

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro

Bus Ridership Continues to Rise

Valley Metro's bus ridership numbers are in, and according to the 2004-2005 ridership report the number of boardings continues to increase by large margins, jumping 4.34 percent this year. The national average for increases in transit system ridership, by comparison, is 2 percent. The system experienced 56.4 million boardings over the last 12 months, as compared to approximately 54 million at the same time last year.

Since March 2000, when Phoenix voters passed Transit 2000, ridership has increased by more than 40 percent throughout the entire Valley Metro system. Contributing to the overall increase is Express and Phoenix RAPID bus service, which together have risen 23 percent since 2004.

In response to continued population growth in the region and the consequential demand for transportation options, Maricopa County residents passed Proposition

400 in November 2004. The resulting transportation plan will seek to address the increasing demands on our transit system. The program will begin by funding improvements to local and Express bus routes including regionally integrated 'supergrid' bus service; funding the purchase of new buses and Dial-a-Ride vehicles as well as new and improved bus stops; and by allocating funding for the construction of more regional park-and-rides and 27 additional miles of light rail.

"Valley Metro provides a valuable service to many residents who rely on the bus to get to work, school and shopping," said Valley Metro/RPTA Executive



Director Dave Boggs.

"The increase in our total ridership shows that more residents are using the bus because it is a convenient and economical way to travel."

Valley Metro Asks Passengers to Stay Alert

Valley Metro is encouraging riders and transit employees to renew their commitment to security and safety awareness.

Using the principles of Transit Watch, a federal program based on the Neighborhood Watch program, transit users and employees are asked to work together to create a safe environment on vehicles and at bus stops.

Increased interest in safety comes months after the U.S. Department of Homeland Security raised the threat level for transit systems to a high alert. Valley Metro passengers have been asked to watch what takes place on buses and at bus stops, and to be aware of suspicious behavior or packages aboard transit vehicles.

"In today's world, bus passengers should be everyday safe by being everyday watchful,"

Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon said in a statement released after the security level was heightened.

Suspicious activities or persons should be reported immediately to bus operators or transit security officers. The public can also call (602) 253-5000 to report any concerns or suspicious behavior.



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.

New Buses Roll Into Town Next Year

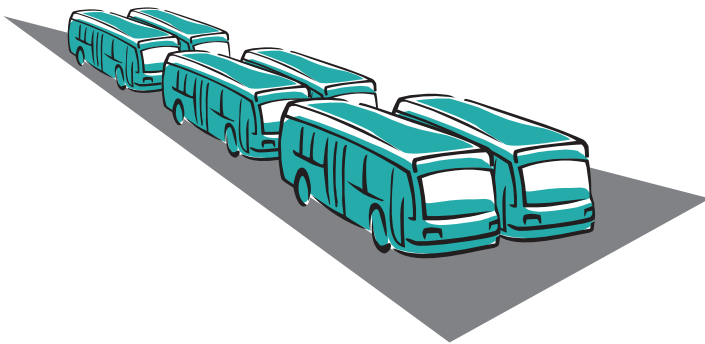
Orders for new buses have been placed by the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department and Valley Metro/RPTA and are due to arrive in 2006.

The Phoenix bus purchase is funded primarily by federal grants, with a portion coming from the Transit 2000 tax in Phoenix and Proposition 400 revenues. The Valley Metro bus purchase is being funded by Proposition 400 dollars and is part of the overall expansion of bus service and replacement of older vehicles included in the 20-year Regional Transportation

Plan (RTP).

City of Phoenix Bus Purchase

The city has a five-year contract that includes the purchase of up to 50 forty-foot and 45 sixty-foot



diesel buses that are fueled by an ultra-low sulfur diesel and have a special exhaust component that traps soot and particles to keep them from being emitted into the air.

To maximize its purchasing power, the city of Phoenix is entering into a Cooperative Procurement Pilot Program with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada for the purchase of 25 forty-foot buses operated by Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), with an anticipated arrival date of early 2007. The entire contract calls for the purchase of 188 forty-foot buses over a five-year period.

The ALEX (Ahwatukee Local EXplorer) neighborhood circulator vehicles, which travel a 40-mile round trip route, will be replaced with new thirty-foot buses and are expected to arrive in late 2006. Also anticipated for a late 2006 delivery is the first shipment of modified vans for Phoenix Dial-a-Ride service. A total of 183 vehicles will arrive over a five-year period.

Valley Metro Bus Purchase

Valley Metro/RPTA has also leveraged the purchasing power of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority by purchasing 28 forty-foot buses and 10 sixty-foot articulated buses through its contract. The buses will run on clean-burning Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).

