David A. Boggs will lead Valley Metro’s efforts to implement the voter-approved Regional Transportation Plan as the public transit agency’s new executive director. Boggs succeeds Ken Driggs, who retired in mid-April after leading the agency for 18 years.

The Valley Metro/RPTA Board of Directors unanimously approved Boggs’ selection. “Dave Boggs is extremely familiar with the Valley and has earned a lot of credibility in the business arena,” said Valley Metro/RPTA Board of Directors Chairwoman and Peoria Vice Mayor Pat Dennis. “He has the ability and knowledge to skillfully lead the agency that provides transportation services that are a necessity to many Valley residents.”

As executive director, Boggs is responsible for the transit-related projects that residents approved as part of the more than $100 million annual budget for the Regional Transportation Plan. He brings to the task expertise in highway, bus, bus rapid transit, and light rail programs and has more than 13 years of experience as a chief executive officer and seven years as a chief financial officer in both private and public sector organizations. Boggs has served as regional vice president of ATC’s Southwest/Northwest region, overseeing the operation of contracted bus service for Mesa, Phoenix, Tempe, the RPTA, and transit properties in Nevada and Washington. Prior to that, he was vice president and general manager of ATC Las Vegas, which was recognized for being the most cost-effective transit system in the nation.

“When Maricopa County voters approved Prop 400, they essentially sent two messages. One was that they like what is happening with transit services currently. And secondly, they want to make transit even better,” Boggs said. “I am excited and honored to be leading this agency into a new era.”

Boggs’ considerable experience managing bus operations and budgets of over $450 million annually, and his leadership in the construction and operation of an 18-mile light rail system in Sacramento, will be vital in managing the 20-year plan to improve transit options for Valley residents. The continuation of the countywide half-cent sales tax provides funding for freeways, bus and rural transit, dial-a-ride, and light rail.

Boggs also honed his leadership skills serving as a general manager of the third-largest public electric utility in the U.S., the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. Prior to that, he managed the Sacramento Regional Transit District. He was honored by a Harvard University study in 2001 for providing the best example of a public/private partnership. During Boggs’ tenure at ATC Las Vegas, the agency was ranked as one of the top 10 urban transit systems in the nation. He received the American Public Transit Association’s (APTA) Safest System Award in 1998, 1999, and 2000 and the APTA 1997 Outstanding Award for the Best Transit System in the 151-600 vehicle category. Boggs has received Extraordinary Achievement and Property of the Year awards from ATC. He has also been involved in successful cost-containment programs and in turning around troubled transit agencies.

Boggs enjoys hiking and traveling. He also has a keen interest in history and has been collecting military medals since he was a youth. In June, he and his wife Peggy will celebrate their 42nd wedding anniversary. They have three grown children and one grandchild.
Not so long ago, people might well have scoffed at the notion that bus riders would one day use a computer to find out what time a bus was arriving or where it was going. Before the year is out, however, Valley Metro passengers will benefit from that sort of high-tech assistance whether they have access to a computer or not.

Beginning this fall, in the first step of a three-phase program, customers calling the Valley Metro transit information line will be able to navigate their way through general information using their voice alone, thanks to technology known as Automated Speech Recognition/Integrated Voice Response (ASR/IVR).

Simply put, a caller will ask a question and the computer’s speech recognition software will process the individual’s speech pattern, dialect, and other distinct characteristics. The computer will then field the question and respond with the requested information.

Callers should find this system convenient because they won’t have to push telephone buttons or wade through a lengthy list of menu options to get the answer to a simple question. That opens up the possibility of customers planning a trip or getting next-bus-arrival information themselves over the phone, says Customer Service and Marketing Manager Scott Wisner.

“ASR/IVR will allow us to give general information and trip-planning capability to customers without having to send them to an agent,” he said. This provides a whole new dimension to the service customers will receive in the future; there will be no waiting on hold for an agent, and information will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Currently, customers can only talk to an agent during business hours.

If there’s any doubt that Valley Metro customers are calling more frequently, the numbers speak for themselves. In 2000, agents logged 1.2 million calls for information or help. By 2004, the number had doubled to 2.4 million. This year, the department expects about 2.5 million calls.

“The customer will always have the option to speak to an agent during normal business hours,” Wisner added. “But the new service will save customers time and reduce expenses for the transit agency.”

The first phase of the program is scheduled to be in place in the fall. Software for next-bus-arrival and trip-planning information is scheduled to be installed by January 2006.

**Speech Recognition Technology Takes Customer Service to Next Level**

Valley Metro’s Summer Youth Passport is a great way for young people to make the most of their summers. The pass offers discounted bus travel to children 18 and under and is valid June 1 through August 31, 2005. It costs only $46—a 10 percent savings over regular monthly bus passes for youths. What’s more, cardholders receive special discounts on products and services at a variety of youth-oriented businesses throughout the Valley. These passport sponsors include the Pueblo Grande Museum, Arizona Mills Mall, Stratum, F1 Race Factory, Brunswick Recreation Centers, the Phoenix Mercury, Desert Schools Coyotes Center, the Heard Museum, GameWorks, Arizona Science Center, and the YMCA.

