

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of the Regional Public Transportation Authority

Vol II Issue II, Spring/Summer 1999

Chandler Seeks to Improve Transportation with Voter Approval

Transit Funding

On May 18, Chandler residents have the opportunity to approve Question #1 on the ballot that will allow significant improvements to their transportation and traffic systems. The improvements are needed due to the doubling of Chandler's population over the past decade. Many residents are fearful that driving on Chandler's overcrowded streets isn't safe anymore and solutions, as well as options, need to be sought.

My 13 year-old son must cross the street to go to school and I worry every day," says Renee Lopata, a Chandler resident for eight years. Lopata and her family come from Chicago where transit is abundant and a natural choice when going someplace.

"We need to make city streets safer," Lopata adds. She believes transit is a viable solution and would provide a way for her son and his friends to be able to get to places like malls and movie theatres. "That's the way I traveled when I was a kid."

The proposed improvements have been the focus of an 11-member committee, the Chandler Citizens Committee, chaired by Mike Perry. Committee members include

residents and business representatives from Chandler.

The first phase was to conduct research. A private consultant was hired to interview 400 Chandler residents on the following concerns: traffic congestion and safety, and transportation systems.

Results of the research showed that residents want more bus pullouts, synchronized lights, left turn arrows, clean buses, improved Dial-A-Ride, red light cameras and expanded bus service. Nearly 73 percent of those interviewed said they would support such a tax to make these improvements.

The second phase of the committee's efforts was to engage in city-wide conversations with groups of residents, business members, and neighborhoods about how to best accomplish their objectives.

"The results of this study just confirmed what we found in the initial research...that people were in favor of the improvements," Perry says.

Phase three includes educating the public about the proposed tax, hoping to get their support along the way.

"The whole idea is a quality-of-life issue that addresses these traffic improvements and benefits the entire community. We want to make it easier to get to the places you need to go, and especially, make it safer for residents," Perry adds.

If passed the Chandler citywide sales tax will increase to 1.875 percent from 1.5 percent. The tax will expire after 10 years and then must be approved again in order for it to be continued.

According to Perry, the plan calls for immediate relief to motorists traveling on crowded, unsafe roads. Dan Cook, Chandler's Assistant Public Works Director for transportation said their first priority for transit, if the vote is approved, is to increase existing bus service on existing routes. According to Cook, their second priority is to expand bus service.

(Continued on page 3)

IF approved by voters, the 3/8 cent tax, would fund:

- 6 Traffic Safety Improvements
- 6 Traffic Congestion Relief
- 6 Transportation Alternatives

What will it cost for the 3/8 cent tax?

Currently, the tax on a \$100 purchase in Chandler is \$7.20.*

If approved, that same purchase would only increase to \$7.58.

*Includes all state, county, and city taxes





year ago, at the beginning of his term as Chairman of the RPTA Board of Directors, Mayor Skip Rimsza stressed the importance of making improvements to Dial-A-Ride.

"Before the next 12 months have run their course, let us make every conceivable effort to provide a regional seamless Dial-a-Ride service." *Mayor Rimsza, Destinations, Summer 1998*

Two groups have been formed to regularly address regional Dial-a-Ride issues. Their focus is to provide some of the planning alternatives to improve service.

The **Regional Paratransit Task Force** representatives are from the major Dial-a-Rides and Valley Metro service providers.

The **Paratransit Advisory Group** representatives are from the Dial-a-Ride customer base, care giver institutions, and agencies or organizations providing service to the elderly or persons with disabilities.

RPTA makes every effort to offer improved coordination of Dial-a-Ride services and identify solutions to make service more dependable, on-time and more efficient in each service area.

"This is one step towards making paratransit services the kind of transportation alternative that Valley residents want and desperately need," says Rimsza as he leaves his post as Chairman of the RPTA.

While great strides are being made to make Dial-a-Ride a more usable service for

Valley residents, Rimsza says it's time to focus on the rest of the transit system.

"With population and job growth expected to double in the next 25 years, we know that freeways won't keep pace. Having a viable public transit system that includes light rail and additional bus service will be essential if we care about air quality, economic growth, and the Valley's quality of life for future generations," Rimsza concludes. □

Mayor Rimsza Reflects on Past Year's Efforts

"We can all be pleased with the improvements that make Dial-A-Ride a more pleasant experience for Valley residents."



