The national event known as Try Transit Week is an opportunity for transit providers across the U.S. to attract new customers and urge them to give public transit a test ride. Try Transit Week, September 10-16, is an annual campaign sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and co-sponsored by groups and organizations that support greater use of public transportation. It’s designed to send the message that communities really can benefit when people ride together to their work, shopping, and school destinations whether on a bus or train, or in a carpool or vanpool.

Special Events
Locally, this special transit promotion will include activities each day to encourage Valley residents to try transit for the day or the entire week. As an example, Sunday service in Phoenix, Tempe, and Scottsdale will be free for the entire month of September.

National Try Transit Week is a week-long series of events focusing on the importance of transit by encouraging motorists to try alternative modes of transportation such as transit in an effort to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

In addition to the September 10 kick-off, the following activities are planned:

September 11 Livable Communities Day
To promote walking in our neighborhoods, instead of driving, there will be a “walking press conference” in Scottsdale that will include Mayor Mary Ann Ross. The public is invited to participate.

September 12 Try Transit Day
Trips made on the Arizona Lottery buses (wrapped in lottery advertising) will be free to all riders. A live TV broadcast and radio remote will take place on one of the lottery buses and Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza and other public officials will be invited to ride along.

September 13 Appreciation Day
Special events and giveaways are planned for the transit coach operators and bus riders.

September 14 Clean Air Day
Special events are planned for commuters driving alternative fuel vehicles. There will be a light rail transit open house at the Valley Connections office. A new website on pollution and its solutions that targets youth is being launched.

September 15 Transit to Work Day
Special plans to recognize commuters using alternative modes will take place. Giveaways are planned and coupons for free sundaes at 5 & Diner will be distributed.

For more information about Try Transit Week, contact Angie Harvey, Phoenix Transit System Customer Communications Manager, at 602-261-8255.
Valley Employers Take On Ozone Pollution

Ozone is still public enemy number one, especially when it comes to breathing bad air during the Valley’s hot summers. However, Valley employers have recently vowed to fight back. By joining Governor Hull’s Ozone Alert 2000 program, they have secured another opportunity to promote ridesharing and combat ozone pollution at the same time.

This summer, more than 300 organizations signed on to the governor’s program to encourage their employees to reduce drive-alone commutes, especially on high-pollution advisory (HPA) days. Under the ozone alert program, employers pledge to notify their employees when an HPA is issued. The goal of each employer is to reduce employee travel on an advisory day by an additional 10 percent over normal trip-reduction efforts.

To help keep employees aware of the ozone problem, the Clean Air Campaign produced and distributed bright yellow signs for companies to display. The signs can be updated daily to show how many days the Valley has gone without an HPA. If an advisory is issued, the HPA sign has a special panel that opens to remind employees to use an alternate mode on the advisory day. The Clean Air Campaign is also sponsoring an online summer ozone contest. Anyone who uses an alternate mode to commute to work, or refuels after 4:00 p.m., can enter. There are weekly prizes in the contest and a grand prize featuring a Mexico cruise for two. Ten thousand online entries were received in June, the first month of the contest.

According to last year’s survey, carpooling was the most popular alternate mode used by commuters on HPA days, followed by transit use and refueling after 4 p.m. There was also a significant reduction in drive-alone commutes on HPA days, with seven percent fewer single-occupant vehicles on the roads.

So far, the battle against ozone is paying off. There have been no ozone violations in the Valley during the last three summers, and the summer of 2000 has yet to experience an exceedance.

For more information about the ozone alert program, call RPTA Rideshare at 602-262-7433.

Faster Bus Service on the Way

With the passage of Transit 2000, the city of Phoenix will significantly improve and expand its existing transit service. One of the major components of the Transit 2000 program is the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The BRT system will initially operate in five corridors in Phoenix serving downtown and the outlying areas of the city, including I-10 and I-17 corridors, SR 51, and Central Avenue. There will be up to 40 trips per day per corridor, split between the hours of 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. BRT will replace and enhance the existing express bus service in Phoenix.