A New Look for Buses on Schedule

Plans are currently underway to change the 13-year old paint scheme on the entire fleet of Valley Metro buses, including the buses owned and operated by the cities of Phoenix and Tempe. "The timing of the new look coincides perfectly with arrival of new buses in 2006," said Scott Wisner, Marketing and Customer Service manager.

In developing the new design, a task force of city representatives and consultants has been assigned to look at all aspects of a new paint scheme. The paint design contract was awarded to Thinking Caps in May 2005, the same design consultant that had created the current design on Valley Metro buses. A presentation of proposed designs may be presented to the Valley Metro Board of Directors as early as October 20, 2005.



A bus featuring Valley Metro's current design.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



Mesa Bus Shelters Provide Shade and Culture

The wait for a bus in Mesa is more pleasant thanks to the artist-designed passenger shelter that was recently installed at the southeast corner of Broadway Road and Macdonald. The shelter, titled “Desert Oasis,” was designed by artists Damian Charette and Martin Moreno, with the help of the Xicanindio Cultural Arts and Youth Development Program. The participants helped create the ceramic tile mosaics that are mounted on the seating and columns.

Another artist-designed shelter, located at the northeast corner of Center and 1st Avenue, near the Mesa Arts Center, is scheduled to be completed later this month. The shelter, titled “Memento,” will feature photographs of historic downtown Mesa.

The City’s newest artist-designed shelter, to be installed in the fall of 2006, will be located at Power Road and Banner Drive, near the Banner Baywood Medical Center.

For information about the shelters, contact the Mesa Public Art Program at (480) 644-6628.



New bus shelter at the corner of Broadway and Macdonald in Mesa.

Tiled mosaic on column of the shelter.



Chandler Anxiously Awaits New Park-and-Ride

The city of Chandler has received funding that allows a land purchase for a new park-and-ride located near Germann Road and Tumbleweed Park. About \$1.9 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds were provided for the project by way of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG).

A 2001 MAG regional study showed that a park-and-ride near loops 202 and 101 would support Express bus service between Chandler and downtown Phoenix.

The park-and-ride is scheduled to be open by 2008 when Express service begins operation.

Chandler officials see the park-and-ride as being beneficial for carpoolers as well, and will be extremely useful at popular city events, such as the July Fourth celebration.

In total, MAG will provide Chandler with about \$3 million in CMAQ funding, which includes the widening of the Alma School and Warner roads intersection, as well as an additional \$450,000 to pay for three new street sweepers.

79th Ave. Park-and-Ride Construction Nearly Complete

When shade was needed most last July, shade was being added. The city of Phoenix-owned park-and-ride located at 79th Avenue and I-10 began construction on new shade canopies for carpoolers and express bus riders who drive to the facility and typically leave a vehicle parked there during daytime hours. During the construction, park-and-ride users were asked to carpool to the facility because one-third of the available parking area was unusable at any one time.

The west side park-and-ride was also upgraded with additional closed-circuit cameras for safety and security purposes.



Scottsdale Trolley Offers Year-Round Service

Scottsdale city officials are making it easier to get around Scottsdale's historic Old Town and the nearby shopping and arts district. On July 1, the circulator service—Scottsdale Trolley—began operating year-round.

The move was made to support continuing reinvestment in this well-known part of Scottsdale, as well as meeting the needs for increased residential development. Also important, city officials want to ensure that visitors can move quickly and easily within the downtown area.

The trolleys operate every 10 minutes, Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and travel to the Main Street Arts District, Marshall Way Arts District, Fifth Avenue Shops, the Galleria and Scottsdale Fashion Square. Service will be extended until 9 p.m. on Thursday evenings for the downtown Artwalks.

Although they have an antique look, complete with a clanging bell and cow-catcher, the trolleys run on clean-burning bio-diesel fuel. They carry up to 22 passengers and feature windows that can be removed for an open-air ride. During warmer months, the trolleys are equipped with air conditioning to keep passengers comfortable. The vehicles are wheelchair-accessible and adjust to allow easy access for everyone.



Each trolley stop features a sign with a map of the route and free brochures to assist new riders and visitors.

Scottsdale Trolley Ridership Increases 39 Percent

The Scottsdale Trolley has gained new ridership with the increase in downtown residential development. Besides tourists and local visitors, new homeowners in the Old Town district are finding the trolley a viable resource for easily accessing stores, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Trolley ridership has increased 39 percent during the past winter and spring, as compared to the previous year. City officials are attributing the increase in ridership to the new residents who now call the Scottsdale downtown area 'home sweet home.'

Scottsdale Trolley Ridership Since 2002

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Passengers*	42,456	49,498	54,504	75,527

*These numbers represent total number of boardings on an annual basis.

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

Glendale Transit Service Earns High Marks

Recently published ridership survey indicates that Glendale residents are very satisfied with their Dial-a-Ride and GUS the Bus (Glendale Urban Shuttle) transit services. Dial-a-Ride is a transit service available for seniors and persons with disabilities. GUS the Bus is a neighborhood circulator bus service that travels in Glendale's central corridor.

