

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro



RAPID Service to Begin This Summer

A new commuter bus service will begin operating in Phoenix this summer. RAPID will be one of the most visible improvements to bus service in the Phoenix Transit Plan, approved by city voters in March 2000. Utilizing freeway HOV (High-Occupancy Vehicle) lanes, it will offer fast and convenient service between park-and-ride locations with easy access to Valley freeways and downtown Phoenix. RAPID buses will run during peak commute times on weekday mornings and evenings.

The new service will be introduced on two routes on July 14. One route will travel along the I-10 Pagago Freeway and will originate at the park-and-ride at Pecos Road and 40th Street. The other will travel along State Route 51 and will serve the park-and-ride at State Route 51 and Bell Road, the Dreamy Draw Park-and-Ride (State Route 51 and Shea Boulevard), and the Paradise Valley Transit Center (Tatum Boulevard and Cactus Road). This fall, RAPID service



▲ RAPID will offer commuters to downtown Phoenix a fast, convenient, and comfortable alternative to driving in rush hour traffic.



▲ Councilwoman Bilsten and Mayor Rimsza at the unveiling of the RAPID prototype.

will also be introduced along the I-17 Black Canyon Freeway and south Central Avenue, and additional service will be provided on the I-10 for north Phoenix.

New, specially designed 45-foot buses, which have seating for 41

passengers, have been purchased to provide this service. The new buses offer a variety of amenities that will appeal to the regular commuter, such as adjustable, high-back seats and overhead storage bins. In addition, the buses are made of a light-weight composite material. In

fact, Phoenix is the first city in the world to utilize a fleet of buses this size manufactured with this particular process, similar to the process used in making sailboat hulls.

A prototype of the bus—painted in a distinct, two-toned metallic color scheme—was unveiled to members of the City Council in downtown Phoenix last November. “This is the bus people told us they would ride to work,” said Councilwoman Peggy Bilsten as she unveiled the prototype. Mayor Skip Rimsza added, “As congestion on the freeways gets worse, this is one example of doing more to get people to use public transit. The new RAPID service is a step in the right direction.”

Valley Metro is a political subdivision of the state of Arizona overseen by an 11-member board of elected officials. It 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.

Transit Center Offers Connections to Past, Present, and Future

The new Ed Pastor Transit Center—located in the heart of South Mountain Village at Broadway Road and Central Avenue—began serving the public on February 24. Building the center was part of a continuing effort to improve public transit services in the city of Phoenix.

Named for U.S. Congressman Ed Pastor (D-Ariz.), the transit center was designed and built to incorporate a local landmark, the former Pay'n Takit grocery store. Constructed in the 1920s, the store reflects the area's early commercial development and agricultural past. It has been historically rehabilitated and now serves as office space for transit operations and security staff.



▲ This historic building from the early 1920s was rehabilitated as part of the transit center project.



▲ FTA Administrator Leslie Rogers (left) and Congressman Ed Pastor at the groundbreaking for the transit center last summer.



The passenger concourse at the new Ed Pastor Transit Center.

“Serving area residents was a top priority,” said Mark Melnychenko, principal planner of the project for the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department. More than 84 percent of area residents are dependent on public transit for transportation to jobs, schools, doctors’ offices, and shopping areas. “In addition, we hope to see this new construction act as a springboard for redevelopment plans in the South Mountain Village core,” Melnychenko said.

The transit center occupies 4.5 acres and cost approximately \$6.5 million, including land acquisition, environmental cleanup, design, and construction. In building the facility, the city’s team of planners, designers, and engineers had to address issues such as the removal of underground fuel-storage tanks and the need to relocate

some residents and businesses. In addition, the sidewalks along both Central Avenue and Broadway Road were widened to create a buffer between pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

Public transit users will find the new center a pleasant respite, with its desert landscaping, public art, and fountain, as well as its shade canopies to provide protection from the elements. Seven local bus routes—the Blue Line and Routes 0, 7, 8, 45, 52, and 61—stop at the center, and RAPID commuter service is planned for the future. In addition, bus riders can receive route information and purchase bus passes from on-site customer service representatives. Passengers who use dial-a-ride can also arrange to be picked up or dropped off at the facility.

It is anticipated that approximately 6,000 people will use the transit center every day.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



Scottsdale

Shuttle Off to Spring Events

Make a line drive to Scottsdale Stadium to watch the San Francisco Giants play other Cactus League teams during spring training this March. Free shuttles to the stadium run every 10 minutes, 90 minutes before and 30 minutes after each home game. You can catch the Giants Shuttle at Loloma Station (Goldwater Boulevard and Second Street) and the Galleria (Drinkwater Boulevard and Stetson Drive).