To find out where you can purchase a Summer Youth Passport, visit www.ValleyMetro.org or call (602) 253-5000. For TTY service, dial (602) 261-8208.
Tempe Going “Green” with Transportation Projects

The city of Tempe is moving forward with two environmentally friendly projects, the East Valley Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility and the Tempe Transportation Center. The U.S. Green Building Council will certify both facilities at the Silver Level. Green building is a whole-systems approach using design and building techniques to minimize environmental impact and reduce the energy consumption of buildings while contributing to the health of their occupants.

The 250-bus maintenance facility, owned and operated by the city of Tempe, will include 75,600 square feet of maintenance space, 7,100 square feet of fueling and washing space, and 19,650 square feet of administration and operations space. Design of the facility will be completed in August with construction to begin this fall.

Located at Veterans Way and College Avenue, the Tempe Transportation Center will be the first multipurpose transportation facility in the nation to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The project includes a three-story, 31,900 square-foot building, an exterior shaded courtyard, and a transit plaza serving the new METRO light rail and local, regional, and Greyhound bus patrons.

The ground floor will include retail space, a transit store, security office, and bike station (a secure, interior bicycle storage facility with bike repair services, shower facilities, and bicycle accessories). The second floor will house city transportation offices and a community/conference room. The third floor will include the Traffic Management Center and for-lease office space. Construction is scheduled to begin in September 2005 with the facility opening in May 2007.

For more information, call (480) 350-2775 or visit www.tempe.gov/tim.

New Glendale Bus Shelters

Glendale residents will soon be able to wait for Valley Metro buses in the comfort of shaded seating at 12 bus stops in the city. The city council recently approved the purchase of the new bus shelters, which will feature a sun cover, bench, and lighting. The shelters will be installed at the following existing bus stops, as well as three locations to be determined at a later date:

- Union Hills Dr. east of 57th Ave. and east of 79th Ave.
- Northern Ave. east of 59th Ave.
- Glendale Ave. east of 76th Ave.
- 67th Ave. north of Mountain View Rd. and north of Myrtle Ave.
- 79th Ave. south of Union Hills Dr.
- 43rd Ave. south of Orangewood Ave.
- 51st Ave. south of Olive Ave.

It will take about three months for the shelters to be built and delivered, and Glendale transportation officials hope to have the structures installed in July. The total cost for the shelters is $150,000. Of this, $120,000 will be funded by a federal transit grant. The remaining $30,000 will come from the city’s voter-approved Glendale Onboard transportation program. For more information on the program, visit www.ci.glendale.az.us/Transportation.

New Ajo/Gila Bend Service

A new regional service connecting Ajo and Gila Bend with west Phoenix began operating in late March. Route 685 was designed to help rural residents reach jobs, medical and shopping centers, and other destinations in the greater Phoenix area.

The route is a joint venture among the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), Valley Metro, and Maricopa and Pima counties. Funding also comes from federal Jobs Access and Rural Transit Grants.

Route 685 provides one morning and evening trip from Ajo to Gila Bend, and two trips each morning and evening between Gila Bend and the Desert Sky Transit Center in Phoenix. Specially designed 16-passenger buses serve the route, which travels mainly on SR 85 and includes stops in Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, and Tolleson.

For route maps and schedules, visit www.ValleyMetro.org or call (602) 253-5000. TTY users, dial (602) 261-8208.
Valley Metro Studies Fare Policy Changes

In conjunction with the planned purchase of new fare boxes, representatives from Valley Metro’s member agencies formed a Fare Policy Study Group to provide recommendations on simplifying the fare structure for the regional transit system.

The group agreed that after 10 years without change, Valley Metro was in definite need of a fare makeover. Reasons for changing the current policy include aging fare boxes, complicated accounting processes, limited customer access to fare media, limited shelf life for passes, and the time bus operators must spend inspecting fares.

Consultants hired to assist the study group recommended eliminating tickets, tokens, and paper transfer slips; standardizing fares; and making one-day passes with transfer privileges available for purchase on the bus. Under the proposed changes, customers would save $.25 per trip on local and Express/RAPID service and $.10 per trip on reduced fares. The new fare boxes will also allow passengers to save money by allowing the purchase of a 31-day pass any day of the month, instead of having an established expiration date at the end of each month.

Input from public meetings held around the Valley will be considered by the Valley Metro Board, which will determine whether to move forward with or amend the proposed fare changes. The updated fare policy will take effect in 2006 after the new fare boxes are installed.

