to be a challenge for local government and community organizations.
- Aging infrastructure including local streets and roads, bridges, water drainage and waste-water management (particularly waste washing across the border from Nogales Sonora) remain ongoing concerns for the City of Nogales.
- Water scarcity, pollution, and threats to natural habitats along the border can inhibit clean growth initiatives in the region.
- While border security continues to be a priority, coordination with local residents, governments, industry, and businesses is often limited when developing federal border policy.

Weaknesses pertaining to public transit development in the region include:

- While the City of Nogales has shown interest in the expansion of transit access in Nogales, no single entity has committed to the development and management of a regional transit program in the Nogales/Rio Rico area.
- Santa Cruz County Supervisors have not determined/documented that transit is a priority for the County other than their acceptance of transit as an unmet need in county planning documents (general plan, transportation plan). Focus remains on border traffic, transportation needs including road infrastructure, and connectivity.
- The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has far more requests for 5311 and 5310 funding than it can provide, making financial resources highly competitive overall and scarce for new programs and the increased funding needed to build and sustain new initiatives.
- In previous years' attempts to establish a robust public transit system, private transportation providers (taxis and shuttles) have advocated against its creation even when private businesses would not be adversely affected. This may have been a result of poor marketing and lack of community engagement.
- The lack of a transit “champion” in the community who can engage the public, advocate for riders, coordinate existing providers, encourage transit development, and shepherd activation of expanded transit access.
- Lack of transit infrastructure requirements including “transit pull-outs” on planned road construction or reconstruction. There is no mention of transit infrastructure or access in either the City’s or County’s Code for new development.
- The declining population in Nogales is from 20,881 in 2000 to 19,774 in 2020. This

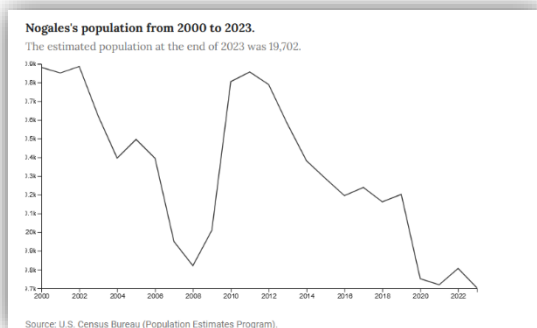


Figure 39 Nogales Population history

number fluctuates up and down depending on economic swings and is recovering from a downturn in population during COVID. The Rio Rico area, on the other hand, has seen a regular population increase of 2.5% on average, since 2021. Rio Rico is now the community with the largest population in Santa Cruz county even though unincorporated.

Opportunities and Transit Options

Types of Transit Systems

The opportunities for transit expansion, coordination, and development are many for the Nogales/Rio Rico area. Before exploring specific options, it is useful to review the standard terminology for rural transit in Arizona.

Micro-transit – Micro-transit is a shared transportation service that uses smaller vehicles to provide flexible, on-demand transportation within a designated area. It is technology-based in that users can request service through a smartphone app, desktop computer or landline. It offers flexible schedules and routing, and users can request service at a specified time in advance. Micro-transit utilizes electronic scheduling software and is often less costly as it uses smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles such as vans or minibuses, even passenger cars. Some small and mid-sized transit systems are moving from fixed-route service to micro transit. Some benefits of micro transit include:

- Fill a gap in existing, fixed-route transit service
- Extend the span of available service
- Offer a first/last mile connection to a fixed route
- Increase mobility access
- Expand transit geographic coverage
- Foster community innovation
- Provide convenient, on-demand service from neighborhoods to popular destinations
- Serve citizens who live far from main arterial routes who need to travel to outlying areas.

Fixed-route transit – Fixed-routes are familiar to many areas with public transit service. In larger cities, these include buses with specific routes which cover the route (either circular or straight-line back and forth) on a schedule and pick up and drop off passengers at stops along the route. In larger cities with multiples buses on a fixed route, the headway (time between stops) is usually fifteen to twenty minutes, and the route may only cover a particular spoke in a hub-like system with connections at a central hub so that the rider can continue on a different route to their destination if needed. The City of Douglas operates this type of system.

In rural areas, fixed route systems may include only one route with one bus. This is often a financial consideration and headways of one hour are not rare. Another cost consideration is a common performance measure: cost per ride. The cost of running multiple buses

simultaneously shows up in the cost of the vehicle, its maintenance, fuel costs, and driver costs. Another consideration is the number of riders. In rural areas, ridership for the year may be high but it is common that daily ridership will not fill a single bus at any given time. An exception may be when a fixed route stops at major employment centers and reaches capacity in the morning and late afternoon. When a community offers a fixed-route system, it must also provide a comparable paratransit service (for persons with mobility difficulties) that is ADA accessible and compliant and can take the time to move people onto and off the vehicle without jeopardizing the fixed-route schedule. Paratransit, in this case, is often a dial-a-ride service for eligible riders and must operate at the same times and to and from the same areas as the fixed-route system. It may charge a small premium on top of fares for this door-to-door service.

Deviated Fixed-route – While very much like a regular fixed-route system, this type has no separate paratransit element. Instead, it makes ample time in the schedule for the driver to deviate from the fixed route to pick up or drop off a rider with mobility difficulties. The required distance from the route that must be available for deviations is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. Often systems with this type of service go up to a mile in some directions in order to reach senior housing, health care facilities, and other desired originations and destinations. The area for deviations is included in all route maps and rider guides so that riders know if they are eligible for such rides. Deviations must be requested in advance of the ride with a dispatcher and are included in the driver's daily route notes. The City of Bisbee operates this type of system.

Flexible Fixed route. Just as the name implies, a flexible fixed route allows for changes in the route that are not needed every day or every route cycle. In rural areas, we often see this type of system being used to reach outlying communities on certain days of the week or, perhaps, three times a day instead of the more common 6-9 times a day. As an example, if Nogales had a fixed-route operating in a circuit 6 times a day, they may schedule a flexible route to Rio Rico three times a day – in the morning, at noon, and at the end of the service day. They could also, if ridership was not significant, schedule flex routes only on certain days. Perhaps, Monday, Thursday, and Saturday. With three route cycles that could bring people to Nogales in the morning, return to drop off and pick up new passengers at noon, and return with passengers toward the end of the service day. A flex-route allows the system operator to fine-tune transit services based on the needs of riders while maintaining cost efficiencies. If Flex routes can also deviate from the route, no separate paratransit is required. Flex routes and deviated fixed routes both require skilled dispatchers and/or an automated system to schedule rides effectively and efficiently. The City of Benson and the City of Willcox operate this type of system.

Demand Response, also called Dial-a-Ride. This type of system is how the Nogales Rides system currently operates. Riders must call in at least 24 hours ahead of their needed ride to have the ride scheduled. Typically, systems of this kind limit their service to or prioritize elderly and disabled riders and must have vehicles that are wheelchair accessible. Service is typically door-to-door, and some systems also provide driver assistance to help the rider to and onto the bus and off the bus at the destination with assistance to the door of their destination. Dial-a-ride services may limit availability to the general public in order to prioritize passengers who are elderly or disabled and since all rides are scheduled in advance, dispatchers know at any given time if there are seats available for the general public. For public transit systems operating only dial-a-ride services having more than one vehicle on the road at any given time creates cost efficiencies, limiting the number of cross-town deadhead (no passenger) trips. Cost efficiencies improve further when vehicles are smaller, such as accessible vans or mini vans. Rides are often shared with other passengers and riders are made aware of this so that they can schedule appropriately. This is an important feature for those trying to arrive for a scheduled appointment, perhaps with a doctor. There are typical policies that monitor and manage chronic no-shows or people who routinely cancel rides. Dial-a-ride is much like a micro-transit system but without the electronic scheduling and technology that allows rides to be scheduled for the same day.

Vanpools – Vanpools are often seen as public transit for workers headed to the same or nearby destinations. Employers often support vanpool systems to help ensure that workers arrive on time and have rides home. Some vanpool programs around the country have contracts with one or more workers to be vanpool drivers as they are already going to the assigned destination. This works best when the number of vans available is plentiful and not needed during the workday. Vanpool systems operate best when there are multiple employers within a relatively close distance of one another, allowing maximum ridership to multiple but nearby destinations.

