



# MESA

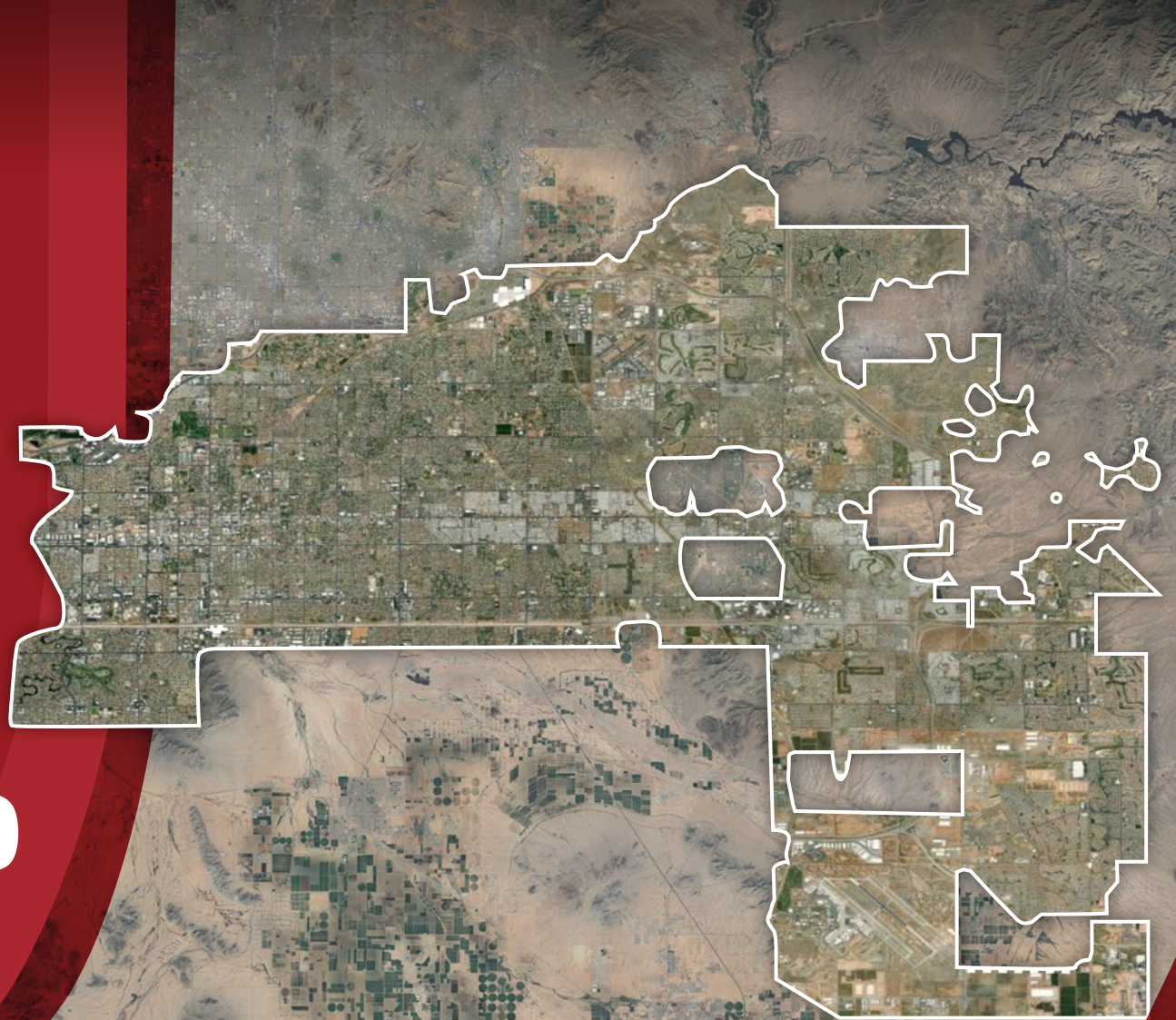
---

# TRANSIT

# MASTER

# PLAN 2050

MAY 2024





Source: City of Mesa

# CONTENTS

- Introduction .....6
- Our Vision Framework .....8
- Transit Today .....10
- Community Engagement .....22
- Needs and Gaps .....27
- Transit Tomorrow .....32
- Transit-Supportive Strategies .....43
- Implementation .....46
- Conclusion .....49

# Figures

- Figure 1. Mesa's Transit Network Today ..... 11
- Figure 2. Light Rail Ridership in Mesa..... 13
- Figure 3. Bus Stop Ridership in Mesa ..... 15
- Figure 4. BUZZ Circulators ..... 18
- Figure 5. Mesa Transit Plan Community Engagement Efforts..... 23
- Figure 6. Transit Propensity..... 29
- Figure 7. Future Employment Density and Major Employers ..... 31
- Figure 8. Example Microtransit Vehicle ..... 33
- Figure 9. Needs Evaluation Process ..... 35
- Figure 10. Recommendation Phasing ..... 36
- Figure 11. Short-Term Plan..... 38
- Figure 12. Mid-Term Plan ..... 40
- Figure 13. Long-Term Plan ..... 42
- Figure 14. Valley Metro Mobile App..... 43
- Figure 15. Example Mobility Hub..... 44
- Figure 16. MesaCONNECTED TOD Study ..... 45
- Figure 17. Example of a Complete Street ..... 45
- Figure 18. ADA Paratransit Areas by Phase..... 47

# Tables

- Table 1. Local Bus Routes Frequency..... 14
- Table 2. Transit Recommendations ..... 34
- Table 3. Short-Term Plan Transit Recommendations ..... 37
- Table 4. Mid-Term Plan Transit Recommendations ..... 39
- Table 5. Long-Term Plan Transit Recommendations..... 41
- Table 6. Estimated New Bus Stops ..... 46



