

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro



New Buses Offer Greater Comfort, Convenience, and Savings

You may have noticed some shiny new Valley Metro buses rolling down our Valley streets. One hundred new buses with a variety of upgraded features went into service in January. Some of the buses replaced older vehicles that were ready to be retired, while others are being used to provide expanded service.

Built by North American Bus Industries (NABI), the buses feature more comfortable seats for both passengers and operators, easier-to-read destination signs, improved wheelchair ramps and bike racks, and heat-reflecting windows.

What passengers will likely notice first are the brighter destination signs on the front, side, and back of the bus. Illuminated by amber-colored, light-emitting

diodes, the signs are much easier to read both day and night and can be seen from a greater distance.

The new windows are an improvement you may not see, but feel. Made of laminated solar-management glass that reflects heat, the windows help keep the interior of the bus cooler and allow for cheaper, more efficient use of the air conditioning system.

Passengers in wheelchairs will also feel another improvement. The wheelchair ramps on the new buses provide a smoother transition from the ramp to the bus floor. While the ramps are a bit slower than those on older buses, they're also less likely to break down. The wheelchair restraint systems have been improved as

– See *New Buses*, page 2



Old Buses	versus	New Buses
▶ Diesel-burning engines emit more pollution		▶ Cleaner burning LNG much better for air quality
▶ A/C system not designed for extreme heat and prone to breakdown and cause bus to overheat		▶ A/C system designed for Phoenix's ambient temperatures and more efficient
▶ Incandescent destination signs hard to read		▶ LED destination signs very visible both day and night
▶ Wheelchair lift on high-floor bus unreliable and breaks down often		▶ Wheelchair ramp with low-floor bus easily accessible and no moving parts
▶ Window tinted with dark plastic absorbs heat		▶ New windows filter out heat rays
▶ Accommodates two wheelchairs		▶ Accommodates three wheelchairs
▶ Metal bike rack heavy and difficult to use quickly		▶ Aluminum bike rack more user friendly, bikes better secured
▶ Metal wheels cause tires and brakes to heat up more quickly		▶ Aluminum wheels dissipate heat, extending brake and tire life
▶ No way to notify vehicles behind the bus when boarding a passenger in a wheelchair		▶ Sign on back of bus indicates when a passenger in a wheelchair is boarding
▶ Seating for bus operator uncomfortable and can cause injuries		▶ Ergonomic seating designed for both male and female operators decreases strain and chance of injury

Valley Metro 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.

On the Road to a Modern Fleet

Believe it or not, some of our buses could be entered into the Guinness Book of Records for highest mileage or longest life for a public transit vehicle. According to Larry Kucera, A.G.M. of Support Services,



ATC-Phoenix, many of our buses have served us far longer than the industry norm. “The FTA (Federal Transit Administration) states that the average life expectancy of a bus is about 13 years, traveling at 40,000 to 50,000 miles per year,” said Kucera. That adds up to about 600,000 miles for the life of the bus. “Some of the older buses in our fleet have as much as a million miles and are more than 20

years old,” Kucera adds. That includes the 1978 buses built by General Motors, which were considered an advanced design at the time.

Unfortunately, modernization and expansion don’t and can’t happen overnight. Although we’re making steady progress in purchasing new vehicles, it’s difficult to get manufacturers to design and mass produce buses based on the specific needs of a geographic region. For instance, the new NABI buses were tested and modified to operate in the hotter climates of Phoenix and Las Vegas. For this reason, buses have to be custom made, and that can take as long as 18 months.

There are currently 392 buses in the Phoenix fleet. Over the next three to four years, that number is expected to increase to approximately 550.

New Buses

(Continued from page 1)

well, requiring less time for the operator to secure and release a passenger’s chair.

There are even improvements that you can hear. The stop request system features a digital chime that can be heard much more easily throughout the bus. And bus operators will certainly like the sound of the Cummins 8.3G Plus engine, which has more horsepower and torque to make climbing hills and elevated grades easier.