Hybrid Partnerships – These relationships are built around a supply and demand model and often involve private transportation providers, both for-profit and non-profit. In this model, the transit system supplements its capacity to provide rides by contracting with other providers for particular rides or for rides to particular destinations. In this Study we could consider taxi and shuttle services as potential partners in meeting dial-a-ride demand. We could also consider non-profit providers like Valley Assistance as partners in moving Nogales riders north of Rio-Rico. These independent contracted services are negotiated based on a demand model. If a dial-a-ride system is turning down ride requests because they have reached capacity, then having partners ready to respond can ease the pressure and ensure riders are able to get where they need to go. Payment amounts and methods are all negotiable.

Volunteer Driver systems – Just as the name implies, some small systems, most often operated by non-profit organizations, recruit, train, and pay mileage and maintenance costs to volunteer drivers who use their own vehicles to transport riders that have been scheduled. Much like a dial-a-ride system, drivers are dispatched based on a schedule of rides requested at least one day ahead of the need. This is a cost-effective system, however, with volunteer drivers, systems are often disadvantaged with the needs of the drivers who may not wish to be available on a routine basis or may be absent for an extended period. Presently, Valley Assistance in the northern part of Santa Cruz County operates a volunteer-driver program.

In some cases, public transit systems employ more than one type of program to meet the needs of the community and to create efficiency. A common pairing is a deviated fixed route or flex route and a public dial-a-ride system. Another combination might be a standard scheduled dial-a-ride system supplemented with a public micro transit program for people needing to access transit the same day.

A fixed route system operating six days a week might schedule volunteer drivers for Sunday transportation service or supplement a dial-a-ride program with a volunteer driver for special or scheduled events. As an example, on commodities days or communal meal days at a senior center, a volunteer driver can pick up riders going to the same destination, deliver them, and wait with them to take them back. This allows rider groups to carry extra bags or linger at a function and frees up the dial-a-ride schedule and driver. Volunteer drivers can also act as “will-call” sources when riders don’t know how long their appointments will be and are unable to accurately schedule return rides through the dial-a-ride system.

With any system, a skilled dispatcher or suitable electronic scheduling system are essential.

There are two ways in which to manage the expansion or development of transit systems. In most rural areas, transit programs are either managed by a single entity – often a municipality or county government or managed through an RTA – a Rural Transit Authority. An Authority must be approved by taxpayers as it has taxing authority to support the program. Often, an RTA is overseen by a board of directors that is made up of stakeholders in the region it serves and, as a collective effort, coordinates transportation across the RTA region. Some RTAs contract with professional transit operators to carry out the service, others create a working staff to provide operating, administrative, and compliance services.

If an RTA is not desirable, then a single entity takes on the development and/or expansion of service. They may work with other government entities and non-profits to coordinate

service and seek funding. As an example, and in the case of Nogales and Rio Rico, the City may wish to be the lead agency with oversight and control of the system and negotiate with the County to provide funding (particularly the match needed for federal funding) that is commensurate with the service provided in the county.

Stakeholders

Regardless of the type of system chosen, stakeholders play an important role in planning, delivery, and coordination of services.

Stakeholders in the Study region include:

- Medical – Hospitals, Clinics, VA services, Pharmacies
- Local Governments – City of Nogales, Rio Rico, Tubac,
- Education – School Districts, College/University, Charter Schools
- Employers
- Private Shuttle Services
- Non-Profits and Human Services Agencies
- Business – Retailers seeking shoppers

These stakeholders are often representatives of potential riders, have services or products that riders want or need, and/or require transportation for their clients or customers. In rural areas, these stakeholders recognize the value of a transit system and are eager partners in making a system efficient and effective. Coordination with other transportation partners is vital for riders moving from one system to another. In this region, it may be Valley Assistance bringing riders to Rio Rico who then wish to transfer to a system that can take them to destinations in Nogales. Stakeholders like Walmart can help in establishing bus stops on their property. The hospitals and clinics may wish to contract rides for patients who need to come to follow up visits. Private shuttle services may want to work with a transit system to bring inter-city riders (PHX and TUS) to their pick-up points. Each of these can be negotiated with for in-kind or direct financial support of the system.

Capacity

Any new or developing transit system will face issues of capacity. With the introduction of federal funding come a myriad of compliance requirements, reporting, and application cycles. Providing sufficient in-house staffing (if not contracting out for operations) is critical and requires a pool of workers with a variety of skills. Drivers, dispatchers, mechanics, financial managers, operation manager(s), and administrative staff are needed to support a sustainable transit service. SEAGO provides ongoing technical assistance

and training to all of these employees and ADOT supports ongoing professional development through its Rural Transit Assistance Program.

Funding Availability

Rural transit systems typically utilize the same financial resources across the west. These are typically state and federal funds and in Arizona are available in 2-year cycles.

- FTA 5311 – through ADOT – funding for operations (42-50% match requirement), administration (20% match requirement), and capital purchases (7-20% match requirement).
- FTA 5310 - through ADOT – funding for operations (50% match requirement), capital purchases (20% match requirement) and no funding for administration.
- FTA 5339 – through ADOT – funding for capital expenses including vehicles, bus and transfer stations, other transit related facilities (buildings, bus storage, etc.). This fund is available annually.
- Area Agency on Aging – through SEAGO – funding supporting rides for elderly. Pays a negotiated award calculated on the number of rides provided. Any eligible ride may be charged to the award regardless of the type of system that is being operated.
- Fares – Fares are collected from riders based on a fare schedule. Fares can be determined by destination, rider type (child, senior, adult, etc.), or sold/given through multi-ride or multi-day passes. ADOT deducts fares collected when calculating their 50% of an operations award.
- Employers and other private companies – The transit system can negotiate with employers for financial or in-kind support. This is often the case when bus stops are located at a particular, and often large, employer. Financial support can be direct, or the employer may wish to buy bus passes for their employees. Mining companies in the area often have foundations that award funding to programs located in the community.
- Community Colleges and other institutions of learning – these organizations may also wish to support the system to assure timely and consistent transportation for their students. Like employers, these funds can come directly or through the purchase of bus passes, or a one-time negotiated payment for anyone with an active student ID.
- Retail and service businesses – larger businesses like Walmart, Home Depot, shopping centers, and other types of retailers dependent on shoppers often have foundations that provide grants for transportation activities. They are also good to approach for in-kind materials needed for daily operations, facilities maintenance, vehicle maintenance, and other supply-oriented needs. Small specialty stores may

also participate with in-kind provisions like driver uniform embroidery work, IT support, and bus washing services, etc.

- Private foundations – These organizations are found locally, state-wide, and nationally and are discovered in different ways. The Santa Cruz Community Foundation is a local example. Staff or volunteers seek these opportunities out and apply for funding on behalf of the transit system.
- Hospitals and Health care facilities – Hospitals are under a great deal of pressure from their federal funding sources (Medicaid, Medicare, etc.) to reduce admissions recidivism. Re-admitting patients is often a result of the patient's failure to return for follow-up appointments. This failure is often attributed to lack of transportation. Partnering with a health-care provider and negotiating costs per ride or a flat rate can help ensure that funding is available to support these types of rides.

While there are a number of ways to seek and get funding in support of transit, they all take time and diligence in reaching out to potential supporters and appealing for their financial or in-kind support.

Ridership

Public transit systems supported with 5311 funding must be available to the public though they may prioritize elderly and disabled in the case of a dial-a-ride system.

Systems supported with 5310 funding may limit their ridership to clients or consumers of their programs but are encouraged to provide rides to the public when possible.

Ridership development is based on several factors: Trust, consistency in service, affordability, accessibility, language access, marketing, and opportunities for feedback.

Trust is a significant factor in people's choosing to use transit. Well informed, polite, friendly, and bi-lingual drivers are on the front line to build rider trust.

Affordability – because most riders will be persons without vehicles and/or financial means, making fares affordable allows riders to choose transit over more costly alternatives.

Accessibility – providing bus stops and locations where potential riders (lower income) live and going to common destinations where they need or want to conduct business is paramount in building ridership. Making bus stops ADA accessible, safe, shaded, and clean keeps riders interested in using transit services. Accessibility is also tied to consistency. If the schedule says that a bus will arrive by 10:00 on a fixed route, it shouldn't be more than five minutes late. Having electronic media at bus stops that says how far out the bus is helps relieve rider anxiety that they may have missed the bus. This is especially

important when the headways are an hour long. If a rider can't count on a schedule or a promised pick-up time, they won't trust the service. For dial-a-ride programs dispatchers should be in touch with riders if the van is going to be late. Free and transparent information is key to building ridership and maintaining trust. Lastly, accessibility includes connections to other existing transit programs. Making schedules that connect with transportation from Patagonia, Sahuarita, and shuttle services will help riders reach their destinations efficiently.