## Basic Terms

<b>Arterial street</b>	A major thoroughfare used for through traffic
<b>Capital costs</b>	Costs for long-term assets like buildings, vehicles, benches, or other purchases
<b>Circulator bus</b>	A bus operating in a closed loop to serve an area (like Downtown or a specific neighborhood) that connects to major corridors
<b>Corridor</b>	Defined area following a street or rail guideway
<b>Demand-response</b>	Type of transit where shared vehicles alter their routes during each journey based on rider locations and requested drop-offs
<b>Express bus</b>	A bus that operates for some portion of the route without stops or with very limited stops
<b>Fixed-route</b>	Service is provided on a regular and fixed-schedule basis along a consistent route
<b>Frequency</b>	Time between trips (also called headway)
<b>Guideway</b>	Surface used for travel, such as a street or train tracks
<b>High-capacity transit</b>	Transit mode using vehicles with a higher capacity than traditional bus, typically paired with exclusive lanes or right-of-way, signal priority, and upgraded stations
<b>Light rail</b>	Electric railway using specific light rail vehicles along dedicated tracks with level passenger boarding and fixed stations. Generally larger with more spaced out stations than streetcar
<b>Multimodal</b>	Using or involving more than one mode of transportation, like walking to a bus stop or driving to a park and ride facility
<b>Off-peak</b>	Non-rush periods of the day when travel activity and demand is generally lower
<b>Paratransit</b>	Comparable transportation service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act for persons with disabilities unable to use fixed-route bus service
<b>Peak</b>	Morning and afternoon times when travel and demand is highest
<b>Public transit</b>	Method of group travel using technologies like buses and trains available to members of the public
<b>Micromobility</b>	Use of small, lightweight personal vehicles like electric scooters or bicycles
<b>Ridership</b>	The number of rides taken by people in a given time period
<b>Streetcar (modern)</b>	Electric railway using modern streetcar vehicles along shared or dedicated tracks with level passenger boarding and fixed stations. Generally smaller with more closely spaced stops compared to light rail
<b>Transit-oriented development</b>	Type of development linking transit facilities to land use, typically includes housing and retail services
<b>Trip</b>	A time-specific journey taken by a person or vehicle

# Abbreviations

<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>ADOT</b>	Arizona Department of Transportation
<b>CFD</b>	Community Facility District
<b>CIG</b>	Capital Investment Grant
<b>EV</b>	Electric Vehicle
<b>FRA</b>	Federal Rail Administration
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal year
<b>HOV</b>	High-occupancy vehicle
<b>ID</b>	Improvement District
<b>LRT</b>	Light rail transit
<b>LTAf</b>	Local Transportation Assistance Fund
<b>MaaS</b>	Mobility-as-a-Service
<b>MAG</b>	Maricopa Association of Governments
<b>MYC</b>	Mayor's Youth Committee
<b>NOFO</b>	Notice of Funding Opportunity
<b>PTF</b>	Public Transit Fund
<b>TLCP</b>	Transit Life Cycle Program
<b>TMP</b>	Transit Master Plan
<b>TOD</b>	Transit-oriented development
<b>VLT</b>	Vehicle License Tax

# INTRODUCTION

The City of Mesa Transit Master Plan (TMP) is a 25-year plan designed to meet the needs of the city for both the short and long term. The TMP is the result of extensive analysis and identification of current gaps and future needs. The TMP reflects input from community members, local leaders, and other key stakeholders to propose a vision for transit that will best serve Mesa residents.

The state of transit in Mesa today is described here in the plan, including all modes that make up Mesa’s system as well as essential facilities like bus stops and transit centers. The plan also includes a summary of anticipated population and employment growth, land use trends, and identifies key destinations that should be served by transit. Using this analysis, transit recommendations were developed and organized into phased plans to create visions for the short-term, mid-term, and long-term. Finally, transit does not operate in a vacuum. Transit-supportive strategies are documented here to use technology, urban design, and policy to make transit work even better in Mesa.



Source: City of Mesa

## Why a Transit Master Plan?

The goal of the Transit Master Plan is to develop a framework for future transit services in Mesa based on productivity, application of emerging transit technologies, assessment of potential new transit markets, and in coordination with other modal opportunities such as pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile. The plan acts as a guide for phased investment in Mesa's transit system that works in conjunction with other planning efforts both locally and regionally. The TMP is needed to ensure that the transit network responds to growth and change, provides connection to significant activity centers, and maintains a strong link to the regional network.

The TMP works together with Mesa's Transportation Master Plan, a vision for the future of the city's transportation network for all modes and users. Together, the Transportation Master Plan and the Transit Master Plan feed into the overall Mesa General Plan. The General Plan is an overarching policy document that provides guidance on development, land use, transportation, open space and recreation, cultural amenities, the environment, and city services through 2050.



# OUR VISION FRAMEWORK

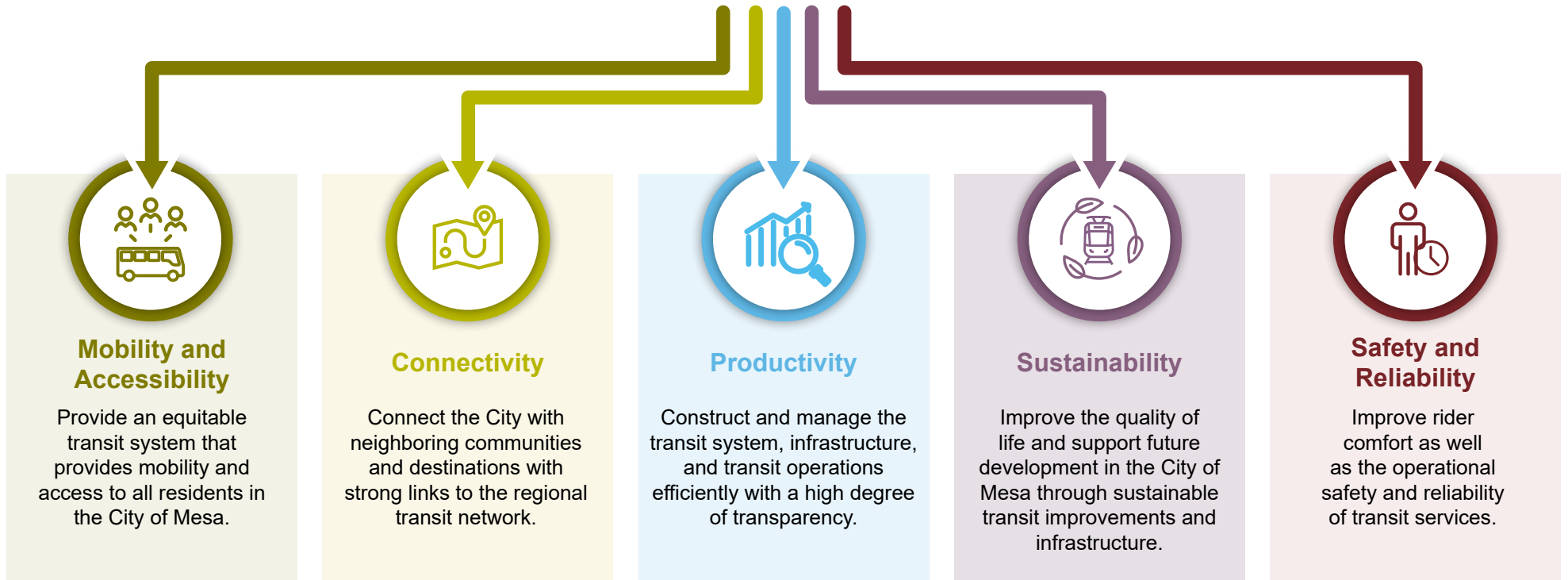
The City of Mesa Transit Services' mission is to collaborate with regional partners to provide innovative, safe, and efficient transit options that support mobility, accessibility, and economic vitality for community members. The goal of the TMP is to develop a transit

