

DESTINATIONS

Destinations is the official newsletter of Valley Metro

New Buses Arrive Before Summer's Heat

In April, the first of 52 new 40-foot buses began making their way to East Valley routes. The buses, sporting a revised version of the Valley Metro bus paint scheme, are bringing welcome relief to riders who last summer rode older buses with under-performing air conditioning systems.

According to Valley Metro's fleet and facility coordinator, David Hyink, the new air conditioning systems will be able to handle the Valley's hottest summer temperatures. "The new buses have high-performance air conditioning units that allow maximum cooling and smooth, quiet operation," said Hyink. "The system also utilizes the latest environmentally friendly, high-capacity refrigerant."

The low-floor buses make wheelchair loading and unloading more efficient and easier for passengers. Each bus accommodates 36 seated and 38 standing passengers.

"We are so pleased that we could take advantage of an existing contract with Atlanta's transit agency, MARTA, which allowed us to get buses delivered before the original due date of December 2006,"



New Flyer buses feature high performance air conditioning systems.

said Dave Boggs, Valley Metro Executive Director. It can take as much as 12 to 18 months to receive a bus due to production scheduling.

Operating on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), the buses average about 12 miles per hour, with a top speed of 55 miles per hour making them useful for both fixed-route and express services.

"The new buses are great to drive and the passengers like the brighter interior," said Mark Colven, bus operator on Routes 72 and 531 for Veolia Transportation—the contractor operating Valley Metro RPTA bus and Dial-a-Ride services. "As an added bonus, riders get to enjoy being on a bus that has a 'new car' smell."



Mark Colven, bus operator, welcomes passengers aboard new Valley Metro buses.

The new buses are being used on local Routes 30 (University Drive), 61 (Southern), 81 (McClintock), and express Routes 531, 532, 533, 540, and 541. Along with the 52 new 40-foot buses, ten new 60-foot buses will be delivered in July and ready for service in August.



Valley residents don helmets and pedal for Chase Field during the Great Bike CHASE Sunday, May 7.

With Summer Comes Ozone Season

During the summer of 2005 the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) issued nine high pollution advisories (HPAs) for ground level ozone. Though it's difficult to predict what this summer will bring, with the Valley's typical hot, dry, stagnant summertime conditions, ozone pollution will continue to be a serious regional concern.

Ozone: The summertime pollutant

The length of the ozone season in the Valley is six months, from April 1 through September 30.

During this time ground level ozone forms as chemical and organic compounds mix with heat—temperatures above 90 degrees—and sunlight. Motor vehicle exhaust and industrial emissions, gasoline vapors, and chemical solvents as well as natural sources are the main culprits in forming ozone pollution.

Even at low levels ozone can adversely affect everyone.

Some of the harmful health effects of ground-level ozone include chest pain and coughing, even after exposure to relatively low ozone levels during periods of moderate exertion. Children, senior citizens and those with respiratory illnesses are considered most at risk from exposure to ground-level ozone pollution.

Doing our part to reduce ground-level ozone

We can all help reduce ozone and other forms of pollution by following these suggestions:

- Reduce driving; try taking the bus or carpool to work
- Telecommute once a week
- Use electric lawn equipment; if you have to use gas-powered equipment, put off using it until late in the day
- Refuel vehicles AFTER dark

Web sites with ozone and ozone-reducing tips include:

- 1). www.Valleymetro.org
- 2). www.adeq.state.az.us
- 3). www.phoenixvis.net
- 4). www.epa.gov
- 5). www.lungusa.org

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.

City by City

Transit updates from across the Valley Metro service area



New Name for Local Transit Provider

On April 3 Connex/ATC, the contractor operating bus and Dial-a-Ride services in the East Valley, officially changed its name to Veolia (VAY-OH-LEE-AH) Transportation. Connex North America, owned by parent company Veolia Environnement (French spelling for 'Environment'), acquired ATC in September 2005 and became Connex/ATC. In a brand name rollout celebration on April 3, 2006, the company's new name was introduced in a nationwide campaign. Employees at the East Valley Transit facility celebrated by wearing Veolia's signature red shirts and dining on catered meals provided by Veolia.

Veolia Transportation's corporate headquarters provided a gift bag for each of its employees as an introduction to the new name. Veolia Transportation has been operating services for Valley Metro's East Valley Mesa location since March 11, 2006. East Valley service operates in the cities of Chandler,

Mesa, Scottsdale, Tempe, and the Town of Gilbert.

Veolia Environnement is headquartered in France, and is a leading international provider of environmental services operating on every continent. In addition to Veolia Transportation, Veolia Environnement also includes Veolia Waste Management, Veolia Energy and Veolia Water.



Around the world, Veolia transports more than 2.5 billion passengers per year. The company operates over 30,000 vehicles including buses, coaches, taxis and rail vehicles.

Veolia has approximately 72,000 employees in 25 countries, with total annual revenues of approximately \$5 billion. Veolia Transportation also operates bus service for the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department and the city of Tempe.

For more information about Veolia, go to www.VeoliaEnvironnement.com.

Mesa Receives U.S. Department of Energy Award

Based on the number of alternative fuel vehicles in operation at the city of Mesa, transit and fleet support services is accepting an award from the U.S. Department of Energy and Clean Cities Coalition. Mesa has one of the largest alternative fuel fleets in the state, which includes staff cars, garbage collection trucks, and street operations vehicles.

