

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of the Regional Public Transportation Authority

New Year Begins with Boost to Bus Service

On January 14, Valley Metro will introduce a variety of significant improvements to regional bus service, many of which are being implemented as part of the Phoenix Transit Plan. The following is a partial list of the January service improvements:

- Weekday service will now be provided until approximately midnight on 12 local bus routes in Phoenix.



- Most local Phoenix routes will now operate until approximately 10 p.m. on Saturdays and 9 p.m. on Sundays and holidays.
- Frequency of service will increase on specific routes during the week and on weekends and holidays.
- Sunday/holiday service will be introduced on many Scottsdale routes.
- Eight bus routes will be extended to serve new areas.

For a specific line-up of January 2002 service changes, pick up the new Valley Metro Bus Book on Valley Metro buses or at city libraries and municipal buildings. For transit information, dial (602) 253-5000 or visit our website at www.valleymetro.maricopa.gov.

Glendale Voters Approve Transportation Election Package

It's not every day that voters have the opportunity to make a real difference in guiding their community into the future. On November 6, however, the citizens of Glendale seized that rare opportunity, voting overwhelmingly for a half-cent sales tax increase to pay for transit and transportation improvements that will help meet the city's growing transportation needs. Sixty-four percent of those voting cast ballots in favor of the tax increase.

The increase, which takes effect on January 1, 2002, is projected to raise \$580 million over the next 25 years to help pay for a comprehensive and integrated transportation program. While the largest share of the money will be used to improve bus service, the favorable vote allows Glendale to continue to plan for a connection to the 20.3-mile long Central Phoenix/East Valley light rail system. Additional street, bicycle, pedestrian, and airport improvements, as well as work-at-home programs, will help to reduce traffic demand on Glendale streets.

City staff now have the task of implementing the Transportation Sales Tax Program, working with the city council and various city departments to provide the transportation projects and programs approved by the voters. Also, the voter-approved election package calls for the establishment of a Citizen's Transportation Oversight Commission with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the Transportation Sales Tax Program and recommending future changes in the program to the city council. The mayor and city council will appoint the members of this commission.

The community-wide benefits from passage of the Transportation Election Package will include reduced traffic congestion, improved traffic flow, increased transportation choices, reduced air pollution, increased economic development opportunities, and better regional transit connections.

The RPTA is a political subdivision of the state of Arizona overseen by an 11-member board of elected officials and was created by voters in 1985 with the passage of Proposition 300. For the hearing and speech impaired, Rideshare and ADA information is available on TTY by calling (602) 495-0936.

ALEX Comes to Ahwatukee

For the first time ever, residents of the Ahwatukee and Desert Foothills area have their own transit service. ALEX, the Ahwatukee Local EXplorer, is a neighborhood circulator that shuttles residents from their neighborhoods to popular community destinations, as well as to fixed-route bus service on major streets. ALEX was launched in late November and will be free for the first four months. The new service is also different in that passengers don't need to wait at a bus stop. To catch a bus, passengers can wait anywhere along the route and simply wave to signal the driver to stop and pick them up.



Route maps are available on ALEX mini-buses, at www.valleymetro.maricopa.gov, or by calling Valley Metro Transit Information at (602) 253-5000.

ALEX is operated by the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department and is funded by the Phoenix Transit Plan sales tax.

Disaster Preparedness Ongoing Task for Valley Transit

As tensions across the country rise with threats of terrorist attacks and anthrax scares, the Valley Metro bus system has been readying its preparedness and disaster mitigation plans.

According to Dave Martin, chief of transit public safety, the Valley Metro bus system has always had disaster-scenario plans in place, but those are being reviewed and revised in light of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"We were working on tight security issues before and during the World Series, and now we are in a constant training mode, helping security staff and bus operators understand how to handle disasters," says Martin.

Valley Metro and its member agencies continue to work with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, along with fire and other emergency services, in order to be prepared to respond to any threat. Bus riders should feel assured that transit staff have been properly trained to handle difficult situations should they arise.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

RPTA Board Supports Funding Bill

The RPTA Board of Directors has asked RPTA staff to work with local city inter-governmental coordinators to prepare a bill that would extend funding for regional transportation after 2005. The bill would allow Maricopa County voters to extend the half-cent regional sales tax beyond its expiration date of December 31, 2005.

The bill is important to RPTA as it will enhance regional transportation funding beyond 2005. If extended, the RPTA Board and the Maricopa Association of Governments' Regional Council would then determine how the funding would be allocated for the 20-year extension period.