Mayor Skip Rimsza

Today, the improvements to the Valley's transportation services for persons with disabilities and senior citizens has occurred and Dial-a-Ride is continuing to move in a more usable direction. The following is a list of recently implemented improvements to better facilitate the coordination and operation of all Dial-a-Rides in the Valley Metro service region.

- 6 An evaluation of trip transfers between Dial-a-Rides will result in better service for passengers.
- 6 Installation of new dispatching software by the City of Phoenix will improve service for riders and communication between service providers.
- 6 Research on a single regional phone number is currently taking place that will help simplify reservations.
- 6 East Valley Dial-a-Ride vehicles now have improved fareboxes that will give passengers more options when paying fares.
- 6 A Dial-a-Ride Guide is being developed, similar to the Bus Book, to give passengers complete information on all Dial-A-Rides in the Valley Metro system.
- 6 In April, an evaluation team, which included Dial-a-Ride passengers, participated in the recommendation of a new contractor for the Mesa/Chandler/Gilbert and Scottsdale/Tempe services.
- 6 New vehicles are traveling in Mesa/Chandler/Gilbert and Scottsdale/Tempe Dial-a-Rides. The City of Phoenix is in the process of purchasing new vehicles.

Dial-a-Ride improvements will make travel easier for seniors and persons with disabilities.





Left to Right:
 George Scoville,
 Teamsters;
 Cliff Davis,
 Teamsters;
 Terry Van der Aa,
 ATC/Vancom;
 Ken Driggs,
 RPTA;
 John Van der Aa,
 ATC/Vancom;
 Fran Mullenix,
 ATU Local #1433;
 John Solomon,
 Sky Harbor Airport

Ribbon cutting ceremony at the new LNG refueling station

New Facility Accelerates Fueling Time

The completion of the country's first facility built from the ground up to support liquified natural gas (LNG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles was celebrated at a ribbon cutting ceremony in February.

The new ATC/Vancom Operations Center, located at 3255 South 44th Street, is the base of operations for the fixed route bus services provided by ATC/Vancom to Valley Metro. It also provides service for the employee shuttle bus operations serving Sky Harbor International Airport.

The state-of-the-art LNG refueling station can fill up one of the new alternative fueled Valley Metro coaches as quickly as a regular diesel pump, which is much more efficient when preparing buses for the road. The new center features 7,680 square feet of service bays, warehousing and parts inventory space, vehicle storage for 80 buses, and administrative offices for ATC/Vancom staff.

Terry Van der Aa, ATC/Vancom President and CEO, and John Van der Aa, ATC/Vancom Chairman of the Board, traveled from the company's Chicago headquarters for the opening ceremony. The ATC/Vancom Operations Center will provide Valley Metro and Sky Harbor with a facility convenient to East Valley transit operations. □



Chandler Seeks (Continued from page 1)

Tempe residents approved a half-cent tax for transportation and transit improvements in September 1996. Between 1996 and 1998, Tempe experienced a 73 percent increase in ridership.

Mesa citizens approved a 3/8 cent city tax last year to also support transit improvements. With their additional funding, they have been able to add a high-tech Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) System to 65 buses. The AVL System gives riders real time arrival information at key locations. Mesa has also been able to make improvements to their Senior Center Transit Station with voter-approved transit funding.

For additional information about ballot Question #1 and the improvements to traffic congestion and safety that it will fund, call the Chandler Citizens Committee at (480) 350-0414. □

3/8 Cent Transportation Improvement Program

- Traffic Safety Improvements**
 - Traffic signal system
 - Right turn arrows
 - Red light cameras
 - Protected turn lanes
 - Pedestrian improvements
 - Median improvements
 - Additional signage
 - Message boards
 - Traffic calming
- Transportation Alternatives**
 - Additional bus routes
 - Expand Dial-a-Ride service
 - Saturday and Sunday bus service
 - Extend bus service hours
 - Purchase clean fuel buses
 - Bike lane striping & facility improvements
 - Downtown park-and-ride lot
 - Shuttle bus service
 - Ray Road express bus service
- Traffic Congestion Relief**
 - Bus pullouts
 - Dual left turn lanes
 - Right turn lanes
 - Additional lanes
 - Intersection and corridor improvements



aunching an attack on ozone this summer may be tougher than anyone expected. With the effects of La Niña expected to raise temperatures making ozone more prevalent in the

Valley,

a challenge to reduce ozone this summer is perfect timing.