The Giants Shuttle will also provide free service to the 33rd annual Scottsdale Arts Festival. This year's festival will feature nearly 200 exhibiting artists, live entertainment on multiple stages, artist demonstrations,



roving street performers, and fabulous food. It will be held at Civic Center Mall March 14 through 16, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

And if you're into shopping, try the free Downtown RoundUp trolley, which links Scottsdale's downtown shopping and arts districts with Scottsdale Fashion Square. The trolley runs from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, through the end of May. Simply look for the trolley stop signs located throughout the downtown area.

For shuttle and trolley information, call the city's transportation department at (480) 312-7696.

Tempe

Bike Week 2003 Events

The city of Tempe transit office, Tempe in Motion, will hold its annual Bike Week April 5 through 13 to encourage people to use bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation.

Bike Week will kick off with a community celebration of the new Crosscut Canal Multi-Use Path on April 5. The recently completed path runs along the west bank of the Crosscut Canal between Canal Park and McDowell Road in north Tempe. It was created to provide new recreational opportunities for bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians in Papago Park and the Papago Salado area.

Residents are invited to join in the celebration by walking, biking, rollerblading, or skating along the



At last year's Mayor's Ride (from left): City Council members Leonard Copple and Ben Arredondo, Whole Foods Marketing Coordinator Susie Hassing, City Manager Will Manley, and Mayor Neil Giuliano.

artist-designed path. To participate in the two-mile round-trip event, meet at Canal Park (Marigold Lane and College Avenue) at 8:30 a.m. All participants will receive breakfast snacks, and the first 100 people to arrive will receive free T-shirts. The path is accessible to people in wheelchairs.

This year's Bike to Work and School Day will be held April 9. All participants will receive breakfast snacks, and the first 300 riders will receive free T-shirts. To join in this event, bike to one of the following locations between

6:30 and 8:30 a.m.: Whole Foods Market, 5120 S. Rural Road; Mill's End Café, 310 S. Mill Avenue; Wildflower Bread Company, 6428 S. McClintock

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Mascot Promotes Valley Metro Web Site

Valley Metro has introduced a new mascot, “Click” the Mouse, to help publicize the online Bus Book and other transit information available at its Web site. The site, www.ValleyMetro.org, is an easy and convenient way for transit users to get information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Encouraging people to access bus route and schedule information online is important because it helps conserve the supply of printed Bus Books and reduces demand on Valley Metro’s customer service call center.

Ads announcing the arrival of the new Bus Book and featuring “Click” the Mouse have appeared in Valley newspapers. The mouse with a mission is also featured in the Bus Book and other Valley Metro publications.



Valley Metro Takes You Out to the Ball Game

Baseball fans are heading to ballparks throughout the Valley to see their favorite teams in spring training competition. Valley Metro has made it easier for residents and visitors alike to get to the bleachers with the new Baseball Spring Training Schedule and Transit Map. This handy brochure includes maps showing which bus routes serve each stadium and schedules for those routes, as well as game schedules for the entire spring training season.



Valley Metro hopes this brochure will give fans a “fielder’s choice” to use public transit and leave their cars—and the hassles of traffic and parking—behind. To find out where you can pick up your copy, or for assistance planning a trip to the ballpark, call Transit Information at (602) 253-5000. For TTY service, dial (602) 261-8208. Our spring training information is also available online at www.ValleyMetro.org.

Glendale

Transit Use on the Rise

Demand for public transit services in Glendale has increased dramatically in the year since city residents approved the transportation sales tax initiative, which funds Glendale’s transportation plan.

The first service improvements following passage of the initiative were rolled out last July. From July through December of 2002, ridership for all transit services in Glendale increased 26 percent over the previous year, with a total of nearly 995,000 passengers.

Bus ridership in the city increased as much as 27 percent. But demand for specific routes grew even



Ridership on some Glendale routes, including the Luke Link, has increased over 40 percent.

more. Ridership increased 45 percent on the Luke Link (Route 70) and 43 percent on the GUS shuttle. In addition, the number of people using Glendale Dial-a-Ride rose 9 percent, with requests for ADA service up 3 percent.

The growth in demand for public transit is largely attributable to extended weekday and Saturday service hours along with new Sunday service. “Although it generally takes three years for ridership to reach its potential after improvements are made to a system, we are already seeing strong results,” said Glendale Transportation Director Jim Book.