Language access – For the Study region, assuring that all information is available in both English and Spanish helps transit riders to fully understand the system, how it works, and how they can use it. All written materials including Rider Guides, bus stop signage, fare information, maps and schedules, and on-board notices must be in both languages. It is also highly recommended that drivers and dispatchers be bilingual. The ability to communicate clearly and with full understanding is required to attract riders and to keep them.

Marketing – to develop ridership, marketing should be focused on ridership development. This means it must be in both Spanish and English (Spanish first when so much of the population are Spanish speakers), must be distributed in places that are frequented or read by the target population, utilizes social media, and offers outlets for more information (QR codes, phone numbers, etc.).

Riders must also be given opportunities to voice concerns about the service, recommend changes, and/or advocate for themselves and the transit services they rely on. These opportunities can come in focus group activities, surveys, and individual interviews.

Infrastructure Development Policies and Regulations

Municipal and County governments provide policies and regulations for any infrastructure development (including their own) in their jurisdiction. Planning & Zoning requirements should always include provisions for transit access. This could be ADA curb cuts for bus pull-outs, sufficient turnaround space in multi-family developments, bus-stop locations for retail developments, and appropriate retrofits for renovations to any existing infrastructure. Proposed developments should include transit elements in their proposals and should be required by City and County planning approval officials through policy and regulations.

Political Will

None of the aforementioned opportunities and options in this section are realistic without political will. If government leaders do not support public transit, potential riders (and voters) will suffer the consequences. Political will must come at all levels from the highest in the region (county supervisors, city council persons, mayors), to management (city and

county managers) who direct staff and carry out Council and Supervisor priorities. Approvals to implement systems, fund them, and sustain them must first be the will of government leaders to have a successful public transit system.

5. Technical Memorandum #5 Preferred Service Option – Working Paper

Recommended Service Plan

While it is still unclear if the City of Nogales Council wishes to take on the leadership role for expanding transit options in the Nogales/Rio Rico region, the following recommendation is based on the City taking this role. The recommendation is based on a phased-in approach that would allow expansion and enhancement over a six-year period to coincide with the State's funding application cycles. The phases can be accelerated or combined as the City and the transit system's capacity allows.

Additionally, the City may wish to explore contracting out operations through a proposal process. ADOT 5311 funding allows operations contracting as an eligible expense. As an example, the City of Douglas is the contracted operator for the City of Bisbee's Bisbee Bus system. Those costs are included in the 5311-funding award as operations costs and are supported with the required 50% match by the City.

Funding Sources:

- FTA 5311 – through ADOT for operations, administration, and capital equipment
- FTA 5339 – through ADOT for vehicles and major capital equipment/facilities
- Area Agency on Aging – through SEAGO for transportation subsidies for senior riders
- Santa Cruz County for financial support of service to Rio Rico
- Hospital and Mariposa Clinic – negotiated awards for discharge patients and return appointments
- Private business for in-kind operations supplies and cash contributions for employee passes
- Fares

Phase 1: ADOT 5311 Application is due in winter 25-26 for award in October 2026

5311 Dial-a-ride expansion Nogales & Rio Rico

The City of Nogales would operate its Douglas Rides dial-a-ride program (priority toward elderly and disabled) with public access (priority toward low-income housing neighborhoods) and expands its reach into Rio Rico.

The City has proposed a 2025 budget of \$218,378 that includes a new vehicle. Vehicle acquisition in FY 2025, outside of FTA/ADOT, will be quicker as ADOT funded vehicles can take two years for delivery. With new vehicles already in hand, the City could request additional vehicles in its first application as the phased approach will call for additional vehicles for the second phase of system development.

See Figure 40.

Estimated Costs for in-house operations of Phase 1 – Total Budget \$478,743

Capital: \$150,000.00 - vehicles

Operations: 212,760.00

Administration: 115,983 (includes first-year-only marketing budget of \$12,000)

Total Federal/ADOT award and Local Share based on match policies in recent years.

Capital 80% fed 20% Local	Fed share \$120,000	Local share \$30,000
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Operations 58% fed 42% Local	Fed share \$123,400	Local share \$89,361
------------------------------	---------------------	----------------------

Administration 80% fed 20% Local	Fed share \$92,786	Local share \$23,196
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Total Budget \$478,743	Fed share \$336,186	Local share \$142,557
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CITY OF NOGALES ESTIMATED TRANSIT BUDGET 2025-26		
	Match Ratio	Nogales Budget Phase 1
ADMINISTRATION		
Administrative Supplies	80 / 20	\$ 240.00
Financial Staff Support	80 / 20	\$ 1,800.00
Fringe Benefits (Admin)	80 / 20	\$ 16,800.00
General Liability Insurance	80 / 20	\$ 2,328.00
HR/Employee Recruitment	80 / 20	\$ 2,000.00
City Management Support	80 / 20	\$ 3,000.00
Marketing/Advertising	80 / 20	\$ 12,000.00
Phones/Internet	80 / 20	\$ 1,200.00
Postage	80 / 20	\$ 150.00
Printing	80 / 20	\$ 800.00
Professional Services	80 / 20	\$ 21,600.00
Program Audit	80 / 20	\$ 2,925.00
Rental Equipment	80 / 20	\$ 540.00
Substance Abuse Program	80 / 20	\$ 1,200.00
Transit Manager/Coordinator	80 / 20	\$ 45,000.00
Travel - non training	80 / 20	\$ 1,800.00
Utilities	80 / 20	\$ 600.00
Vehicle Insurance	80 / 20	\$ 2,000.00
Total Administration Costs		\$ 115,983.00
Total Administration Local Share		\$ 23,196.60
Total Administration Federal Share		\$ 92,786.40
	Match Ratio	Nogales Budget Phase 1
OPERATING		
Dispatcher(s)	58 / 42	\$ 33,280.00
Driver Training & Certifications	58 / 42	\$ 500.00
Driver Salaries	58 / 42	\$ 93,600.00
Fringe Benefits	58 / 42	\$ 44,408.00
Fuel	58 / 42	\$ 25,272.00
Mechanic(s)	58 / 42	\$ 11,000.00
Operating Supplies	58 / 42	\$ 1,500.00
Radio Services/Equipment	58 / 42	\$ 1,600.00
Software Maintenance	58 / 42	\$ 200.00
Vehicle Repairs	58 / 42	\$ 1,000.00
Uniforms	58 / 42	\$ 1,000.00
Preventive Maintenance	58 / 42	\$ 4,200.00
Total Operating/Intercity Costs		\$ 217,560.00
Revenue Earned ie Fares		\$ 4,800.00
Net Operating Costs		\$ 212,760.00
Operating Federal Share		\$ 123,400.80
Operating Local Share		\$ 89,359.20
Total Operating and Admin. Budget		\$ 328,743.00
Total Operating and Admin. Federal		\$ 216,187.20
Total Operating and Admin. Local		\$ 112,555.80

Figure 40 Phase 1 In-house Estimated Budget

Phase 2: ADOT 5311 Application is due in winter 27-28 for award in October 2028

5311 Deviated Fixed Route service - Nogales

The City of Nogales would operate an intracity deviated fixed route service with scheduled stops at key low-income and elderly housing neighborhoods as well as key destinations including health care facilities, grocery stores, retail stores, major employment centers, Department of Economic Security, Veterans Services, Human Services organizations, Food Pantries, and border crossings. The Dial-a-Ride service can connect ambulatory riders to the fixed route for destinations within Nogales and/or riders trying to reach multiple destinations.

The destinations below may be considered for a fixed route system.

