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<th>Needs/Resource Assessment: Nogales, Arizona</th>
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<td>PROJECT BASTIIA: Building Accessible and Sustainable Transportation for Increased Independence - Arizona</td>
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<td>Isra Yaghoubi</td>
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Community Profile:

Located along Arizona’s southern boundary, the City of Nogales, Arizona borders the city of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, and is Arizona’s largest international border town. Nogales is the county seat for Santa Cruz County.

The City of Nogales is currently comprised of 20.8 square miles with a population density of approximately 964 people per square mile (compared to the Arizona average of 54 people per square mile).

The City of Nogales has a total population of 20,837 (2010 Census). The populations of nearby cities are as follows: Rio Rico ~19,000; Patagonia 913.

Regarding the demographics of Nogales:

34.9% are 0-19 years old; 6.2% are 20-24 years old; 10% are 25-34 years old; 10.9% are 35-44 years old; 13.1% are 45-54 years old; 11.1% are 55-64 years old; 13.8% are 65 years or above.

19,793 residents are Hispanic or Latino and 1,044 residents are “Not Hispanic or Latino”: 803 residents are “White alone”; 48 residents are “American Indian and Alaska Native alone”; 28 residents are “Black or African American alone”; 125 residents are “Asian alone”; 1 resident is “Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone”; 31 residents are “2 or more races”; and 8 are “Some other race alone”.

54% of the population is female and 46% of the population is male.

According to the national prevalence rate, an estimated 375 people with developmental disabilities live in Nogales, with 240 of them served by the Arizona Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

Nogales is located at the southern terminus of interstate I-19, a highway that is a portion of the United States section of the CANAMEX Corridor, a trade corridor that stretches north from Mexico across the United States to the Canadian province of Alberta. I-19 is short but significant insofar as it serves (via Interstate 10) as a fast route between Phoenix and Tucson and the Mexican border.

There are limited public transportation routes within the City of Nogales on three to four privately owned buses. There is a paratransit service, Nogales Rides, for seniors and people with disabilities. Nogales is also served by Greyhound bus and various shuttle services. An Amtrack train station and the Tucson International Airport are 70 miles away in Tucson.
Nogales commerce and employment are supported through extensive international trade, manufacturing, maquiladora trade flows, retail and tourism. The largest private sector employer in Santa Cruz County is the produce industry, and the Nogales Mariposa Port of Entry is the largest entry point for fresh produce from Mexico.

Transportation Options

Public transportation in Nogales consists of 3-4 privately run buses. The bus route runs primarily from the U.S.-Mexican border to take people to shopping centers in Nogales.

Nogales Rides is the paratransit (dial-a-ride) van service offered by the city for seniors and people with disabilities, within city limits. This van has a wheelchair lift, and is ADA compliant.

People with developmental disabilities are primarily served by providers who facilitate transportation to their programs, such as the Santa Cruz Training Program (SCTP), and Horizon Human Services. Ninety percent of those involved with programs by these providers are picked up and dropped off at their homes. The SCTP has two group homes and a van assigned to each home that takes people to church and shopping. Some individuals who live in their own homes and receive services from SCTP pay a fee for transportation. The director noted that they applied for Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) money to purchase the vans, with the Santa Cruz County ARC assisting with matching funds.

Transportation Barriers

The following critical transportation barriers for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families were identified:

- Lack of transport to outlying areas (such as Rio Rico, Patagonia)
- Non-ADA compliant buses that have a very limited route
- Those who are not Title-19 eligible are not served by some providers
- A lack of afterhours/weekend transport and sole prioritization of medical needs
- Parents face challenges such as language issues and lack of advocacy training
- School bus drivers need training and regulation

The Santa Cruz One-Stop Career Center provides transport to work training for those who qualify based on income eligibility. This service is open to all, including those with developmental disabilities.

Children with developmental disabilities receive curb-to-curb service on school buses to get them to and from school.

Many adults with developmental disabilities rely on their families for transportation.

