

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of the Regional Public Transportation Authority

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Taking Another Look at Transit

Ken Driggs, Executive Director of the Regional Public Transportation Authority, is commenting on a report recently published by the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation and the American Public Transit Association titled *Does Transit Work? A Conservative Reappraisal*, by Paul M. Weyrich and William S. Lind.



Destinations: *Why is this report so important?*

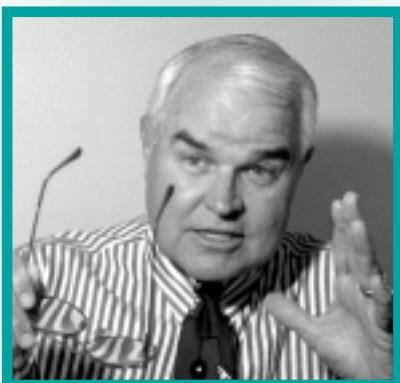
Driggs: Weyrich is an important leader in the conservative camp. There is an anti-transit feeling among many conservatives, and Weyrich does not think transit should be divided along ideological lines. When a person of his caliber comes out with a pro-transit message, it takes some of the wind out of the shrill rantings of the so-called conservative think tanks who base their anti-transit arguments on poor research.

Destinations: *What is the "one percent argument?"*

Driggs: This is a commonly used assertion made by many conservatives and libertarians—that transit only carries one percent of total trips made and therefore does little to provide an alternative. This figure is derived from looking at 24 hours, seven days a week across the entire country. Weyrich says this is not only an inaccurate figure, but the measurement is wrong. If you look at transit competitive trips the percentage of trips carried on transit is much different.

Destinations: *What are "transit competitive trips?"*

Driggs: Three criteria must be met. First, transit must be available. Secondly, it must be of high quality. And third, the trip purpose must be one for which transit can compete. The authors point out that about half of the country doesn't have transit available. Even where transit is provided



the service isn't frequent enough to compete with the automobile. Where it is available and convenient, people will ride. Look at Central Avenue in Phoenix. At rush hour, more than 20 percent of the people are riding on transit. When you have a standard like that, the one percent argument falls flat.

Destinations: *Where does this work?*

Driggs: If you provide high quality service, people will use it. Weyrich and Lind use three case studies to make their point—St. Louis, San Diego, and Chicago. St. Louis is doing a particularly good job of linking bus and rail together. The rail system, MetroLink, started service in St. Louis in 1991 and is carrying over 14.5 million riders a year. Chicago has a good network of park and ride lots. In the central business district, 50 percent to 60 percent of the trips are made by transit. San Diego has demonstrated that transit can be used successfully for special events—one million people rode during Super Bowl Week in 1998.

Destinations: *What implications does all this have for the Valley Metro area?*

Driggs: I agree with Weyrich that we have to be creative in planning and promoting transit services. Other cities have demonstrated that light rail will attract new riders who have not previously used buses. Rail can work here but it is not for everybody. We need a comprehensive mix of transit services to provide mobility to the entire community. People need to understand that transit can collectively have an impact on the community as well as the individual person. Automobiles are seen as freedom, but do we really have the freedom to pollute and congest and infringe on the rights of others? This freedom has costs, whether you use it or not. If people would just not drive one (day) in five (days), we could cut traffic and its related ills by 20 percent. If we can provide high quality, convenient transit to our customers, we will attract people who now drive alone. Expanded bus service and light rail can work together to provide viable transportation alternatives for our area. □

A New East Valley Dial-a-Ride

Formerly known as the Mesa/Chandler/Gilbert and Tempe/Scottsdale Dial-a-Ride services, the new East Valley Dial-a-Ride (EVDAR) will begin service on October 31. These five cities agreed to begin the partnership process more than one year ago, with the administration still being provided by the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA).

Combining the two service areas presents many challenges including:

- 6 combining operating locations
- 6 merging data bases
- 6 determining new service criteria
- 6 allocating vehicles and service hours
- 6 new employee uniforms
- 6 repainting vehicles.

In addition, a new phone number for Tempe/Scottsdale passengers will be available beginning October 31.

For passengers the best news is that, for the first time, many of the current forced transfers between Tempe/Scottsdale and Mesa/Chandler/Gilbert Dial-a-Rides will be done differently. Although transferring will still be required to travel to many Phoenix destinations, the transfers will now be quicker, and both better coordinated and supervised. This is due to having a sole contractor operating the service.

East Valley Dial-a-Ride passengers can expect quicker transfers now.