The BRT system will include such features as custom-designed buses, park-and-rides, and transit centers. Various technology and street improvements will help to maximize the speed, comfort, and convenience of the system. BRT will rely heavily on park-and-rides and the utilization of HOV lanes to ensure that travel speeds are competitive with the automobile. The BRT system will interface with the light rail transit (LRT) system at end-of-the-line rail stations. As the LRT system expands into BRT corridors, it may replace BRT in certain areas.

The BRT system will be fully operational by mid-2003. The development of the project is split into three phases:
- planning, programming, and conceptual design
- final design
- construction.

STV Incorporated, a national transportation engineering firm, has been hired to assist the city in developing and implementing this program. Phase One of this project will begin in early August.

For additional information about BRT, contact Mark Reddie, Development Manager, City of Phoenix Transit Department, 602-534-7457.
More Valley Employers to Join the Telework Crusade

The RPTA has been promoting telework in the Valley since 1992 and providing trip-reduction assistance to employers since 1987. More recently teleworking, or telecommuting, has become more popular as an alternative to the single-occupant commute. It’s also more widely accepted as a business tool for employers. Support and growth of this work option is based on these factors:

- Providing a better balance between work and personal time
- Improving retention and recruitment
- Enhancing productivity and morale
- Reducing overhead costs.

In the Valley, there are more than 67,000 employed residents who say they telework at least once a week. It is the RPTA’s goal to increase that number in order to reduce trips and improve air quality. To do so, a new program beginning this fall will assist employers with setting up telework programs. Valley Telework Project will specifically target 10 to 15 companies and customize a telework program for them. Examples of assistance organizations may receive includes training, development of policies, and getting remote workers connected.

Developing a group of employers who can serve as a best practices group will help other companies in the Valley who have thought about teleworking, but wanted more information before getting started, said Randi Alcott, Transportation Demand Manager, RPTA. We also hope to have mentors formed from this effort, as well as solid case studies.

With more than 20 million Americans teleworking these days, up from 4 million in 1990, this work style is considered more than a fad. It continues to take hold in the fast-paced business world that we live in today. Certainly, technology has contributed to the growth of remote working, but quality-of-life and balance have also added to its surge in popularity.

Employers in the Valley, whether small or large, private or public, have realized that with such a tight labor market, the telework option is a big recruitment perk that gives them a competitive edge in hiring good workers. In fact, the state of Arizona is considered a leader across the U.S. in telework, with 15 percent of state workers telecommuting at least once a week. Not only does telework help with trip reduction, but the state has also documented such benefits as increased retention, productivity, and morale.

It’s this kind of good business message that we want to spread: telework has worked for others and can work for you, says Alcott. The Austin, Texas based firm, T Manage, has been hired to provide consulting at the 10 to 15 companies chosen for the free telework assistance. T Manage has more than 250 years combined experience in the telecommunication and computer industry, and 150 years in telework implementation. Valley organizations will apply for the consulting help through the RPTA. Companies will be chosen based on specific criteria.

We want to select a diverse group of organizations for the consulting help. Small, medium, and large private and public and different industries and geographic locations, says Alcott.

T Manage will also be handling requests for one-on-one telework training and assistance, as well as updating the telework section of the RPTA website.

The opportunity to implement a telework program at your organization may have just arrived. The outcomes you experience might just take your workplace to a new level of productivity and technological advancement. After all, work is not where you are but what you do.

For additional information on applying for the Valley Telework Project, call 602-262-7433.

Our Peers in Transit

The last section of the Los Angeles County subway system opened to the public on June 24 and has since far exceeded initial ridership projections. The North Hollywood segment of the Metro Red Line brings subway service to the San Fernando Valley and extends the line’s overall length by 6.3 miles to 17.4 miles. During the first week of operation after the new segment opened, the entire Red Line carried over 1 million passengers. The extension resulted in a 46-percent increase in ridership on the Red Line over May, with average daily ridership reaching 120,500.