network so that Mesa residents and visitors have mobility options within the city and region to access significant employment/activity centers and residential areas.

## VISION

“Support a reliable, productive, and well-connected multimodal transit system that fosters economic growth, diversity, and inclusiveness for the City of Mesa.”

## GOALS





The department aims to serve the public by planning, operating, and maintaining a high-quality transit system. This is achieved through three primary components:

- Enhancing mobility, reduce traffic congestion, promote sustainable transportation options, and improve the overall quality of life.
- Offering safe and affordable transit options that connect people to employment centers, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, shopping areas, and other key destinations within Mesa and the surrounding areas.
- Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, promoting equity and supporting economic development through transit service.

**Five goals support this vision, each with corresponding objectives:**



### Mobility and Accessibility

- Expand transit service in the community.
- Incorporate new and emerging mobility solutions into the existing transit system.
- Support regional initiatives to reduce technological and financial barriers to better allow disadvantaged groups access to transit services.



### Connectivity

- Increase opportunities for riders to transfer between regionally connected services and other transportation modes.
- Invest transit capital funding in facilities that advance regional economic vitality and development strategies.
- Educate and inform about the City of Mesa transit services to help better use the system.



### Productivity

- Improve operational efficiencies by focusing resources on the most productive services.
- Advocate for cutting-edge technologies to modernize the existing service operations and infrastructure and evaluate emerging transit market needs within the City.
- Share key performance indicators relative to benchmarks to increase transparency for service changes.
- Improve operational efficiencies by leveraging outside resources.



### Safety and Reliability

- Improve bus stop amenities with an emphasis on rider security and comfort.
- Support initiatives that bolster rider trust in transit schedules by improving on-time performance and providing real-time rider information.
- Improve communication with users during emergencies and service disruptions to ensure timely and effective sharing of information.
- Mitigate transit-related safety and security risks to minimize the frequency and severity of incidents.



### Sustainability

- Transition to a low/no-emission transit fleet and infrastructure to improve health outcomes in environmentally susceptible areas.
- Build financially sustainable assets while prioritizing the preservation, maintenance, and enhancement of the existing transit system.
- Provide quality and attractive service that serves to reduce single-occupancy-vehicle miles traveled by making transit a more viable travel option.
- Leverage transit investments and steer the development of land use to bolster economic growth.
- Increase shade at bus stops to mitigate the heat island effect.

# TRANSIT TODAY

Mesa’s transit network, as shown in *Figure 1*, contains a diverse set of modes to meet the wide range of residents’ travel needs. Light rail provides high-capacity service along Main Street, connecting Mesa to Tempe and Phoenix. Local bus service forms the backbone of the city’s overall network, with both regional routes that stretch to neighboring communities and local routes providing intracity connectivity.

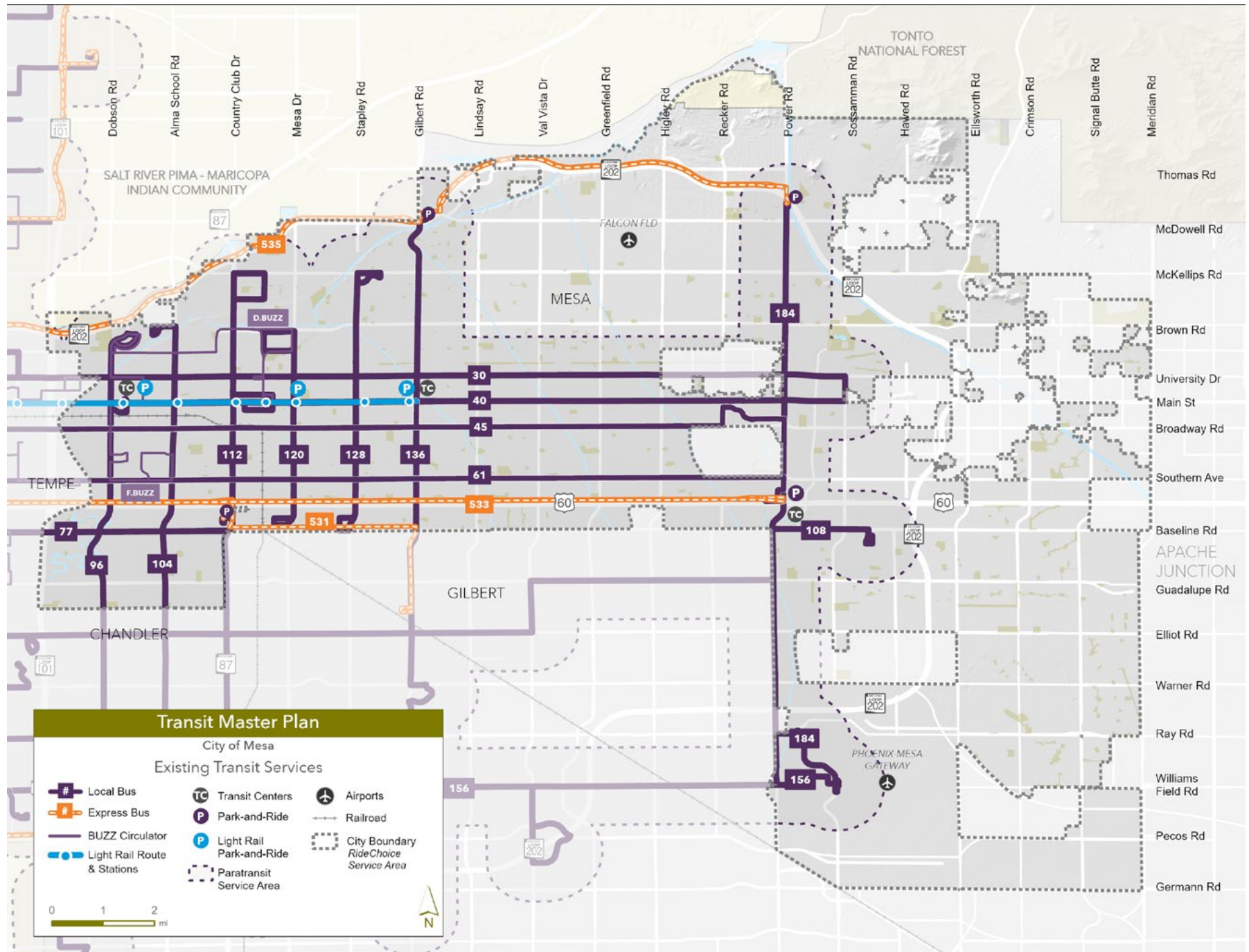
Express buses quickly move passengers from strategic park-and-ride facilities to major employment and activity hubs and BUZZ circulators in two busy districts provide neighborhood access to major bus routes and light rail. Mesa also provides two types of services for residents with disabilities that prevent them from accessing regular local bus routes- ADA Paratransit and RideChoice.

