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**NCRTD Announces Participation in Nationwide Public Transportation Industry
“Health and Safety Commitments” Program**

District joins over 100 public transit agencies across the country in signing on to the program

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) announced today that it has joined the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) “Health and Safety Commitments Program,” the public transportation industry’s overarching pledge to passengers that public transit systems are taking all the necessary measures to operate safely as the nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The health and safety of passengers and operators is the most important priority for NCRTD. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the District has worked tirelessly to keep riders safe from infection from the coronavirus. By signing on to the APTA Health and Safety Commitments Program with more than 100 public transit systems, NCRTD and the public transit industry are actively working to instill confidence in riders that it is committed to protecting their health and safety.

The Program was developed after asking transit users from across the country what measures would make them feel more confident riding public transportation amid concerns about COVID-19. From this research, the industry identified four key areas that transit systems need to address to earn riders’ confidence:

- Following public health guidelines from official sources
- Cleaning and disinfecting transit vehicles frequently and requiring face coverings and other protections
- Keeping passengers informed and empowered to choose the safest times and routes to ride
- Putting health first by requiring riders and employees to avoid public transit if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or feel ill

APTA has provided a seal, much like a Good Housekeeping seal of approval, that will be affixed to each bus to show commitment to the program.

NCRTD has pledged to meet these commitments by creating specific policies that are effective for our system, our riders, and our community. A key component of the Health and Safety Commitments Program is the shared responsibility of our system *and* our riders to follow the guidelines. Riders rely on us to follow these commitments, and the District relies on riders to protect themselves and other customers.

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The District developed a COVID-19 care package to provide passengers who are not in possession of a face covering when attempting to board. The kit will include either an RTD blue bandana adorned with illustrations of the Northern New Mexico landscape or a cloth mask provided by the New Mexico Department of Transportation Transit and Rail Division, a bottle of spray hand sanitizer and a printed business-sized card with COVID-safe tips.

“The NCRTD remains committed to providing essential service for its passengers, stated Anthony Mortillaro, NCRTD Executive Director. “We continue to take aggressive measures to clean and disinfect our vehicles. Face coverings are required to board the buses and must remain on for the duration of the trip. Appropriate social distancing is maintained on vehicles with seats closed off and six feet of separation between riders, unless traveling together. Persons exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 are asked not to ride. Keeping our operators and passengers safe is our top priority.”

“This program is a commitment that this industry is making to all those we serve now and to those who we look forward to serving,” said Nuria I. Fernandez, APTA Chair, and General Manager and CEO of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. “Public transportation is and will be vital to the social and economic recovery of our nation. But getting there requires us to win back our ridership and encourage new riders to view public transit as a preferred mobility choice. We believe this commitment program will help do this.”

“The program being launched today is the public transportation industry’s pledge to promote sensible policies and practices designed to keep transit users and transit employees safe during the COVID-19 crisis,” said APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas. “It is a logical extension of the innovation and commitment we have been demonstrating for the past several months – and it makes the need for at least \$32 billion in additional emergency funding that much more urgent and critical.”

The North Central Regional Transit District, commonly known as the RTD Blue Bus, provides fare-free and premium fare public transit service to an area that encompasses over 10,000 square miles of north central New Mexico including the counties of Taos, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba and Santa Fe; as well as the Pueblos of Pojoaque, Ohkay Owingeh, Nambé, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Tesuque, Taos, Picuris and the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

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