This year, Valley organizations have the opportunity to achieve a third consecutive year with no violations of the ozone one-hour standard. If we have no violations in the 1999 ozone season (mid-May through September), the one-hour ozone standard and associated federal sanctions will no longer apply to the Valley.

“The Governor is 100 percent behind this program and she really believes that such a proactive approach by business, government and the driving public will make a significant difference,” said Johnson.

Ira Domsy, Planning Section Manager at the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, explained why attainment is so important.

“If we are given the ‘severe’ label (for ozone), it creates the perception Arizona cannot manage its natural resources. And, these new restrictions would also saddle the Valley with economic development disadvantages,” Domsy said.

“It’s a simple and fun program that’s not only good for

the Valley, but also good for our company,” said workshop attendee, Kathleen Mlod, Transportation Coordinator for BF Goodrich Aerospace.

More than 200 Valley companies and organizations will be participating in the Governor’s summer program to reduce ozone.

“Think of the effect it would make on our air quality if 10 percent of the workforce stayed home to work or used an alternate mode for their daily commute,” said Ed Fox, Vice

President, Health and Safety, Environmental Programs at APS, and whose idea it was to develop the ozone campaign. “It shows we can make a difference if we really want to.”

To find out more about the Governor’s Ozone Program initiative call 262-7433 or visit the RPTA website at www.valleymetro.maricopa.gov. □

Governor Hull Announces New Ozone Initiative

“The Governor is 100 percent behind this program and she really believes that such a proactive approach... will make a significant difference.”

Leslie Johnson, Assistant to the Governor.



Governor Jane Hull

The Ozone Alert Program, that officially kicks off in May, asks Valley companies to reduce the number of employee vehicles that travel to the work site by at least 10 percent via teleworking or other trip reduction means. The Governor has combined the resources of Maricopa County, ADEQ, RPTA, Valley Forward, Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, APS, and Intel to help companies in developing their plans.

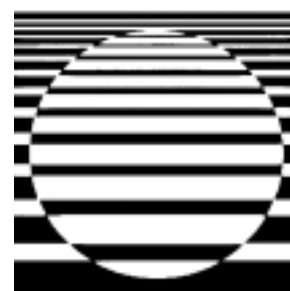
Funding support from the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and federal highway funds has made the program to combat ozone possible. In addition, MAG will be funding a summer ozone campaign that will target the general public across the Valley.

“Because of MAG’s absolute commitment to improving air quality in the region, the MAG Regional Council voted unanimously to fund this campaign,” said MAG Executive Director James M. Bourey. “But just putting out the message isn’t enough. It is vital that both the business community and the public embrace this plan” he adds.

Developing a “10% Plan” was initiated with training at a Virtual Workshop in March that more than 100 companies attended at four different sites. The workshop featured Leslie Johnson, Assistant to the Governor.

Governor Jane Dee Hull’s

OZONE ALERT PROGRAM



Hop On Glendale's Bus GUS

Singer Paul Simon had no idea when he wrote the famous song featuring the lyrics, "hop on the bus Gus," that folks in Arizona would take it so seriously. However, the City of Glendale has taken those words literally with the creation of GUS—the Glendale Urban Shuttle. It's the newest addition to the city's transit service that began last fall.

Two propane-fueled twelve-passenger GUS shuttles, equipped with bicycle racks, travel the route through downtown Glendale every half hour from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The cost to ride GUS is \$.25 per trip and it's completely accessible for persons with disabilities. Unique from other bus routes, GUS will travel off its scheduled course to pick up passengers as long as it's within the shuttle's five-and-a-half mile circular route. Riders just need to call the city for the special pickup.

The City of Glendale is firm in its commitment to clean the air, ease traffic congestion, and help citizens and visitors traveling in their city. Although GUS is a one-year pilot program, both routes and buses may be added if ridership continues to increase. For additional information about GUS, contact Diane Adams, City of Glendale Transit Department at (623) 930-3501. □

Creation and placement of the GUS logo and color scheme was produced entirely by Glendale city staff.