## Types of Transit in Mesa



Source: City of Mesa

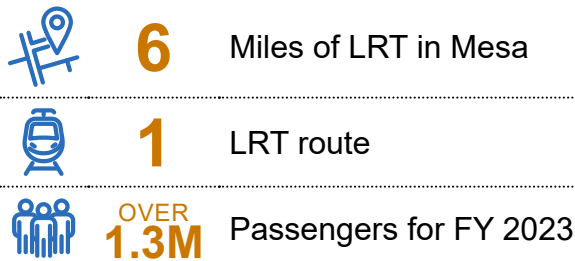
Figure 1. Mesa's Transit Network Today



## Light Rail

Light rail transit (LRT) is a type of passenger rail service characterized by electric-powered transit vehicles that operate along a rail guideway. LRT service provide riders with more frequent service and faster travel times when compared to buses. LRT is generally, but not always, at the street level, and it often has its own guideway (travel lane). LRT has a higher capacity compared to regular bus or streetcar vehicles and uses dedicated stations along the route, often with seating and shade structures.

Valley Metro operates the regional LRT system which provides service to Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa. *Figure 2* shows the LRT route in Mesa. Branded as Valley Metro Rail, the LRT service operates Monday – Sunday and provides 15-minute peak and 20-minute off-peak service for eastbound and westbound travel. As of May 2024, the base fare for local service is \$2.00 for a single ride or \$4.00 for a 1-day pass.



Mesa includes approximately six miles of LRT which connects major destinations within Mesa, such as the Mekong Plaza, major grocery retailers, Downtown Mesa, and Pioneer Park. For fiscal year (FY) 2023, over 1.3 million passengers rode the LRT in Mesa.

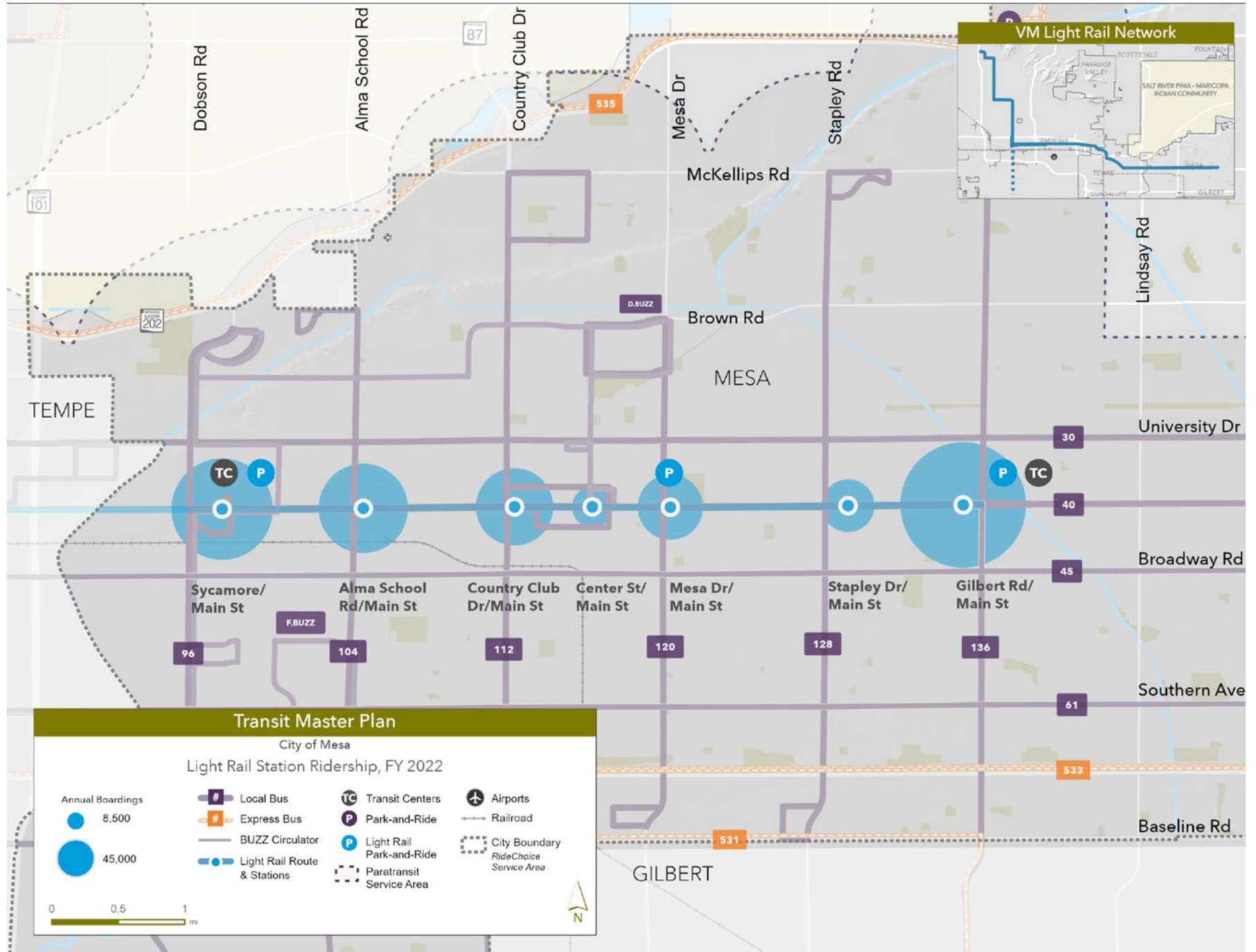
Top three LRT stations by ridership (FY 2023):

