

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro



Industry Leader Named New CEO of Valley Metro Rail

The Valley Metro Rail Board has hired Richard Simonetta, a nationally respected leader in the public transit industry, to head up the Valley's light rail program. Simonetta, a former CEO of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority and past chairman of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), assumed his role as the CEO of Valley Metro Rail on January 5.

"We're so lucky to have the benefit of Mr. Simonetta's experience and reputation," said former Valley Metro Rail Board Chairman and Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza. "He's quite simply the best in the business." Mesa Mayor Keno Hawker was equally complimentary of Simonetta, calling him a "leader among leaders in the transit industry worldwide."

Simonetta is best known for leading the effort to prepare Atlanta's transportation system for the 1996 Summer Olympics. He has also served as the general manager of several transit agen-



Richard Simonetta, the new CEO of Valley Metro Rail.

cies, including the Central Ohio Transit Authority in Columbus, Ohio, and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which was recognized by APTA as the best transit system in the nation in its size category. He is a recipient of APTA's Transit Manager of the Year award, one of the most prestigious awards in the transit industry.

"I am honored to have been selected as the CEO of Valley Metro Rail and look forward to the opportunity to be a part of this historic

undertaking," said Simonetta. "The Valley's light rail project is the envy of transit agencies nationwide, with tremendous public support and involvement, a 'highly recommended' rating from the Federal Transit Administration, and significant federal funding to date. I look forward to continuing the success they have worked so hard to achieve."

Valley Metro Rail began its search for a permanent director in 2003. The goal, rail officials said, was to bring in a visionary leader with a proven track record in rail implementation who would complement the talents of the existing management staff. Wulf Grote, Valley Metro Rail's former acting executive director, is now the assistant executive director. In that capacity, Grote will oversee development of the 20-mile starter line and future extensions.

Valley Metro Rail is a non-profit, public corporation overseeing the design, construction, and operation of the light rail system. Construction on the system is scheduled to begin in summer 2004, and the final phase of the 20-mile starter route is expected to be operational in August 2007.

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.

Metro Chosen as Name for Light Rail

After an exhaustive search for the best name for the Valley's light rail system, and extensive research on the public's response to possible names, Valley Metro Rail officials have announced that the system will be called Metro.

"Light rail is the community's plan, and the community said they liked Metro," said former Valley Metro Rail Board Chairman and Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza. "In fact, it was the No. 1 name submitted in our naming contest."

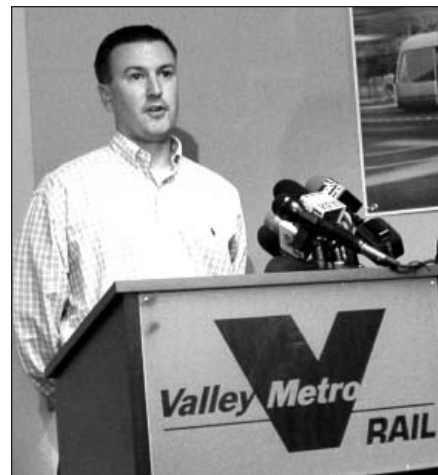
Metro had strong public appeal and was preferred by both existing transit riders and future rail

riders. Survey results showed the name was popular because it is timeless, regional, easy-to-remember, and clearly conveys the idea of transit. The public also felt that Metro best matched the name of the Valley's current transit system, Valley Metro.

At a news conference announcing the selection of the name, Ben Bethel of Phoenix was recognized for being the first person to submit the winning name in the agency's "Name the Train Campaign,"

which was held last year. He received a VIP pass on the inaugural train ride and a one-year pass for the system when it opens.

The response to Valley Metro Rail's naming contest was overwhelming. The light rail office received more than 3,400 individual entries suggesting more than 7,000 names. While many of the names were duplicates, rail officials estimate that at least 3,000 distinct names were proposed.



Ben Bethel, the winner of the "Name the Train" contest.

Groundbreaking for First Light Rail Project

Light rail moved yet another step closer to becoming a reality at a groundbreaking for the system's first construction project on November 6. More than 150 community members were in attendance to celebrate this milestone in light rail's progress.

"With the first shovel of dirt unearthed today, we are ending light rail as a concept and beginning a long-awaited reality for our community," said Valley Metro Rail's then Acting Executive Director Wulf Grote.

The first construction project involves the reconstruction of the access bridge over the Arizona Canal at 48th Street—which will lead to the light rail system's 60-acre maintenance site near 48th and Washington Streets—as well as related street improvements on 48th Street. Tempe based FNF Construction was awarded the \$2.1 million contract to serve as general contractor for the bridge project.



At the groundbreaking (left to right): Mesa Councilman Mike Whalen, Tempe Councilman Leonard Copple, Glendale Vice Mayor Tom Eggleston, and former Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza.

Construction on the light rail line itself is scheduled to begin by summer 2004, though construction on some sections of the line won't begin until late in the year.

