



## CHAPTER 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northwest Valley of the metropolitan Phoenix area is home to over 600,000 residents, many drawn to its inviting climate and quality of life. Collectively the communities of El Mirage, Glendale, Peoria, Sun City, Sun City Festival (in the town of Buckeye), Sun City Grand (in the city of Surprise), Sun City West, Surprise, and Youngtown have experienced significant population growth across the past decade, translating to an increase in transportation options.

The Northwest Valley is also home to many of Arizona’s top attractions. Each year, the cities of Glendale, Peoria, and Surprise host Spring Training for several Major League Baseball teams; while the city of Glendale is home to the Arizona Cardinals football and Phoenix Coyotes ice hockey franchises. Glendale is also home to the Arizona State University West Campus, Thunderbird School of Global Management, and Midwestern University, one of the region’s premier medical schools.

The Northwest Valley is also a popular home for seniors and retirees, particularly the communities of Sun City, Sun City Festival, Sun City Grand, Sun City West, and Youngtown. The region also features a growing population of young families and diversified housing markets, most notably in El Mirage, Glendale, Peoria, and Surprise. These attributes and attractions, combined with numerous retail centers including the Arrowhead Towne Center and proximity to Luke Air Force Base, make the Northwest Valley one of the fastest growing regions in the American Southwest.

### Transit Service Types

This report discusses four forms of public transit service, which either currently serves the Northwest Valley or is proposed for future implementation

- *Fixed-route service*, utilizing vehicles along an established route according to a regular, set schedule,
- *Limited-stop express service*, operates along an established route according to a set schedule, yet stops less frequently covering longer distances more quickly,
- *Deviated fixed-route service* follows a predetermined route and approximate schedule; yet unlike traditional fixed-route service, vehicles may deviate up to ¼-mile away from the normal routing in response to “pre-scheduled” passenger pickup/drop-off,
- *Dial-A-Ride service*, a shared-ride, reservation-based service catering typically to seniors and persons with disabilities.

### Existing Transit Service in the Northwest Valley

While the Northwest Valley has experienced population growth and residential and commercial development, much of it lacks fixed-route transit service. The City of Glendale sponsors a reasonably comprehensive transit service with its own fixed-route shuttle system and several Valley Metro routes. Beyond Glendale, however, local fixed-route transit service remains relatively limited (especially in the western half of the sub-region). Valley Metro Route 106 serves portions of Peoria and Youngtown, yet only runs hourly. Valley Metro's 571 and Grand Avenue Limited routes provide limited peak-hour service linking Surprise and Downtown Phoenix via Grand Avenue, although service levels have varied considerably during recent years.

Complementing these fixed-route transit services is a fairly comprehensive Dial-A-Ride (DAR) program. Valley Metro's Northwest Valley Dial-A-Ride program provides DAR service to most of the Northwest Valley, while the City of Peoria operates its own DAR service within city limits. Sun City and Sun City West previously had a DAR service operated by a non-profit organization, although this service was absorbed by Valley Metro in 2011. The City of Surprise also operated its own DAR service, although this service was shifted to Valley Metro in October 2012 as a cost-cutting measure.

The consultant team was tasked with identifying practical recommendations specific to public transit intended to enhance resident mobility within individual communities while also identifying opportunities for synergy among key transit nodes. The team's primary approach was to develop practical, sustainable service recommendations using a phased approach (i.e., near-term, mid-term, and long-term implementation periods).

### Report Overview

This study had two primary goals: The identification and quantification of transit demand throughout the Northwest Valley, and development of practical recommendations intended to address said demand in the most cost-effective manner possible. To accomplish this, the consultant team completed a variety of activities which are documented in the following chapters:

1. Executive Summary
2. Existing Conditions
3. Public Involvement
4. Service Recommendations
5. Financial Plan
6. Implementation Plan

The [Existing Conditions](#) chapter presents a snapshot of demographic characteristics and existing transit services within each community within the study area. The consultant team obtained demographic data from the federal census and transit service information from the individual communities as well as Valley Metro. Where applicable, the consultant team then mapped findings using ESRI ArcMap software.

**Public involvement** included more than 20 community workshops at locations throughout the Northwest Valley as well as surveys distributed via mail, internet, and at community workshops. In total more than over 2,600 surveys were collected, providing a wealth of information concerning transit-related needs and wants specific to Northwest Valley residents. We used both the survey data and input from community meetings in developing the service recommendations.

### Key Findings

- Existing transit service is presently limited in most portions of the Northwest Valley. Where it does exist, it runs either hourly or less frequently on weekdays as a limited- express route for commuters who work in downtown Phoenix.
- Residents of the Northwest Valley exhibited a strong desire to be able to access local retail centers and healthcare centers via public transit.
- Participants in community workshops indicated an overall desire for local circulators as a means of addressing intra-community mobility needs.
- Many survey respondents/workshop attendees expressed a desire for improved transit connectivity/service to destinations beyond the Northwest Valley.