The Mariposa Community Health Center (CHC) has one ADA van for their clinic, to serve patients with insurance in Nogales and Rio Rico. They recently received a grant to get a new van.
• Streets, sidewalks and some buildings are not ADA compliant, barring physical access
• Need for greater community awareness and support on issues relating to people with developmentally disabilities
• Budget cuts and unmet funding needs

The lack of transportation options for those with developmental disabilities was described as impacting them adversely. People expressed concern about individuals with developmental disabilities being stranded in their homes, without being able to access things like jobs, rehabilitation and recreation.

One parent summed up the transportation options for adults with developmental disabilities in Nogales by saying, “It’s just the family and providers.”

Other people noted the lack of occupational, speech and other therapists in Nogales. With no Children’s Rehabilitation Center and few specialists as well, people must secure transportation to access these services elsewhere.

One parent expressed her concerns regarding the future challenges of developmentally disabled adults who are currently dependent on their families for transport, if transportation options are not expanded. She asked, “What will happen to them when their parents die?” Another parent who runs a support group described the stress that families face when adult family members with developmental disabilities do not have access to the services and supports that will enable them to live independently.

City Buses: Non-ADA, Limited Route
The former school buses used for public transportation in Nogales are not ADA compliant and therefore cannot accommodate someone with a mobility impairment or using a wheelchair. The drivers of these buses are not trained in providing transportation for individuals with disability related needs. Additionally, these privately owned buses have a very limited route.

Nogales Rides
Many individuals mentioned the lack of flexibility for those who use the paratransit service, insofar as riders are often dropped off late (or else must plan to arrive hours early) and may have to wait hours to be picked up again. It was also noted that people needing assistance during transit would not be able to use Nogales Rides, as the driver cannot drive and provide assistance at the same time.

Lack of Transport to the Outskirts
There is a lack of transportation between Nogales, Rio Rico and Patagonia, despite the fact that people need to go back and forth between these places for shopping, employment and medical needs. It was noted that many people who once lived in Nogales have moved to Rio Rico (a neighboring town almost equally as large in population), because it’s cheaper to rent or buy a home, but that many are stuck if they don’t have a car. As an unincorporated area, Rio Rico faces significant transportation challenges.
Non-Title 19 Eligibility
Only those adults who are receiving services through the Arizona Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and who are ALTCS (Title 19) eligible receive transportation services through contracted providers, and usually only to and from provider related services and activities. 

School Bus Drivers Need Training and Regulation
One parent noted that drivers of the Nogales school buses which transport children with developmental disabilities do not receive sensitivity training, and that there are related issues and concerns.

No After Hours/Weekend Transport, Medical Prioritization
A provider noted that while transportation might be adequate for the day programs, it is lacking in the evenings and on weekends, leaving people with developmental disabilities without any options during these times. Transportation for children with developmental disabilities is limited to school hours, with nothing available to accommodate participation in after-school activities or programs. Nogales Rides used to operate four vans, but now only operates one, which it prioritizes for medical needs.

Physical Access, Design
Another barrier mentioned is difficulty regarding physical access on streets and in buildings. Many of those interviewed mentioned the absence of sidewalks in some areas, and the problem of old, dilapidated sidewalks on main roads. One person said, “Sidewalks in the city are not accessible for those who are wheelchair bound”. A parent noted that schools are not fully ADA compliant for students in wheelchairs.

Lack of Community Awareness and Support
The lack of community awareness on issues faced by those with developmental disabilities was cited repeatedly as a barrier. One parent said, “I think we need to talk more about disabilities to inform people.”

Budget Cuts, Funding Needs
The city manager of Nogales pointed to the lack of funding, stating that because “Arizona has cut back funding, we’re operating just one [ADA compliant] van [out of four available],” adding that even with the coordinating efforts and “thinking outside of the box” of the Nogales Mobility Coordinating Committee, in essence, “the issue is funding.”

A health care worker noted in her advisory meetings that “transportation consistently comes up” and that “funding is a huge problem.”

