

**COMMENTS ON THE NW VALLEY TRANSPORTATION SURVEY &
IMPLEMENTATION STUDY**

Submitted By: **PORA SUN CITIES TRANSIT COMMITTEE**
9/24/2020

The Sun Cities Transit Committee advocates for affordable and accessible public transit in the Sun City (SC) and Sun City West (SCW) jurisdictions. The Committee is comprised of residents from both Sun Cities as well as the Executive Director and a staff member of North West Valley Connect. In addition, a Board Director from the Property Owners & Residents Association (PORA) in SCW & the Sun City Homeowners Association (SCHOA) are Committee members as well as residents of their communities. These two organizations are quasi-governmental organizations that liaison with government, non-profit and private agencies on issues impacting residents in the Sun Cities.

The Committee applauds Valley Metro and MAG for focusing on the public transit needs of the Sun Cities and welcomes the opportunity to submit the following written comments.

- First, of the five transit options, the **Committee supports the service concept for circulators in SCW and SC**. This option has the potential to provide the best access to a wide range of important local locations, as well as to connect residents to regional transit networks where they can access additional modes of transportation.
- If the circulator option is advanced, the **Committee requests that it participate in selecting the types of vehicles used for the circulators and in identifying the routes and stops that will be made by them**.
- **The Committee has concerns about the validity of the needs survey**. The survey does show the high percentage of individuals in SC & SCW that are disabled or are 65+. Specifically, the survey identified that:
 - the percentage of individuals 65+ in the Sun Cities is 5-1/2 times that of all such individual in Maricopa County; and
 - the percentage of disabled individuals in the Sun Cities is nearly triple that of those in all of Maricopa County.

Yet the transportation needs of this cohort, which typically are significant, were not highlighted in the study.

Further, information on the low need or use that does exist for these populations in the survey does not corroborate with data found elsewhere.

Additionally, transit needs of these populations are likely under-counted in the study since Maricopa County revised the eligibility requirements for the 65+ & disabled populations for the popular Dial-a-Ride program. These revisions eliminated participation by individual who are 65+, and required those with a disability to become ADA certified in order to participate in the program. These changes occurred after the survey results were collected, so the possible significant impact of individuals losing access to this transit program is not reflected in the survey findings.

Finally, the technical memorandum notes that no funding currently exists to support any of the identified transit options. For years this refrain has stifled transit development proposed in previous

surveys and studies in the Northwest Valley and Sun Cities. While the technical memorandum states that the next phase of this current project will be to develop potential funding scenarios and solutions to support future transit service in the study area, it provides no information on process or time frame for this phase.

Given the advanced planning needs for transit development, the Committee recommends the funding process be initiated now in the technical memorandum by at least identify funding strategies that have already been discussed within the communities. This action would provide a starting point for public discussion now as well as for the subsequent phase.

To that end, the Committee lists below five strategies that have been discussed in different arenas and recommends that they be listed in the current technical memorandum. While the Sun Cities Transit Committee does not endorse any of the options below, it is prepared to help educate and receive feedback about these options from the Sun Cities communities through different mechanisms.

Funding Options:

1. Incorporate the two Sun Cities areas so they will have the options the cities have to hire a transit planner and look at a transit tax.

This would require sharing the survey and plan with the Sun Cities communities and the PORA and SCHOA Boards. If accepted, a transit planner would need to be hired, funding for the position identified, and MAG would need to include these jurisdictions in its regional planning.

2. Develop a special taxing district in the Sun Cities areas for transit.

The State Legislature would need to put together a taxing district. If accepted, tax funds would pay for a transit planner who would be hired by the appropriate County entity, and the Sun Cities jurisdictions would be included in MAG's regional planning activities.

3. Have the State Legislature mandate a County Transit Planner as well as the funding for it. This position would handle planning for the Sun Cities and other unincorporated areas in the county not currently included in MAG'S resource allocation activities.

The Legislature would need to be informed of and agree to this funding initiative.

4. Change the process that MAG and Valley Metro use to plan *to a regional planning process like other large cities have.*

The Sun Cities Transit Committee would be pleased to work with Survey staff in the next phase to investigate what the planning in other large cities looks like. These findings would be included in suggestions to MAG's Transportation Policy Committee to review. The Board at MAG and Valley Metro would then review and discuss the idea of how this would benefit the whole Metro Phoenix Area.

5. Assure that language for a new Proposition 400 includes funding to support transit options in neighborhoods., as well as item #3 above.

The SCTC will share this proposed option with the representatives and senators of the Sun Cities' state legislative districts and recommend they incorporate it into new Proposition 400 extension legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact:

Kate King, PORA Board Director
Chair, Sun Cities Transit Committee
623-584-4286
Kate.King@porascw.org