Utilizing input from the public involvement process the consultant team prepared the **Service Recommendations** chapter. The recommendations presented therein address questions of routing, scheduling, administration, and finance and capital. Taken collectively, three primary themes emerged:

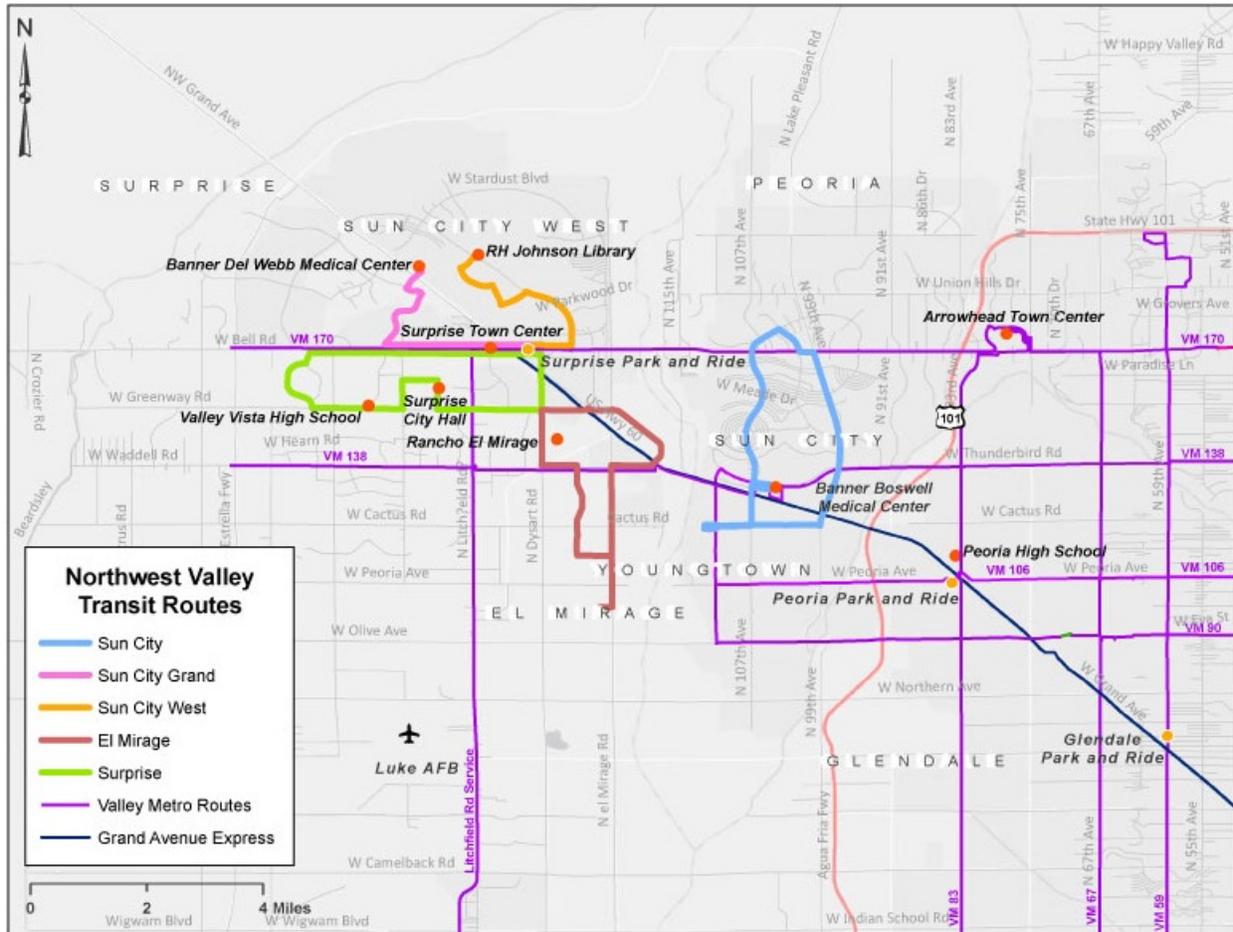
- Implement circulator routes to enhance access to address local shopping and healthcare-related travel needs,
- Establish an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) among the Northwest Valley communities to address, administrative, operational, and funding functions.
- Increase Valley Metro bus service throughout the Northwest Valley.

The **Financial Plan** chapter presents cost estimates specific to implementation of these study's near-, mid-, and long-term service recommendations. The Plan also identifies likely funding sources at the federal, state, regional, and local levels.

Finally, the **Implementation Plan** provides a brief summary of service recommendations while recommending the order in which they should be implemented. The Plan also provides an at-a-glance summary of each recommendation and the phase recommended for its implementation.

Exhibit 1.1.1 presents a map of approximately where recommended fixed- and deviated-route service would operate.

Exhibit 1.1.1 Map of Circulator Routes and Valley Metro Service for All Implementation Phases



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