

**COMMUNITY  
READINESS  
REPORT**

Prepared for the  
Mandan, Hidatsa,  
& Arikara Nation

by Bubar & Hall  
Consulting, LLC

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# Tribal Transit at Fort Berthold Community Readiness Report



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As part of the transit planning process, staff at Bubar & Hall Consulting, LLC, engaged in Community Readiness interviews with residents, leadership, and service providers on the Fort Berthold Reservation. This report summarizes and analyzes the data that has been collected thus far and discusses the next steps in the Community Readiness process.

## The Community Readiness Model - Background

The Community Readiness Model is an innovative and transformative research methodology that was developed by a team of researchers in the Tri-Ethnic Center at Colorado State University as a means of “creating community change while integrating the culture of a community, the existing resources, and the level of readiness to more effectively address an issue” (Community Readiness Manual, p. 5).

Community Readiness is an important and useful model that:

- keeps community culture at the forefront of addressing community problems;
- allows a community to define issues and strategies in their own context;
- builds cooperation between systems and individuals;
- encourages and enhances community investment and awareness in addressing an issue; and
- serves as guide to the complex process of community change.

The Community Readiness Model was designed with tribal communities in mind; however, it has been used widely in both tribal and non-tribal settings. The model allows planners and leaders to make the best use of valuable resources such as time and money by guiding the selection of strategies that are most likely to be successful, given the community’s level of readiness to address an issue. It keeps the community at the forefront of all planning and decision-making, encouraging community recognition and ownership of community issues. This strong community ownership then helps to ensure that strategies are culturally congruent and sustainable in the long-term.

## Community Readiness and Tribal Transit

The Community Readiness Model has been used for a wide variety of issues including, for example, HIV/AIDS prevention, youth suicide, methamphetamine use, and cultural competency. One of the more innovative uses of the model is in tribal transit planning. A new public tribal transit system cannot be effective without widespread community support. Additionally, when planning a new transit system, it is essential that the community remains engaged throughout the entire process; this helps to ensure that the new transit system is responsive to their specific needs and that it is generally accepted and used by

the public. Community Readiness is a valuable resource because it focuses on community input and action.

To take advantage of the benefits provided by the Community Readiness Model, Bubar & Hall Consulting, LLC is utilizing this model during the Transit Planning process to engage the community as well as ensure that the resulting plan is the best fit for the reservation communities. Researchers conducted interviews with community members from each Segment about public transit services on the Fort Berthold Reservation. Each of these interviews was then analyzed and scored across the following six dimensions:

1. **Dimension A: Existing Public Transit Efforts** – What public transit services currently exist on the reservation?
2. **Dimension B: Community Knowledge of Public Transit Efforts** – How much do community members know about public transit options on the reservation?
3. **Dimension C: Leadership’s Support of Public Transit Efforts** – What is the community’s perception about leadership’s support for public transit?
4. **Dimension D: Community Climate Regarding the Need for Public Transit** – What are community attitudes toward public transit, including whether expanded services are needed?
5. **Dimension E: Community Knowledge about Public Transit Needs & Access** -- What perceptions does the community have about who needs access to transit services?
6. **Dimension F: Resources Related to Transit Needs** – What resources are available in the community for addressing public transit needs?

The Fort Berthold community received a score between 1 and 9 on each of these dimensions, as well as an overall score. No score is *bad* or *good*; rather, the score simply provides a snapshot of the community climate regarding a particular issue—in this case, public transit. The nine levels of community readiness are listed below:

1. **Level 1: No Awareness** – The issue is not generally recognized by the community as a problem
2. **Level 2: Denial / Resistance** – At least some community members recognize that the issue is a concern, but there is little recognition that it might be occurring locally.
3. **Level 3: Vague Awareness** – Most feel that there may be a local concern, but there is no immediate motivation or willingness to do anything about it.