Additional regional concepts to be addressed by the Dial-a-Ride system are:

- 6 continued analysis of on-demand versus reservation-based trip making
- 6 determination of more efficient and effective routing
- 6 standardization of many procedures and policies affecting service delivery
- 6 the addition of more passenger-friendly vehicles.

Concentrated efforts by the EVDAR cities and RPTA are making Dial-a-Ride a better system for current and future riders.

For more information about EVDAR or Dial-a-Ride service changes, call (602)495-0586. □



Student IDs double as bus fare cards.

A Fare Alternative for Students

For high school students in Phoenix, riding the bus to school is a no-brainer! Thanks to the software program designed by Valley Metro two years ago. Specially encoded student identification cards for the Phoenix Union High School District (PUHSD) allow students to pay their fare by just sliding their ID card in the fare box electronic reader as they board the bus.

Information gathered from the ID cards include bus usage by students who qualify for free bus transportation through the community aid program. It also helps speed up boardings and also reduces fraud within the

Valley Metro fare collection system. Fares are based on the cash price for riding the local bus and will not exceed the cost of a monthly pass.

Students not qualifying for the subsidy can pay to have their cards encoded at their campus bookstore.

The program has expanded and will include eleven schools this fall within the PUHSD district and two Tempe Unified School District schools. Besides being a local success, it has received national recognition by Public Technology, Inc. for exceptional achievement. □

The westbound I-10 HOV lane from downtown Phoenix carries up to 1700 vehicles per hour during peak afternoon travel.



Freeway Lanes: Where do we go from here?

Are our carpool lanes as effective as they could be? Would toll lanes work in the Valley?

It's a subject of national and local debate. Last year, New Jersey turned their carpool lanes on a stretch of freeway back to multi-use lanes. Other states have considered such moves.

What direction do we want Maricopa County freeway lanes to take?

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) are beginning a study to evaluate the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) and High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane alternatives for the Maricopa County freeway system.

Local HOV lanes are those lanes that are only to be used by vehicles with two or more passengers during peak travel times. The idea is to encourage carpooling or to make transit more attractive by traveling faster in a less congested lane during slow, congested periods. It can also help take cars out of the multi-use lanes.

The HOT lane concept is based on congestion pricing, or paying a toll during peak periods for using the HOV lane. For example, a carpool with three or more persons may ride free in the express lane, but all others including single occupant vehicles, pay a fee when riding in this lane. This fee is based upon supply and demand.

The MAG/ADOT contracted feasibility study, which includes a public opinion component, will include:

- 6 a look at national experience with both HOV and HOT lanes
- 6 a review of previous proposals including Metro Road
- 6 the marketing of HOT lanes, with a marketing policy established

- 6 the need for additional bus service due to HOT/HOV lanes
- 6 cost effectiveness and travel time savings
- 6 land use and economic development.

The evaluation will take place over three separate time periods: the current year and the years 2005 and 2020.

Based on other experiences around the country, the HOT lanes have taken awhile to warm up with the public, but after use they have become more popular. One such example is the State Route (SR) 91 or Riverside Freeway in Orange County, California. An interim study showed that the increased capacity from adding the new toll lanes substantially reduced peak period freeway congestion, which gave short-term travel time benefits to all commuters in the corridor. In the six months after the opening of the express lanes (HOT lanes), the typical peak afternoon trip delay fell from 30 to 40 minutes to less than 10 minutes per trip.

It is also interesting to note that driving comfort and the perception of greater safety were considered added benefits. As a matter of fact, the accident rate for the section of the Riverside Freeway containing express lanes decreased significantly after the express lanes opened.

Popularity of the congestion-based tolls continues to grow with an initial approval rating of 45 percent that grew up to 75 percent after the third year.

The bottom line for the SR-91 lanes is that California transportation officials believe the innovative approach to traffic management merits consideration for further experimentation elsewhere. Might that "elsewhere" be here?

For more information about the value lane study, call Parsons Transportation Group at (949)263-9322. □

TRANSIT UPDATES

New Law Speeds Up Freeway Construction

Passed by the state legislature and signed by the Governor, Senate Bill 1201 creates a state infrastructure bank for transportation. In Maricopa County the new law accelerates freeway construction that will complete the Valley's freeway system by 2007.

A majority of the bill has positive outcomes for Valley cities. Although, a last minute amendment authored by Representative Jerry Overton (R-Litchfield Park) eliminated the ability for the RPTA and Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to seek an extension of the current half-cent sales tax for Maricopa County transportation/transit projects.