The opening of the new subway segment also boosted passenger volume on the Metro Rail System’s two light-rail components. Average daily ridership increased by five percent on the Blue Line and by ten percent on the Green Line. Total daily boardings on Metro Rail System’s three lines reached 211,015, accounting for 15 percent of ridership on all transit lines operated by the county’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority. 1
Seniors Try Switching from Dial-a-Ride to Bus

This summer, East Valley Dial-a-Ride conducted a fixed-route travel training workshop at the Mesa Senior Center. Forty seniors learned how to use the regular bus system, instead of relying on dial-a-ride for their transportation needs. Because there is such a high demand for dial-a-ride service in the Valley, it is hoped that more seniors will make the switch to regular bus service.

Many of the seniors had concerns about riding the bus since it was not familiar to them. With a Valley Metro bus on exhibit, seniors saw how the wheelchair lift worked and learned how to use the farebox. A driver was on hand to answer questions as well.

So what could be better than a hands-on demonstration on how to ride the bus? Perhaps an actual ride on Dial-a-Ride?

Yeah baby!

Motorists Get a Gas out of Star Look-A-Like

On July 12, it was full “Shagadelic” service at Fiesta Exxon on Baseline Road in Mesa. The Austin Powers gas “gag” was a summertime promotion to remind Valley motorists how crucial it is to refuel their vehicles after 4:00 p.m. Filling up later in the day reduces the time gas fumes have to react with sunlight and heat, which contributes to the formation of ozone.

Local Transit Staff to Host National Conference

The 2000 Transit Information Exchange (T.I.E.) conference will be hosted at the Phoenix Airport Hilton October 23-25 by transit staff in the Phoenix metro area. The T.I.E. conference is an excellent networking and educational opportunity for transit professionals everywhere. The goal of the conference is to share ideas on marketing, planning, and customer service. This year’s program of workshop sessions and entertainment events promises to be both informative and memorable. We hope to see you in October!

For more information about the T.I.E. conference, contact Alene Kelsey at 602-534-7391.
City by City

Valley
August 2000 Bus Book Marks Significant Transit Improvements

The August 2000 Bus Book is now available on all Valley Metro buses and at city libraries and municipal buildings. Many significant improvements to the Valley’s public transit system have taken effect with the new Bus Book. These include:

- New Sunday service on all local routes that serve Phoenix
- New holiday service on all local routes in Phoenix and Tempe
- New Saturday service on five local routes in Phoenix
- More frequent Saturday service on seven Phoenix routes
- Extended service hours on 19 routes in Mesa, Phoenix, and Tempe
- A new, free shuttle service operating in the Scottsdale Airpark business corridor
- Two new Scottsdale routes: 114–Via Linda and 146–Frank Lloyd Wright

To find a Bus Book supplier near you, or for updated route and schedule information by phone, call Transit Information at 602-253-5000. Text telephone service for people with hearing/speech impairments is available at 602-261-8208. You can also link up with the Online Bus Book at www.bus.maricopa.gov.

Tempe
Tempe to Offer Shuttle Service to Fall Events

This fall, the city of Tempe will provide park-and-ride shuttle service to all Arizona Cardinals and ASU Sun Devils home football games, as well as most downtown Tempe events. Football fans can park at the Pyle Center (southwest corner of Rural Road and Southern Avenue) and take the shuttle to College Avenue and Sixth Street in downtown Tempe. Shuttle service will begin one hour before an event starts and run for two hours after the event ends. The shuttle costs $2 roundtrip, with children 12 and under riding free. Exact fare is recommended since operators cannot provide change.

