

For Immediate Release

Commentary by Councilmember Matt Orlando

June 29, 2007

The City of Chandler is the newest member of the Valley Metro Rail Board (known as METRO). METRO's aim is to "provide a premier regional rail system that enhances mobility and strengthens the viability of our community". The 20-mile line should be fully operational by the end of 2008 and hopefully will give some welcomed relief to Valley commuters. While we do not have any light rail lines planned in Chandler in the immediate future, we feel it is critical to have input on decisions that will effect the region as a whole – and quite possibly our own community. Mass transit is a vital component to the Valley's overall quality of life and is an element that really knows no borders.

Our membership in METRO is just the latest action by the City Council that is striving to make a significant investment in our community's transportation future. For instance, the council recently authorized staff to update Chandler's Transportation Master Plan. The update will supply us with critical data as we look to the future. The plan will take about a year to complete and will address a number of critical needs for our community - That include, bicycles, traffic patterns and mass transit rider ship (DAVE what else?).

The first task and most critical to the entire process, will be an intensive outreach effort to ensure residents have the opportunity to provide input. This will include public meetings, a dedicated page on the City's Web site and the development of a stakeholders' database. I encourage you to participate as we move through this process.

Unlike other Valley cities, Chandler has no dedicated local funding source for transit. As a result, we have only been able to provide a minimal level of transit service in spite of our significant population increase over the past 10 years. However, voter approval of Proposition 400 in 2004 is now providing some regional funds for a significant increase in public transit in Chandler.

Some improvements have already been made such as increased bus service on Rural Road to Chandler Fashion Center, and increased funding for Dial-A-Ride. Next July, bus service on Chandler Boulevard will be improved and weekend service will be added. Eventually, all of the arterial street bus routes will be upgraded with increased service frequency as well as later evening and weekend hours.

Several bus routes will also be extended into south Chandler, and new routes will be added to Ray Road and Queen Creek Road. Plans are also being developed to implement several neighborhood circulator routes similar to the ALEX bus in Ahwatukee. Last year the City increased funding to Maricopa County Special Transportation Services to augment the dial-a-ride service provided by Valley Metro's East Valley Dial-A-Ride.

This year the City implemented a taxicab coupon program in partnership with Valley Metro. This program provides senior citizens and people with disabilities with another affordable transportation option.

We all realize the significance that these efforts will play in our daily lives. The work we are doing here in Chandler to address the future of transportation will only enhance an already great place to live.

Dave can we add paragraph here to an email address or phone number so people can be contacted for inputs to the transit plan?