The half-cent sales tax, which was approved by the voters in 1985 (Proposition 300), provides a majority of RPTA's funding. The tax expires in 2005. □

State Approves Additional Transit Funds

In 1998, the Arizona state legislature passed House Bill (HB) 2565 that designates a portion of vehicle license tax (VLT) revenues to cities, towns, and counties throughout Arizona. In Maricopa County, the RPTA receives HB 2565 distributions for local governments, disburses funds, and partners with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to administer the program and conduct the grant application process.

In June 1999, the ADOT Transportation Board voted to use \$5 million in federal Surface Transportation Policy funds (STP) to provide additional match to the HB 2565 monies as long as the recipient uses the funds for a transit purpose. The \$5 million match can take place over the next four years of the current ADOT five-year program, but remains subject to annual approval of the State Transportation Board. □

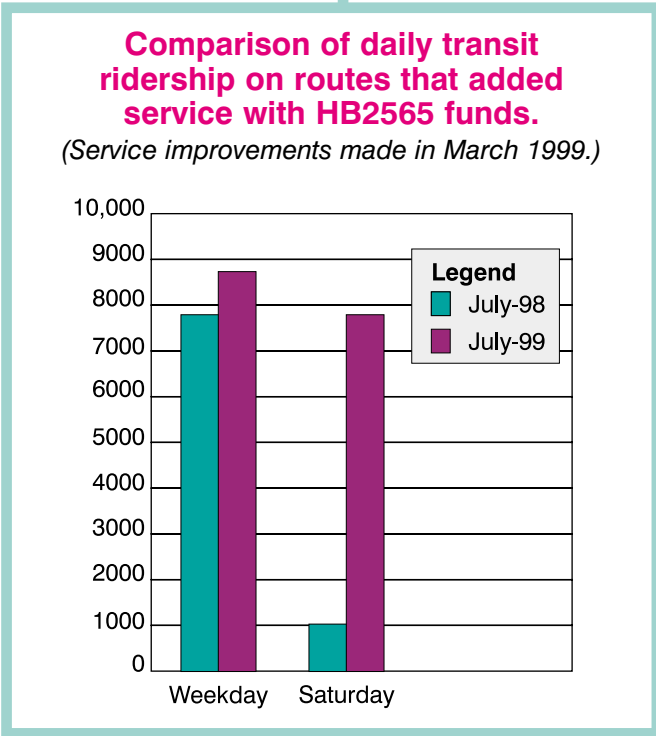
Fall Plans for Cleaning Up the Air

"It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air" is the theme of this year's Clean Air Campaign. As we head into the fall, we battle carbon monoxide and particulate matter pollution season.

This special campaign will focus on three messages: carpool, ride the bus, and car maintenance. To help raise awareness and increase participation in Clean Air Campaign activities the campaign will use drive time radio, TV, outdoor, transit, and print advertising. In addition, a variety of events throughout the winter months including Rideshare Week, October 25-29, will be conducted. For more information call (602)262-RIDE. □

New Service in SW Valley

The Southwest Valley's first fixed bus route will start rolling in January 2000. Funding for the route is being provided through a federal Job Access grant provided to Maricopa County, as well as state matching funds from House Bill 2565. The bus will serve the communities of Avondale, Goodyear, Litchfield Park and Tolleson and is a pilot program to provide residents with transportation to and from work. For more information, call (602)262-7242. □



The Estrella Mountain Community College is expected to be a popular destination on the new Southwest Valley route.

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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Scottsdale

Scottsdale Looks At Ways to Handle Growth

The City of Scottsdale and its residents realize that unless something is done soon about transportation within city boundaries, gridlock will be a way of life. Projections indicate that 105,000 more people will live in Scottsdale by 2020. From an extensive outreach effort citizens are saying that they:

- 6 Want to maintain their current quality-of-life status
- 6 Know land use and transportation must be interwoven
- 6 Want to finish roadway network while encouraging other modes
- 6 Know that transportation solutions will not be cheap
- 6 Want to be a part of the answer.

How Does A City Achieve These Goals?

According to Scottsdale Transportation's "Let's Get Moving Again," the aim is to reduce projected traffic on Scottsdale's major roadways at least 20 percent by the year 2010.

The "bold" plan goes beyond fine-tuning traffic signal coordination and managing roadway construction. It will take a serious look at rail and explore technologies that focus on moving information as an alternative to moving people. The action plan will ask residents to look at daily travel decisions and the demands placed upon the system. Most importantly, the plan communicates what will be jeopardized if residents fail to consider the burdens placed on mobility in everyday lifestyle choices.

