

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro



Regional Transportation Plan Takes Shape

The Maricopa Association of Governments, in cooperation with Valley Metro/RPTA and the Arizona Department of Transportation, is developing a Regional Transportation Plan that will define transportation investments in the Valley over the next 20 years.

The plan, which updates the 2002 Long-Range Transportation Plan, includes a recommendation to invest over \$8.5 billion in transportation improvements from a proposed extension of the Regional Area Road Fund beginning in 2006. This total includes over \$2.9 billion in public transit investments that will expand the current bus network



eventually operate over 600 vehicles; a comprehensive capital facilities and fleet purchasing program; and an improved customer communications program, including marketing and Transportation Demand Management elements.

Regional Study Completed

Valley Metro's contribution to the planning effort began with the development of the recently completed Regional Transit System Study. The study used socio-economic indicators to quantify both current and future transit needs in Maricopa County. The Regional Transportation Plan proposes a series of operating and capital investments that will address those needs over the next two decades. The study is providing valuable guidance to the

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and complete 37 miles of extensions to the initial 20-mile light rail transit system.

The Regional Transportation Plan provides for 38 "supergrid" transit routes that will offer 15- or 30-minute frequency on major streets across the metropolitan area, five limited-stop bus rapid transit routes, 26 freeway express routes, and a new rural transit service linking the communities of Gila Bend and Wickenburg with the jobs and services of the central Valley. The plan also calls for expanded ADA dial-a-ride service; a commuter vanpool program that will



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.

Transportation Costs in Valley Second Highest in Nation

A national study released in July shows that transportation costs account for 19 percent of U.S. household spending. These costs include car payments, gas, motor oil, car insurance, and maintenance. The only thing that Americans pay more for than transportation is housing. And we spend more on transportation than we do on medical care.

Transportation costs in the Phoenix metropolitan area were second highest in the nation.

Valley residents spent 21.7 percent of their budgets, or \$8,910, on transportation in 2000–2001. The most expensive city for transportation was Tampa (24.6 percent). By contrast, residents of New York City, 28th on the list, spent 15.1 percent on transportation.

The study was undertaken by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), “a nationwide network of more than 800 organizations . . . devoted to improving the nation’s transportation system” (STPP Web site). Entitled *Transportation Costs and the American Dream*, the study attributes the high cost of transportation nationwide to urban sprawl and inadequate public transit systems.

The Maricopa Association of Governments, in cooperation with Valley Metro/RPTA and the Arizona Department of Transportation, is developing a multi-modal Regional Transportation Plan that will provide a regional funding source to improve transit services in Maricopa County (see related story on page 1). Implementation of this plan will help reduce the high cost of transportation for Valley residents.

For more information on the STPP report, visit the organization’s Web site at www.transact.org.



Regional Plan

(Continued from page 1)

development of the Regional Transportation Plan and the selection of transit investments that will be incorporated in the plan.

Plan To Be Basis for Election Package

The Regional Transportation Plan will serve as the basis for an election package that will be considered by Maricopa County voters in 2004 to extend the current county-wide, half-cent sales tax for transportation. The current tax, passed in 1985 to fund construction of the region’s freeway system, is set to expire at the end of 2005. Since 1985, the Valley’s population has increased by over 1.5 million residents, placing additional demands on the region’s transportation infrastructure.

The plan seeks to address these demands through a multi-modal transportation program that will include new freeway lanes; expanded transit services; increased investments in non-motorized transportation options, including improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians; and trip-reduction efforts such as carpooling, vanpooling, and telework programs. The plan will enhance the quality of life in the Valley by giving the region’s residents flexible options to meet their daily transportation needs.

At present, Valley Metro operations are predominately funded through local revenues that are in large part derived from local sales taxes. This has resulted in a network of service that is concentrated in those communities with the financial resources to fund service. Where routes travel through multiple jurisdictions, service frequency can vary dramatically if one community can afford to fund more service than its neighbors. By providing a stable source for regional transit funding, the county-wide sales tax extension will enable the development of a regional transit network that provides a consistent level of service across jurisdictions.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



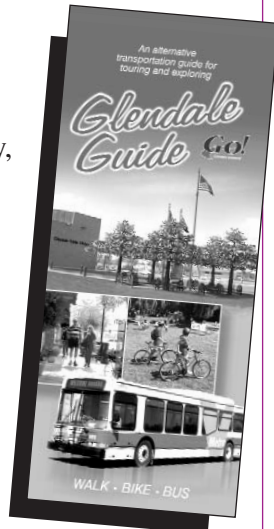
Glendale

New Brochure Available

The city of Glendale and Valley Metro have published a new brochure to help promote public transit as an easy, environmentally friendly, and inexpensive way to travel in the city. The *Glendale Guide* is also intended to encourage visitors and residents to explore the city's many cultural and recreational attractions.

The guide contains helpful hints on using public transit and a detailed map showing all local bus and shuttle routes, as well as bicycle and multi-use paths. The map spotlights public art sites, sports facilities, civic buildings, and other popular destinations you can visit by bus, bike, or on foot.