4. **Level 4: Preplanning** – There is clear recognition that something must be done and there may even be a group addressing it. However, efforts are not yet focused or detailed
5. **Level 5: Preparation** – Active leaders begin planning in earnest. The community offers modest interest in efforts.
6. **Level 6: Initiation** – Enough information has been gathered to justify initiation of efforts. Activities are underway.
7. **Level 7: Stabilization** – Activities are supported by administrators or community decision makers. Staff are trained and experienced. The efforts are stable.
8. **Level 8: Confirmation / Expansion** – Efforts are established. Community members feel comfortable using services and are supportive. Efforts may expand to related issues. Local data are regularly obtained.
9. **Level 9: High Level of Community Ownership** – Detailed and sophisticated knowledge exists about the issue, including prevalence, causes, and consequences. In-depth evaluation guides new directions. The model is applied to other issues.

After a community's readiness level is established, the model provides specific and targeted strategies to move the community to a higher level of readiness, building critical community support for the transit plan in the process. Ideally, over the next several months as the planning process progresses, Fort Berthold will reach Level Six—Initiation. Reaching this level of readiness will help the community accept the new transit plan when it is implemented.

To prepare for the Community Readiness interviews, Bubar & Hall Consulting, LLC held a transit planning retreat with the MHA Nation Department of Planning and Grants. At this retreat, 15-20 individuals were identified from each of the six segments. These residents are tribal members and community leaders, and many work with transit-dependent populations. Five to six people from each segment were randomly selected from this list to participate in interviews. Each person was called, the project was explained, and if they agreed, the interview was recorded and later transcribed. Although we share participants' thoughts about transit in their own words later in this report, we have maintained confidentiality by removing identifying information and not associating interviews with individual names. All interviews were scored to determine an overall community readiness score. Additionally, the qualitative information in the interviews was coded to discover themes in the data. The Community Readiness score is explained across each of the six dimensions below.

## Community Readiness Score at Fort Berthold

The Community Readiness methodology includes a quantitative scoring process to help us understand how to best prepare the Fort Berthold community to embrace public transit as a new way of getting around. The findings also help guide the transit planning process so the initial service is appropriate for the level of need and actual use. The Fort Berthold community received an overall readiness score of 2.9, which corresponds to Stage 2: Denial/ Resistance, although it is very close to a Stage 3: Vague Awareness. The scores for each of the six dimensions vary from 2.3 up to 3.5. Looking at each of these scores individually can provide insight about the community climate regarding transit issues.

- Dimension A: Existing Public Transit Efforts – Score: 2.9

Answers to “Dimension A” questions revealed programs that are working to address public transit on the Fort Berthold Reservation. These include programs funded by federal or tribal government, such as CHR, dialysis transportation, and segment vans for elders, as well as private enterprises like the New Town Bus Line and Lyle’s Taxi. A score of 2.9 reflects that while there are some services currently available, a growing number of residents are beginning to recognize the need to develop more transit options on the reservation.

- Dimension B: Community Knowledge of Public Transit Efforts – Score 3.0

According to our interview data, many community members are aware of public transit options related to medical needs, like the CHR program, but they often have incorrect assumptions about program eligibility. Additionally, they are unsure of where to turn for other kinds of transit needs, and are sometimes unaware of the fact that many community members struggle to get where they need to go. This is reflected in the score of 3.0, which suggests that some community members have heard about public transit efforts, but the extent of their knowledge is limited.

- Dimension C: Leadership’s Support of Public Transit Efforts – Score 2.3

There were a wide range of answers to questions about community leaders and their support of public transit. It is important to remember that the leadership score does not necessarily reflect how strongly community leaders support public transit but rather what community *perceptions* are. Several people mentioned that community councilpersons were supportive of individuals in need of transit access and were able to give specific examples of times their appointed leaders had stepped in to make changes or

assist individuals in need. Other interview data showed a lack of awareness of community leaders' support of public transit. A score of 2 would show that leadership believes transit access is *not* a concern in the community, while a score of 3 would show that leaders *do* recognize the need for further public transit services. A score of 2.3 reflects inconsistency in community *perceptions* of leadership's commitment to transit access. However, we interviewed community leaders themselves and consistently saw great support for expanding public transit; this is reflected in Tribal Business Council's decision to hire Bubar & Hall Consulting, LLC to begin the transit planning process. If expanded transit services are going to be successful, it is crucial that leaders show support for the planning process and simultaneously that the community is aware of this support.