Community Infrastructures & Resources

A Mobility Transportation Committee
Monthly mobility transportation meetings are held in Nogales, with participation from nonprofits and the city, and “all try to pitch in and do their best for transportation for the elderly.” The mobility coordinating committee is organized through SEAGO (Southeastern Arizona Government Organization), and includes the Nogales city manager, John Kissinger, and Mayor Arturo Garino. Mobility coordinator Martha Sparling also represents the city at the monthly meetings, and Melanie Greene is the SEAGO Transit Consultant who coordinates the committee.
**Parent and Family Groups**

Jenny Hill founded and runs a nonprofit group called Angels Purse, which provides practical assistance to families with autism and developmental delays. Jenny is a community organizer who has a son with autism. She is interested in advocating for more transportation options for people with developmental disabilities in Nogales.

Maria and Jack Schnolnick founded and run a nonprofit group called the Parent-Love Connection that serves parents of special needs children (and is affiliated with the National Downs Syndrome Society and the Downs Syndrome Connection). They have been attuned to issues relating to developmental disabilities for over three decades. They have met with Mayor Garino, raising the issue of transportation and wheelchair accessibility on city streets. Maria mentioned her interest in encouraging more advocacy on this issue, and desire to create a bigger group with more parents.

There was mention of a group that brings lunches to the homes of people with developmental disabilities.

**Existing Advocacy Initiatives**

Three *promotoras* have been involved in the University of Arizona initiative in Nogales, *Advocacy Leadership – Accion Para La Salud*, surveying the needs of the community over the past two years. Transportation was chosen as the community advocacy issue. Recent meetings have led to the expansion in the route of one of the privately run buses (on 4/2/12), to serve the low-income street of Western Ave., so that people can have transportation to go to the hospital and to work.

More was written in the Nogales International:  
[http://www.nogalesinternational.com/news/advocates-step-up-on-transportation-problems/article_2c8a3330-7a79-11e1-b701-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.nogalesinternational.com/news/advocates-step-up-on-transportation-problems/article_2c8a3330-7a79-11e1-b701-001a4bcf887a.html)

The Santa Cruz Community Action Coalition was formed 6 months ago by Adriana Romero, to “meet needs in the community,” including transportation, substance abuse and law enforcement. She is interested in working on education and advocacy training.

**Research Resources**

Over the past 2 years, ADOT has been conducting a study in Nogales, the “City of Nogales PARA Pedestrian Circulation at Ports of Entry Study,” about sidewalks, safety, the need to move pedestrians and compliance issues for individuals with disabilities. The study can be read here:  

**Federal Funding**

Federal funding for transportation (such as 53-11, 53-10, and 53-09 grants) are available contingent upon state or local matching funds. A former transportation project initiator noted that expanding transportation opportunities for people with developmental disabilities would be doable with local support and matching capital that could leverage readily available federal funding.
Available ADA Vans
The City of Nogales has a total of four vans that are ADA equipped, but only one is currently in use (by Nogales Rides). The city manager noted that only one is being operated “because funding has dried up.”

Also, the Transportation Director at the Senior Citizens of Patagonia (who is also involved in the SEAGO Mobility Committee) said that they have an ADA van that is not in use. He noted that while their volunteer run van service does not serve Nogales, part of their mission and their charter is to provide transportation to seniors and people with disabilities, and that if a driver from Nogales were provided he would be “more than happy to entertain the idea of somebody using that van, if they have a clean driving record, and we can set up insurance.”

General Impression of Community Readiness and Need for Transportation Project
In summary, virtually all of the people interviewed agreed that individuals with developmental disabilities in Nogales have a clear need for accessible transportation options. Some expressed interest in becoming actively involved in creating community solutions.

There is the beginning of a small groundswell with the efforts of the promotoras on their transportation advocacy project, and the recent bus line expansion. In addition, there are 3 currently unused ADA vans owned by the city, and another one available through the Senior Citizens of Patagonia.