Transit Modes

There are several types of transit considered during the planning process. The modes considered for a specific corridor will vary depending upon conditions, needs and opportunities unique to the corridor. Options can include:

Express Bus
Buses that make fewer stops and operate primarily on freeways during peak commute hours.

Bus Rapid Transit
A limited-stop bus service that provides faster service and travel times. Bus rapid transit can operate in exclusive corridors, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, on expressways or in mixed traffic on city streets. Bus rapid transit service can receive signal prioritization and feature quick, convenient fare collection.

Modern Streetcar
Streetcars operate on tracks typically mixed with auto traffic and are powered by overhead power lines. They differ from light rail in their vehicle size and single-car operation. Stations are also more frequent than light rail.

Light Rail
Light rail is powered by overhead power lines and travels in a dedicated guideway alongside vehicle traffic or in its own right-of-way. Light rail trains provide an extremely smooth and quiet ride, traveling at posted speed limits. A three-car train can carry as many as 600 passengers.

Commuter Rail
Commuter rail service typically uses existing freight railroad tracks and equipment. Stations are often five to ten miles apart and operation usually focuses on peak-commute hours with less frequent service during off-peak hours.
Valley Metro Rail is responsible for the development and operation of the region’s high-capacity transit system. While operating the 20-mile light rail starter line that opened in December 2008, Valley Metro Rail has also begun planning, design and construction of the 40 additional miles of high-capacity/light rail transit corridors identified in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Valley Metro Rail is a public, nonprofit regional organization with five member cities—Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa, Glendale and Chandler. Its Board of Directors includes representatives from each of the member cities and typically consists of mayors or city council members.

### Planning Process

The planning process involves identifying options and refining plans for each of the future transit corridors identified in the RTP. The RTP outlines regional transportation improvements through 2034.

Valley Metro Rail identifies the options—potential transit routes and modes—through a formal study process known as an Alternatives Analysis. Community participation is an important part of the process, ensuring that residents, business owners, community groups and policymakers have the opportunity to provide their input.

The community involvement process includes public meetings, more focused briefings with stakeholders and presentations to policy boards and organizations. Typically, public meetings are held in an open-house format with an opportunity to ask questions and provide comment.

In addition to looking at various routes and transit modes, the Alternatives Analysis identifies the potential impacts of each option and establishes the goals and objectives that will guide the evaluation of the options.

Following the in-depth evaluation, a Locally Preferred Alternative—typically a single route and mode—is identified and carried through a public approval process. The project then continues with environmental analysis, design, construction and, finally, operation. The project development process can take approximately 12 years depending on the project mode and alignment.

### System Expansion

As one of the country’s fastest-growing metropolitan areas, the Valley of the Sun has a critical need for an expanded transit network.

The RTP identifies seven future high-capacity transit corridors. Valley Metro Rail determines the specific transit route for each corridor. Light rail, bus rapid transit, modern streetcar or another transit mode are examined to determine what will best serve the corridor. They are built using local, regional and federal funds.

**Central Mesa Light Rail Extension:** A 3.1-mile extension from the current end-of-line, running east on Main Street through downtown Mesa to Mesa Drive. Scheduled to open in 2015.

**Northwest Light Rail Extension:** A 5-mile extension from the current end-of-line, running north on 19th Avenue. This extension will be built in two phases, with the first phase of 3.2 miles ending at Dunlap Avenue. Phase I is scheduled to open in 2016; Phase II in 2026.

**Tempe Streetcar:** The region’s first modern streetcar will run in the Mill Avenue corridor and on Rio Salado Parkway and/or Apache Boulevard. Scheduled to open in 2015.

**Gilbert Road Light Rail Extension:** A 1.8-mile extension that will travel east from Mesa Drive on Main Street to Gilbert Road. Scheduled to open in 2018.

**Capitol/I-10 West Light Rail Extension:** An 11-mile extension running west from downtown Phoenix by the State Capitol area to the I-10 freeway ending at 79th Avenue. Scheduled to open in 2023.

**West Phoenix/Central Glendale Transit Corridor Study:** A 5-mile study area running northwest into downtown Glendale. Scheduled to open in 2026. Transit mode and route to be determined.

**Northeast Transit Corridor Study:** An adopted locally preferred alternative for light rail on Central and 1st avenues connecting from Washington/Jefferson streets south to Baseline Rd. Proceeding with Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) amendment process.