Glendale's survey findings show that nearly all Dial-a-Ride passengers are satisfied with the drivers' safety and courtesy (97%) and vehicle cleanliness (98%). More than nine out of 10 are picked up at their scheduled

time (92%). Most GUS riders are satisfied with the service (96%) as well as the safe driving and courtesy (95%) of the operators.

"We are extremely pleased to receive high marks, particularly in such areas as cleanliness and driver courtesy," said Glendale's Deputy City Manager Horatio Skeete. "These positive ratings demonstrate the pride and devotion all of our transit employees have in providing exceptional customer service."

Dial-a-Ride provides over 86,000 rides a year for residents, and there are more than 80,000 boardings annually on GUS the Bus.



A New Era for Public Transportation in the Valley

Implementing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

A new era in public transportation in Maricopa County has begun. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), approved by citizens last November, will play a key role in transforming the face of transit in the region over the next 20 years. The extension of the county-wide, half-cent sales tax will fund new and improved freeways as well as additional bus transit, rural transit, Dial-a-Ride and light rail service.

In order to implement the RTP plan, Valley Metro/RPTA will be undertaking a series of studies that will define the operational and capital requirements involved in this 20-year service expansion. Current fiscal year 2006 planning studies include:

- **Express Bus and Freeway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Operating Plan**

Developing a detailed operating plan to identify specific routes and infrastructure improvements needed for future freeway Express and BRT routes, as well as to coordinate service with planned freeway improvement projects.

- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor Study – Main Street, Mesa**

Defining what infrastructure investments are needed (vehicles, intersection and signal improvements, station design) in order to establish a BRT corridor on Main Street in Mesa, as well as integrating this service with existing and planned fixed-route bus and light rail transit service in Mesa.

- **Passenger Satisfaction Surveys**

Monitoring customer opinions about ongoing service changes through annual passenger satisfaction surveys.

- **Wireless Communications Network**

Performing a study to assess the costs and benefits of moving the current wireless transit communications network to a newly established government radio frequency.

- **Service Effectiveness and Efficiency Study**
Developing performance measures to allow for the objective assessment of current and future bus service in order to ensure that regional investments in transportation achieve their desired effects.

- **Regional Safety and Security Plan**

Developing detailed safety and security plans to address operational and physical vulnerabilities of transit vehicles and the system's infrastructure.

- **Regional Park-and-Ride Planning**

Preparing environmental documents, and in some cases preliminary designs, for new regional park-and-ride lots to include Loop 101/Scottsdale Road (Scottsdale), Mustang/Loop 101 (Scottsdale)

and Loop 202/Greenfield Road (Mesa).

- **Park-and-Ride Prioritization**

Evaluating and, where necessary, reprioritizing the phasing recommendations for regional park-and-ride lots originally identified in the 2001 Maricopa Association of Governments Park-and-Ride Study. This reprioritization will also address three additional regional park-and-rides identified in the 2003 Regional Transportation Plan.

- **Bus Stop Program and Standards**

Developing standards and identifying needs for bus stop improvements along current and future regional routes, including the preparation of a coordinated implementation program.

For more information about the Regional Transportation Plan, and the fiscal year 2006 planning program, contact Stuart Boggs at sboggs@valleymetro.org



First Tracks Laid for Light Rail

The METRO light rail system is literally making tracks, with the first stretch of rail recently laid for the 20-mile system.

Construction crews began installing track this summer at the maintenance and storage facility site, located south of Washington and 48th streets. More than 1,000 feet of track has already been installed—one of the most significant and exciting milestones to date for the METRO light rail system.

Work is also progressing on other sections of the route—including east Washington Street and in downtown Phoenix—where crews are relocating utilities and preparing the street for future tracks. At Tempe Beach Park, piers and footings are being installed for the new light rail bridge over the lake. Valley Metro Rail has put in place several comprehensive assistance and mitigation programs to minimize construction impacts wherever possible.



First METRO tracks being laid south of Washington and 48th streets.

Valley Metro Rail's assistance program includes several elements, such as business promotions, special business signage, a 24-hour construction hotline, business counseling and access to low-interest loans. In addition, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) program was created

to give community members the opportunity to empower the neighborhoods directly affected by construction. CABs evaluate contractors on how well they minimize impacts to the community and recommend whether to award quarterly monetary incentives for construction mitigation.

More information about METRO construc-

tion progress and the construction assistance program can be found on the Valley Metro Rail Web site at www.valleymetro.org/rail. Valley Metro Rail is a non-profit, public corporation overseeing the design, construction and operation of the METRO light rail system, which is scheduled to open in December 2008.

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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