1	Arizona Child Protective Services
2	Arizona Department of Economic Security
3	Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division
4	Bowman Hotel
5	CASA of Santa Cruz County - Arizona
6	Casa De Asistencia
7	Child & Family Resources, Inc.
8	Cimarron Assisted Living
9	Community Food Bank in Nogales
10	Community Medical Services
11	Crossroad Mission Family Center
12	De Concini border crossing
13	Dependable Home Health, Inc.
14	Family Resource Center
15	Food City
16	Food Stamps & Assistance Office
17	Holy Cross Hospital
18	Intermountain Health Centers
19	Living Center
20	Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest - Luminaria Hom...
21	Mariposa Border Crossing

21	Mariposa Border Crossing
22	Mariposa Community Health Center
23	Mariposa Community Health Center
24	Mariposa Manor Manufactured Home Community
25	Meadow Hills Assisted Living
26	NextCare Urgent Care Nogales
27	Nogales City Hall
28	Nogales Community Development
29	Nogales Housing Authority
30	Safeway
31	Santa Cruz Council On Aging
32	Santa Cruz County Arizona at Work Job Center
33	Santa Cruz County Government Complex
34	Santa Cruz County Health
35	Santa Cruz Training Programs, Inc.
36	Social Security Administration
37	Southeastern Arizona Community
38	Villa Paraiso Apartments
39	Villa's Food Market
40	Villa's Market
41	Walmart Supercenter

Figure 41 Nogales destinations list

Major streets and thoroughfares in Nogales were established around the terrain and do not typically have a grid pattern. Establishing a fixed route system that has a reasonable headway and reaches origination and destination points efficiently is difficult. Previous studies recommended multiple routes that run simultaneously and meet at a central transfer station. In Figure 38 common destinations are marked with triangles. Origination points are marked with house icons. Mapping a single route would require backtracking once the route goes north of Mariposa Rd. on Grand Ave. But with destinations on both sides of Grand Ave. it would be best to backtrack and limit turns across traffic.

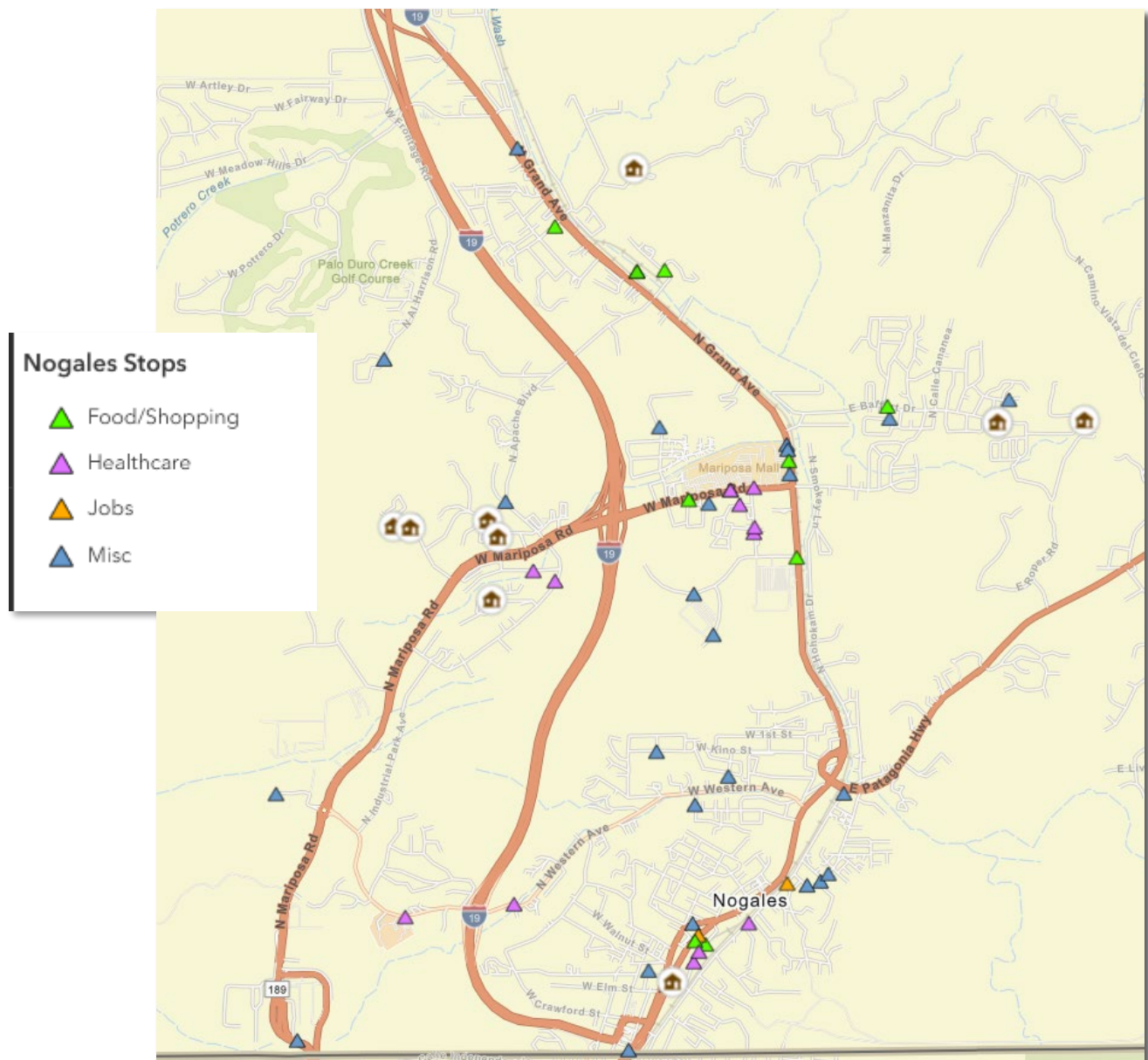


Figure 42 Origination and Destination Map Nogales

CITY OF NOGALES ESTIMATED TRANSIT BUDGET 2025-26			2027-2028
	Match Ratio	Nogales Budget Phase 1	Nogales Budget Phase 2
ADMINISTRATION			
Administrative Supplies	80 / 20	\$ 240.00	\$ 247.20
Financial Staff Support	80 / 20	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,854.00
Fringe Benefits (Admin)	80 / 20	\$ 16,800.00	\$ 17,304.00
General Liability Insurance	80 / 20	\$ 2,328.00	\$ 2,397.84
HR/Employee Recruitment	80 / 20	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,060.00
City Management Support	80 / 20	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,090.00
Marketing/Advertising	80 / 20	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,360.00
Phones/Internet	80 / 20	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,236.00
Postage	80 / 20	\$ 150.00	\$ 154.50
Printing	80 / 20	\$ 800.00	\$ 824.00
Professional Services	80 / 20	\$ 21,600.00	\$ 22,248.00
Program Audit	80 / 20	\$ 2,925.00	\$ 3,012.75
Rental Equipment	80 / 20	\$ 540.00	\$ 556.20
Substance Abuse Program	80 / 20	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,236.00
Transit Manager/Coordinator	80 / 20	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 46,350.00
Travel - non training	80 / 20	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,854.00
Utilities	80 / 20	\$ 600.00	\$ 618.00
Vehicle Insurance	80 / 20	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 3,400.00
Total Administration Costs		\$ 115,983.00	\$ 120,802.49
Total Administration Local Share		\$ 23,196.60	\$ 24,160.50
Total Administration Federal Share		\$ 92,786.40	\$ 96,641.99
	Match Ratio	Nogales Budget Phase 1	Nogales Budget Phase 2
OPERATING			
Dispatcher(s)	58 / 42	\$ 33,280.00	\$ 34,278.40
Driver Training & Certifications	58 / 42	\$ 500.00	\$ 700.00
Driver Salaries	58 / 42	\$ 93,600.00	\$ 138,320.00
Fringe Benefits	58 / 42	\$ 44,408.00	\$ 60,409.44
Fuel	58 / 42	\$ 25,272.00	\$ 54,600.00
Mechanic(s)	58 / 42	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 13,000.00
Operating Supplies	58 / 42	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,800.00
Radio Services/Equipment	58 / 42	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1,900.00
Software Maintenance	58 / 42	\$ 200.00	\$ 250.00
Vehicle Repairs	58 / 42	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,500.00
Uniforms	58 / 42	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Preventive Maintenance	58 / 42	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 8,400.00
Total Operating/Intercity Costs		\$ 217,560.00	\$ 318,157.84
Revenue Earned ie Fares		\$ 4,800.00	\$ 5,400.00
Net Operating Costs		\$ 212,760.00	\$ 312,757.84
Operating Federal Share		\$ 123,400.80	\$ 181,399.55
Operating Local Share		\$ 89,359.20	\$ 131,358.29
Total Operating and Admin. Budget		\$ 328,743.00	\$ 433,560.33
Total Operating and Admin. Federal		\$ 216,187.20	\$ 278,041.54
Total Operating and Admin. Local		\$ 112,555.80	\$ 155,518.79

The addition of Phase 2 deviated fixed-route services can run in conjunction with dial-a-ride services in the first year to assure that the system addresses the needs of senior and disabled dial-a-ride passengers and to acquaint regular, ambulatory passengers with the deviated fixed route. Dial-a-ride passengers seeking destinations on the fixed route can be transferred to the fixed route or transported directly. In Phase 2, the system may wish to limit Dial-a-ride passengers to those who are seniors and/or disabled. The Phase 2 budget includes costs to operate both the fixed route and the dial-a-ride. An inflation rate of 3% was included in all costs that are subject to price increases.