- Gilbert Road/Main Street
- Sycamore Road/Main Street
- Alma School Road/Main Street



Source: City of Mesa

Figure 2. Light Rail Ridership in Mesa



## Local Bus

Local bus service is a fixed-route transit service with established schedules for weekday and weekend service. Local buses serve bus stops that are typically located every ¼-mile along an established route. Bus stops can have amenities like seating and shelters or can simply be marked with a signpost that shows route information like the route number and direction of travel.

In Mesa, the local bus service operates as part of the Valley Metro regional transit system, crossing city boundaries and offering a uniform fare structure across the region. Mesa is served by 14 local bus routes, as shown in *Figure 3*. Local bus service is available Monday - Sunday. As of May 2024, the base fare for local service is \$2.00 for a single ride or \$4.00 for a 1-day pass.



Source: Valley Metro



14

Local bus routes in Mesa



6.3K

Average weekday boardings (FY 2023)



OVER 2.1M

Annual passengers for FY 2023

Top three local bus routes by ridership (FY 2023):

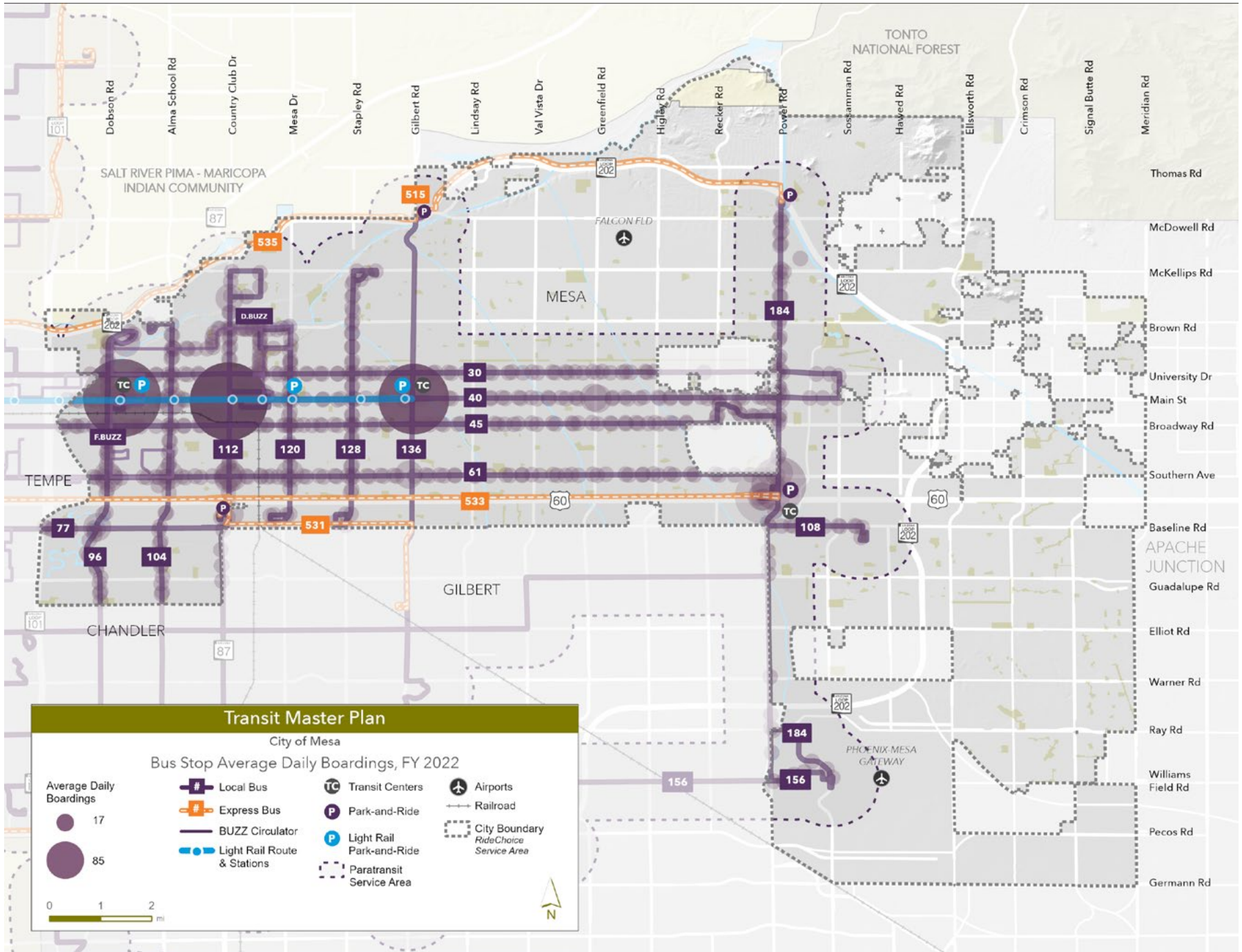
- Route 112 (Country Club Drive)
- Route 40 (Main Street)
- Route 61 (Southern Avenue)

*Table 1* shows the frequencies for each of Mesa’s local bus routes. With the exception of four high-frequency routes, the majority of local routes operate every 30 minutes. Route 108 (Elliot Road) operates on a 60 minute frequency on weekends, as does Route 184 (Power Road). While Route 30 (University Drive) provides service every 30 minutes on Saturdays, Sunday service is provided every 60 minutes. All other routes operate every 30 minutes.