This service will be offered for the following events:

- All Arizona Cardinals regular season home football games (September 10–December 17; Please note that shuttle service for the October 15 game will be provided from a different parking lot. Call 480-350-5075 after October 1 for the location.)
- All ASU Sun Devils regular season home football games (September 16–November 4)
- Mill Avenue Masquerade, October 31
- Fantasy of Lights Parade, November 24
- Tempe Fall Festival of the Arts, December 2–3
- Fiesta Bowl Block Party, December 31
- Fiesta Bowl Football Game, January 1

For more information, please call Tempe In Motion at 480-350-2739 or visit their Web site at: www.tempe.gov/tim.

Glendale
Student Art Promotes Transit and Safety

If you’ve hopped on a Valley Metro bus recently, you’ve probably noticed some colorful student artwork on display. Third grade students at 27 Glendale schools created these eye-catching posters as part of the Cool Bus “Stuff”© educational campaign. Organized by the city of Glendale Transportation Department and Valley Metro, the campaign promotes the use of public transit as well as bus and traffic safety. A lesson plan provided to teachers included rules for riding the bus safely, information on how public transit helps reduce air pollution, and an introduction to the various places you can go on the bus. The campaign was held in May and was timed to coincide with the end of the school year, when students start spending more time outdoors and crossing our Valley’s busy streets.

Glendale city staff selected 550 of the student-drawn campaign posters for display, with one poster being placed on each bus in the Valley Metro fleet. The posters were produced at no cost to the city or Valley Metro. Printing and paper were donated by Meaker The Printer and laminating was donated by Kinko’s Copies. The posters were unveiled at a media event held at Glendale City Hall on May 18. Mayor Elaine Scruggs was on hand to assist students in placing their artwork on the bus and to support the campaign’s goal of creating safe, transit-savvy kids.

A student artist proudly displays her masterpiece and her enthusiasm for transit!
Light Rail Project Moves Ahead

The team of planners and engineers working on the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Transit project continues to make progress developing its alignment and station recommendations for the new regional light rail system. The initial segment of the light rail transit (LRT) system will operate along a 20.3-mile corridor from the Chris-Town area to the downtown areas of Phoenix and Tempe, then west to Mesa. Light rail is being planned to serve many of the Valley’s top destinations, including Bank One Ballpark, ASU, Sky Harbor International Airport, and downtown Tempe and Mesa. Powered by overhead electric wires, the system will operate primarily at street level.

Pulling the pieces together
The Phoenix City Council and the RPTA Board of Directors have approved a 31-acre maintenance facility located at Washington and 48th Streets, where light rail vehicles will be stored and serviced. Another important element of the project is the evaluation of potential environmental issues such as noise, traffic, cultural resources, visual impacts, and air quality. A document describing positive and negative environmental effects the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be released in the fall of 2000 for public review and comment. After the document is released, a public hearing will be held to obtain citizens’ input on the findings.

Routing decisions
Planning of the route where the LRT system will travel has approached its final stages. Numerous neighborhood meetings and open houses have been held to discuss options with the public and receive their input on the alternatives. Communities along the route will also have a voice in deciding where the stations will be located, what they will look like, and what connecting services will be offered.

Let the construction begin
Planning and design of the light rail system will continue through 2003. Construction of the starter segment will begin in 2003, and LRT will begin operating on this segment in 2006. Although construction of the starter segment will take three years, no single area will be under construction that entire time. Instead, construction will be done in phases to minimize any negative impacts.

Get involved!
There are many opportunities for you to participate in the planning process. You can attend public meetings, receive newsletters and updates, keep in contact with your neighborhood association or village planning committee, and share information about the project with your friends and neighbors.

Later this fall, a Valley Connections storefront office will be opened in downtown Phoenix. Citizens will be encouraged to stop by the office to pick up information and talk with staff about the project.

For more information, or to be added to the Valley Connections mailing list, call 602-534-1807 or e-mail rail@vm.maricopa.gov. You can also obtain information about the project Web site: www.valleyconnections.com. Materials in alternate formats (large print, audio cassette, Braille, FM listening systems, or qualified sign language interpreters) are available with 72 hours notice. Voice: 602-534-1807 or TTY: 602-495-0936.