Fuel costs were calculated on both Phase 1 Dial-a-ride mileage and additional mileage for a fixed route system.

Estimates are based on 2024-2025 average costs with expectations of a 3% cost increase and may change significantly depending on economic conditions at the time. It is recommended that budget forecasts be updated prior to applying for funding in

Figure 43 Phase 2 Estimated Budget

all phases of development. Not included in this budget are capital costs associated with the development of the fixed route. It is expected that two new busses will be needed to provide Phase 2 expansion. Because vehicle purchases now take two years for delivery. Purchases for Phase 2 should be made in the initial ADOT 5311 and 5339 applications.

Phase 3: ADOT 5311 Application is due winter 29-30 for award in October 2030

5311 Flex Route – Rio Rico

The City of Nogales would expand its fixed route service to include a fixed-flex-route schedule to and from Rio Rico two or three days a week. A more robust schedule would be needed if workers indicated an interest in using the service. Pick-up and drop-off stops can

include County facilities, employment centers, and stores, and connect riders to the Nogales Intracity Fixed Route for destinations in Nogales.

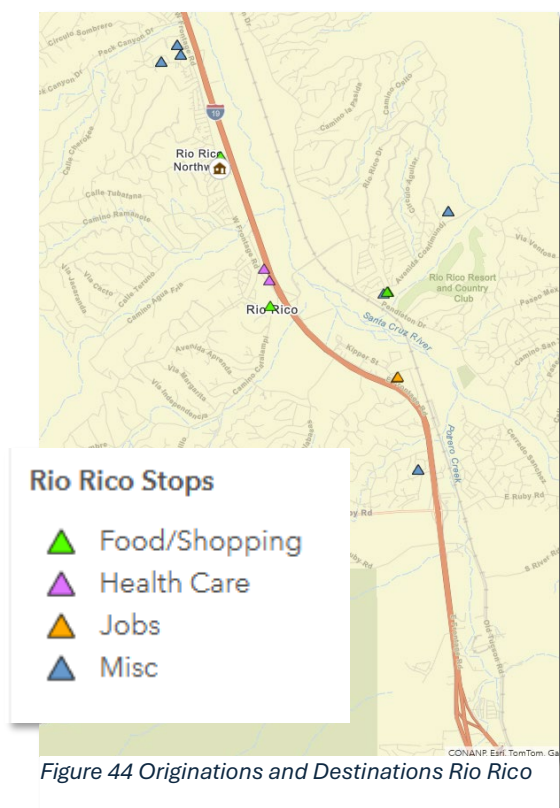
Traveling north to south on Frontage Road; Rio Rico high school, County offices, the Las Casitas apartments, El Destino apartments, the Mariposa Community Health Center, the post office, Garrett's IGA, and the Rio Rico shopping center.

Northbound from the I-19-Grand Ave. Interchange; Pilot Travel Center, PDG and GP Produce industrial area, and Rio Rico Public Library. Residents of outlying areas can use park & ride facilities that would be negotiated with private owners or developed on public land.

This phase would expect that Dial-a-ride service to Rio-Rico would be limited to seniors and persons with disabilities, and that ambulatory public riders would utilize the service from fixed

pick-up locations. Drivers providing dial-a-ride services in Rio Rico would be dispatched with the flex route scheduled stops in mind. A single bus and driver could provide both the flex route and dial-a-ride services for Rio Rico.

Non-senior/disabled riders seeking dial-a-ride services would be directed to a flex-route stop for pick up based on a schedule. Depending on demand. The flex route could make three runs daily to Rio Rico, three days a week with potential for expansion if demand is warranted. If employers and their employees were interested in supporting the service,



schedules would need to correlate with those of the major businesses to ensure workers were transported to destinations in time for work start times and available for return rides when employee shifts end.

The budget for Phase 3 would be similar to the Phase 2 budget in that it includes trips to Rio Rico for Dial-a-ride services three days a week. Adding fixed scheduled stops for general public ridership can be budgeted with additional fuel costs but no additional drivers or vehicles would be required.

The Phase 3 budget estimates below do not include capital purchase of vehicles, however with a fleet of four vehicles from Phases 1 and 2, the system would need only schedule replacement of any older existing vehicles that may have been brought to the system in Phase 1.

CITY OF NOGALES ESTIMATED TRANSIT BUDGET 2025-26			2027-2028	2029-2030
	Match Ratio	Nogales Budget Phase 1	Nogales Budget Phase 2	Nogales Budget Phase 3
ADMINISTRATION				
Administrative Supplies	80 / 20	\$ 240.00	\$ 247.20	\$ 254.62
Financial Staff Support	80 / 20	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,854.00	\$ 1,909.62
Fringe Benefits (Admin)	80 / 20	\$ 16,800.00	\$ 17,304.00	\$ 17,823.12
General Liability Insurance	80 / 20	\$ 2,328.00	\$ 2,397.84	\$ 2,469.78
HR/Employee Recruitment	80 / 20	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,060.00	\$ 2,121.80
City Management Support	80 / 20	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,090.00	\$ 3,182.70
Marketing/Advertising	80 / 20	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,360.00	\$ 12,730.80
Phones/Internet	80 / 20	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,236.00	\$ 1,273.08
Postage	80 / 20	\$ 150.00	\$ 154.50	\$ 159.14
Printing	80 / 20	\$ 800.00	\$ 824.00	\$ 848.72
Professional Services	80 / 20	\$ 21,600.00	\$ 22,248.00	\$ 22,915.44
Program Audit	80 / 20	\$ 2,925.00	\$ 3,012.75	\$ 3,103.13
Rental Equipment	80 / 20	\$ 540.00	\$ 556.20	\$ 572.89
Substance Abuse Program	80 / 20	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,236.00	\$ 1,273.08
Transit Manager/Coordinator	80 / 20	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 46,350.00	\$ 47,740.50
Travel - non training	80 / 20	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,854.00	\$ 1,909.62
Utilities	80 / 20	\$ 600.00	\$ 618.00	\$ 636.54
Vehicle Insurance	80 / 20	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 3,400.00	\$ 3,502.00
Total Administration Costs		\$ 115,983.00	\$ 120,802.49	\$ 124,426.56
Total Administration Local Share		\$ 23,196.60	\$ 24,160.50	\$ 24,885.31
Total Administration Federal Share		\$ 92,786.40	\$ 96,641.99	\$ 99,541.25
	Match Ratio	Nogales Budget Phase 1	Nogales Budget Phase 2	
OPERATING				
Dispatcher(s)	58 / 42	\$ 33,280.00	\$ 34,278.40	\$ 35,306.75
Driver Training & Certifications	58 / 42	\$ 500.00	\$ 700.00	\$ 721.00
Driver Salaries	58 / 42	\$ 93,600.00	\$ 138,320.00	\$ 142,469.60
Fringe Benefits	58 / 42	\$ 44,408.00	\$ 60,409.44	\$ 62,221.72
Fuel	58 / 42	\$ 25,272.00	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 57,000.00
Mechanic(s)	58 / 42	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 13,000.00	\$ 13,390.00
Operating Supplies	58 / 42	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,854.00
Radio Services/Equipment	58 / 42	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1,900.00	\$ 1,957.00
Software Maintenance	58 / 42	\$ 200.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 257.50
Vehicle Repairs	58 / 42	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,575.00
Uniforms	58 / 42	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,060.00
Preventive Maintenance	58 / 42	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 8,400.00	\$ 8,652.00
Total Operating/Intercity Costs		\$ 217,560.00	\$ 318,157.84	\$ 328,464.58
Revenue Earned ie Fares		\$ 4,800.00	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 6,000.00
Net Operating Costs		\$ 212,760.00	\$ 312,757.84	\$ 322,464.58
Operating Federal Share		\$ 123,400.80	\$ 181,399.55	\$ 187,029.45
Operating Local Share		\$ 89,359.20	\$ 131,358.29	\$ 135,435.12
Total Operating and Admin. Budget		\$ 328,743.00	\$ 433,560.33	\$ 446,891.14
Total Operating and Admin. Federal		\$ 216,187.20	\$ 278,041.54	\$ 286,570.71
Total Operating and Admin. Local		\$ 112,555.80	\$ 155,518.79	\$ 160,320.43

Figure 45 Phase 3 Estimated Budget

5311 Micro-Transit option

This option can be included in any of the above application cycles. The City of Nogales enhances its dial-a-ride program with on-demand, shared-ride services with technology-based scheduling software that allows the public to schedule rides similar to Uber & Lyft programs without advanced reservations. The City may also contract with secondary providers such as approved taxis and shuttles to assure capacity and broaden rider reach and destination points.