In addition, an advanced electronics system notifies the operator when the bus needs maintenance and makes diagnosing mechanical problems easier, cutting down on service time and costs. And that sounds pretty sweet to our mechanics.

The chart on the previous page offers a more detailed comparison of the old and new buses, illustrating how certain changes will make a big difference in the overall efficiency of fleet operations and, most importantly, in the comfort of our passengers.

Bus Operator Recognized for Safety Record

His badge says bus operator “Number 1.” And he is, not only in terms of seniority, but also for having driven a city bus through our congested Valley streets for 30 years without being involved in a single accident. Manuel Hernandez, a Valley Metro bus operator in Phoenix, was recognized for that outstanding safety record by the Phoenix City Council at a presentation made in the council chambers on March 5.



Left to right: Ron Norton, General Manager, ATC-Phoenix; Rose Hernandez, honoree’s wife; Manuel Hernandez; Mayor Skip Rimsza; and Ed Zuercher, Public Transit Director.

“Safe service is a great example of good customer service for our bus passengers,” said Ed Zuercher, director of the city’s Public Transit Department. “We in Phoenix are proud of Manuel Hernandez and are pleased he is also being honored nationally by his employer, ATC.”

In recognition of his safe driving record and long career, Hernandez was recently named 2001 Employee of the Year by ATC, a national transportation company based in Chicago. The company operates in 70 locations in 18 states and employs approximately 4,000 transit operators nationwide. ATC-Phoenix manages bus operations for the city of Phoenix and employs 671 operators.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



Glendale

Transit Improvements Introduced on March 11

Significant improvements to transit services in Glendale took effect on March 11. Non-ADA dial-a-ride service is now available on Saturdays and Sundays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Previously, no dial-a-ride service was provided in the city on Sundays and only ADA service was provided on Saturdays. The new non-ADA weekend service is provided by reservation only, and reservations must be made by noon on the preceding Friday.

To make reservations for non-ADA service on any day, call (623) 930-3500 from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For ADA reservations, please call (623) 930-3515 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday through Friday. (Please note that ADA service is not provided in Glendale on Sundays because

there is no fixed-route bus service in Glendale on Sundays.)

In addition, Saturday service has been introduced on Route 70–Luke Link, with buses operating from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Also, weekday service on Route 70 now runs until 7 p.m. instead of 6 p.m.

Finally, Weekday and Saturday service on GUS (the Glendale Urban Shuttle) now begins earlier, at 7 a.m. instead of 9 a.m.

These service improvements were a direct result of the transportation tax initiative passed by Glendale voters in November 2001. Further service improvements are planned for July 2002.



Region

A Summer Travel Deal That Parents Can Appreciate

Summer Youth Passport Available May 17

How many times this summer will your kids ask you if they can borrow the car, or if you can give them a lift to the mall? Don't really want to think about it, do you? Well, Valley Metro has something that just might simplify your life, save you some money, and keep everybody happy. It's called the Summer Youth Passport, a discount bus pass for people 18 and under. Valid from June 1 to August 31, it's good for unlimited rides on any local bus route, anytime, anywhere. And at only \$46, the Summer Youth Passport represents a ten percent savings over regular monthly youth passes. What's more, your

kids can use the pass to receive discounts at some of their favorite destinations.

By encouraging your children to ride the bus, you'll

not only save yourself a few headaches, you'll also save money on gas and help reduce summertime air pollution. And, of course, your kids will love having the freedom to go where they want, when they want. (That's assuming they've finished their chores.)

The Summer Youth Passport goes on sale May 17. For more information

about the pass, or to find a participating sales outlet near you, call Valley Metro at (602) 253-5000 or visit www.valleymetro.org.





2002 Bike to Work and School Day

The city of Tempe transit office, Tempe in Motion, held its 2002 Bike to Work and School Day on April 17. The purpose of the annual event is to encourage people to use bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation.

All participants received free breakfast snacks, offered at four local businesses that sponsored the event. The first 200 riders also received free T-shirts.



Bicyclists of all ages, including these Boy Scouts, participated in last year's Bike to Work and School Day.

