

# DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of the Regional Public Transportation Authority

Vol I Issue II, Spring 1998

## Light Rail Transit Options

**I**magine riding a train to and from work or traveling around parts of the Valley for shopping or other leisure activities! The Major Investment Study (MIS) of the Central Phoenix/East Valley Corridor proposes light rail transit (LRT) for a specified corridor starting in Phoenix and moving through parts of Tempe and Mesa.

An MIS is an initial step mandated by the Federal Government to make a project eligible for federal funding. The technical analysis, along with input from stakeholders and the public, has resulted in the following recommendations:

- Implement a regional light rail transit (LRT) corridor linking Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa
- LRT is an electric rail terminology operating primarily at street level. It allows a higher passenger capacity, and faster speed than buses on local streets
- The LRT segment (13 miles) would link Phoenix and Tempe and could begin service as early as 2003 if funding is secured
- Expand local bus service within the Central Phoenix/East Valley Corridor to improve all-day travel
- Expand and reorganize peak period express bus travel and supporting park-and-ride lots using existing and planned carpool lanes on freeways within the corridor
- Provide access to Sky Harbor International Airport employer and passenger destinations via frequent shuttle buses from two nearby LRT stations
- Provide interim access to employment areas along North Central Avenue and downtown Phoenix via shuttle buses. Continue to study a potential LRT extension to serve employment along Central Avenue to Camelback Road



*A light rail transit (LRT) example that operates in Portland, Oregon*

- Provide circulation within downtown Tempe via expanded FLASH buses, linking FLASH to the LRT corridor
- Investigate the long-term feasibility of commuter rail using existing railroad tracks in this corridor to serve peak period travel-demand and identify a regional funding source
- Construct an express bus station on I-10 at Central Avenue to link express bus passengers with LRT to the East Valley
- Construct a transit center in downtown Tempe connecting FLASH, the Rio Salado, LRT segment, and feeder bus operations

While the recommendation for Central Avenue, north of Interstate 10, includes a shuttle bus connection to the LRT corridor, further study and discussions with the community along north Central Avenue continue. It may result in a modified recommendation to include LRT north to Camelback Road.

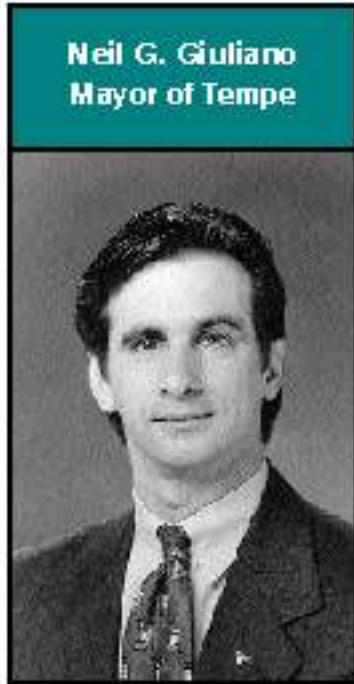
Federal funding is available for the next study phase for the Central Phoenix/East Valley Corridor, which is

expected to commence this summer. This study phase, known as the preliminary engineering and environmental impact statement (EIS), will continue to narrow down LRT-route options. Additional study will provide more detailed information needed to better understand impacts, opportunities, benefits and costs of the LRT project. The study will take 20 months to complete. A decision whether this project should be funded and constructed will likely be made following study completion. ■

*For additional information about this study please call the Valley Connections Hotline at 534-1807 or online at [www.valleymetro.maricopa.gov](http://www.valleymetro.maricopa.gov) under "What's New."*

# Improved Transit Underway

As this year of serving as Chairman of the RPTA Board comes to a close, there is a sense of satisfaction over the many things we've accomplished. While there was disappointment with the defeat of transit proposals in Phoenix and Scottsdale, we have reached milestones in advancing our public transit system.



Neil G. Giuliano  
Mayor of Tempe

RPTA has recently taken a more active role in promoting transit at the local, regional and national levels as the following accomplishments demonstrate.

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- **The procurement of federal funds for rail and bus proposals has been successful.**

Through an aggressive presence in Washington,

D.C. the RPTA has obtained approximately \$8.5 million for bus purchases and rail development. Currently we are lobbying for an additional \$42.4 million from Congress.