NEW

Scottsdale Has Art, Will Travel

In April, the City of Scottsdale unveiled its latest masterpiece, the "Art Bus" in Motion—Bringing People Together. "This will not only be a great way to encourage Scottsdale citizens to use public transportation, but it also gives children an opportunity to build a connection to their community," said Michelle Korf, Transit Director for Scottsdale, who came up with the idea.

Scottsdale's new "Art Bus"



The 32 foot, clean-burning Scottsdale Connection bus that travels downtown, was painted by local artist Sam Mindrum-Logan and a group of students from the Free Arts of Arizona program. Free Arts of Arizona is a non-profit organization that provides the healing effects of the creative arts to abused, neglected, homeless, and at-risk children.

Key sponsors of the "Art Bus" project represent a public/private partnership of organizations that include the City of Scottsdale, Scottsdale Cultural Council, Dave Bang Associates, Forsythe and Associates, Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Scottsdale Junior Women's Club, and Thinking Caps.

Trips cost \$1.25 each way on the fully accessible bus. The new "Art Bus" expects to be in operation until April 2000.

For more information regarding this innovative and creative program or to learn more about the "Art Bus" contact Michelle Korf at (480)312-2638 or Free Arts of Arizona at (480)234-1707. □

What's New In Transit

Destinations is available on audio tape and in braille. If you know of anyone who might be interested in receiving *Destinations* in either format, please call RPTA's Lillian Duarte at 534-1937. *Destinations* is the official newsletter of the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA). It is published with a circulation of approximately 6,000 copies. We welcome your letters, comments and suggestions.

The RPTA is a political subdivision of Arizona overseen by a ten-member board of elected officials, and was created by voters in 1985 with the passage of Proposition 300. Membership is open to all municipalities in Maricopa County and to the county government.

The mission of RPTA is to promote the social and economic well-being of the community through an efficient and effective regional transit system as a valued and significant component of the transportation network.

To receive future copies of *Destinations* please write or call:

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Credits

Light Rail Study Seeks Opinions

The first public scoping meetings for the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail study were held in March. The main goal of the meetings was to encourage the active participation of the public at an early stage in the decision-making process. Four meetings were held with over three hundred people attending. Conducted in an open house format, the meetings also featured a fifteen minute presentation. Guests had the opportunity to discuss the study one-on-one with project staff and submit comments in writing.

After viewing the display boards and answering survey questions on alignment alternatives, environmental analysis, and the overall planning process, here are some opinions of the attendees:

Alignments: Most supported the proposed routes, and some advocated future extensions to north Phoenix, Chandler, Scottsdale, and Glendale. Some supported monorail and commuter rail.

Environmental Analysis: Most identified concerns about traffic and circulation, neighborhoods/community cohesion, parking, noise/vibration, and air quality.

Public Involvement: Some recommended more media coverage of the light rail project, advertising in movie theatres, and creating a video for public use.

Overall Planning Process: Some suggested using and sharing more information from existing light rail systems in Portland, San Diego, and Dallas.



Valley residents learn more about the project that could provide a new way to travel in the Valley.

All public comments received at the scoping meetings and during the scoping period will be carefully considered. They will help refine the proposals and the public involvement plan. A Scoping Summary Report will describe the results of the initial phase of study, including comments received at the public meetings. This report is available upon request.

For more information, call the Valley Connections hotline at (602) 534-1807. Comments can also be

made in writing to rail@vm.maricopa.gov or visit the web site at www.valleymetro.maricopa.gov.

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In This Issue:

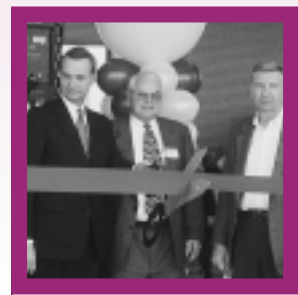
Destinations is the official newsletter of the Regional Public Transportation Authority



Chandler Seeks to Improve Transportation with Voter Approval
Page 1



Mayor Rimsza Reflects on Past Year's Efforts
Page 2



New Facility Accelerates Fueling Time
Page 3



Governor Hull Announces New Ozone Initiative
Page 4



Eye-catching Buses in Glendale and Scottsdale
Page 5



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