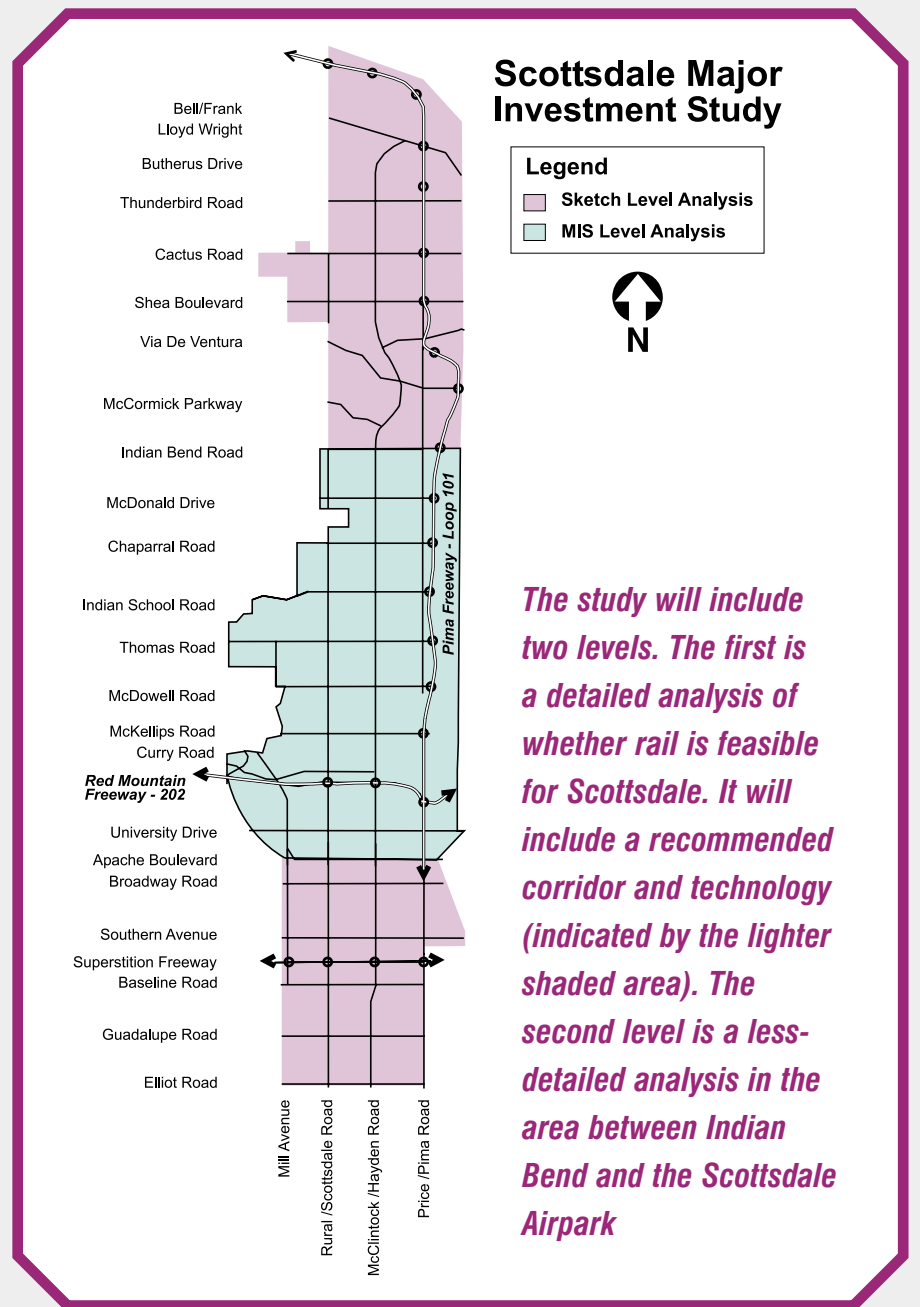
Scottsdale Transportation's "Let's Get Moving Again" plan of action will require not only community involvement, but also the development and growth of partnerships within the business arena.

With the city council's approval in May 1999, public dialogue continues throughout the summer and fall of 1999. Final city council adoption of the plan is expected by the end of the year. The integration of "Let's Get Moving Again" into the General Plan will occur by December 2000.

Scottsdale's Major Investment Study

While education is part of the process to improve mobility, actual transportation options are needed in Scottsdale to accommodate for anticipated growth. As residents and tourists have experienced, traveling the north-south routes through the picturesque city, especially during peak hours, can be a dreadfully slow ride.