- **We are seeking state legislation for transit funding.** Last year, the RPTA began pursuing state funding for transit and the creation of a collaborative partnership with ADOT (HE2565). If passed this spring, over \$8 million will be made available for transit statewide in

Fiscal Year 1998. This amount would be expected to grow over a five year period.

- **RPTA is actively supporting local transit funding initiatives.** While measures in Phoenix and Scottsdale were defeated, considerable support was garnered for public transit from all sectors of the community and important public-private partnerships were created. Strengthening long-range planning comes from the Board's direction. RPTA's transit planning role was enhanced and the agency embarked on a long range plan to create capital planning goals into the next century.
- **RPTA is addressing regional Dial-a-Ride issues as a result of last year's annual Board retreat.** The RPTA began a concerted effort to provide regional coordination by initiating a consultant study and the formation of a task force to address problems.
- **Promoting public transit at a regional level began as RPTA accepted responsibility for regional transit advocacy.** Efforts include developing and implementing an ambitious marketing and community outreach plan.
- **RPTA has committed to maintain agency financial viability and fiscal responsibility**

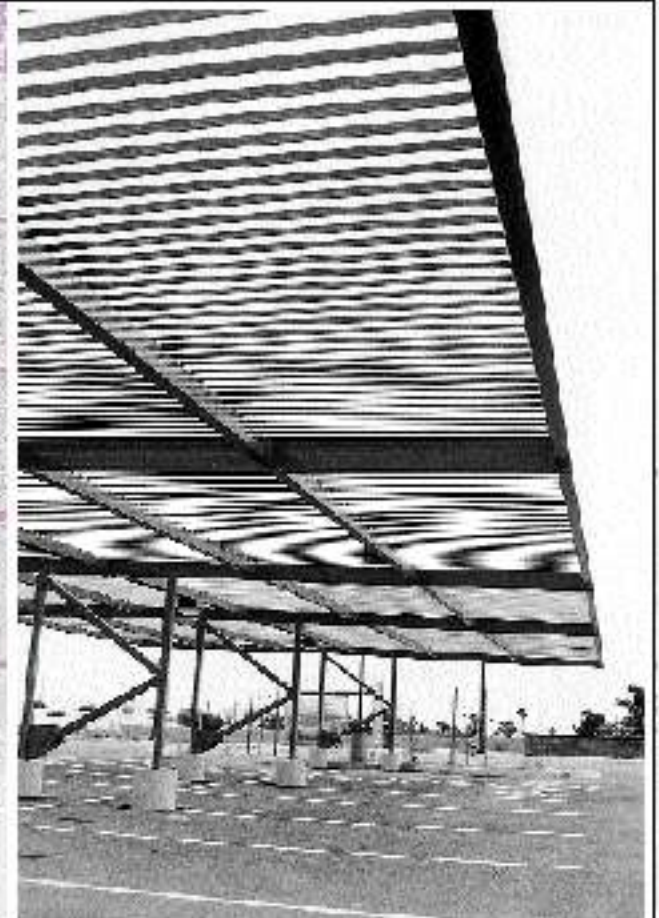
RPTA member agencies need to continue to work together as a region to build on this strong foundation and develop a strong transportation network throughout the Valley. I would like to sincerely thank the RPTA staff and Board members for their support, dedication and trust to improve transit in our region. ■

# Dreamy Draw Park & Ride Parking



The Dreamy Draw Park-and-Ride is now in full operation for bus riders or carpools/vanpools after a grand opening

celebrated the Valley's newest transit passenger facility on April 15. Dreamy Draw serves express bus routes 500, 501, 502, 512, and 592 and is the only facility in the region to offer a direct access ramp to State Route 51.



## Smart Cards Add Value To Paying Fares

In May 1995 Valley Metro became the first transit system in the nation to offer passengers the choice of paying fares with VISA or MasterCard. Today, the lure of even greater convenience and lower operating costs is raising interest in smart cards, an automated fare collection system that goes beyond the familiar magnetic strip technology in credit cards or Valley Metro's Bus Card Plus.

Smart Cards get their name from a tiny microprocessor buried within the plastic matrix of the card. Pass a smart card over a reading mechanism, and the internal chip can instantly calculate fares, activate a passenger account, or perform other transactions without requiring contact with a magnetic reader.