Software providers have naturally been focused on more urban and suburban applications for their software. Few examples of rural systems that are similar to Nogales exist in the literature, but more Microtransit systems are being developed nationwide in rural areas. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation in Virginia published an insightful report on Microtransit in rural areas of Virginia which can be read at

<https://drpt.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/drpt-rural-microtransit-case-study-and-report-final.pdf>

Rural Microtransit systems work best when the ridership is limited to high-use populations including seniors and workers. This prohibits the use of the system as a lower cost taxi alternative, which is important to consider in the Nogales region with a number of taxi and shuttle providers in operation.

Because this is a growing and fast-changing system alternative, initial start-up costs can be high and have been changing rapidly making cost estimations difficult if not misleading. RideCo, Via, and TransLoc are the leading providers in Microtransit software solutions and development. Any consideration of Microtransit should be based on a more complete implementation plan with market pricing in direct collaboration with an established Microtransit developer such as the three noted above.

Appendix Public Engagement Plan – Appendix A

Santa Cruz County Transportation & Transit Projects Update Public Outreach and Involvement Plan November 2023

Prepared by:
SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO)
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Section 1 – Project Scope

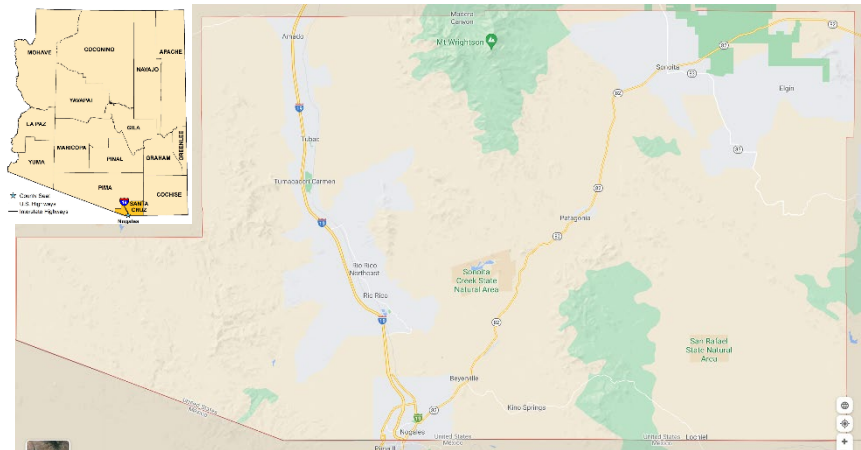
Introduction

In late 2021, SEAGO was tasked to assist Santa Cruz member entities in identifying unaddressed transportation and transit projects throughout the county and develop a List of Preliminary Projects that also includes input on any potential new, previously unidentified, projects for the purposes of prioritization. As part of the prioritization effort, it was determined that a feasibility study for public transit was needed. In 2023, SEAGO obtained funding to develop a Public Transit Feasibility Study (Study) for the region. This Public Engagement Plan is the first step in the Study process and outlines SEAGO's efforts to ensure public input and involvement in the development of the Study and any subsequent plans.

Study Area

The Transportation Projects update will consider transit projects throughout Santa Cruz County, including potential transit services connecting Tubac, Rio Rico, Nogales, and Patagonia.

Santa Cruz County is the smallest county in Arizona with a land mass of 1,238 square miles. The County maintains 412 miles of hard surface roads (not including streets in Nogales, Patagonia or state and federal roads) and over 300 miles of unpaved roads. Interstate 19 runs from the Mexican Border, north, and beyond the northern county line. State Highway 82 runs northeast to the eastern county line. State highway 289 runs west from I-19.

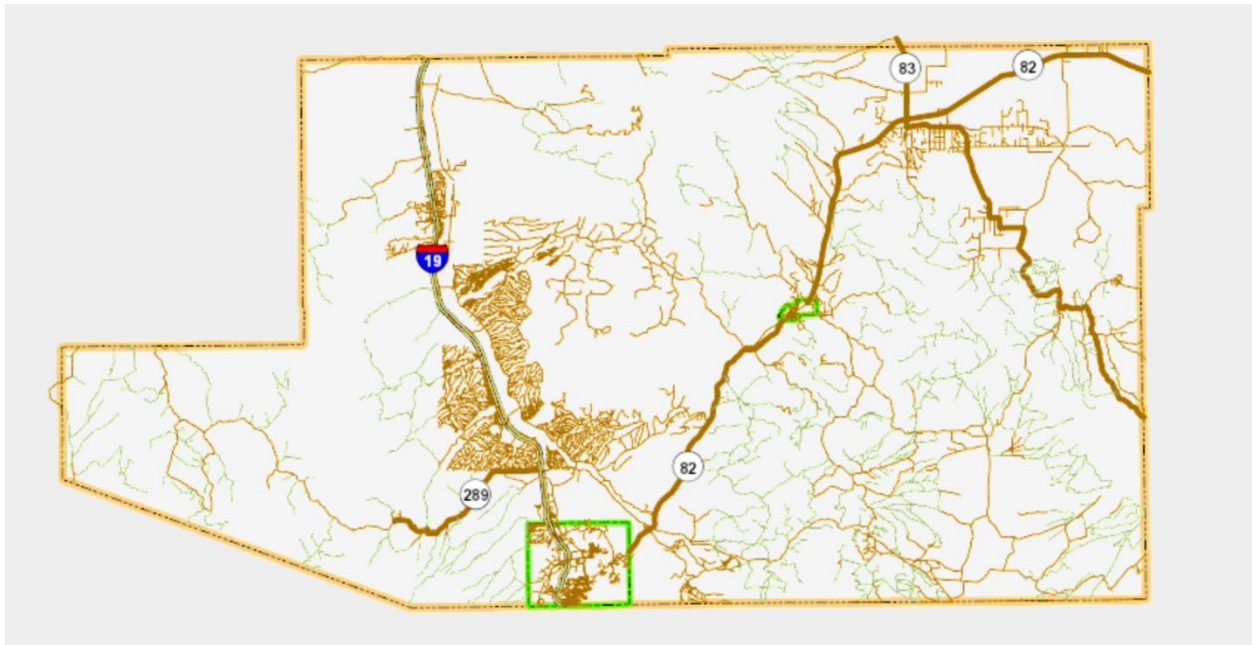


Study Description

SEAGO will collect all Santa Cruz County transit related studies completed at the state or local level over the past 15 years. After extensive review, the SEAGO Project Team (Team) will compile a list of unaddressed transit projects that remain valid in today's economic, demographic, and transportation climate. The Team will also consult with local experts to determine if there are transit issues that have not been identified and should be included. A technical analysis of current census data will assess the impact of population, employment, major destinations, and rider originations to begin to identify the potential for various types of transit. The Team will establish a baseline of transit potential as well as existing 5311 and 5310 public and special needs transit services already in service with cost estimates that will serve as the focal point for discussions with government authorities and the public in establishing the feasibility of enhanced transit services for both short- and long-term implementation.

Existing Studies

A 2010 Transportation Plan (Wilbur Smith, 2010) identified 24 relevant studies, plans, and reviews regarding transportation and transit, published in 2006. In 2016, the County updated its Comprehensive Plan including a transportation section. SEAGO will identify and review all relevant studies over the past 15 years that will yield potential transit information from which the feasibility study will be drawn.



Road System in Santa Cruz County

Section 2 - Public Participation Goals

SEAGO relies on and values the input of the public, stakeholders, funders, and policy makers in the development of a feasibility study for the region's ADOT-funded transit providers. Its goal is to gain insights into transit needs, and the partnerships and collaborative response obligations that will preserve and enhance existing transit service as well as new transit services that will address growing transit requirements in this rapidly changing environment. Public engagement and involvement are essential as these projects are funded by and for those who live here. Public input in defining priorities will develop a sense of investment and support for funding projects and for maintaining them in the future.

Specific goals for participants vary and are determined by their role in identifying and prioritizing transit needs. Overall public engagement goals include:

- Educate the public, local government entities, stakeholders, funders, and policy makers as to previous study outcomes, existing identified transit services within the county and their communities, and gaps in public transit access in key communities within the county.

