

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro

Ken Driggs to Retire as RPTA's Executive Director

After a long and distinguished career serving the public in transportation administration, Ken Driggs has announced his retirement. Driggs joined the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) as chief financial officer in December 1986 after serving 18 years on the staff of the Maricopa Association of Governments. In 1988, he was promoted to deputy executive director and became executive director the following year. He will leave his post after a new executive director is hired in early 2005.

Driggs laid the foundation for his life in public service at Brigham Young University, where he received a master's degree in public administration. "I have found serving in a public capacity rewarding, in terms of seeing ideas and plans implemented from input that the community, business leaders, and city officials have given," said Driggs.

The biggest changes he's witnessed in the past 18 years have included the build-out of an initial freeway system, expansion of the multi-city bus and dial-a-ride system, and transit sales tax victories for Glendale, Phoenix, and Tempe. And, of course, he looks forward to the progress that the first comprehensive, multi-modal regional



"It's been a great experience to see the growth of transit. All those years we didn't have what we have now, or will in the future. It's been worth the wait."

—Ken Driggs

"With limited funding, Ken kept RPTA moving forward as he waited for the day the region would recognize the importance of multi-modal transit.

The successful passage of Prop 400 indicated that recognition had come, and the nearly \$100 million a year it will now infuse into Valley transit will build a substantial legacy."

—Mayor Keno Hawker,
City of Mesa

transportation plan will bring with the passage of Proposition 400 last November.

Of the top accomplishments during his tenure, Driggs said he is proud of being able to help restore stability to the agency after the loss in the 1989 regional transit sales tax election and to help develop a revised regional transportation plan. He is pleased that he was able to hire and retain quality staff members. And most of all, he is proud of the work that was done to establish solid working relationships with the Maricopa Association of Governments, the Arizona Department of Transportation, local governments, and private sector leaders, which helped make possible the landmark regional transportation plan recently approved by the citizens of Maricopa County.

Knowing all that he knows now about the politics of public transportation, would he change anything? "I'd be less naïve in thinking that if the public approved the freeways in 1985, then elevated rail wouldn't be too far behind," said Driggs, in reference to the failed Valtrans election of 1989. "We should also have figured out a better transportation plan in 1994 that would have been approved by the voters, and as a result, we'd be 10 years ahead of where we are right now."

— See Ken Driggs, page 2

Valley Metro is a political subdivision of the state of Arizona overseen by a 12-member board of local elected officials. It was created by voters in 1985 with the passage of Proposition 300.

For the hearing and speech impaired, transit, rideshare, and ADA information is available on TTY by calling (602) 495-0936.

– Ken Driggs, *continued from page 1*

Yet, throughout the past 18 years, Driggs took care to listen and watch in order to serve the public's best interests when it came to public transportation. "The best professional advice I was ever given was to always listen to the elected officials because they are closer to understanding what the public wants," Driggs said.

The best advice he believes he could give his successor is to be willing to work through the difficult periods—especially when it comes to setting priorities in getting work accomplished. He added that it's important to stay focused on solving problems because the end result will be worthwhile.

After he leaves Valley Metro/RPTA, Ken is looking forward to spending more time with his family, especially his 12 grandchildren. In the near future, he and his wife Kerry also plan to serve a mission for their church.

“I know everyone at MAG wishes Ken the best in his retirement. Ken was at MAG when it began and was a key staff member in the development of the transportation plan that led to the 1985 sales tax vote for the regional freeway system. Even though Ken moved on to the RPTA, he always had kind words for MAG.

In retrospect, Ken has always been a person who everyone liked, no matter how difficult the regional decision was that needed to be made. We could all learn something from his essential goodness.”

—Dennis Smith, Executive Director,
Maricopa Association of Governments

Voters Approve Regional Transportation Plan

The passage last November of the Regional Transportation Plan, or Proposition 400, has ushered in a new era in public transportation in Maricopa County. The continuation of the countywide half-cent sales tax will provide funding for freeways, streets, bus transit, rural transit, Dial-a-Ride, and light rail. Consequently, the plan will play a key role in accommodating anticipated growth in the region over the next 20 years by increasing transportation options for county residents and visitors, as well as improving the movement of goods and services within the region.