The solution is to build upon the work completed in the Tier 1 Scottsdale Transit Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS). The purpose of the next levels of study, Tiers 2 and 3, are to provide an analysis of the top modal alternatives and potential corridor alignments. They will also look at regional connections to the current Valley Connections effort, which includes an initial 17-mile light rail segment along a Central Phoenix/East Valley route.



The study will include two levels. The first is a detailed analysis of whether rail is feasible for Scottsdale. It will include a recommended corridor and technology (indicated by the lighter shaded area). The second level is a less-detailed analysis in the area between Indian Bend and the Scottsdale Airpark

Objectives included in the Scottsdale MIS are to:

- 6 Improve mobility choices for people and goods;
- 6 Accommodate for growth and travel demand;
- 6 Gain public consent;
- 6 Add capacity to oblige north-south travel demand.

The City of Scottsdale continues to be a strong supporter of regional efforts to bring light rail to the Valley. Ensuring a coordinated effort, all project work is aligned with Valley Connections and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Long Range Transportation System Plan update.

For more information on how Scottsdale residents or businesses can get involved, please call Michelle Korf at (480)312-2638, City of Scottsdale Transportation. ☐

Tempe

Tempe Opens First LNG Station for Buses

No longer will Tempe in Motion (TIM) buses have to drive to Phoenix to refuel. In May of this year, Tempe opened the city's first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) bus fueling station. The new station not only makes bus service more efficient for riders, but also means lower LNG prices for the city.

The station, located at Forsythe and Associates Inc. on West 1st Street features two tanks, each holding 11,000 gallons of liquefied natural gas. Buses can hold between 75 and 150 gallons of fuel.

Although this is the third LNG refueling station to open in the Valley, it is the only one in Tempe. ☐



Tempe opened the city's first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) bus fueling station.

Phoenix

Join the Transit 2000 Committee

Here's your chance to get involved and make your voice heard when it comes to transit in the Valley. Mayor Skip Rimsza and the Phoenix City Council will hold a transit sales tax election in the spring of 2000 that is intended to provide this area with a dedicated funding source for current and future transit. In preparation for the elec-

tion, the city is forming the Transit 2000

Committee. Anyone interested is invited to join this group. Members of the committee will have a definite impact on how our future transit is shaped in the Valley.

If you would like your name to be added to the committee's mailing list, please call (602)262-7242. You will be notified of the meeting schedule by mail. ☐

Clean Summers...2 Exceedances.....0 Clean Air Wins!



Congratulations to all of you who reduce vehicle trips by riding the bus, telecommuting, or carpooling. Because of you, we're winning! We're beating the ozone "serious" designation for Valley skies.

The ozone season, which lasts from May through September, has been a great source of attention this summer. If we can make it through this summer with no ozone exceedances we become redesignated as moderate attainment for ozone. The past two summers have been "clean" so, with a third such effort, we all become winners. Why?

An ozone exceedance this summer could put the Valley into the "severe" category. This translates into greater restrictions for industry, as we already have some of the tightest emissions controls in the country. There could also be a withdrawal of large amounts of federal highway funds, which could stop some freeway construction and road improvement projects. A major contributor to the effort to create less ozone (or should we say those who have not made a contribution to ozone creation) are the 225 Valley companies signed up for the Governor's Ozone Alert Program. Governor Jane D. Hull has asked

local companies to participate by reducing the number of vehicles traveling to the worksite by at least 10 percent on High Pollution Advisory (HPA) days. Recent participation numbers show that companies are actually reducing vehicles coming to their parking lots by about 14 percent, surpassing the original goal.

According to an ozone tracking study by WestGroup Market Research, between May and August, an additional six percent of Valley commuters used alternate modes on HPA days. This translates to an additional 30,000 pounds or 15 tons of pollution saved per day.

Another effort to reduce ozone this summer has been the "Care for the Air Contest." Anyone who uses an alternative mode, telecommutes, or refuels after 4 p.m. is eligible to enter into the contest that includes such giveaways as a cruise for two to Mexico. More than 6,000 entries have been received from Valley residents.

Thanks to many of you, we're winning! And that makes all of us breathe a little easier!

For more information about either the Governor's Ozone Alert Program or the Care for the Air Contest, call (602)262-RIDE (7433). □

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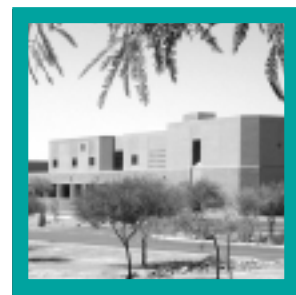
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