PROPOSED FARE CHANGES

- Eliminate paper transfer slips
- Eliminate tickets and tokens
- Make the cost of local bus fares and light rail fares the same
- Activate passes on first use, not on a predetermined date
- Make one-day passes with transfer privileges available for purchase on the bus
- Make no changes to the Bus Card Plus program at this time
- Local fare, one boarding = $1 (currently $1.25)
- Reduced fare, one boarding = $.50 (currently $.60)
- Express/RAPID fare, one boarding = $1.50 (currently $1.75)
- One-day local fare pass = $2 (currently $3.60)
- One-day reduced fare pass = $1 (currently $1.80)
- One-day Express/RAPID pass = $3 (not currently available)
- Multiple-day passes = $2 x number of days (not currently available)

Transition to New East Valley Contractor

The transition to a new transit service contractor in the East Valley has been completed. MV Transportation, which was awarded the contract for Valley Metro/RPTA East Valley transit service last June, implemented the final step in the three-phase transition on April 10.

In the first two phases, MV Transportation assumed the fixed-route services once operated by ATC-Mesa, the Mesa express routes operated by ATC-Phoenix, and East Valley Dial-a-Ride operations. In the final phase, Routes 61, 72, 81, 112, and 156—previously operated by ATC-RPTA—switched over to MV Transportation. Routes 84 and 114 moved from ATC-RPTA to ATC-Tempe, and the 131-START Route serving the Southwest Valley switched from ATC-RPTA to ATC-Phoenix.

Express Routes 540 and 541, which connect Chandler and Ahwatukee to downtown Phoenix, moved to MV Transportation from ATC-Phoenix. Also, three additional trips were added to the Route 541 schedule, and all departure times for the route were adjusted.

New schedules for Route 541, which took effect on April 11, are available online at www.ValleyMetro.org as well as on the buses. The schedule for Route 540 remained the same and can be found in the current Bus Book.

Planning staff received input on the proposed changes from passengers and downtown employers earlier this year. A public meeting was also held in January at the Chandler Senior Center to present two different options for the schedule adjustments on Route 541.
The METRO light rail system officially left the station with a groundbreaking celebration on February 15. Instead of a traditional groundbreaking, however, hundreds of rail supporters turned out at Tempe Beach Park for a dramatic and memorable evening ceremony. Featuring the mayors of the system’s participating cities, it included the lighting of a full-scale replica of the future METRO bridge over Tempe Town Lake. A unique lighting system will bathe the bridge in various colors and patterns of light, making it one of the focal points of the rail project’s public art program.

Phoenix Mayor and Valley Metro Rail Chairman Phil Gordon, Tempe Mayor and event emcee Hugh Hallman, Mesa Mayor Keno Hawker, and Glendale’s Assistant Transportation Director Michael Munroe also sealed a time capsule containing items provided by each participating city, the Thomas J. Pappas School, and local media. Dozens of audience members also added personalized messages and business cards to the capsule, which will be opened in 2025.

In-street construction of the METRO light rail system began in March in the Papago Park area near 56th and Washington streets. While work to relocate utilities has been underway for more than a year, this is the first in-street work performed by Valley Metro Rail construction contractors.

Construction kickoff meetings were held in early March for the Tempe Town Lake bridge and Line Section 4, which stretches from 26th Street to the lake. At the meetings, community members were informed about the planned schedule and what to expect during construction. Contractors and Valley Metro Rail staff working on those sections were also introduced to participants.

Work on other areas of the route will begin in the coming months and will be phased within each of the project’s five line sections. Construction kickoff meetings will be held for each section, and community members will be informed of the meetings through door hangers distributed within a quarter mile of the route. Meetings will also be held periodically during construction to keep the community informed of progress, planned work schedules, and any expected impacts.

Construction information is available on Valley Metro Rail’s Web site at www.ValleyMetro.org/rail or by calling the 24-hour hotline at (602) 534-1807.
Valley Metro Teams Up with D-Backs

Valley Metro has formed a new partnership with the Arizona Diamondbacks for the 2005 season and hopes to oblige the next time you sing “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.” Or the next time you want to go anywhere, for that matter.

The regional transportation agency decided to advertise as a Diamondbacks sponsor as a way of educating Valley residents and potential customers about the public transportation services it provides and their benefits. The ad campaign was undertaken in part due to low awareness levels (23%) of the Valley Metro name.

To increase the agency’s visibility—quite literally—Valley Metro’s logo and tagline, “Smart Move,” now appear on a permanent in-field sign at Bank One Ballpark. Look for it in right field the next time you’re taking in a game. The agency has also produced 15-second television spots to air during D-Backs games, TV ads and public service announcements to be broadcast on Playin’ Hardball, and radio spots to be played on Spanish-language stations.

The ads will promote using the bus or finding a carpool partner to save fuel costs in your daily travels.

An estimated viewing audience of more than 350,000 will see the Valley Metro ads during each Diamondbacks game.

For more information on public transit service, visit www.ValleyMetro.org or call (602) 253-5000; TTY users, dial (602) 261-8208.

To find a carpool or vanpool partner, visit ShareTheRide.com or call (602) 262-RIDE (7433); for TTY, (602) 495-0936.