Combined with projected federal matching funds, the tax will provide \$5 billion for transit improvements over the next 20 years. It will support the creation of an integrated “supergrid” bus and Dial-a-Ride network that offers consistent service levels across the region; an expanded Express bus and bus rapid transit network that addresses both suburb-to-central-city and suburb-to-suburb commute trips; expansion of light rail transit; and associated capital investments, including new buses and Intelligent Transportation System improvements, as well as

Following is a short list of the transit improvements county residents can expect with the passage of Proposition 400:

- 2,433 new fixed-route buses
- 36 new buses for rural transit
- 1,000 new Dial-a-Ride vehicles
- 1,404 new vanpool vehicles
- 13 new regional park-and-ride lots
- Freeway and arterial street bus rapid transit routes
- New supergrid bus service
- 13 new transit passenger facilities
- Additional express service
- New rural routes
- 27 additional miles of light rail

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passenger and operations facilities. The service upgrades and expansions will be implemented in four phases.

For more information about the Regional Transportation Plan, visit www.mag.maricopa.gov.

RAPID Recognized for Environmental Excellence

RAPID, the city of Phoenix bus rapid transit service, was honored for its contribution to the environment at Valley Forward Association's 35th annual Environmental Excellence Awards banquet last fall. The city's Public Transit Department received a first-place Crescordia award for the service, which was nominated in the Livable Communities–Public Policy/Plans category.

RAPID is a 61-mile commuter bus system that began service in July 2003 and features 56 new buses, seven park-and-rides, and 32 stations. It offers commuters streamlined travel routes only available to buses on HOV lanes, with point-to-point service to the downtown area. Since the system's inception, ridership on commuter service has increased 32 percent, demonstrating that RAPID is a practical and popular alternative to the automobile.

Valley Forward is a non-profit, public interest organization that brings business and civic leaders together to improve the environment and livability of Valley communities. Its Environmental Excellence Awards program is the oldest of its kind in Arizona.

For information about RAPID, visit www.ValleyMetro.org or call (602) 253-5000; for TTY service, (602) 261-8208.



Glendale Bike Program Receives Golden Spoke Award

The city of Glendale recently received the Golden Spoke award at Valley Metro's annual Clean Air Campaign Awards luncheon. The award, given to an employer, public agency, group, or individual that has implemented an outstanding bicycle program encouraging commuters to bicycle as an alternative mode of transportation, was given in recognition of the city's Bike Box program.

The Bike Box program is a bicycle safety education initiative that specifically addresses traffic injury prevention and defensive driving techniques. The program focuses on reducing bicycle crashes and related injuries to children, who are at the highest risk for involvement in bicycle-motor vehicle collisions.

Bike Boxes were provided free of charge to 48 K-8 schools (public, private, and charter); to public libraries; and to the police and fire departments. The boxes contained a bicycle safety training manual and two safety videos, as well as other materials needed to teach the curriculum developed for the program. In addition, a professional bicycle educator from Phoenix Children's Hospital provided in-service training for fourth and fifth grade teachers and other interested staff.

The program was developed by the city of Glendale's Transportation Department, Phoenix Children's Hospital, and BikeStar International and was funded through the Arizona Department of Transportation and a Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant.

Ed Zuercher Transitions to Phoenix Mayor's Office

Hired to lead the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department into the new millennium with the passage of Transit 2000, Ed Zuercher is now taking on new challenges in his role as senior deputy chief of staff to Mayor Phil Gordon.

During his time as director of the Public Transit Department, Zuercher was instrumental in spearheading the transit changes mandated by the public with the passage of Transit 2000. The highlights of his tenure include the revitalization of Copper Square DASH service in downtown Phoenix and the implementation of RAPID service in four new corridors throughout the city. Under his leadership, the Phoenix Public

Transit Department was named by *Metro Magazine* in 2003 as one of the 10 most improved transit systems in the United States.

Beginning January 2005, Zuercher has been acting as the liaison between the mayor's office, city management, and city council, as well as supervising the administrative functions of the department. Until a new one is appointed, Debbie Cotton will continue to act as the director of Phoenix's Public Transit department.