New RAPID Services Introduced

Two new RAPID commuter routes began serving the public on January 12. The I-10 West RAPID route improves service between west Phoenix and the downtown Phoenix area. Buses on this route pick up passengers at the Desert Sky Mall Transit Center and the 79th Avenue/I-10 Park-and-Ride and take them directly downtown via the I-10 Papago Freeway. This new RAPID service replaced Express Route 561. (Express Route 560, which originates in Avondale, was not affected.)

The I-17 RAPID route improves service between northwest Phoenix and the downtown Phoenix area. Buses on this route pick up passengers at three northwest Phoenix locations and take them directly downtown via the I-17 Black Canyon Freeway. These locations are the Deer Valley Community Center, 2001 W. Wahalla Lane; the recently upgraded Bell Road/I-17 Park-and-Ride (formerly known as the Deer Valley

Park-and-Ride); and the Metrocenter Transit Center. This new RAPID service replaced Express Routes 580 and 591. (Express Routes 581 and 582 were not affected.)

RAPID schedules are available on RAPID buses and at park-and-ride locations; they are also online at www.ValleyMetro.org. For trip-planning assistance, call Valley Metro at (602) 253-5000 or, for TTY text telephone service, (602) 261-8208.



Completion of Deck Park Station to Be Studied

The Valley Metro Board of Directors has authorized the procurement of several consultant contracts for FY04. One of these contracts includes a feasibility study on completing the express bus station in the I-10 Deck Park Tunnel system.

While driving through the tunnel, you've probably noticed the entrances to the station off the east- and westbound HOV lanes. The "shell" of the station was built when the I-10 tunnel was completed more than 10 years ago, but the station remains incomplete.

Since the proposed, new Regional Transportation Plan calls for improvements to RAPID and express bus service, completing the station is now being considered. The feasibility study, which will direct the future of that effort, is expected to be finished by June 2004.

Share the Ride to Keep Winter Skies Clear

The "brown cloud" is back. It's hard to miss, as it looms high over the Valley and obstructs the view of our beautiful desert mountains. The cloud is the product of atmospheric temperature inversions that can occur in the Valley from October through February, trapping air pollution close to the ground. Though particulate matter from auto emissions and dust are what make the brown cloud visible, the cloud also contains carbon monoxide and other pollutants.



This winter you can do your part to eliminate the brown cloud and reduce the possibility of High Pollution Advisories by carpooling, riding the bus, or bicycling to work. Other ways to help include telecommuting or working a compressed work week.

For assistance finding carpool partners, go to www.ShareTheRide.com or call (602) 262-RIDE (7433). For information on bus routes and schedules, visit www.ValleyMetro.org or call (602) 253-5000; for TTY text telephone service, (602) 261-8208. Wintertime air quality information and weekly air quality forecasts are available at www.adeq.state.az.us.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



New Scottsdale Trolleys

Scottsdale's seven new trolley buses began serving the downtown area in November. The 22-passenger vehicles are styled to resemble historic, turn-of-the-century trolleys. Features such as a cowcatcher, cupola, clanging bell, leather handhold straps, wooden seating, brass fixtures, and decorative windows all contribute to the trolleys' old-fashioned charm.

The new buses are wheelchair accessible and environmentally friendly, running on clean-burning, biodiesel fuel. Though windows can be removed for an "open-air" experience, the vehicles are also equipped with air conditioning for season-long comfort.



The Downtown Trolley provides free shuttle service around Scottsdale's historic Old Town, the Main Street and Marshall Way art districts, the Fifth Avenue

shopping district, and Scottsdale Fashion Square. Trolleys run every 10 minutes Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. now through the end of May. This season the trolley will also operate until 9 p.m. on Thursday nights, when the downtown galleries host their weekly "ArtWalks."

For more information about the trolley, call the Scottsdale Convention and Visitors Bureau at (480) 421-1004 or visit www.scottsdaletrolley.com.

Tempe Recognized for Transit Marketing Campaign

The South West Transit Association (SWTA) has awarded the city of Tempe's transit program, Tempe in Motion, first place in the 2003 Spotlight Awards. The annual awards, which have been held since 1989, recognize the best transit marketing campaigns in the Southern and Western U.S. Tempe in Motion competed against eight other agencies for the top prize.

Tempe's award-winning campaign employed a wide variety of advertising, public relations, and public involvement activities intended to encourage city residents to ride the bus, bike, and walk. It included print advertisements in local newspapers, cable television and movie theater slide-show advertising, and street banners.

The SWTA is a regional transit association representing Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Member organizations include transit agencies; state transit associations and departments of transportation; municipalities; and transit consultants, manufacturers, and suppliers.

For more information about the city of Tempe's transit marketing campaign, call Tempe in Motion at (480) 350-2775 or visit www.tempe.gov/tim.

For additional information on the South West Transit Association and the Spotlight Awards, visit www.swta.org.

New Regional Bus Book Now Available

The January 2004 Bus Book is now available on Valley Metro buses and at 1,800 locations Valleywide. Service changes introduced in the new Bus Book, including new schedules and maps for some routes, took effect on January 12. The same day, RAPID commuter service was introduced on two new routes serving west Phoenix along the I-10 Freeway and northwest Phoenix along I-17 (see story on Page 3 for details).