**Table 1.** Local Bus Routes Frequency

Route Name	Frequency (Minutes)		
	Weekday		Saturday
	Peak	Off-Peak	
<b>30-University Drive</b>	30	30	60
<b>40-Main Street</b>	15	30	30
<b>45-Broadway Road</b>	15	30	30
<b>61-Southern Avenue</b>	15	30	30
<b>77-Baseline Road</b>	30	30	30
<b>96-Dobson Road</b>	30	30	30
<b>104-Alma School Road</b>	30	30	30
<b>108-Elliot Rd/ 48th Street</b>	30	60	60
<b>112-Country Club Drive / Arizona Avenue</b>	15	30	30
<b>120-Mesa Drive</b>	30	30	30
<b>128-Stapley Drive</b>	30	30	30
<b>136-Gilbert Road</b>	30	30	30
<b>156-Chandler Boulevard / Williams Field Road</b>	15	30	30
<b>184-Power Road</b>	30	60	60

Figure 3. Bus Stop Ridership in Mesa



## Express Bus

Express bus service is designed to reduce travel time by making a limited number of stops before entering a freeway for non-stop travel to employment centers in downtown Phoenix. On the freeway, Express buses travel in high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and use HOV entrance and exit ramps where available. Express buses often serve park-and-ride and transit facilities, in addition to the limited stops along the route.

Mesa is served by three Express bus routes that operate during the peak commute hours on weekdays. Express bus service is available Monday – Friday. As of May 2024, the base fare for express routes is \$3.25 for a single ride or \$6.50 for a 1-day pass.



**3**

Express bus routes in Mesa



**47K**

Annual boardings (FY 2023)



**OVER  
2x**

Increase in annual passengers between FY 2022 and FY 2023

Express routes by ridership (FY 2023):

- Route 533 (Mesa Express)
- Route 535 (Northeast Mesa Express)
- Route 531 (Mesa/Gilbert Express)



Source: City of Mesa



## BUZZ Circulators

BUZZ is a neighborhood circulator service. Neighborhood circulators operate with a smaller 30-foot vehicle compared to the 40-foot vehicle operating on local bus routes. The BUZZ circulator routes are short routes aimed at connecting local routes in a specific neighborhood, augmenting regular local bus service. BUZZ circulators stop at existing bus stops along major roads. Both BUZZ routes use existing bus stops and stop approximately every ¼-mile or less.

Mesa transit services provide two routes, the Downtown BUZZ and the Fiesta BUZZ, shown in [Figure 4](#). BUZZ service is available Monday to Friday on a 30-minute frequency for weekday service and 60-minute for Saturday service. The Downtown BUZZ route connects the Mesa Riverview shopping center to Downtown Mesa and provides service to the Mesa Grande neighborhood. The Fiesta BUZZ route connects the Mesa Riverview shopping center with the Fiesta District. As of May 2024, BUZZ service is free.


**2**

BUZZ routes in Mesa


**171K**

Annual boardings (FY 2023)