- Engage and educate stakeholders to determine project needs, feasibility, urgency, priority, and benefit and how they are best positioned to create partnerships and collaborations that can bring a more robust transit system to implementation.
- Engage and educate municipal and county government professionals to determine project need, feasibility, urgency, priority, and benefit and how they are best positioned to create partnerships and collaborations that can bring transit systems into implementation.
- With input across participation sectors, prioritize transit needs that meet parameters for feasibility, fundability, and economic and community benefit.
- Enhance collaborative capital in bringing transit services to the area that enhance and sustain the region.

Section 3 – Public/Stakeholder Interest

Level of Concern

The level of concern among municipal and county governments is high as the nation begins to make pathways for transportation infrastructure and transit funding. Communities must understand the feasibility of such ventures, prioritize service areas, and provide evidence of need and community input.

The level of concern for stakeholders is driven largely by the direct impact transit will have on the economic health and sustainability of their community, businesses, and service industries with more concern for projects that also impact the safety and sustainability of their interests.

The level of concern for members of the general public may be high among persons with special needs, the elderly, and those whose economic position and quality of life can be enhanced with additional access to transportation for jobs, healthcare, human services, and meeting daily basic needs.

Spectrum and Level of Public Participation

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Public-at-large	Public meetings and hearings	Gather input and feedback on transit types, routes, and use potential	Survey data, comment, and review of findings	
Stakeholders	TAC meetings and focus groups	Gather input and feedback on existing transit services and unmet needs	Survey data, comment, and review of findings	Identify connections among existing transit providers, Identify opportunities for collaborative service provision
Local Governments, funding agencies, and policy makers	TAC and Individual meetings	Gather input and feedback on potential service provision management and funding	Determine Project Priorities and funding potential	Determine schedule and funding commitments

Section 5 - Tactics and Tools

Strategies

Kickoff

SEAGO will initiate the feasibility study with a kick-off meeting, inviting the public, stakeholders, and government officials. This meeting will be held in person at determined locations and allow SEAGO to educate participants on the purpose of the Study and the ways participants can engage throughout the Study period.

Participants will be asked about transit projects they are interested in, how projects should be prioritized, and what new projects should also be considered.

Participants also will be invited to join the existing Transportation TAC committee for the purposes of forwarding this project and working with other established members throughout the study process.



Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) and TAC Meetings

The Santa Cruz Transportation TAC will serve as the TAC committee for this project. Members representing local governments, stakeholders, and members of the interested public will form a subcommittee of the TAC to provide oversight and feedback throughout the Study process. SEAGO will be mindful to have diverse representation from across the region as well as those familiar with the existing infrastructure and transit needs.

TAC members will provide input and feedback in the development of the Feasibility Study, will assist in promoting review and comment of the Study in their communities, and assist in outreach efforts.

The TAC committee will meet at least quarterly.

Stakeholder Meetings

Identified stakeholders will be reached individually or in small group meetings to discuss transit needs, existing transit service identification and prioritization, and if and how enhanced transit services would benefit the community and county at large. Stakeholders may be asked to take part in a survey to determine the level of concern or to prioritize service types and areas.

Stakeholders will be asked to respond to draft documents with comments which will be considered in any final documents.

Public Meetings

Public meetings will be scheduled either in person or at locations determined by the Team. The first public meeting will be the kickoff meeting. A second public meeting will ask for input on prioritizing transit services identified in the Feasibility study. These meetings will be promoted and held for maximum participation across the region.

Public Hearings

SEAGO member entities will be asked to solicit and receive comment through the Public Hearing process on the Feasibility Study and will be made available for public view (electronically and hard copy) at the member entities' official locations with participants afforded opportunities to make comments and suggestions either electronically or in person.

Website

SEAGO will maintain a website presence regarding the Study and its development. Meeting dates, invitations, documents, and drafts will be available for review. SEAGO will encourage member entities to provide links to this resource on their own websites, social media, and in their outreach to residents and constituents.



Promotion

Media

SEAGO will promote all public participation opportunities utilizing available media which may include print, radio, mail, and public service announcement opportunities. Press releases, public service announcements, and local access options will be considered.

Social Media

SEAGO maintains a Facebook presence and will include information, documents, schedules, and invitations as part of its social media content. SEAGO will also invite its member entities and TAC members to include these promotions on their own websites and social media accounts.

Websites

SEAGO will promote public engagement outreach and activities, meetings, and schedules on its organization website as well as its Mobility Management website with links to various documents as they are developed. SEAGO will also invite its member entities and TAC members to include these promotions on their own websites.

Outreach

SEAGO will utilize its extensive network to promote the Study process and solicit public and stakeholder input. Members, and established Key partners (health care, library, social and human services, business and

industry, senior centers, DES centers, etc.) of SEAGO's will be encouraged to send notices and invitations to their mailing lists.

Public Comment

SEAGO will accept public comment for a minimum of 30 days on the draft Feasibility Study. Comment cards will be available electronically and as hard copies. Persons wishing to view Study documents in Spanish may request a translated copy and may submit comments in Spanish. Comments will be reviewed by SEAGO and the TAC and will be incorporated into the final Study document.

Section 6 – Schedule

Task Title	Responsible Party	2024												Deliverable
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Public Engagement														
Public Meetings and Hearings	SEAGO	<div></div>									<div></div>			Kickoff meeting sign in sheets, agenda, & comments
Convene TAC Subcommittee	SEAGO	<div></div>												TAC Committee Member List and meeting minutes
TAC Meetings	SEAGO	<div></div>		<div></div>		<div></div>		<div></div>		<div></div>		<div></div>		Bi-monthly meeting agenda, sign in sheets, and comments
Stakeholder Meetings	SEAGO		<div></div>				<div></div>				<div></div>			Individual and group meetings among stakeholders
Local Government and Transit Divisions meetings	SEAGO	<div></div>			<div></div>			<div></div>			<div></div>			Individual and group meetings among providers and planners in each County
Public Draft Review and Comment	SEAGO										<div></div>			Draft Study and all comments
Final Study with Prioritized Projects Delivered to ADOT & Local Governments with public access	SEAGO										<div></div>			Final Study published for public access and delivered to ADOT and local governments

SEAGO will collect sign-in sheets, agendas, and comments from all meetings.

Section 7 - Roles and Responsibilities

SEAGO

SEAGO staff will act as the Project Team (Team) for the Santa Cruz County Transit Feasibility Study. The Team will provide oversight for the TAC, meet with stakeholders, collect data and comments, carry out Study activities, and update schedules as needed. With data from the public outreach efforts, the Team will provide a Draft Feasibility Study, and a final Feasibility Study as defined in the approved ADOT Work Program. Team members include:

Chris Vertrees, Transportation Program Administrator

Mr. Vertrees acts as the project leader and Senior Planner and is responsible for all content and documentation for the Study.

Melanie Greene, Transportation Planner

Ms. Greene is responsible for the development of the Public Outreach and Involvement Plan and will carry out public engagement activities, collect public input and draft the Public Outreach and Involvement summary.

Jessica Aguayo, Regional Mobility Manager

Ms. Aguayo is responsible for seeing that all outreach activities are Title VI compliant and serves as the Title VI contact person for those needing accommodation.

John Merideth, GIS Analyst II

Mr. Merideth is responsible for creating maps and other GIS driven tables, maps, and graphics for the Public Engagement events and Study.

To ensure public engagement goals and objectives are addressed in a timely manner, the Team will meet on a bi-weekly basis to monitor progress, coordinate activities, identify strategic issues with development and next steps. The Team is tasked with producing materials to be presented to specific audiences and the engagement activities to ensure that feedback is summarized and addressed as appropriate to the Study.

TAC

TAC members provide guidance and input to the project team throughout the Study period. TAC members will help promote public outreach activities and utilize their professional networks to engage a broader audience. TAC members also recommend how transit administration, operations and investments be made in addressing the development of the Study and the prioritization of transit services, incorporating efficiency and effectiveness that meets the needs of the public and the providers.

The existing Transportation TAC is made up of transportation officials and professionals, representatives of local governments, transit advocates, AZDOT, and individuals, stakeholders, and interested members of the public. Additional TAC members, for the purposes of this study, are drawn from across Santa Cruz County.

TAC structure: Facilitated by key TEAM members, the TAC will determine how often it will meet (at least quarterly). Meeting sites will be available to members electronically and vary across the region to promote understanding of local conditions and assure greater participation among members living and working in more remote locations. Agendas and information will be provided to each member prior to the meeting. Member attendance will be recorded.