"We are pleased to have been selected to receive this prestigious award," said Pete Scarafiotti, fleet

support services director. "The city of Mesa maintains a strong commitment to use alternative, environmentally-friendly fuel sources for our vehicles, and this award is recognition of our diligent efforts and dedication."

In 2005, 100 percent of Mesa's transit vehicles and 30 percent of its fleet vehicles used compressed natural gas (CNG) as their fuel source. This is the first year the city of Mesa has received the Clean Air Champion award.

New Avondale Transit Center

The city of Avondale is using Local Transportation Assistance Funds (LTAF II), or Powerball lottery funds, to support the construction of Avondale's first transit bus center located at Estrella Mountain Community College (EMCC).

Locating the transit center on the Estrella Mountain campus provides west Valley residents additional access to college programs and services, as well as convenient access to public transportation. Routes 41 and 131 currently go to the campus and will serve the new transit center.

According to Rogene Hill, Avondale Assistant City Manager, the EMCC serves as a transit hub—a location where transit conveniently connects to

meet other services and routes. In addition, the city is also building a bus stop at the Avondale Civic Center Library, which will serve the new regional Maricopa County Library.

“Both locations give riders the opportunity to transfer and continue on another line to complete their trip, or be picked up or dropped off,” said Hill.

The EMCC project will include benches, trash containers, and a structure providing shade that incorporates a contemporary look using contextual design. Contextual design integrates the local setting in its design features.

Construction on the center should be completed by mid-2007.

Gilbert Adds Bus Shelters

Most bus riders who are waiting for the next bus in Gilbert will find their wait a little more comfortable. The installation of 29 new bus shelters were completed in May. The shelter improvements include a screen to shade riders from the sun's heat and glare, while also serving as a back rest. Concrete pads that meet requirements for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were also installed as a part of the project, making it easier for those riding in wheelchairs to navigate.

“This project shows our commitment to public transportation in Gilbert,” said Tami Ryall, Gilbert's Deputy Town Manager. “When you make it easier and more comfortable for people to take the bus, ridership will increase. That's what this project is all about.”



One of 86 bus shelters in the Town of Gilbert.

The Town currently has 98 bus stops along the routes serving Gilbert: 108, 136 and 531. Out of the 98 bus stops, 86 have shelters.

Gilbert is also planning new bus service on Williams Field Road that begins in 2007.

Creating a 20-Year Plan That Works

In February, Valley Metro deposited \$18,796.97 into its bank account. This is not a significant sum relative to operating a portion of the transit system that recorded 56.4 million annual boardings in 2005 and operated nearly 27 million miles of revenue service. What does make it extremely momentous is that it is the first receipt from Proposition 400—the extension of a half-cent sales tax in Maricopa County, where one-third of the total revenues—or \$5.8 billion—is dedicated to funding transit services and improvements.

Voters in Maricopa County approved the sales tax in November 2004 that will fund freeways, transit—including light rail—and streets. Designated as the third largest and fastest growing county in the U.S., the funding for additional transportation and infrastructure could not come soon enough.

“When the voters passed Proposition 400, they said we like what you are doing and we want more of it,” said David Boggs, Executive Director of Valley Metro, the 12-member organization that plans, operates, and promotes transit services in the Valley of the Sun.

With that endorsement, Boggs immediately began

laying the foundation for a “new” Valley Metro. In the past year, the agency has taken on new philosophies, strategies and direction and studies that would support new bus routes, services and infrastructure. An investment of more than \$100 million per year over the next 20 years in transit and light rail has prompted the creation of a strategic plan. Included in this plan are studies on bus rapid transit and express bus operations; service effectiveness and efficiency; a regional Dial-a-Ride system; and regional safety and security.



New articulated buses funded by Proposition 400 will begin service in August.

Input from the Valley Metro member agencies, along with the executive director’s guidance, will help develop a 20-year road map that provides a clearly defined path of decision points and measurable

milestones. The strategic plan

will be divided into three separate timeframes, with the greatest emphasis placed on the first five years of the plan.

“In the next few years, the renaissance of transit in the Valley will be apparent,” said Valley Metro Board Chairman and Town of Gilbert Vice Mayor, Les Presmyk.

“To see the agency change is exciting, and to know that the 20-year strategy will work effectively and efficiently to bring about new services and projects will result in a lot of positive changes for the way people travel.”

METRO light rail achieves first milestones

This summer Valley residents and visitors will be able to catch the latest progress on the light rail system as the first two stations are completed. The sites of the initial stations are in downtown Phoenix, north of Van Buren along both First Avenue and Central Avenue. In Tempe, another milestone occurs with the completion of the Tempe Town Lake bridge. With the placement of the final set of steel trusses finished last December, and the concrete deck poured, the bridge receives its final touches this summer.

In March, the first in-street tracks were installed at 56th Street and Washington, which is located on the city borders connecting Phoenix and Tempe. Additional in-street track will continue to be installed in both cities throughout the year. More than four miles of track has been laid at the maintenance and storage facility, including the yard lead track from Washington Street to the site.

As the METRO construction advertising slogan states, it will be here a lot sooner than you think. These are the first of many milestones that will occur between now and December 2008 when the rail system begins operation.

For up-to-date construction photos and information about milestone celebration events go to valleymetro.org/rail.



Workers install the first in-street tracks near 56th Street and Washington Street.

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 audiotape. 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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