
LRT Construction Mitigation Studies

PHOENIX, ARIZONA:
Phoenix Valley METRO
Light Rail

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For University Avenue Business Association

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Synopsis

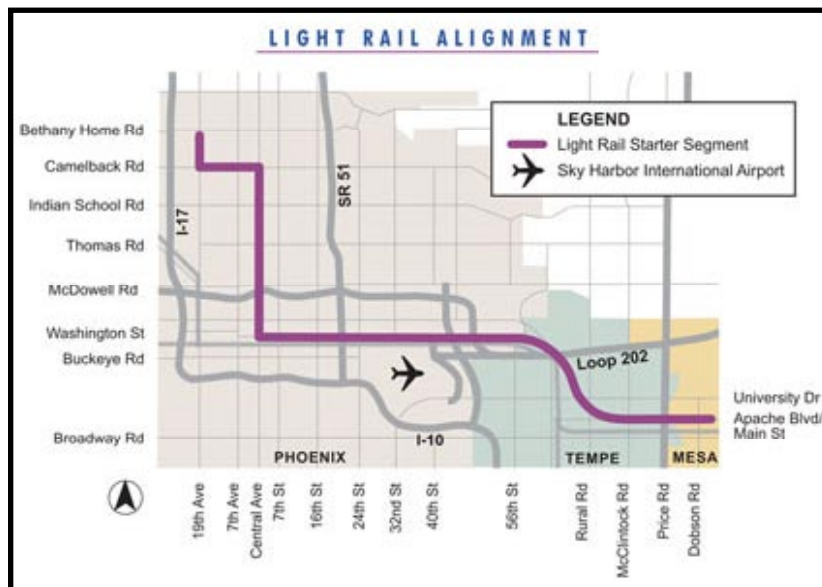
As it nears completion the Valley Metro Light Rail's lofty goals can serve as a model for how the city of St. Paul can go about keeping community members involved during light rail construction along the Central Corridor. Scheduled to open for public transport at the end of December 2008, the light rail starter segment covers just under 20 miles (with an additional 36 miles to come online by the end of 2010), and moves through numerous types

of neighborhoods – including mixed-use, industrial and commercial. Valley Metro and the city of Phoenix have seemingly devoted numerous, varying resources to ensure public cooperation, benefit and input throughout

the construction process. An initial Public Involvement Plan (PIP) laying out expectations for community interaction at each step of the process was finalized in the 2003 and the subsequent programs have grown out of the expectations set therein. These programs range from regular, scheduled contact with community members, to creation of positions to maintain alliances between the community, the city and Valley Metro, and making available different discounted and free opportunities for businesses affected by construction.

This report outlines the basic form of the services and opportunities provided to corridor residents and business owners during construction. This is an examination of the programs provided and is not meant to critique the effectiveness, delivery or reception of said services and alliances. Generally I find the intentions of the city of Phoenix and Valley Metro to be well-placed and recommend that University UNITED presses to ensure that the city of St. Paul at the

very least include such services to residents and business owners along the Central Corridor.



Public Involvement Plan

From the outset Valley Metro worked to involve community members throughout the four-year initial construction period. An awareness of this requirement was put-forth in a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) in the fall of 2003.

Specifically, section 5.2 of the plan discusses “Public Activities During Construction.”

Successful public involvement is here defined as the ability of Valley Metro Rail and its contractor as being prepared to respond to public comment and concern in an ongoing manner. This plan includes soliciting community input from the initial construction design up to final design and throughout the construction process (see Appendix A).



Community Advisory Board

Monthly meetings of local business leaders and representatives provide a forum for concerned community leaders to stay abreast of light-rail developments. These boards also serve an evaluative function within the community as the forum allows area residents and business owners to communicate their expectations and

concerns about the developing project. Each Community Advisory Board is paired with a Community Outreach Coordinator (see below) who is responsive to concerns and serves as the Valley Metro spokesperson at meetings. Additionally, Board members decide on whether or not contractors are meeting or exceeding job expectations and make recommendations to Valley Metro on whether or not to award contractors with a quarterly bonus.

Business Outreach Coordinators

Two Valley Metro staff members serve as full-time liaisons to businesses along the construction route. Their work focuses on providing information and resolving problems that may arise. This includes, but may not be limited to, connecting local business owners – primarily small business owners – with financial and business assistance services throughout construction and ensuring that the needs of the community, as perceived by business owners are managed throughout the process. (For contacts, see Appendix B.)

Community Outreach Coordinators

Six Valley Metro employees serve as Community Outreach Coordinators and are available to help any individual or group during construction. Each Coordinator is assigned a section of the construction line to which they are solely responsible. Along this section they work towards direct working-relationships with

both community members and construction contractors. They serve as resources to provide information and to help resolve problems as they arise. (For contacts, see Appendix C.) There is also a 24-hour hot line to ensure constant community contact with Outreach Coordinators.

Construction Signage Program

Courtesy signage and banners have been made available to businesses along the construction route. The signs come in two different forms: traffic guide signs and courtesy signs. Traffic guide signs are 24” x 36”, made of metal, reinforced by T-stands and weighted by sandbags. Courtesy signs are 24” x 36” A-frame signs made of corrugated plastic and reinforced by a metal A-frame (see picture). Banners were also slated to be made available.