To receive your free copy of the guide, call the Glendale Transit Department at (623) 930-3500. For assistance planning your next bus trip, call Valley Metro at (602) 253-5000 or visit www.ValleyMetro.org.



Scottsdale

City Buys New Trolleys

Scottsdale's Downtown Trolley will get a face-lift when seven new trolley buses arrive later this fall. The trolley is a free shuttle serving the needs of tourists and shoppers in downtown Scottsdale. The contract for the new trolley buses was awarded to Arizona Bus Sales, representing Specialty Vehicles and the Supreme Corporation.

The new vehicles, which are 83 percent federally funded, have clean-burning, bio-diesel fueled engines, making them environmentally friendly. Designed to look like antique trolleys, the vehicles will be air-conditioned, but will also have the option of operating open-air. The first new trolleys to roll off the assembly line are scheduled to arrive in November for testing. They will be put into service as they become available, replacing older vehicles.

The Downtown Trolley is a seasonal service, beginning this year on November 17 and operating through the end of May.

For more information about the trolley, please call (480) 312-7696.

Region

"Commuter Idol" Winner Chosen

Inspired by the popular TV show *American Idol*, Valley Metro held a month-long contest in July to name the Valley's most popular "commuter idol." The winner was Christopher Geist, a University of Phoenix employee who pulled such stunts as riding to work on his bicycle dressed as a chicken, and wearing a plunger on his head to "flush out pollution" while carpooling in his convertible.



Christopher Geist (right) with Terri Wall, transportation coordinator at the University of Phoenix.

Four "Commuter Idol" contestants did stunts and other promotions to focus media and public attention on the benefits of using alternative modes of transportation to get to work. Visitors to Valley Metro's Web site selected the winner.

For his efforts, Geist won a \$1,500 travel voucher. The other dedicated contestants were west Valley resident C.J. Allen, Michael Miller of Phoenix, and Emma Vega of Gilbert.

Rideshare Week 2003, Oct. 27-31

With cooler temperatures finally settling in, the Valley's air pollution strategy for the fall and winter months shifts to CO (carbon monoxide) and PM-10 (particulate matter). To keep the public thinking about environmentally sound alternatives to driving alone, Valley Metro will hold its annual Rideshare Week October 27-31. These alternatives include riding the bus, carpooling, van-pooling, and telecommuting.

Commuters can enter the Rideshare Week contest and win prizes including hotel accommodations; dinners; car washes; and three grand prize packages consisting of two round-trip airline tickets and a \$500 travel voucher. Rideshare Week will also feature a friendly competition between Valley employers partic-

ipating in the Maricopa County Trip Reduction Program to see who can encourage the most employees to commute using an alternative mode.

For more information on Rideshare Week and how you can register to win prizes, call (602) 262-RIDE (7433) or visit www.ValleyMetro.org.



Tempe

City Named "Bicycle-Friendly Community"

The League of American Bicyclists has presented Tempe with its Silver-Level Bicycle-Friendly Community Award. Tempe is one of 14 communities across the country to be recognized for providing safe accommodations and facilities for bicyclists and for encouraging residents to cycle for transportation and recreation.



The league, a national organization with 300,000 members and affiliates, presents the awards to promote bicycling as a transportation option, for physical fitness, and to help make communities more livable. Criteria considered in selecting award winners included traffic

engineering facilities and policies, bicycling promotion campaigns, the enforcement of traffic laws for motorists and cyclists, and efforts to educate both groups on traffic safety.

Tempe has more than 150 miles of dedicated bikeways, and 3.5 percent of residents are bicycle commuters. The city integrates bicycling and bicycle infrastructure into all levels of city plan-

ning to promote cycling as a part of Tempe's culture and to help create a more balanced transportation system.

For more information about Tempe's bicycle program, call the Tempe Transit Office at (480) 350-2775 or visit www.tempe.gov/bikeprogram.

Tour de Tempe Bike Ride

The city of Tempe will host its annual Tour de Tempe community bike ride on Sunday, October 26. The ride will begin at the parking lot across from Kiwanis Park Recreation Center at 8 a.m.

The Tour de Tempe covers approximately 12 miles of scenic bike lanes, bike routes, and multi-use paths and travels over bridges, through historic neighborhoods, and around public art sites. The free event also includes breakfast snacks and live entertainment.

Riders of all ages and abilities are encouraged to join in the fun and to celebrate bicycling by decorating their bikes or wearing costumes. Bicycle helmets are required, and all riders are expected to obey the rules of the road. Children under the age of 15 must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information or to obtain a registration brochure, call the city of Tempe Transit Office at (480) 350-2775 or visit www.tempe.gov/bikeprogram.

Partners in Progress Awards Luncheon

The Light Rail Project held its Partners in Progress awards luncheon at the Phoenix Civic Plaza on June 27. The celebration of progress on the project was attended by nearly 1,000 light rail supporters, including Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza (chairman of the Valley Metro Rail Board), Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano, Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs, and Mesa Vice Mayor Dennis Kavanaugh. During the awards ceremony, Diane Scherer was named Light Rail Community Advocate of the Year for her dedication to advancing the rail project. Award-winning Valley columnist and author Jana Bommersbach of *Phoenix Magazine* acted as mistress of ceremonies for the event.