"Smart Card technology would allow us to process the entire financial transaction right on the bus," explains Mike Nevarez, City of Phoenix Transit Operations

Manager.

"The intelligent functions and memory built into the card make it



perform like cash-in-hand. We don't have to upload fare charges from the farebox or rely on a credit card clearinghouse."

Distribution costs and administrative overhead would also be reduced by the long life of most smart cards — up to 10 years. Passengers could purchase cards for \$5 to \$10 and add or subtract value from their smart card on their own schedule.

The convenience of smart cards could put transit in the driver's seat of an important new consumer trend. Sophisticated transit smart card security functions developed by Motorola have already attracted interest from telephone companies, convenience stores, and fast-food restaurants. Smart card-bearing passengers could safely charge meals, phone calls and get cash from ATMs with the same level of security offered by bank debit cards.

Smart Card fare programs have emerged as a clear choice for large transit systems that need to conveniently and accurately process millions of card transactions. As the technology develops, an innovative Valley Metro smart card system could someday bring these benefits to Valley bus passengers. ■

## Recycling Computers Helps Clean the Air

For employers in metropolitan Phoenix, starting or expanding a telecommuting program just got a little easier on the balance sheet.

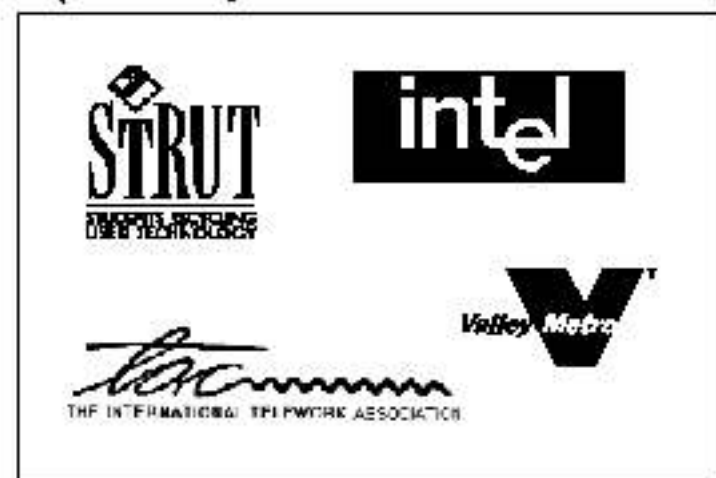
Thanks to a new program called Project ADOPT (Arizona Donates Office Products for Telework) more Valley workers will be making fewer commute trips. Companies, such as Intel, are providing no longer needed, but usable, computer equipment to help other organizations start up or expand telecommuting programs.

Project ADOPT, sponsored by Intel, RPTA, STRUT (Students Refurbishing Used Technology), and ITAC (International Telework Association and Council) is seen as one of the most innovative and cooperative ways to help reduce emissions in the Valley. This clever program refurbishes computer equipment, taken as a tax-deductible donation from companies, and places it into the hands of new telecommuters in order to reduce commute trips. Both the donor of equipment and recipient company may also be able to realize valuable trip reduction credits for Maricopa County's Trip Reduction Program.

Donated equipment goes directly to a refurbishing facility, where it is repaired if necessary, and prepared for pick-up by a participating company. Simple agreements are signed by both the donor and recipient employers to ensure the transaction is without negative consequence to either party. Criteria has been developed to encourage more wide-spread telecommuting; reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

If your organization is interested in either donating or receiving the recycled computer equipment call 262-7433 and ask for a Project ADOPT representative. ■