Light Rail Project Advances to Next Phase

The Light Rail Project passed a critical milestone in late January, receiving a Record of Decision on its environmental process from the Federal Transit Administration. The decision allows the Project to request federal approval to formally initiate Final Design and permits participating cities to begin purchasing the needed right-of-way for the light rail system.

As with any federal transportation project, the Light Rail Project had to conduct an extensive environmental process to identify potential environmental impacts, define efforts to minimize those impacts, and inform the public. That process is documented in a Final Environmental Impact Statement, which had to be

approved by the federal government before the project could move forward. The Record of Decision is the formal approval of this statement and identifies measures to mitigate specific impacts.

“We’re right on track for a light rail grand opening in 2006,” said Valley Metro Rail acting Executive Director Wulf Grote. “Now that we’ve cleared this hurdle, we’re heading into the home stretch.”

Project officials anticipate receiving a Full Funding Grant Agreement—a commitment from the federal government that it will fund half the project—in February 2004. The Project cannot apply for the agreement until at least half the design work is completed. Approximately one-third of that work has now been accomplished.

Project Releases RFP for Light Rail Vehicles

When the light rail system opens in late 2006, one of its most visible components will be the light rail vehicles. Project officials recently began the process of selecting a manufacturer for those vehicles by releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP).

The proposed vehicle will be approximately 93-feet long, with seating for up to 72 passengers. Some seats can be converted to accommodate up to four passengers in wheelchairs and four bicycle racks per vehicle. The requested vehicle will also include low-floor entries, which allow passengers to board at the same height as the station platform, reducing the time required for boarding.

A sleek, modern vehicle design was developed with extensive public input, including a survey showing four potential designs and asking the public to select their favorite elements of each. “Light rail is the community’s plan,” said Valley Metro Rail acting Executive Director Wulf Grote, “and the community told us they wanted something new and exciting for their light rail vehicle.”

Vehicle proposals are due March 31, and Project officials expect to select a manufacturer in September.



Council Approves Rail Extension to Metrocenter

While design and engineering of the initial starter segment of the light rail system are still in development, plans for the first extension are already being initiated.

In November, the Phoenix City Council agreed to begin the planning process for a five-mile light rail extension from 19th Avenue and Montebello, near Phoenix Spectrum Mall, to the Metrocenter Mall area. The exact route has not yet been determined. The first phase of study for the extension includes conceptual design and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and will result in recommendations concerning alignment and station locations.

An extension to Metrocenter by 2010 was included in the ballot language for the Phoenix Transit Plan, approved by city voters in March 2000.

Valley Metro Gears Up for Bike Week

The Clean Air Campaign hosts Valley Bike Week each year to promote bicycle safety and bicycling for commuting and recreation. Commuting by bicycle is an environmentally friendly, inexpensive, and healthy alternative to driving.

Valley residents who ride their bikes during Bike Week can enter to win a variety of prizes, including two round-trip airline tickets to anywhere that Alaska Airlines flies in the continental U.S.

The schedule of events for the week includes the Bicycle Swap Meet, Bike to Work and School Day, the Tour de Phoenix Bicycle Ride, and the premiere event—the Bike to BOB (Bank One Ballpark) Family Fun Ride, which will be held on April 13. Bike to BOB is a leisurely two-mile bike ride to the ballpark to watch an Arizona Diamondbacks game. A \$12 per person fee covers food, refreshments, a reserved seat at the game, a T-shirt, giveaways, and secure bike parking at the stadium.

Arizona Diamondbacks catcher Rod Barajas and his family have supported this year's event by appearing on the 2003 Valley Bike Week poster (above), which will be distributed to baseball fans at the April 13 game. For more information, or to register for Bike to BOB, call (602) 262-RIDE (7433) or visit www.ValleyMetro.org.



Tempe Bike Week Events

(Continued from page 3)

Drive; or Berning's Fine Jewelry, 1721 E. Warner Road.

Also on April 9, Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano will hold the annual Mayor's Ride, biking through the city with members of the City Council, the Bicycle Advisory Committee, and residents. Participants will meet at 7:30 a.m. at Whole Foods Market and bike to Mill's End Café in downtown Tempe.

"Bike Week is a great opportunity for people to try an alternative mode of transportation," Mayor Giuliano said. "It's a chance for people to get on their bikes and experience Tempe in a whole new way."

For more information on Tempe Bike Week events, call Tempe in Motion at (480) 350-8663 or visit www.tempe.gov/bikeprogram.

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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