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North Central Regional Transit District Approves Plan to Study Autonomous Vehicle Technology Across North Central New Mexico Transit Systems

[March 18, 2024, Española, NM] – The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) approved a resolution at its March 2024 Board meeting to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) to evaluate and create a roadmap for the potential development of autonomous vehicle (AV) technology for public transportation systems in North Central New Mexico.

CTAA's National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT) would implement the cooperative study in partnership with the NCRTD, the Santa Fe Trails transit system and Atomic City Transit in Los Alamos. The significant step marks the first such study of its kind in New Mexico to explore innovative AV solutions for public transportation in New Mexico.

NCRTD, along with Atomic City Transit and Santa Fe Trails, aims to research and better understand the benefits, implications, risks, and strategies involved in utilizing AV technology to address public transportation challenges. As the national bus operator shortages persist, the agencies seek to explore pilot service options to ensure communities do not suffer from a lack of mobility options.

"By partnering with N-CATT and CTAA, we are taking a proactive approach to address the evolving landscape of public transportation," said Anthony Mortillaro NCRTD executive director. "This collaboration will enable us to evaluate and harness the potential of AV technology to enhance transit services and meet the needs of our communities."

The MOU includes providing access to data, collaborating on research efforts, and implementing recommendations to ensure the successful evaluation of AV technology.

"We are excited to collaborate with NCRTD on this important initiative," said Scott Bogren, Executive Director of CTAA. "Through our partnership, we aim to leverage the expertise of N-CATT to support NCRTD's efforts in exploring autonomous vehicle technology and its potential impact on public transportation."

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The project is expected to be completed by June 30, 2025, with the possibility of extension by mutual agreement. NCRTD and its partners remain committed to leveraging innovative solutions to address the evolving transportation needs of the region.

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The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) connects communities and pueblos across 10,000 square miles throughout north central New Mexico, including Española, Los Alamos, Santa Fe and Taos. The signature Blue Bus™ provides free public transit service on 28 Fixed and Flex routes and MyBlue™, an app-based on-demand rideshare service for Taos and Española.

The mission of the National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT) is to translate emerging transportation technologies for states and localities across the United States. N-CATT will develop learning and planning resources for rural, small-urban and tribal transportation providers and communities, as well as provide community and state-specific technical assistance.