TAC responsibilities:

- Assist in developing the Transit Feasibility Study
- Identify existing conditions and future scenarios
- Identify special interest groups and individuals who represent under-represented individuals/groups for purposes of public engagement outreach
- Promote outreach and partnerships with constituents, stakeholders, and the public
- Work to develop a general understanding or agreement on future goals
- Review and comment on the draft Feasibility Study
- Advise on final recommendations to the SEAGO Board of Directors, Santa Cruz County, City of Nogales, Town of Patagonia, and ADOT.

TAC membership will include volunteer representatives from:

- Existing Santa Cruz Transportation TAC
- Transit providers & riders and members of the Santa Cruz Transit Coordination Council
- Health and Human Services
- Business and Industry
- Federal and State departments
- Municipal and County Governments

Stakeholders

Stakeholders will be a primary source of information and input for the development of the Feasibility Study. Through interviews, focus groups, and surveys, stakeholders will be responsible for providing detailed information on current transit services, anticipated transit needs, and providing feedback and comments on draft and final Study documents. Stakeholders will also assist in promoting public outreach activities and sharing Study documents with their constituents, clients, and staff.



Stakeholders include:

- Transit professionals
- Elected officials and managers for municipalities and counties
- Residents and businesses in areas impacted by projects
- Chambers of Commerce
- Health Care and human services
- Business and Industry leaders
- Border Crossing station leaders
- State and Federal Agencies
- Private sector transportation providers (taxi, Uber, shuttle services)

Section 8 – Title VI /Environmental Justice

Pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), SEAGO does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. Persons who require a reasonable accommodation based on language or disability should contact Jessica Aguayo at 520-432-5301 or by email at jaguayo@seago.org. Requests should be made as early as possible to ensure that SEAGO has an opportunity to address the accommodation.

Section 9 - Expected outcomes of Public Engagement

The following expected outcomes are present to highlight the resulting impact of the Public Outreach and Involvement activities:

- Enhanced awareness of transit projects in Santa Cruz County and the areas of unmet need
- Draft and Final Feasibility Study inclusive of public, stakeholder, and TAC input and comment
- Improved coordination among Residents, Stakeholders, Local, State, and Federal Governments
- Potential for future Transit Implementation Plan

Section 10 – Monitoring Public Participation

To ensure that a high degree of public involvement is sustained over the course of the study, metrics for each of the public outreach mechanisms will be monitored on a regular basis and mid-course corrections made to enhance levels of engagement should declining participation be noted. Ultimately, the goal is to give members of the public and stakeholders the opportunity to influence the direction and shape of the Study. All comments will be categorized and summarized to preserve a public record of all feedback. These summaries will be shared with the TEAM, TAC, stakeholders, and the public, posted on the website, and used on social media to generate more discussion.



Appendix A – Stakeholders

Stakeholder list

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Debbie Weaver (are they still in SC County?)	Horizon Health and Wellness	
Indira Rodriguez (still there?)	Horizon Health and Wellness	
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Appendix B – TAC Members

TAC member list

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Oscar Pena	Rio Rico Community Center	Rrcommunitycenter2017@gmail.com
Ana Holman	Rio Rico Fire Department	aholman@rioricofire.org
Ellen March	Green Valley – La Posada Community Center	emarch@casagv.or
	Tubac Chamber of Commerce	info@gubackaz.com
	Tubac Community Center	tubaccommunity@gmail.com
	Holy Cross Hospital - Nogales	
	Nogales Chamber of Commerce	
	Santa Cruz Valley Regional Hospital – Green Valley	
	Santa Cruz Council on Aging	
	United Way of Santa Cruz County	
	Hope Inc.	
Victor Ramos	Pinal Hispanic Council	vramos@pinalhispaniccouncil.or
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Appendix

Survey Results Appendix - B

Santa Cruz County Transit Study Survey Results

SEAGO – 10-16-2022

Survey Report & Census Data

SEAGO, in an effort to understand the transit needs of the Santa Cruz County, Arizona community, provided surveys to the public between 5/22 through 09/22 in both English and Spanish.

Surveys were distributed in Nogales, Patagonia, Rio Rico, and other non-incorporated areas of the county. Surveys were collected at the time they were filled out, or respondents could mail their surveys. Additionally, surveys were distributed by human services and health organizations throughout the county, collected by staff, and returned to SEAGO for analysis.

In total, 383 surveys were received.

Summary points

Demographics

- Of the 383 responses, 229 (60%) reported that Spanish was the primary language spoken in the home.
- 72 (19%) reported they were disabled or caring for someone disabled in the home
- 32 (8%) reported they were veterans

Residence

- 186 (49%) of surveys were from residents living in Nogales
- 113 (30%) of surveys were from residents living in Rio Rico
- 22 (6%) of surveys were from residents living in Patagonia
- 9 (2%) of surveys were from residents living in Tubac
- 4 (1%) of surveys were from residents living in Tumacacori
- 3 (1%) of surveys were from residents in Mexico
- Additional surveys were received from persons in Amado, Arivaca, Bisbee, Sahuarita, and Tucson (1 each representing 1%)
- 35 (9%) did not answer the residency question
- 11 (3%) Seasonal residents This survey was offered during the summer months and would not capture the influx of winter residents who are seasonal.
- 19 (5%) did not answer the seasonal/year-round question regarding residency

Age

- 25 (6%) of surveys were completed by persons 17 years of age and under
- 21 (5%) of surveys were completed by persons 18-29 years old
- 60 (16%) of surveys were completed by persons 30-49 years old
- 69 (18%) of surveys were completed by persons 50-65 years old

- 152 (40%) of surveys were completed by persons 65-79 years old
- 51 (13%) of surveys were completed by persons 80 years of age or older

Employment

- 125 (33%) identified as employed
- 172 (45%) identified as retired
- 21 (5%) identified as students
- 28 (7%) identified as unemployed
- 37 (10%) reported driving less than 3 miles to work
- 81 (21%) reported driving 4-10 miles to work
- 45 (12%) reported driving 11-20 miles to work
- 21 (5%) reported driving more than 20 miles to work
- 191 (50%) reported that the question was not applicable
- 57 (15%) reported that transportation to their primary employment was a concern
- 20 (5%) reported that transportation to their secondary employment was a concern

Access to Transportation

- 44 (11%) of respondents reported that even if they had a car available, they could not afford the car, gas, or insurance
- 14 (4%) reported that a medical condition or disability prevented them from driving
- 35 (9%) reported that they had no license
- Other items listed as major transportation concerns include
 - Employed students working 4-20 miles away from home
 - Employment and volunteer opportunities are far from home
 - Families living in Sierra Vista travel routinely to Nogales and Rio Rico for groceries and medical care
 - Affordable groceries are 20+ miles away
 - Limited or no access to grocery and medical care
 - Long distance for medical, grocery, and employment
 - No access to operable transport for medical services
 - No access to transportation for work
 - No assistance for the unemployed or caregivers
 - No Driver's License, dependent on family, friends, neighbors
 - Students routinely riding to Sierra Vista for School (Cochise College)

Sources of Transportation

- 87 (23%) Friend, Relative, Neighbor
- 254 (66%) Personal Vehicle of these 32 (13%) reported they do not use their car for reasons listed in the previous section.
- 11 (3%) Van or Bus Service
- 2 (<1%) Volunteer Driver
- 6 (<2%) Walking
- 7 (<2%) No answer

Operable Vehicles

- 91 (24%) have no operable vehicle in the household
- 139 (36%) had one operable vehicle in the household – of these 39 (28%) cannot drive this vehicle
- 96 (25%) have two operable vehicles in the household – of these 17 (18%) cannot drive these vehicles
- 48 (13%) have three operable vehicles in the household – of these 8 (15%) cannot drive these vehicles
- 4 (1%) have four operable vehicles in the household – of these all can drive
-

Miles to Destinations

Grocery & Shopping

- 76 (20%) drive less than 3 miles to shop
- 143 (37%) drive 4-10 miles
- 33 (9%) drive 11-20 miles
- 3 (<1%) drive over 20 miles
- 92 (24%) indicated that transportation to a local grocery destination was a concern
- 142 (37%) indicated that transportation to a local shopping destination was a concern
- 82 (21%) indicated that transportation to a shopping destination in other communities was a concern

Medical care

- 54 (14%) drive less than 3 miles to medical care
- 122 (32%) drive 4-10 miles
- 71 (19%) drive 11-20 miles
- 93 (24%) drive more than 20 miles
- 128 (33%) indicated that transportation to this destination was a concern for local medical visits
- 106 (28%) indicated that transportation to this destination was a concern for medical visits in other communities.

School

- 25 (7%) indicated that transportation to school was a concern

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