- Dimension D: Community Climate Regarding the Need for Public Transit – Score 3.5

This dimension examines community attitudes about the need for public transit. The score in this area, a 3.5, reflects that some community members see public transit access as an unimportant issue in the Fort Berthold community, while other community members feel that transit access must be addressed but are unsure of how to get something started. The fact that support for increased transit services is building will be very helpful in the planning process.

- Dimension E: Community Knowledge about Public Transit Needs & Access – Score 2.8

A score of 2.8 in Dimension E reflects that while many community members have limited knowledge about public transit, some community members are beginning to understand that there are populations (including the elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals/ families) that are affected by lack of mobility due to few public transit services on the reservation.

- Dimension F: Resources Related to Transit Needs – Score 2.8

Dimension F examines the resources the community currently has to address public transit needs. Some examples of public transit resources are volunteers, services, or agencies where people can go for information. The Fort Berthold community received a score of 2.8 in this area, suggesting that there are currently few resources for addressing public transit needs. One great resource that community members have is the support of family and friends. Family and friends were consistently mentioned as the place people would turn if they needed help with mobility. However, other interviews mentioned that it is hard to recruit volunteers for efforts and causes at Fort Berthold. Volunteers will be crucial in the planning process; it will be important to move the community to a higher level of readiness to generate excitement about expanded transit services which will lead to more volunteers.

## Themes

In addition to determining quantitative Community Readiness score, Bubar & Hall Consulting, LLC coded the interviews and organized qualitative data into themes which will be used to guide the transit planning process. There were several themes that stood out during the interview coding process.

### Transit-Disadvantaged Populations

Due to the recent oil development on the reservation, many people who did not previously have vehicles have now been able to purchase them. However, according to our interviews, there are several populations that do not have access to vehicles and are in need of transit services. Each of these populations is discussed below.

#### Elders

77% of the people we interviewed thought that elders were in need of more transit services. In some segments, transit services for elders were no longer provided as frequently as they used to be and in some cases have been eliminated.

*The elder program used to have that bus that came up here every Tuesday and Thursday. They brought the elders to the casino, and then if they needed to go into town, they used to give them a ride into town to get groceries or whatever it was that they needed to do. The bus driver didn't have to do that, but he did that for the elders. But now I don't think they have that anymore. I don't think they have anybody that has a CDL to drive a bus like that. So I think the elders now all kind of depend on one another for transportation.*

Several interviews mentioned that elders are more vulnerable to the decreased safety on the roads from oil field truck traffic; transit services for elders could offer them a safer alternative. Additionally, elders are more likely to need medical care, but access to that medical care has become increasingly difficult to obtain.

*Well I believe the CHRs provide service for the elders, but sometimes you just have so many elders who have appointments, and we might not have enough CHRs... I know there have been CHRs saying we need more services for the elders.*

Another problem is that many elders are unable to drive, either due to age or fear about unsafe road conditions. They may want to continue doing their own shopping and attend to business and appointments in nearby cities but can have a difficult time accessing resources. Even elders who are able to drive may not be able to afford car insurance and gas on their fixed incomes.



*It's really hard [for the elders]. They get very frustrated about it, not being able to go anywhere. They have vehicles, but like I said, the insurance and the gas, it's just too much. With public transit they would be able to pay a little to get to their doctors and their appointments.*

### *Individuals with Disabilities or Medical Needs*

Residents with medical needs or disabilities were mentioned in 85% of the interviews. A large percentage of these individuals are also elders, which further complicates their access to medical care. Often they may not have driver's licenses or automobile insurance. Many community members and programs support more access for these individuals.