Ed Zuercher

In-Street Rail Track Construction Set to Begin in February

Construction on the first in-street section of the METRO light rail system is scheduled to begin February 2005. This section, identified as Line Section 4, stretches 5.4 miles along Washington Street from 26th Street to the north side of Tempe Town Lake.

The first construction activity will be to lay nearly two miles of track along Washington, which will serve as the test track for vehicles when they begin arriving April 2006. The area is adjacent to the METRO Light Rail Maintenance and Storage Facility (southeast of Washington and 48th streets), where construction has already begun and where vehicles will be stored.

Line Section 4 runs through the cities of Phoenix and Tempe and includes three stations: on Washington at 38th and 44th streets and Priest Drive. The 44th Street station will be linked to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport's future "people mover" system. The 38th Street station is adjacent to GateWay Community College and will include a 189-space park-and-ride lot.

Construction on Line Section 4 is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2007. Construction of the other four line sections along the route is scheduled to begin throughout 2005. Line Section 3, which includes downtown Phoenix and extends as far north as Central Avenue and McDowell Road, is the next section scheduled for construction, beginning in the second quarter of 2005. Construction will be phased within each line section, so that typically only a mile section (or less) will be under construction within each section at any given time.

A community construction-kickoff meeting will be held for residents and business owners in Line Section 4 just prior to the start of construction. For more information about the meeting, contact Gary Flunoy, Line Section 4 area coordinator, at (602) 322-4457.

For a complete construction schedule and fact sheet, visit www.ValleyMetro.org/rail and click on the construction icon.



Workers install track on Salt Lake City's Main Street. METRO track construction is slated to begin in February.



An artist's rendering of the light rail bridge that will span Tempe Town Lake.

Join the Excitement at the METRO Groundbreaking

Valley Metro Rail is gearing up for one of METRO's most exciting events—the official groundbreaking for the Valley's first light rail line. The event is slated for February 15 at Tempe Beach Park.

The highlight of the groundbreaking ceremony will be the lighting of a 30-foot replica of the future light rail bridge spanning Tempe Town Lake. The replica features a state-of-the-art lighting system that will illuminate the bridge with a wide spectrum of colors and patterns, which can be programmed for various effects.

To further commemorate this landmark event, a time capsule containing items submitted by each of the projects' participating cities will be placed at a site along the system. The capsule will be buried for 20 years—one year for each of the system's initial 20 miles.

Please visit www.ValleyMetro.org/rail for the latest information.

The managing architect for the Valley's light rail system has been honored for her work in making the future system accessible for persons with disabilities. Valley Metro Rail's manager of architecture and urban design, Betsy Moll, received a special award for outstanding service from the city of Phoenix Mayor's Commission on Disability Issues for her leadership in accessible design and her inclusion of the disabled community in the design-planning process.

Moll created Valley Metro Rail's Accessibility Advisory Committee, composed of disabled citizens and accessibility advocates, to provide suggestions on light rail station and vehicle design to make them user-friendly for people of all abilities.

The award was presented at the annual Ability Counts luncheon, hosted by the Mayor's Commission

Staff Honored for Leadership on Light Rail Accessibility



An example of an accessible vehicle in Portland, Oreg.

on Disability Issues and the city of Phoenix Equal Opportunity Department.

"It has been a privilege to work with the cities and the members of our Accessibility Taskforce to create a design that universally addresses people of all ages and abilities," said Moll. "This award highlights the great partnerships that can happen when we all work together toward the best possible solutions."

Accessibility features on the METRO system include four wheelchair areas in each light rail vehicle, vehicle entries the same height as station platforms to ease boarding by eliminating stairs and wheelchair lifts, gradual entry ramps to the station platforms, Braille on ticket vending machines, and electronic message boards and audible announcements at station platforms and inside trains.

