

# CITY OF SIERRA VISTA, AZ

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS # 2025-015

### TRANSIT ROUTE STUDY



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## **City Overview**

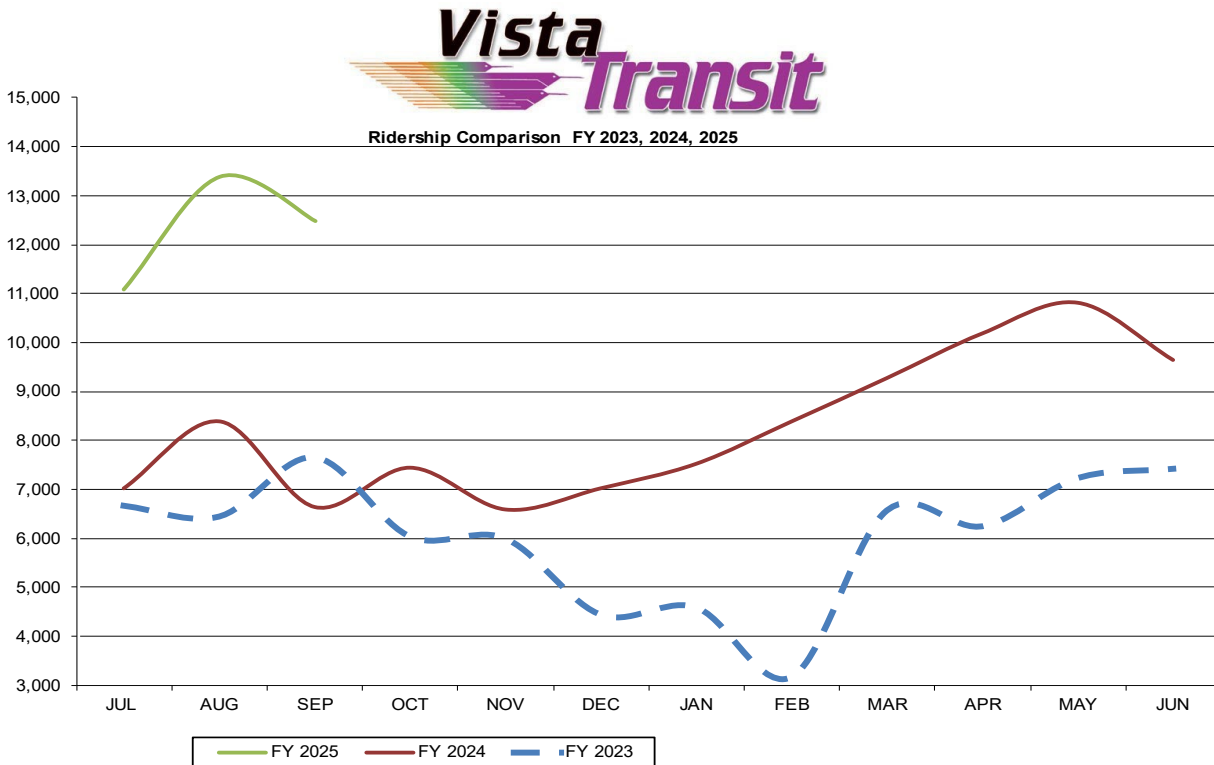
Sierra Vista, Arizona, established in 1956, spans an area of approximately 152 square miles, blending urban and rural landscapes, approximately 75 miles southeast of Tucson, AZ. With a population of around 45,000 residents, the city reflects a diverse community. Governed under a council-manager form of government. Sierra Vista operates on a fiscal year from July 1 to June 30. The city's economy is driven by industries such as defense, technology, healthcare, and tourism, buoyed by its proximity to Fort Huachuca.

## **Vista Transit Background**

Private transit service first began operating within City limits in 1994. In the early 2000s, the City of Sierra Vista assumed operation of transit services and established Vista Transit as a 5311 rural transit provider with the Federal Transit Administration. In 2007, the Vista Transit Center located at the corner of Wilcox and Coronado Drive opened and the system rolled-out a new fixed route service with 30-minute loops all starting and ending at the Vista Transit Center. In July 2019, new 60-minute loops were implemented to simplify the routing and to put more of a focus on "single seat" rides versus transfers. The impacts of the new routing were difficult to measure, as passengers were no longer being double-counted and the COVID-19 pandemic began within a few months.