Mayor Rimsza (left) congratulates Diane Scherer, Light Rail Community Advocate of the Year.

New East Phoenix Light Rail Stations Approved

In June the Phoenix City Council approved three new light rail station locations at Washington/Jefferson Street and 24th Street, Washington and 38th Street, and Washington and 44th Street. The decision marked the culmination of a four-month community process to select the new locations. The need to examine new locations resulted from a planned change to the connecting point between the airport's "people mover" and the light rail system. The revised station location plan maintains a high level of light rail and public bus service to the east Phoenix community, while also providing direct connections to the two most popular destinations in the area: Sky Harbor International Airport and Gateway Community College.

Light Rail Project Gets FTA Approval to Finalize Plans

With the announcement in July of a key decision from the federal government, the Valley's light rail project has officially left the station. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) gave approval for the project to advance to the final design stage—a decision that project officials say virtually guarantees full federal funding approval.

No light rail project in the country has ever reached the final design stage and not received a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from the federal government. The FFGA, a formal agreement to fund the federal share of the project costs, is the last major milestone to be reached.

The approval keeps the project on schedule to begin construction in late spring 2004 and open in late 2006. It allows project designers to finalize construction plans, begin utility relocation, and request early approval to start construction and purchase light rail vehicles and construction materials. Project officials estimate that design, engineering, construction, and construction equipment are expected to add nearly \$150 million to the local economy and provide hundreds of local jobs in 2004.

The project is not eligible for an FFGA until much of the design work is completed. Officials anticipate receiving the agreement in late spring 2004, shortly before construction begins.

In a letter to Phoenix officials, the FTA cited the project's "highly recommended" rating status as one of the main reasons the project received final design approval. The rating was based on these factors: cost effectiveness, land use, the existence of major activity centers along the route, and local financial commitment to the project.

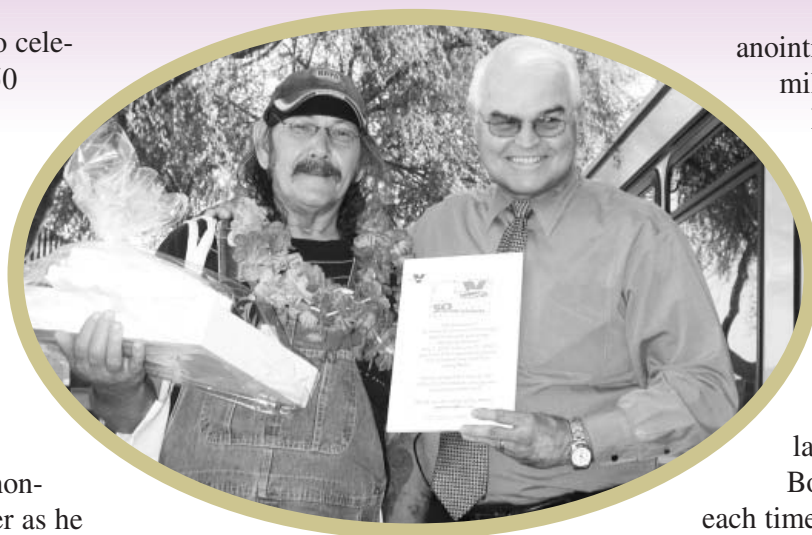
Valley Metro Rail is a non-profit, public corporation overseeing the design, construction, and operation of the light rail system.

Valley Metro Celebrates Record High Boardings

Valley Metro celebrated its 50 millionth passenger boarding of the fiscal year on June 30. That is an all-time high since Valley Metro was organized in 1993, when 32 million boardings were recorded.

Eddie Ellenbarger of Phoenix was named the honorary 50 millionth boarder as he got off the Blue Line bus at Central Station in Phoenix. "I joked with my bus operator that I'd be the one," he said, "but I didn't really believe it." Ellenbarger was presented with a lei of silk flowers; Diamondbacks tickets; family swim passes to Phoenix city pools; and other gifts, including a one-year bus pass.

"We are having a little bit of fun today,



Ken Driggs (right), executive director of Valley Metro/RPTA, presents Eddie Ellenbarger with prizes and a certificate for being the 50 millionth rider of the year.

announcing an honorary 50 millionth rider," said Ken Driggs, executive director of Valley Metro/RPTA. "But it shows that people do ride the bus." He added, "Today we also recognize the impact Valley Metro has made in our community for the last decade."

Boardings, which occur each time a passenger steps aboard a bus, are the most frequently used yardstick for measuring transit service. All of Valley Metro's fixed-route services—local and express buses, circulators, and shuttles—were included in the annual count.

Valley Metro also carries an additional 1 million passengers per year on its dial-a-ride vehicles, which provide service for seniors and people with disabilities.

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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