In addition to the Bus Book, transit information is available online at www.ValleyMetro.org or by calling (602) 253-5000. For TTY text telephone service, call (602) 261-8208.



Regional Transportation Plan

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) has submitted the Regional Transportation Plan to the Arizona Legislature. State lawmakers must now determine whether the plan will be included in a countywide ballot this year.

The plan provides a blueprint for transportation improvements in the Valley over the next 20 years, setting out how \$15.8 billion in state and federal funds and regional tax revenues will be spent if taxpayers agree to extend Maricopa County's half-cent transportation sales tax. The tax was approved by county voters in 1985 and has funded construction of the regional freeway system.

The new transportation plan has received broad public support and has been endorsed by MAG, Valley Metro/RPTA, the Arizona Department of Transportation, local elected officials, and Valley businesses. It includes \$9 billion for new freeways and freeway improvements, \$1.5 billion for major street improvements, and \$5 billion to expand regional transit services. In addition, approximately \$276 million is allocated for various air-quality improvement programs, improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians, and planning.

Valley's Rush Hour Traffic Fifth Worst in U.S.

According to a recent study by the Texas Transportation Institute, rush hour traffic in the Phoenix metropolitan area is the fifth worst in the U.S. The institute's annual study of the nation's 75 largest urban areas reports that Valley commuters spent an average of 61 hours stuck in traffic in 2001. The national average was 51 hours. These figures were calculated by determining the amount of extra time traffic added to a one-way commute that would normally take 25 minutes outside of rush hour.

The study also reports that the annual economic cost of traffic congestion in the Phoenix area, as measured in wasted fuel and lost productivity, was approximately \$1.6 billion. Regional commuting times and congestion costs are expected to increase in the coming decades. If vehicle ownership continues to grow at the current rate relative to population, there could be as many as 4.2 million cars on Valley roads by 2020—about 1.5 million more than today.

For more information on the Texas Transportation Institute, visit <http://tti.tamu.edu>.

Manufacturer for Light Rail Vehicles Selected

Valley Metro Rail has awarded a \$115 million contract to Kinkisharyo-Mitsui to manufacture 36 light rail vehicles for the Valley's light rail system. The proposed contract—the single largest contract for the 20-mile light rail starter line—is \$8.8 million less than the estimated budget.

The contract includes manufacturing, project management, design, testing, warranty, spare parts, special tools, test equipment, and options for 39 additional vehicles. The first vehicle is scheduled to arrive on-site in April 2006. The remainder of the vehicles will arrive at a rate of two to three per month, with the last delivery in June 2007.

Kinkisharyo-Mitsui, a Japanese joint venture, received the highest score in the agency's evaluation of four worldwide manufacturers competing for the contract. Kinkisharyo has designed and manufactured transit vehicles in Japan since 1920. It entered the U.S. market in the 1980s and has supplied vehicles for light rail systems in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Texas.

The vehicle car bodies will be manufactured in Japan, but at least 60 percent of the components will



An illustration by selected light rail vehicle manufacturer Kinkisharyo shows what the vehicle's exterior will look like.

be manufactured in the United States to meet federal Buy America requirements. Final assembly of the light rail vehicles will occur in Arizona.

Each light rail vehicle will be 92-feet long and will carry up to 150 passengers, with seating for 66. The electrically powered vehicles, which can travel at speeds up to 55 mph, can be linked into three-car trains that span the length of a downtown city block. Passenger amenities will include air conditioning, four spaces for wheelchair-assisted passengers, and four hanging bicycle racks mounted inside the vehicle.

Best Workplaces for Commuters

Valley Metro has teamed up with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) in a new program to designate select Valley employers as the “Best Workplaces for Commuters.” Companies that offer a superior level of benefits to assist commuters will receive the designation and be allowed to use the Best Workplaces logo in recruiting materials. The EPA and DOT describe the designation as a “mark of excellence for environmentally and employee-friendly organizations.” As stated on the Web site for the national program, “providing commuter benefits helps employers address limited or expensive parking, reduce traffic congestion, improve employee recruit-

ing and retention, and minimize the environmental impacts associated with drive-alone commuting.”

To apply for the Best Workplaces designation, employers simply fill out a one-page self-nomination.

Your company may already qualify. And since documentation requirements are fulfilled by current Maricopa County survey analyses and Trip Reduction Plan records, applying creates no extra work for transportation coordinators or their employers.

To request an application form, or for more information, contact your company’s Rideshare representative or



call Valley Metro Rideshare at (602) 262-RIDE (7433). Information is also available online at www.bwc.gov. Valley Metro plans to announce a list of designated employers to the media early this summer.

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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Managing Editor: Lillian Duarte
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302 N. First Ave. ▲ Suite 700 ▲ Phoenix, Arizona 85003 ▲ (602) 262-7242

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