

2023 Transit Stakeholder Group

Recommendations and Final Report

November 13, 2023



NOTE: Following the conclusion of this meeting, staff received additional information from the City Attorney’s Office that limits the workability of Recommendation No. 4, related to the pursuit of a Metropolitan Public Transit Authority (MPTA) service delivery model, without substantial revisions to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS). This recommendation was left in the report to memorialize the conversations; however, it will not be recommended that Mayor and Council proceed with initializing the formation of an MPTA. City staff will reconvene this group on December 18, 2023, to discuss the additional details and have continued conversations.



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Stakeholder Group Attendance Listing

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Presentation Summary

The final meeting of the 2023 Transit Stakeholder Group began with a brief re-iteration of the group goals, as defined below:

1. Short-term – Recommendation on securing funding for fare-free transit through the remainder of FY2024
2. Mid-term – Recommendation to secure funding for fare-free transit indefinitely
3. Long-term – Recommendation on a sustainable transit funding source

Next, the group was presented with draft language to support four strategic recommendations that were formulated at the October 23 meeting. Stakeholder members reviewed, discussed, and edited each one of the draft recommendations to craft the Final Recommendations that are presented in the next section of this summary. For reference, the draft recommendations from the October 23 meeting are available in the previous meeting summary ([link](#)).

Final Recommendations

The Final Recommendations of the 2023 Transit Stakeholder Group are presented below. Each recommendation includes supporting details to assist the Mayor and Council with next steps in the decision-making process. Please note that representatives from the University of Arizona (UA) and the Southern Arizona Leadership Council (SALC) wished to abstain from a formal endorsement of the Final Recommendations; however, they acknowledged and supported their respective organization's continued participation in transit-related discussions.

- 1. Establish sustainable funding for public transit services by primarily using a combination of sales tax, property tax and service access agreements with public and private partners who directly benefit from public transit services. (Short and mid-term goals)**

Recommendation support:

- Potential and existing partners include Pima County, Town of Marana, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, City of South Tucson, University of Arizona, Pima Community College, public school districts and private employers.
 - This mix of sustainable funding sources provides decision makers with a range of options to ensure transit services are funded in an equitable manner that precludes an undue financial burden on any one segment of the community.
 - Layered funding prevents overreliance on a single funding source that is impacted by rapidly changing economic conditions.
- 2. Pursue actions to seek voter approval of a sales tax increment to be dedicated to improved transit service levels, including improved transit facilities, for a specific term with a program of improvements, as part of a balanced plan of multi-modal transportation investments. (Short and mid-term goals)**

Recommendation support:

- The current transit Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) will identify specific service improvements that can be funded from this sales tax increment.
 - Continue to prioritize the safety and comfort of transit riders and bus operators.
 - Transit improvements should include more shade and shelters that improve the transit rider experience and support climate action through the strategies outlined in Tucson Resilient Together and the Long-Range Regional Transit Plan (LR RTP).
3. **Recommend Mayor and Council include in its next legislative agenda, the pursuit of legislation that allows State revenues to be appropriated to support local public transit services.** (*Mid and long-term goals*)

Recommendation support:

- Include caveat that state transit appropriations should not decrease existing state-shared revenues with cities.
4. **Recognizing the need for a dedicated, stable source of revenue for transit operations; direct staff to return with a potential plan for Mayor and Council to establish a Metropolitan Public Transit Authority (MPTA)¹ service delivery model.** (*Mid and long-term goals*)

Recommendation support:

- MPTA represents the only existing provision within the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) with the needed features such as dedicated funding authority (via property tax).
- An MPTA can be solely formed by the City of Tucson Mayor and Council through a City ordinance, and allows other regional agencies such as Pima County, City of South Tucson, and the Town of Oro Valley, to join if they desire.
- Existing ARS statutes establish MPTA governance via a voter-elected Board of Directors with full authority for policy, funding, and operational decisions for all aspects of transit.
- MPTA governance features proportional representation among members of the Board of Directors.
- In Arizona, similar service delivery models currently exist within Maricopa and Coconino Counties.

¹ Please see the Note on the cover page of this report regarding the MPTA recommendation.

Next Steps

The final recommendations outlined in this summary will be reviewed with the City Manager's Office and presented to the Mayor and Council in late 2023. Based on the Mayor and Council's review of the final recommendations, there may be a request to reconvene the Transit Stakeholder Group at a later date. For reference, all meeting materials including presentations, summaries, and supplemental information can be found on the 2023 Transit Stakeholder Group webpage ([link](#)).

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