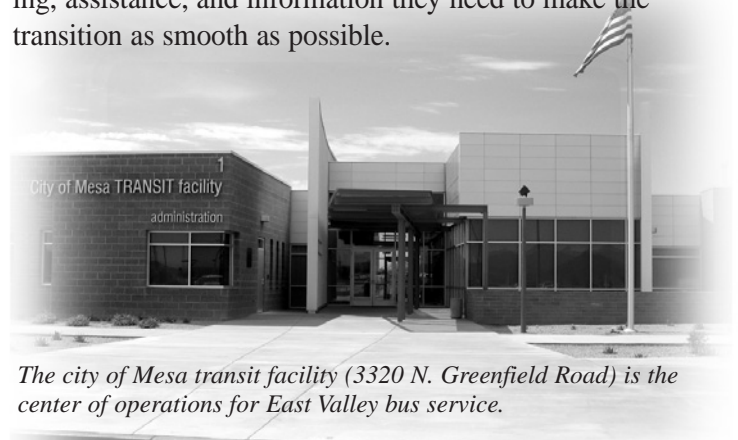
East Valley Service in Final Transition Phase

The changeover of transit service in the East Valley to MV Transportation is nearly complete. MV Transportation, which was awarded the Valley Metro East Valley transit service contract this past summer, has completed two of three transition phases. The first phase occurred in August and included the move of all services previously managed by ATC-Mesa—Routes 30, 96, 104, 120, 128, and 136, and Express Routes 531, 532, and 533—to MV Transportation. During the second phase of the transition, which took place in January, MV assumed the operation of East Valley Dial-a-Ride service.

The third phase of the conversion will take place April 10, when most of the services operated by ATC-RPTA—Routes 61, 72, 81, 112, and 156—will move to the East Valley facility, along with Chandler Express Routes 540 and 541 from ATC-Phoenix. In addition, the articulated buses currently assigned to Routes 540 and 541 will serve heavy use local routes in Phoenix. This will require MV to replace each articulated bus with two 40-foot buses. The city of Chandler transit staff and the RPTA are in the process of discussing ways to incorpo-

rate the additional buses into existing service. The possibilities include running two buses at the same time, one right after the other, or operating additional trips five to 15 minutes apart.

RPTA planning staff will solicit input from passengers on the proposed changes through a combination of passenger notices, public meetings, targeted announcements to trip coordinators through Valley Metro's Rideshare department, and one-on-one meetings with express riders. The RPTA will also ensure that MV staff receive the training, assistance, and information they need to make the transition as smooth as possible.



The city of Mesa transit facility (3320 N. Greenfield Road) is the center of operations for East Valley bus service.

METRO Discount Card, Directory Available Soon

Valley residents will soon be able to enjoy discounts at stores, restaurants, and other businesses along the future light rail line using their METRO MAX Shopping Card. The card, as well as a directory of businesses along the route, will be available in February. The discount program is one way Valley Metro Rail is helping businesses affected by light rail construction increase customer traffic.

More than 300 businesses have signed up to participate in the program. The businesses will provide a discount or special offer when customers present the card.

Participating businesses can customize their own offer for customers and change it at any time. The shopping card—along with a brochure listing participating businesses—will be



available at those businesses, at METRO kiosk locations, and at www.ValleyMetro.org/rail.

The *METRO Light Rail Business Directory* lists all 3,600 businesses along the light rail route by category and can be used as a handy reference guide for identifying and frequenting area businesses. Businesses participating in the program are also identified in the directory.

Valley Metro Rail will conduct an advertising campaign to coincide with the launch of the shopping card and directory prior to in-street light rail construction in February 2005.

For more information about the METRO MAX Shopping Card and business directory, or other light rail business assistance programs, visit www.ValleyMetro.org/rail or call Ruben Landa, Valley Metro Rail's business outreach coordinator, at (602) 495-8230.

January 2005 Bus Book

Pick up your copy of the new Valley Metro Bus Book for the latest bus



schedules and route maps, effective January 24. Bus Books are free and available at local transit centers, city and county offices, and public libraries.

You can also plan your trip using the online Custom Trip Planner at www.ValleyMetro.org. The Planner offers a customized itinerary with options for the fastest route, fewest number of transfers, or shortest walking distance between bus stops.

For more information, go online or call (602) 253-5000; for TTY service, (602) 261-8208

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