Signage and banners were made available to businesses at the beginning of construction and have remained so throughout the

process. Generally the information conveyed upon the signage and banners is at the discretion of business owners as long as the information conveyed relates directly to business purposes. (For contacts, see Appendix D.)

METRO MAX Card

This discount card is set-up as an incentive for riders of the Phoenix LRT to visit local businesses along the route. For local businesses to participate they simply have to offer a type of discount or incentive to LRT passengers who present their METRO MAX card. The card is marketed, promoted and distributed



by the Valley Metro network. Traditionally in arrangements such as this each individual business

sets the discount – say get ten percent off on your haircut – which is printed either on the card and/or advertised at the business.

Financing

The city of Phoenix provides numerous types of loans to business owners within the corridor to help meet business needs during construction and beyond in the hopes of stimulating business growth along the corridor.

Expansion Assistance and Development is a collateral reserve deposit meant to help local business owners meet lending requirements. Collateral enhancements up to \$150,000 have been made available with no additional cost to Valley Metro, corridor business, or lenders. These can be used with any commercial loan or lines of credit.

Community-based micro loans are also available

in amounts ranging from \$200-\$35,000.

(For contact, see Appendix E)

Business Advocate

The city of Phoenix hired on a business advocate solely to support small business owners impacted by the construction. The focus of this position is to help business owners analyze and meet immediate and long-term goals and connect with business strengthening tools. It is unclear whether this service was gratis.

Management Technical Assistance Consultants

Business experts and small business owners, these private-sector consultants provide a free consultation (reported market value: \$3,000) – paid for by the city of Phoenix. Consultants can focus on: advertising and promotions, accounting development, financial reviews, business strategies, workforce recruitment, supplier development, and technology analysis and implementation.

ASU Market Needs Assessment

This program serves business owners by connecting them with marketing experts at the Arizona State University Spirit of Enterprise Center and W.P. Carey School of Business. A free service, these marketing consultants visit businesses and develop marketing strategies alongside business owners while providing their own recommendations.

Appendix A

(Valley Metro Rail Public Involvement Plan;
Section 5.2)

Public Involvement Activities During Construction
Construction of the Central Phoenix/East Valley
Light Rail Transit Project is scheduled to begin
in mid 2004 and last approximately three years.
Minimizing impacts to businesses, residents
and traffic, involving the public and maintaining
positive community relations are key elements
to the successful development of the Project.
Successful public involvement requires that
Valley Metro Rail and the contractor be prepared
to respond to public comment and concerns in
an ongoing effort.

Throughout Final Design, the light rail public
involvement team will work with the community
to prepare them for what to expect during
construction, to listen to and address their
concerns regarding how they will be affected by
the construction, and to share those concerns
with the LRT Project management and the
design teams. During Final Design, the area
coordinators will work with the community to
identify special events and holidays, which
will be communicated to the Light Rail design
managers, so they can be designated in the
Project construction specifications as “limited
construction days.”

To prepare for construction, the Community
Relations staff worked with Light
Rail Project Management, City representatives
and business leaders in all three cities to develop

a plan for mitigating impacts on businesses and
residents during LRT construction. This plan is
attached as Appendix 1 (note: Appendix 1 could
not be found). A public involvement specialist
has been assigned to develop and coordinate
this effort.

Prior to the start of construction for each line
section, the Project will hold a kickoff meeting
to introduce the neighborhoods within that line
section to their Project engineer and contractor.
During construction, the light rail public
involvement area coordinators assigned to
each construction section will help mitigate
construction impacts, provide up-to-date
information on the construction activities and
the schedule, and coordinate the work with
adjacent business activities, the public and
the construction contractor. The construction
contractors will be required to develop detailed
schedules to identify specific construction
activities for their work. The area coordinators
will work closely with the contractors to provide
the public advance notification of possible
street lane closures, detours, and rerouting of
transit services. They will work with the Project
engineers and the contractors to help ensure that
access to homes and businesses is maintained
at all times during construction and that
construction is avoided during nighttime hours in
residential areas.

Throughout construction, the area coordinators
will maintain a high level of communication with
the affected stakeholders in their assigned line

sections.

They will be on-call via cellular phone at all times when construction is taking place. Serving as the one point of contact for stakeholders along the alignment, the area coordinators will be the conduit for communications among the public and the LRT Project staff and the contractor. As such, they will be available to provide assistance to the public in resolving any construction issue or concerns.

Periodic community update meetings will be held throughout construction. The

Project will also form a team of community leaders from each construction line section that will serve as a voice for the community during construction and that will help evaluate the contractor's performance at various milestones during construction. These teams will be known as line section Community Advisory Boards (CABs), and they will participate in monthly meetings organized by the area coordinators that will include the resident engineer and the construction contractor. The CABs will provide community input on the contractor's performance that will be considered by the resident engineer in determining the contractor's monthly progress payments.

During construction, the light rail Community Relations Team will continue to maintain the LRT Project hotline, web site and stakeholder database; staff the community office; coordinate and staff community events; coordinate and make presentations to various community groups; develop and distribute LRT Project fact sheets and newsletters; and maintain a high level

of media outreach.

Appendix B

Business Outreach Coordinators

Erin Seibel
Business Outreach Coordinator
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Howard Steere
Public Involvement Manager
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Appendix C

Community Outreach Coordinators

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Line Section 6, Mesa

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Appendix D

Construction Signage Coordinator

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Appendix E

Phoenix Community Financing Contact

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