*Project ADOPT sponsors*

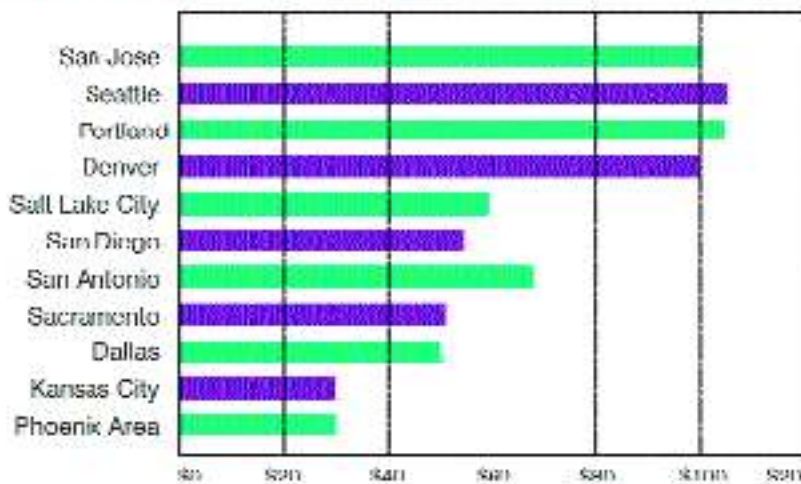


# Valley Stands Apart on Transit Funding

After three attempts to provide funding for an expanded transit system, the Valley continues to operate without the type of dedicated funding of peer communities such as Seattle, Dallas and San Diego. The September 1997 failure of Proposition 1 in Phoenix by only 122 votes was the third funding-opportunity in nine years. County voters also rejected the ambitious ValTrans proposal in 1989, and the 1994 half-cent freeway and transit package known as Proposition 400.

While some funding has increased—the successful 1996 Tempe vote for a half-cent transit sales tax—the Valley's regional funding problem has not been solved. In addition, the Valley has recently become the fastest growing

## Comparison of Peer Cities Annual Operating Expenditure Per Capita



Source: Federal Transit Administration 1995 Report

area in the United States. Valley Metro provides service within an area of over 2.7 million people, with a approximately 900,000 people living within one mile of a Valley Metro bus route. While passenger needs have increased, the Valley Metro base fare has not changed since 1995. The \$1.25 fare is close to the national average base transit fare of \$1.19. Because most Valley Metro passengers are dependent on bus and dial-a-ride service for transportation, Valley Metro has not observed an appreciable drop in ridership after fare increases. Despite funding shortfalls, the Valley also compares well in the most common measure of how well a system attracts transit customers: passenger boardings per mile of service provided. Valley Metro bus service averaged 2.45 passengers per mile in 1997 compared to a national average of 2.99. ■



## Puget Sound RTA Second Funding Effort A Success

After a failed special transit election three years ago, officials at the Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority reworked their transit plan and came up with a winning solution. By November 1996, voters in the central Puget Sound area had agreed to a ten year, \$3.9 billion rail and bus plan to expand public transportation facilities and services.

According to Media Relations Director Denny Fleenor, an important component of the new plan was a focus on listening to the concerns of local municipalities.

"When we wanted to take another run, we entered a listening mode," he noted. "We learned that smaller communities on the east side of King County were concerned that tax

revenues would be spent on large Seattle rail projects." With local concerns in mind, planners created five new taxing district boundaries to create "sub area equity" that recognized the primary needs of each Puget Sound community.

With the regional transit plan approved by voters in 1996, Sounder commuter rail service between Tacoma and Seattle is scheduled to begin operation in late 1999. ■

**“**  
*We found that our new process really gave people a sense of ownership in the plan.*  
**”**  
*Denny Fleenor*



Despite the clouds and cool weather, about 120 bike riders of all ages made the trip from Margaret T. Hance Park to the Civic Center Plaza to enjoy the Diamondbacks' first game in the new Bank One Ballpark (BOB) on Sunday, March 29. "Bike to BOB" was one of many activities during the Clean Air Campaign's Valley Bike Week, March 28-April 4.

# Building Transit Confidence in Mesa

**T**he city of Mesa has watched with interest the different scenarios Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tempe have experienced in gaining public approval of tax dollars to fund transit. Mesa has charted its own course in a direction that will hopefully win public approval. By providing improved amenities and customer service, while focusing on extensive marketing, Mesa hopes to positively impact the mixed public attitudes on public transportation.

"We'd like to have more funding, so we are challenged to provide the very best service with what we have," says Mesa Transit Coordinator Jim Wright.

