

# West Valley View

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ ♦ Phone (623) 535-8439

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July 23, 2012

7/20/2012

## Kudos to the folks behind the ZOOM

In this age of polarization and contentious politics, it's welcome news when local governments work together for the common good of the people.

Such is the case with Valley Metro, Avondale and Tolleson working together to expand the ZOOM circulator bus service. When it started last year, the service was limited to Avondale, but starting July 23, it will also go to Tolleson.

Avondale receives Federal Transit Authority funding because the 2000 Census defined the city as a "small urbanized area," which allows Avondale to use federal money for the operation of local transit. Officials in Tolleson contacted Avondale after noticing the program's success.

Even Goodyear is getting in on the ZOOM action. Earlier this year, **Estrella Mountain Community College** closed its fitness center, but created a partnership with the Southwest Valley YMCA in Goodyear that allows EMCC students to use the YMCA fitness facilities. EMCC asked Avondale to consider adding a ZOOM stop at the YMCA to accommodate those students' needs.

The service has been so successful, it's also being expanded within Avondale itself. With about 400 people boarding daily in May 2012, ZOOM experienced a 62 percent increase in riders since August 2011, according to Valley Metro. The high demand for service prompted officials to add Saturday trips that will run every 30 minutes from about 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. (see the story on Page 4 in this issue).

More mass transit options are sorely needed in the West Valley. Most of the major cities in the United States have extensive mass transit systems that include buses and commuter rail service. However, the Phoenix metropolitan area, anchored by the sixth-largest city in the nation, is decades behind most other major cities when it comes to mass transportation. We have lots of freeways, but light rail service is in its infancy and our other options are severely limited.

The speed of the West Valley's growth was astounding before the housing bubble burst and the world economy was thrown into a recession. The sluggish economy won't last forever, and when it turns around, our little corner of the world will once again be at the center of the nation's growth. It will be better if we have viable mass transit options already in place when the boom begins again than try to play catch-up after it starts.

The ZOOM circulator bus system is a small step in the right direction. Kudos to those responsible for getting the mass-transit ball rolling in the West Valley.



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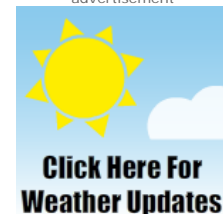
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