*When I schedule appointments, if I ask them to go up to New Town to get labs drawn or something, they'll say, "I don't have a ride." They can't make it on that day because they don't have a ride, or they'll have to see who can take them. A lot of people don't go to their doctor's appointments because they don't have vehicles.*

The Community Health Representative (CHR) program provides medical transportation for some elders, but many people are unaware of the eligibility process for accessing CHR services. Additionally, the program is stretched and cannot provide services to everyone that needs them.

*I know the CHRs help out as much as they can with providing rides. But I know that's not enough to meet the need of everybody that needs a ride. And I know for CHR, that's not what the program was designed to do, that's just something they've taken on.*

Dialysis patients also have a need for more transit services. Not having enough dialysis drivers for the whole reservation was a problem mentioned during interviews, with one person responding that "now we have more people who are on dialysis and are driving themselves" to their appointments.

### *Employees*

Transportation to and from jobs is also a need that is not being met through existing services. Employees who do not have vehicles have to find other ways of getting to work, often relying on friends and relatives or Lyle's Taxi service. Lack of access to reliable transportation prevents some people from working.

*They used to have a [bus] line that gave casino employees rides, but they don't do that anymore. And that's why a lot of the employees quit, because they can't get a ride to work. I never had a weekend off the time I worked at the casino because they were short-handed, and that was always the excuse, that they couldn't get to work.*

A public transit system that provides transportation to major employers on the reservation, including the casino and the future refinery site, may be one way to address this issue.

### *Residents of Outlying Segments*

Another group that is currently being underserved by existing transit services includes residents of outlying segments, particularly Twin Buttes, Mandaree, and White Shield. Interview participants from these segments mention that remoteness, isolation, and lack of access to services is a major problem.

*I live in Twin Buttes, and even before we all had vehicles we had a hard time [accessing services]. And now with the store being closed there is absolutely no gas. You have to gas up before you can even get anywhere, and where are you going to gas up? It's been hard. There's a lot of single parents that really, really need a lot of help. And they move out of there because it's so far out, getting to Dickinson is hard, and coming to New Town is especially hard for us, because you have to deal with all the traffic, with all the semis and all that... Now Halliday has no grocery store, so we go clear to Beulah or Dickinson or even Bismarck just to get groceries.*

The oil boom has left roads and infrastructure in constant need of repair. The on-going construction to address these needs further complicates mobility and access for the communities of Twin Buttes and Mandaree, adding significantly to drive times.

### *Safety*

Another recurrent theme in the interviews was safety. Road safety concerns were mentioned in 92% of our community readiness interviews. The oil boom has come with a sharp increase in heavy truck traffic on the reservation, and several individuals we interviewed were concerned about safety on the roads, especially for populations such as elders and youth who are learning to drive.

*[Transit is] needed because of the high-volume of truck traffic. People are scared to go to New Town because it's too dangerous.*

*I would assume that [a transit system] is going to be welcomed. People will welcome a new transit system just for the safer roads in the evenings due to all the accidents and fatalities.*

Some interviews also mentioned drinking and driving as a barrier to road safety on the reservation, suggesting services to and from the casino in the evenings to prevent drunk driving. Another safety concern that was brought out in the interviews is hitchhiking—sometimes people have to resort to hitchhiking or looking for rides at the gas station. With the influx of workers coming onto the reservation due to oil development, hitchhiking may not be the safest option for community members.

### *Resources*

The Community Readiness interviews also asked about transit-related resources on the reservation. A major strength of the Fort Berthold Community is that families and neighbors are often willing to help each other out when someone needs assistance getting around. Families and friends were consistently

mentioned as the best resource for transportation when CHR isn't an option. Community councilpersons and community boards were also discussed as good resources for tribal members. However, not everyone has access to people who can help them get around, especially those who do not qualify for elder's services or medical transportation.

*A lot of [people] just don't have someone to take them around. It would be good if they had a bus that took people just for appointments, or to get their grocery shopping, or go visit somebody, or carools to work, but right now they don't have that.*

*If they're not an elder, I don't know where they would turn for help.*

## Community Climate

Overall, the community climate regarding transit was open and positive. 92% of the individuals interviewed thought that additional transit services were needed. Two people we spoke to were unsure if there was a high enough demand to make transit feasible. One of the post-oil boom changes is that many more people have cars now.