Professional market research will be conducted soon to determine how citizens believe taxes should be allocated. These findings will be considered by both local and state elected officials. The most likely course for the tax extension revenue would be to fund improvements for freeways, transit, and possibly arterial roadways.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



Chandler

Transit Plan Update Underway

The city of Chandler is in the process of updating its transit plan and preparing a related High Capacity Transit Major Investment Study. The Transit Plan Update was undertaken to address the transit needs of the rapidly growing Chandler area over the next three to five years. Work on the update began in April 2001 and is expected to conclude by February 2002.

The High Capacity Transit Major Investment Study will analyze the city's transit needs through the year 2020 and will review a variety of service options, including light rail transit, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit. The study began in August of last year and is expected to conclude by August 2002.

For more information about the Transit Plan Update, the Major Investment Study, or how you can share your valuable input on the city's transit needs, please call (480) 782-3440 or visit www.chandleraz.org. You can also send an e-mail to transupdate@ci.chandler.az.us.

Tempe

Transit Store Set to Open

The city of Tempe will open its first "Transit Store" in early 2002. The store will be located at 502 S. College Ave., Ste. 101 (on the corner of Fifth St. and College Ave.) in downtown Tempe. Business hours will be Monday through Sunday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Various transit fare media and services will be available at the store, including:

- ▲ Monthly bus passes (local, express, youth, senior, and disabled)
- ▲ Bus tokens
- ▲ Local and reduced-fare ticket books
- ▲ Local and reduced-fare all day passes
- ▲ Bus route and schedule information
- ▲ Greyhound passenger tickets and package-shipping services.



To celebrate the grand opening of the Tempe Transit Store, the city will give customers who purchase either a monthly bus pass or a book of bus tickets a free Target or Fry's Food gift certificate valued at \$10.

Surprise

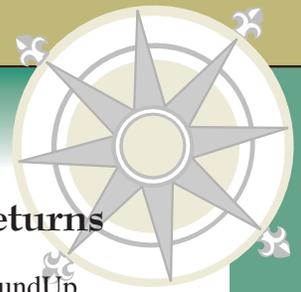
City Transit Stalled Goals Revealed...Funding an Issue

Officials and residents of Surprise have recognized the need for additional transit services within their city. Currently, the city has a fleet of three vans that provides dial-a-ride service within city limits. With the present and anticipated population increases in Surprise, the popular van service expects to be overwhelmed by demand. A recently developed Long Range Transit Plan indicates that the highest

priorities for transit include: 1) developing a phased implementation of transit improvements to enhance services to the community during the next 20 years, and 2) joining the RPTA to gain a voice in regional transit program discussions. The focal point of Surprise's transit issues is funding. With minimal local resources currently available, and without regional funding or a reliable source of state dedicated revenue, Surprise will have difficulty providing expanded transit services to its residents.

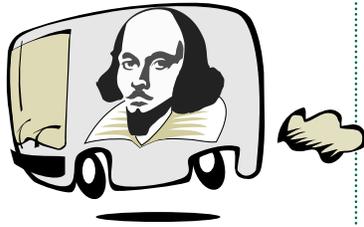
To receive a copy of the city of Surprise Long Range Transit Plan, call Steve Hogan at (480) 966-8295.

Scottsdale



New Poetry Bus Unveiled

Community officials celebrated the unveiling of a new Poetry Bus at the Scottsdale Center for the Arts in November of last year. The joint project between the city of Scottsdale, the Scottsdale Public Art Program, Free Arts, and other partners places a second Poetry Bus in service for bus riders to enjoy throughout the city.



A traveling landmark, the Poetry Bus features a collection of artistic writings from young people about life, home, and growing up. Youth from the New Foundation created original poetry with the theme "Everyday Magic." The poetry is incorporated into the graphic design of a vinyl "wrap" around the exterior of the bus.

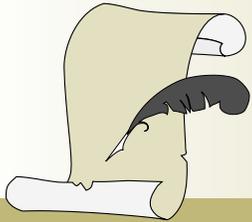
Downtown RoundUp Returns

The Scottsdale Downtown RoundUp is a free shuttle service providing transportation around the city's arts and shopping districts, including Fashion Square Mall and the internationally renowned Fifth Avenue Shops.

Scottsdale residents and visitors can't miss the brightly colored, old-fashioned, bell-ringing trolleys that weave through the downtown area's galleries and shopping destinations.

The trolleys run about every ten minutes, making frequent stops at designated areas to pick up people enjoying the downtown area activities. The service operates Monday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., from November through May.

So, if you're in the mood to stroll through some of Scottsdale's premiere art galleries, enjoy wonderful cuisine, or simply "shop 'til you drop," you can "rope a free ride" on the Scottsdale Downtown RoundUp.