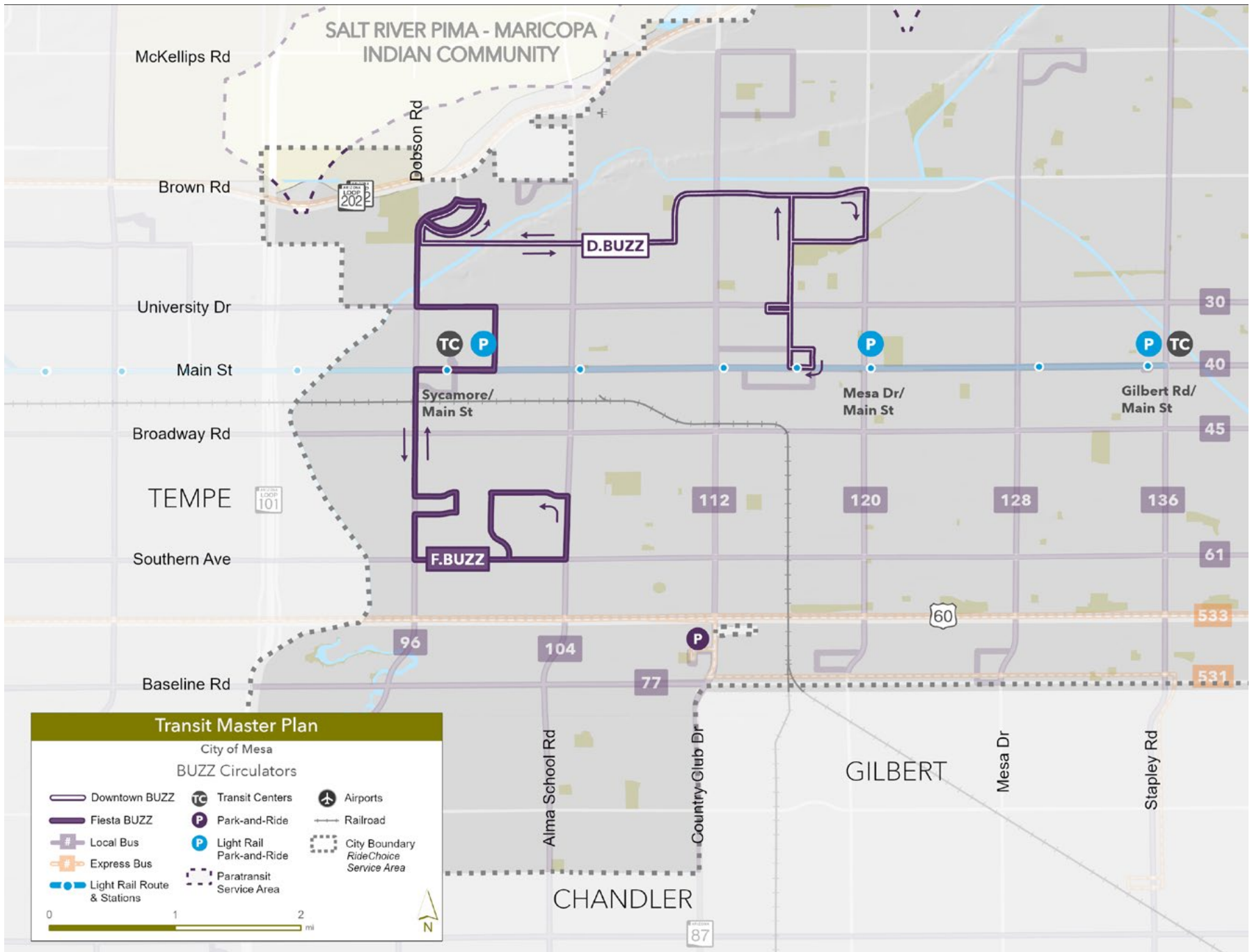

**2022**

New Fiesta BUZZ route



Source: City of Mesa

Figure 4. BUZZ Circulators



## ADA Paratransit

ADA paratransit service provides door-to-door and curb-to-curb transportation to people with disabilities who are unable, or have limited ability because of their disability, to use fixed-route buses or trains. All public transit agencies that provide fixed-route bus and rail service are required by the ADA to provide this service. Riders must meet the eligibility requirements and complete an ADA paratransit certification process prior to using the service. Paratransit service in Mesa is available for trips that begin and end within ¾-miles of local fixed-route bus service or LRT stations within the city boundaries.

Paratransit services are available throughout the Maricopa County region through local and regional paratransit programs offered by Valley Metro and partnering cities. The local and regional ADA paratransit service is operated by Valley Metro Paratransit. Participating cities in the East Valley service region (local ADA paratransit) include the City of Chandler, City of Gilbert, City of Mesa, City of Scottsdale, City of Tempe, and unincorporated Maricopa County. Regional ADA paratransit service is available to ADA riders for travel outside the East Valley service region supporting the regional travel needs. This includes regional trips between the East Valley, and West Valley, as well as the cities of Phoenix, Glendale, and Peoria. East Valley paratransit services are available daily from 4 a.m. to 1 a.m. Regional paratransit services are available daily from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Riders must book their trips one (1) to fourteen (14) days in advance by calling Valley Metro customer service.



Source: City of Mesa

## Ride Choice

There are a few key differences between the RideChoice service and the ADA paratransit service though eligibility requirements remain the same for both services. RideChoice provides transportation services to ADA paratransit-certified people with disabilities and/or seniors aged 65 and above who reside in participating communities, like Mesa. Whereas regular ADA Paratransit service is offered within ¾-miles of local service, RideChoice service is available city-wide. RideChoice also does not require advance booking, unlike regular ADA paratransit service. Overall, the program has a steady demand of over 4,000 ride requests throughout the year, similar to ADA Paratransit trips.



Source: City of Mesa

# Transit Facilities

Mesa’s transit network depends on support from various types of facilities, from larger facilities like park-and-rides to stations and bus stops. These facilities allow passengers to access transit and provide important functions for transit operations and staff.



Source: City of Mesa

## Transit Centers

Mesa currently has three transit centers that act as transfer points for multiple transit routes, including local bus routes, Express routes, BUZZ routes, and LRT. Transit centers typically have limited or no passenger parking but may be adjacent to a park-and-ride lot. Transit centers often provide passenger information and may provide additional transit amenities such as ticket sales, bike parking, and transit operator layover locations.

1. Main Street and Sycamore Road has over 20 benches and shelters for passengers as well as trash cans, public art, bicycle parking, and a connection to the LRT. Passengers can transfer between five routes- Route 30 (University Drive), Route 40 (Main Street), Route 96 (Dobson Road), Valley Metro Rail, and the Fiesta BUZZ.
2. Superstition Springs has a fare machine so riders can purchase their tickets before boarding in addition to the benches, shelters, and other amenities. This transit center does not connect to the LRT but is served by six routes-Route 40 (Main Street), Route 45 (Broadway Road), Route 61 (Southern Avenue), Route 108 (Elliot Road), and Route 184 (Power Road).
3. Gilbert Road and Main Street is a smaller transit center with fewer amenities and fewer connections. Four total routes are available at this center- Route 40 (Main Street), Route 45 (Broadway Road), Route 136 (Gilbert Road), and Valley Metro Rail.

## Park-and-Rides

Park-and-ride facilities offer parking for passengers, where people can drive their personal vehicle to the lot and park to access local and Express bus routes. Park-and-ride lots may be dedicated, meaning that their sole function is to provide parking space for transit passengers, or be shared with other uses during off-peak times. Mesa currently has seven dedicated park-and-ride lots, which provide connections to Express routes, local bus routes, and LRT service.

## Light Rail Stations

Mesa is home to seven light rail stations that provide connection to the LRT system. Three of the LRT stations, the Main Street/Sycamore Road, Main Street/Mesa Drive, and Main Street/Gilbert Road, operate as transit centers with park-and-ride lots for commuters. Light rail stations offer various levels of amenities, including bike racks, benches, transit shelters, trash cans, and passenger information signage.



7

LRT stations in Mesa



3

LRT park and rides



Source: City of Mesa

## Bus Stops

Within Mesa, there are approximately 700 bus stops where passengers can access the local bus network. Bus stops offer various levels of amenities depending on the location, including benches, transit shelters, trash cans, and passenger information signage. The City of Mesa is responsible for maintaining and cleaning the bus stops within the city limits.

Top three local bus stops by ridership (FY 2023):

- Country Club Drive & Main Street
- Main Street & Gilbert Road
- Sycamore & Main Street Transit Center



700

Bus stops in Mesa



servicing  
14

Local bus routes



Source: City of Mesa

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Thousands of people use transit in Mesa to meet their daily needs, visit friends, get to school, go to work, and attend events both locally and regionally. Understanding the diverse needs, challenges, and preferences of residents plays an essential role in shaping the future of Mesa’s transit network. Community engagement took place throughout the entire plan development process. *Figure 5* shows a timeline of the engagement. The feedback collected is reflected in the proposed plans and improvements in this plan.

## Outreach Efforts

Community outreach took many forms, from individual interviews to events and surveys. Outreach efforts prioritized engagement with Mesa youth and current transit riders. Surveys were widely publicized and advertised at major bus stops and transfer locations to gather feedback from the people who use Mesa’s transit system regularly. The Transit team also set up booths at major local events to connect with residents and hear their concerns and their vision for the future of transit in Mesa. Additionally, the team surveyed Valley Metro bus operators at both East Valley bus garages to solicit suggestions they had to improve service to passengers.