*I would say there's really not much need for public transit, because everybody has one or two cars, and what I've found is that people want to drive their own car. They don't want to ride a bus, or they don't want to be without their car.*

Most of the people we interviewed, however, saw at least a moderate need for increased public transit services, noting that it was hard to meet everyone's needs with the current services.

*[The segment office tries] to assist in whatever way we can whenever we can... The need is there, but we can't fulfill everybody's requests.*

When asked about what obstacles a new transit system would face, staffing, organization, and lack of volunteers were mentioned as potential barriers. Competing with oil companies for drivers, mechanics, and other staff is a unique challenge the Fort Berthold reservation would face.

*To staff something like that you would have trouble. Even for myself I have problems getting drivers because you have to have a clean record and that's difficult. And you have to have a license.*

A few respondents felt like the community climate had changed after the oil boom, making it more difficult to come together to solve problems.

*We don't have enough involvement by the community residents. They don't help one another like they used to. It's really hard to get volunteers these days, because it seems like everybody wants to get paid for everything.*

*If they want to put public transit in place, they could, because, you know, we are one of the richest reservations. [But] everybody just does their own kind of thing, and doesn't think about the elders or the community.*

In order for public transit to be a feasible option at Fort Berthold, the community will need to come together in support of it, and community members will need to step up and take leadership in the planning process.

### Leadership

Luckily, there was evidence in the interviews of support by both official and unofficial community leaders for public transit. The majority of individuals interviewed thought that leadership would support a new public transit system, and a few respondents mentioned ways that their community leaders had already stepped up to find solutions.

*There is awareness that dialysis patients were having problems getting there on time. Our leader Mervin [Packineau] hired someone to personally pick them up. So he's a winner at least.*

*Our community rep [stands out as a transit leader], Randy Phelan—he would be a great person to talk to. He's also an elder.*

*Ed Hall, he's a community leader. He lives there in Parshall.*

*I think one that would bend over backwards is Doris Packineau. She's one that would help anybody. She stands out in my book.*

*I think that [Tribal Business Council is] very aware and they really support our program. And they support the CHR program as well. But there just needs to be other options for transportation, not just these two programs.*

*I'm a community board chairman and I try to help anybody that needs help. You know, show by my example.*

Strong community leaders are a great resource that will need to be mobilized for the transit planning process to be successful.

### Next Steps

Bubar & Hall Consulting, LLC will use Fort Berthold's Community Readiness Level of 2 to develop targeted marketing strategies that will move the community to a higher level of readiness. According to the model, raising awareness about the need for public transit in the community is the best way to bring the community to a higher readiness level. Although scores are rounded down in the Community Readiness model, an overall score of 2.9 is very close to Level 3; the goal at Level 3 is to focus on raising

awareness that the community has the ability and power to enact change regarding public transit. Since Fort Berthold is so close to a Level 3, we will use strategies from this level as well. Some of the specific marketing strategies for these levels include:

- Make one-on-one visits with community leaders/members.
- Visit existing and established small groups to share information with them about public transit generally as well as transit needs on the reservation.
- Approach and engage local services and programs to assist in the education and awareness effort by including flyers, posters, or brochures in their materials or outreach efforts.
- Prepare and submit short informational “blurbs” on public transit for church bulletins, local newsletters, club newsletters, etc.
- Present information to local community groups.
- Request to be on small group or club agendas and present information on public transit
- Post flyers, posters, and articles in visible places.

Community Readiness is a dynamic model that can be used on an ongoing basis at Fort Berthold. By incorporating Community Readiness questions into our stakeholder interviews, we can continue gaining insight into shifts in the Community Readiness score.

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The information contained in the report about Community Readiness was taken from the publication *Community Readiness Manual* by Barbara A. Plested, Pamela Jumper-Thurman, and Ruth W. Edwards. To learn more about the Community Readiness model or to request a free copy of the manual, visit the website of the National Center for Community and Organizational Readiness online at <http://www.nccr.colostate.edu/>