For more information about this project, call (480) 874-4645.

For more information about the Scottsdale Downtown RoundUp, contact the city's Transportation Department at (480) 312-7696.

Phoenix

Zuercher Named Director of Public Transit

Ed Zuercher has been appointed director of the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department. As director, Zuercher will be responsible for implementing the Phoenix Transit Plan, which voters approved in March 2000. He will manage a staff of more than 60 employees and oversee an annual budget of \$112 million.

"For the past eight years, Ed has done a tremendous job working on the light rail program and various other city projects," said Jack Tevlin, deputy city manager.

For the past year, Zuercher has served as assistant to the city manager, his primary responsibility being the management of the city's light rail project.

Zuercher is involved with community programs such as the House of Refuge East Homeless Shelter, for which he serves as a board member. He has received numerous awards during his career including the City Manager's Excellence Award.

He earned his bachelor's degree at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, and a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Kansas.



Ed Zuercher

Transit Gets Local TV Show



Valley Metro transit is Phoenix's newest celebrity, with its own TV show called *Valley Metro: Transit Now*. It debuted on December 7 on Phoenix Channel 11, a local cable station operated by the city of Phoenix. Transit is growing in the Valley, with bigger bus fleets, light rail, and other new services and facilities coming on line. Interviews, pre-recorded segments, and varied locations will take viewers for a ride through the city of Phoenix and around the Valley.

Broadcast times for *Valley Metro: Transit Now* can be found in the *Arizona Republic's* TV section and at www.ci.phoenix.az.us/11/phx11.html. The next episode will air on January 14, 2002, with new episodes being aired about every six weeks.

FIND YOUR MATCH AT SHARETHERIDE.COM

Finding a carpool partner could be just a mouse click away with Valley Metro's new website ShareTheRide.com. A new, state-of-the-art carpool matching system available at this site allows you to input your commute information, including point of origin, destination, and travel times. In a matter of minutes, the system downloads your data and generates a list and map of potential rideshare matches. Carpool applications can also be found on the Valley Metro website, in the Valley Metro Bus Book, or by calling (602) 262-RIDE (7433).



Enter to Win

Enter your information in the Rideshare database for carpool, vanpool, or bike buddy matches either online or by phone during the winter pollution season (November through February) and automatically register for monthly prize drawings. Prizes will include \$200 in groceries at a local supermarket and a \$200 gift certificate to any Westcor shopping mall.



The Brown Cloud Is Back

All it takes is a few windless, warm days and the big "brown cloud" overshadows the Valley of the Sun. From November through February, when wintertime inversion layers are common, the potential for high pollution advisories for carbon monoxide or particulate matter increases.

To remind all of us to reduce single-occupant trips by carpooling, telecommuting, bicycling, and riding the bus, the Clean Air Campaign is airing messages on radio, billboards, television, and in movie theaters. Look for the retro theme ads focusing on how enjoyable it is to ride with someone else.

Links for Rideshare Info

- ▲ For more information about pollution in the Valley, visit www.maricopa.gov/envsvc/AIR/airday.asp
- ▲ To find a carpool partner, call (602) 262-RIDE (7433) or visit www.sharetheride.com
- ▲ For bus routing information, call (602) 253-5000 or visit the website www.bus.maricopa.gov

LRT Federal Funding a Step Closer

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has informally announced that the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Transit Project will receive a recommended rating from the FTA in its upcoming report to the U.S. Congress. The announcement was made in a phone call from FTA administrator Jenna Dorn to Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza.

Mayor Rimsza called it “very good news for the future of Phoenix.” In an October 31 *East Valley Tribune* article, Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano was quoted as saying “(The new rating) vindicates those who believed we needed to move forward quickly with light rail.”

Project Receives Recommendation from FTA



Receiving a recommended rating is a project milestone in order to create a light rail system such as the one shown here in Salt Lake City.

Receiving a recommended rating is a major milestone in the project, because it is one of the requirements for the project to move forward into the final design phase. The rating puts the project in a more competitive position for federal funding, but does not guarantee it. The FTA rating is used by Congress to make funding decisions for transit projects.

While the announcement is very good news for the local project, it's still awaiting formal notification from the FTA.

For more information about the light rail project, call the project hotline at (602) 534-1807, stop by the Valley Connections Community Office at 411 N. Central Ave., Ste. 195, Phoenix or visit www.valleyconnections.com.

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.

Destinations is also available on audio-tape. If you know of anyone who might be interested in receiving Destinations in that format, please call the RPTA's Pat Dillon at (602) 534-1806.

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