As part of the event, Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano held his annual Mayor's Ride on the same day. Participants, including members of the Tempe City Council and Bicycle Advisory Committee, cycled from the Whole Foods Market at Rural Rd. and Baseline Rd. to the Mill's End Cafe in downtown Tempe. Live entertainment was provided at both locations.

2002 Bike to Work and School Day sponsors included Berning's Fine Jewelry, Mill's End Cafe, Whole Foods Market, Wildflower Bread Company, and Tempe in Motion.

For more information, contact Tempe in Motion at (480) 350-2739 or visit www.tempe.gov/tim.

Bus Service Changes Introduced on March 31

The city of Tempe transit office, Tempe in Motion, implemented several bus service changes on March 31. Due to a reduction in city sales tax revenues, the city of Tempe reduced service on the portions of Routes 30–University, 45–Broadway, and 61–Southern that operate in Mesa and are funded by the city of Tempe. New schedules and maps for the three routes are available online at www.valleymetro.org and in passenger notices posted on Valley Metro buses.

In addition, service on Route 124–Warner was discontinued on the same day. Passengers who formerly used this route, which ran east and west on Warner Rd., may be served by the following routes, all of which connected to Route 124: 56–Priest, 62–Hardy, 65–Kyrene, 66–Mill/68th Street, 72–Scottsdale/Rural, and 81–Hayden/McClintock, which travel north and south; and Route 108–Elliot, which runs east and west.

In January, the city of Tempe also proposed reducing service levels on the portions of the Red Line and Routes 40–Apache, 72–Scottsdale/Rural, and 81–Hayden/McClintock that operate in neighboring cities and are currently funded by the city of Tempe. Since that time, it has been determined that those routes will not be affected. A decision has not been made regarding the proposed service reductions in the city of Mesa on Route 77–Baseline.

FLASH Lite on Mill, which served recreation and employment centers along Mill Ave. and in Papago Park, was eliminated on February 24. FLASH Forward & Back, Route 56–Priest, and the Yellow Line still provide service to those areas.

For more information on bus routes and schedules, please call Valley Metro at (602) 253-5000 or visit www.valleymetro.org.

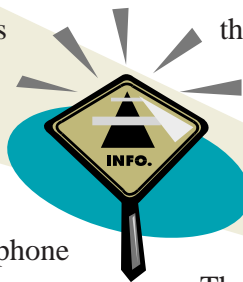
For information regarding the above-mentioned service changes, please call Tempe in Motion at (480) 350-2739 or visit www.tempe.gov/tim.

OFFICIALS CONVERGE ON SCOTTSDALE FOR 511 CONFERENCE

Transportation and telecommunications officials from across the United States, as well as public service, utility, and government representatives, met at the Hilton Scottsdale Resort and Villas in March to participate in a conference on the deployment of the local travel information telephone number, 511.

In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission introduced 511 so travelers could easily access up-to-date, local travel information—including traffic and weather conditions and public transportation options—no matter where they are in the U.S. Several states launched their 511 services in 2001, and Arizona is scheduled to introduce its service later this year.

The 511 conference was sponsored by the 511 Deployment Coalition, comprised of the American Public Transportation Association,



the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and more than 26 other public agencies, industry groups, associations, and private companies.

The event brought the industry together to share developments in the 511 system, from the basics to the latest voice technologies available, and to facilitate information sharing and further accelerate 511 implementation. Workshop sessions included: consumer expectations and research, business models, wireless carrier issues, 511 technology, implementation planning, and 511 marketing.

For more information about the conference, contact ITS America's Pete Costello at (202) 484-2905 or visit www.itsa.org/511.



Valley Metro Requests Transportation Appropriations from FTA

Valley Metro has recently submitted its requests for funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for FY 2003. These annual appropriations requests are made in conjunction with participating member agencies and municipalities throughout the region.

The requests include \$80 million for final design, land acquisition, and initial construction of the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Project. The project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase, with construction scheduled to begin in 2003. Ultimately, federal funding is expected to provide 50 percent of the total cost of the project.