Like most transit agencies, Vista Transit was significantly impacted by the pandemic. Ridership dropped dramatically, and emergency route revisions were needed to provide for social distancing on buses. Vista Transit went fare free during this time to eliminate health concerns associated with handling money. As the pandemic wore on, federal mask mandates proved to be unpopular with both riders and drivers, delaying the return of riders to the transit system and resulting in staff attrition. In late 2022 and early 2023, staffing reached critical levels, resulting in several emergency routing changes in response to limited staff availability. Free fares were also continued indefinitely, as the program proved popular with both riders and drivers and the amount of potential revenue was less than the operational expense associated with collecting it.

In the last year, staffing availability has improved while ridership has increased substantially. A chart showing ridership over the last three fiscal years is included immediately below. Additional routing changes have been needed to accommodate the sharply increased demand. Vista Transit is now at the point where a full routing study is needed to build a new routing system which reflects current staffing and demand levels.



Vista Transit currently includes a fleet of 15 vehicles providing service to 43 unique stops—including the Transit Center located at 2050 E. Wilcox—Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. The three routes require a minimum of 4 buses. Service to the 18 stops on the pink line is limited to hourly, although there are plans to increase service to every 30 minutes in the near future due to high demand. The blue line provides 30-minute service to 19 stops during peak hours (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.), and hourly service from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The gray line provides 30-minute service to 7 stops from 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. All routes stop at the centrally located Transit Center for a timed transfer, generally on the top and bottom of the hour.

## Introduction

This Scope of Work outlines the objectives, tasks, and deliverables for the consultancy services aimed at enhancing the fixed route system and complementary paratransit services provided by the City of Sierra Vista's Vista Transit services. The primary goal is to increase ridership, enhance rider experience, and minimize adverse impacts on existing ridership, thereby improving overall transit services within the community.

## Objectives

The objectives of this project include:

- Make recommendations to improve current fixed routes and complementary paratransit services.

- Fixed Routes Jan - September 2024
  - 3 fixed routes
  - 42 Stops (current inventory in GIS)
    - 17 with hourly service (increasing to 30-minute service in October 2024)
    - 26 with 30-minute service
  - Avg. 550 riders/day, a 77% increase since January 2024
- Paratransit
  - 220 approved riders
  - Avg 40 trips/day, a 38% increase from FY23 to FY24
- Enhance rider experience.
- Limit adverse impacts on existing ridership.
- Evaluate facility, fleet, and personnel resources necessary for implementing recommendations.
  - Fleet
    - Passenger vehicles (15)
      - <16 passenger capacity (3) \*Do not require CDL
      - 17 – 20 passenger capacity (10)
      - >20 passenger capacity (2)
  - Personnel
    - Admin (3)
      - Administrator
      - Department Specialist
      - Customer Service Rep/Dispatcher
    - Full-time drivers (9)
    - Part-time driver positions (6)

The constraints and givens of this project include:

- Budgetary allocations are likely to remain relatively consistent.
- Any proposed increases in personnel or fleet would need to be accomplished incrementally and would be subject to City Council and FTA approval.
- Paratransit services must meet but not necessarily exceed FTA guidelines.
- The focus should continue to be on single seat rides and getting customers to their destinations as quickly as possible.
- Hours of operation could expand based on potential need but should not decrease.
- The Vista Transit Center will remain the center of Transit Center operations.
- Although all current drivers are CDL-trained as part of their onboarding process, the City is open to a routing system which proposes non-CDL drivers in some applications.

## Scope of Work

The scope of work will include the following tasks:

### Task 1: Data Collection and Analysis

- Develop a survey to gather information on trip origin/destination pairs, trip purpose, system access, ridership characteristics, and community needs.
- Collect and analyze data to identify current system performance, gaps in service, and opportunities for improvement.
- Compile electronic versions of all data collected and prepare summary reports of findings.

### Task 2: Public Outreach and Engagement

- Administer outreach and public engagement activities to solicit input from the community, both on perceptions of current system performance and areas for improvement.
- Incorporate public input into the development of recommendations and the Transit Route Study.

### Task 3: Recommendation Development

- Develop recommendations for improving the fixed route system and complementary paratransit services based on data analysis and public input.
- Identify short, medium, and long-term scenarios for implementation.
- Provide detailed plans for each scenario, including route changes, service types, timing, operational impacts, equipment, and resource needs such as personnel, equipment and associated budget.

## Deliverables

The consultant will be responsible for delivering the following:

- Survey instruments and data collected.
- Summary reports of data analysis and recommendations.
- Documentation of public outreach and engagement activities.
- Transit Route Study, including proposed route changes and improvement recommendations.
- Geospatial data deliverables compatible with ESRI ArcGIS.

## Timeline

The project timeline will be determined in consultation with the City of Sierra Vista and should account for sufficient time for data collection, analysis, public outreach, recommendation development, and final report preparation.