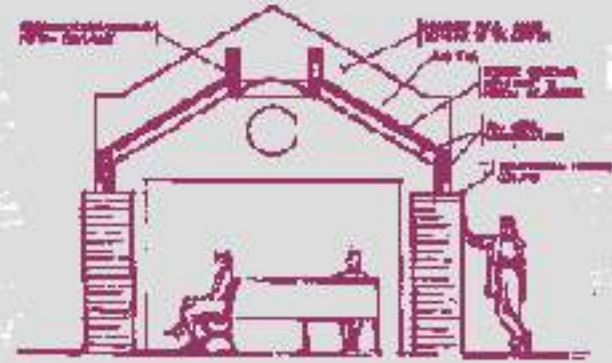
On schedule for the city's transportation department is a \$300,000 remodel to the Mesa Senior Center Transit Station. Funded by the Federal Transit Administration and the City of Mesa, the station will provide more shade, seating, and convenience. Also planned is an arts shelter program modeled after the Tempe and Scottsdale projects. When completed later this year, this program will include up to three new bus shelters designed by Arizona artists.

"We are very excited about this opportunity to beautify our community and make our shelters more attractive," says Wright.

Mesa also plans to be more proactive in providing transit information. Currently, the only source of information about routes and schedules is in the Valley Metro bus book or by accessing it electronically through the Valley Metro web page. Mesa hopes to install "Guide-a-Rides" in each bus shelter, which will be particularly helpful for the first time bus rider.

The city also hopes to improve its customer service through an Automated Vehicle Location System, which is a high tech satellite link that provides the

## Mesa's Senior Center Transit Station



Covered benches will comfortably accommodate riders waiting for the bus.

exact location of each bus traveling through Mesa. With this technology installed into an additional 65 regional buses passengers will be able to receive bus arrival information at key locations.

The Mesa Senior Center Station project will include neighborhood newsletters to keep residents informed of construction issues while providing valuable information about transit.

Furthering support of transit, Mesa has been active in such activities as the "Summer Youth Passport," the "Ride Free Shopping Spree" promotions for bus travel to Superstition Springs Center and Fiesta Mall, and a tie-in with spring training activities at Mesa's Hohokam Stadium. Mesa's also supporting next year's "1999 Try Transit Week."

By gaining public support with improved amenities and customer service through innovation, education and marketing, Mesa hopes to gain public endorsement for additional transit funding. ■

“

*We are very excited about this opportunity to beautify our community and make our shelters more attractive.*

*Jim Wright*



Mesa's Senior Center Transit Station

## Clean Air 2000

What else can businesses in the Valley do to help clean the air? The Clean Air 2000 campaign sponsors have a few ideas and are inviting metropolitan Phoenix organizations to help reach air quality goals and begin the next century a little healthier.

Clean Air 2000 is an alliance of businesses, municipalities, educational institutions and agencies that pledge to take voluntary actions to help rid Valley skies of the "brown cloud." Several of these actions can actually help businesses reduce costs, improve productivity and enhance customer relations—all while reducing air pollution. By agreeing to commit to one or more of the pollution-saving steps, organizations can become a Clean Air 2000 participant. Each participant will also be asked to fill out a brief agreement and complete a simple annual report to help measure success of the campaign. For a full slate of pollution reduction measures, please refer to the website ([www.cleanair2000.org](http://www.cleanair2000.org)) or call 250-3528 and request a brochure.

*Sponsors of Clean Air 2000 include: ADEQ, APS, Maricopa County Environmental Services Department, Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, RPTA, and SRP.*

## Calendar of Events

### Dates To Remember:

#### May 17-21 American Public Transit Association

1998 Bus Operations Technology & Management Conference  
Hyatt Regency - Phoenix  
Call (202) 898-4038 for information.

#### May 21 Association for Commuter Transportation May Luncheon

*"Legislative Update: What Passed & What it Means to You & Your Company"*

11:30 – 1 p.m. Wyndham Garden Hotel -Phoenix  
Call 542-3635 for information.

#### June 19 Clean Air Campaign Awards Luncheon

11:30 – 1:30 p.m. Ritz-Carlton - Phoenix  
Call 262-7433 for information.

## Ozone

With the return of our Valley's warm summer weather also comes the ground-level ozone pollution season. June 1 through September 30 marks the Valley's ozone pollution season. The Phoenix metropolitan area has been designated a "serious" non-attainment area for ozone.



Ground-level ozone is formed when gases

emitted from cars, gas-powered garden equipment, household cleaners, paint, etc. are combined with hot temperatures and sunlight. When these gases have time to "bake," ozone develops and can build to unhealthy levels. We can help reduce ground-level ozone pollution by following these simple tips:

- Re-fuel after 4 p.m.
- Use electric garden equipment
- Carpool, ride the bus, or telecommute

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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.

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