In addition, \$3.8 million has been requested to purchase 14 new buses for planned service expansion, and \$10.7 million has been requested for the design and construction of four new bus maintenance facilities, including land acquisition. With dedicated local funding sources for transit now in place in Glendale, Phoenix, and Tempe, the regional bus fleet continues to grow dramatically and has already exceeded

the capacity of existing maintenance facilities. To address this issue, a total of seven new maintenance facilities are planned for construction by 2010.

Additional requests include \$1 million to support the Maricopa County Work Links Project and \$0.5 million for the Southwest Valley's START and Ajo-to-Phoenix bus routes. The Work Links Project increases self-sufficiency for individuals with low incomes by eliminating transportation-related barriers to employment. Federal funding for the two bus routes, both of which have exceeded initial ridership projections, is essential for service to continue at current levels. Ridership on START (Route 131) has nearly doubled since the route was introduced in January 2000, while ridership on the Ajo-to-Phoenix route has quadrupled during the past year alone.

All federal appropriations requested must rigorously compete with other projects throughout the country for limited federal dollars. Any appropriations would be supplemented by local and regional funding.

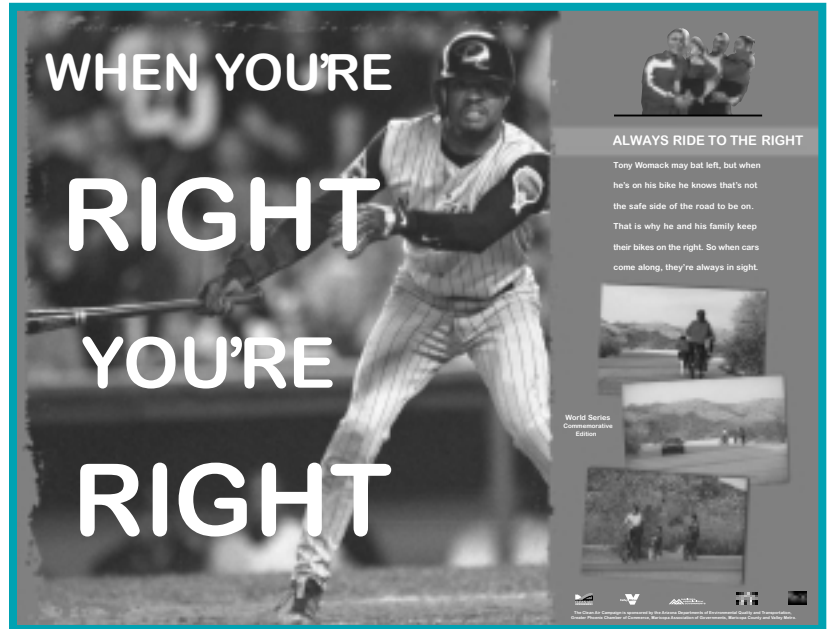
Valley Riders Support Fifth Annual

BIKE WEEK EVENTS

In mid-April each year, Valley cities, employers, and residents show their “pedal power” during Valley Bike Week, a Clean Air Campaign initiative. Focusing on bike safety and cycling as a commuting option, the week was kicked off with a Bike Swap Meet at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on April 13. The week concluded with the popular Bike to BOB (Bank One Ballpark) ride on April 21, after which participants took in an Arizona Diamondbacks baseball game.

About 1,500 cyclers made the four-mile ride from Steele Indian School Park to the downtown ballpark to show that they support bicycling as a fun and environmentally sound way to travel. Their ticket to ride also included a Bike to BOB T-shirt, snacks, souvenirs, and a reserved seat at the afternoon game.

Tony Womack, outfielder for the Arizona Diamondbacks, and his family showed their support for Valley



Bike Week by being featured on the 2002 bike safety poster. To receive a free poster, call (602) 262-RIDE or visit www.valleymetro.org.

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro. 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 Valley Metro's Pat Dillon at (602) 534-1806.

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