

as sign language interpretation should contact Ruben Landa, Public Involvement Coordinator, Valley Metro Rail, Inc., 411 North Central Avenue, Suite 200, Phoenix, Arizona 85004. E-mail: rlanda@valleymetro.org. Phone: (602) 495-8230. The dates and addresses of the scoping meetings are given in the **DATES** section above. All locations are accessible to people with disabilities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To request a scoping information packet, contact Mr. Jim Mathien, Metrocenter Corridor Study Project Manager, Valley Metro Rail, Inc., 411 North Central Avenue, Suite 200, Phoenix, Arizona 85004. E-mail: jmathien@valleymetro.org. Phone: (602) 744-5598. The Federal agency contact is Mr. Hymie Luden, Office of Planning and Program Development, FTA, 201 Mission Street, Room 2210, San Francisco, CA 94105. Phone: (415) 744-2732.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Description of Study Area and Scope

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as joint lead agency with the Valley Metro Rail, Inc., will prepare an AA/EIS on a proposal to improve transit service in an approximately six mile-long corridor in northwest Phoenix, Arizona. The study area for the Metrocenter Corridor is bounded by Missouri Avenue to the south; 15th Avenue to the east; Cholla Street to the north; and 31st Avenue to the west. Most of the study area is densely developed with a mixture of urban land uses. Although not a part of the formal AA/EIS process for the Metrocenter Corridor Project, a secondary study area defined as the "Future Deer Valley Core Connection Study Area" will also be considered to identify opportunities for future transportation connections to that area should Valley Metro Rail, Inc. later decide to move forward with that potential project. The secondary study area is on the north side of the primary study area and is bounded by Dunlap Avenue to the south; 15th Avenue to the east; Rose Garden Lane to the north; and 31st Avenue to the west. Any further detailed planning and design for a future Deer Valley Core connection would be prepared in accordance with NEPA. Valley Metro Rail, Inc. will perform conceptual engineering for transit alternatives within the Metrocenter Corridor for the AA/DEIS that satisfies NEPA requirements. In addition, a financial plan will be developed that examines alternative funding sources.

II. Purpose and Need

The Metrocenter area is a major employment and activity center. The study corridor continues to experience significant growth in population and jobs. Along with this growth, traffic congestion and capacity deficiencies are expected to increase despite planned transportation improvements.

Inadequate transit service has hampered access to this area and to other Valley destinations, other than by automobile. A major transit investment is recognized as a feasible alternative to providing additional capacity within this corridor.

The Metrocenter Corridor Project was included in the City of Phoenix's Transit 2000 ballot initiative that was passed by the voters in 2000 and provides a 0.4% sales tax to help fund the City's transit program. The project also is included in the currently approved Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) financially constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

III. Alternatives

In 1999, a Major Investment Study (MIS) was completed for a proposed transit system from the northern end-of-line station of the planned Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Transit Project (CP/EV LRT) continuing north and west into Phoenix and Glendale. The CP/EV LRT is scheduled to begin construction in late 2004. The MIS evaluated and recommended an appropriate transit technology and corridor alignment options. The study concluded that light rail transit (LRT) was the appropriate technology for the Metrocenter Corridor Connection. The MIS recommended 19th Avenue with various subalignments to the Metrocenter Shopping Center as the best alignment option(s) for this study corridor. Although the MIS made these recommendations, it does not meet current FTA requirements for Alternatives Analysis (AA). Therefore, the AA will re-evaluate both technology modes as well as alignment options within the study area. At a minimum, the alternatives to be considered include:

- No-Build Alternative;
 - Transportation System Management (TMS)—all reasonable cost-effective transit service improvements short of an investment in a New Starts project;
 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT);
 - LRT At Grade; and
 - LRT Aerial.
- Specific alignment alternatives include, but are not limited to: (1) 19th Avenue Corridor; (2) I-17 Freeway Corridor; and (3) 27th Avenue Corridor.

These alternatives will be developed further during the preparation of the AA/DEIX. Additional reasonable Build Alternatives suggested during the scoping process, including those involving other modes, may be considered.

IV. Probable Effects

The purpose of the EIS is to fully disclose the environmental consequences of building and operating a major capital investment in the Metrocenter Corridor in advance of any decisions to commit substantial financial or other resources towards its implementation. The EIS will explore the extent to which study alternatives and alignment options result in environmental impacts and will discuss actions to reduce or eliminate such impacts.

Environmental issues to be examined in the EIS include: potential changes to the physical environment (natural resources, air quality, noise, water quality, geology, visual); changes in the social environment (land use, development, business and neighborhood disruptions); changes in traffic and pedestrian circulation; changes in transit service and patronage; associated changes in traffic congestion; and impacts on parklands and historic sites. Impacts will be identified both for the construction period and for the long-term operation of the alternatives. The proposed evaluation criteria include transportation, social, economic, and financial measures, as required by current Federal (NEPA) environmental laws and the implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality and of FTA.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action will be addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the Valley Metro Rail, Inc. Manager as noted in the **ADDRESSES** section above.

V. FTA Procedures

To streamline the NEPA process and to avoid duplication of effort, the agencies involved in the scoping process will consider the results of any previous planning studies or financial feasibility studies prepared in support of a decision by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to include a particular alternative in the regional transportation plan for metropolitan Phoenix. Prior transportation planning studies may be pertinent to establishing the purpose