### Key Stakeholders

To set the stage for community engagement, the Mesa Transit team conducted individual interviews with city leaders to help shape the outreach program. Every city leader hears specific input from constituents and has valuable knowledge about the community. These interviews reinforced the need to connect with everyday transit users and youth in particular. City leaders also emphasized the need to provide bilingual materials and a mix of in-person and online engagement opportunities so that all residents had the chance to provide their feedback on Mesa’s transit system.

After hearing from city leaders, the Mesa Transit team identified other key stakeholders to engage. These stakeholders were chosen to better understand the challenges faced by students and young adults in Mesa. These stakeholders included:

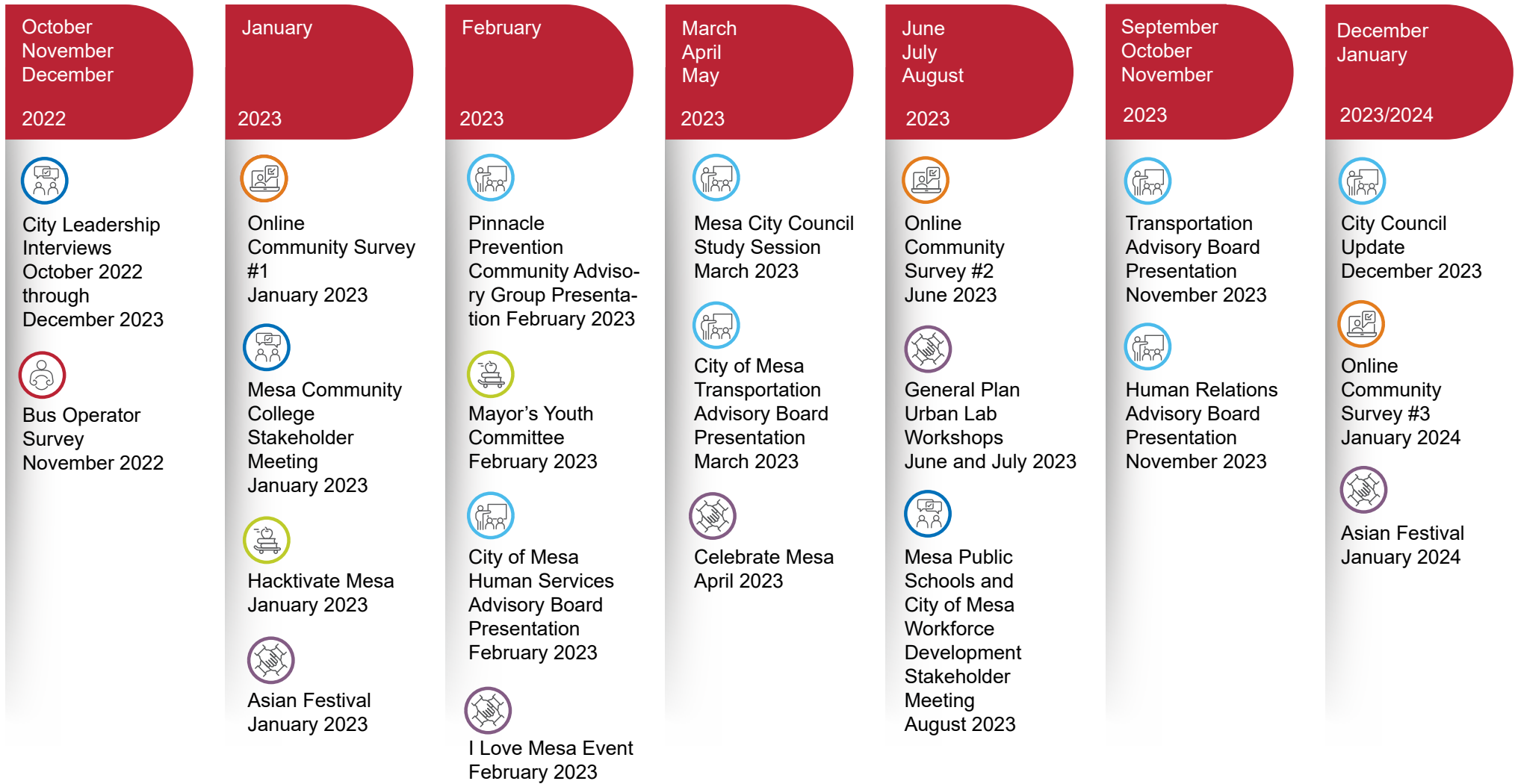
- Mayor and City Council members
- City Leadership
- Mesa Community College Student Life & Leadership
- Mesa Public Schools
- City of Mesa Workforce Development



### that shaped the Outreach and Engagement Plan

- Focus on transit dependent populations—those who use the system.
- Provide a mix of virtual and in-person engagement opportunities.
- Engage the City’s youth.
- Provide materials and surveys in English and Spanish.

Figure 5. Mesa Transit Plan Community Engagement Efforts



KEY

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Events
- Presentations
- Bus Operator Survey
- Online Surveys
- Youth Outreach



## Youth Outreach

Two events offered opportunities for direct engagement with Mesa youth to hear their priorities and concerns—Hacktivate Mesa and the Mayor’s Youth Committee (MYC). Hacktivate Mesa is an annual 2-day experience run by the City of Mesa and Mesa Public Schools for local high school students to discover, study, analyze, and present data about an issue or challenge facing the Mesa community. The Mayor’s Youth Committee is a select group of juniors and seniors from high schools throughout Mesa. Each year, school principals and counselors choose students through a competitive process to represent their school on the committee. The committee is a yearlong program where students interact with the mayor, city council, and city staff on a regular basis to learn about the ins and outs of city government.



## Community Events

Community events present great opportunities for meeting local residents. The Mesa Transit team participated in 10 events, equipped with signs and interactive activities at a designated booth. The team asked: "Which transit options are most important for Mesa's future?" Participants were provided four tickets so they could vote using ballot boxes. Banners displayed information about the different transit options, and signs provided links and survey codes so people could complete the community survey. A map of the city also allowed people to place dots on areas they think need new or expanded services.



Source: City of Mesa, Hacktivate Mesa February 2023



Source: City of Mesa, Celebrate Mesa April 2023



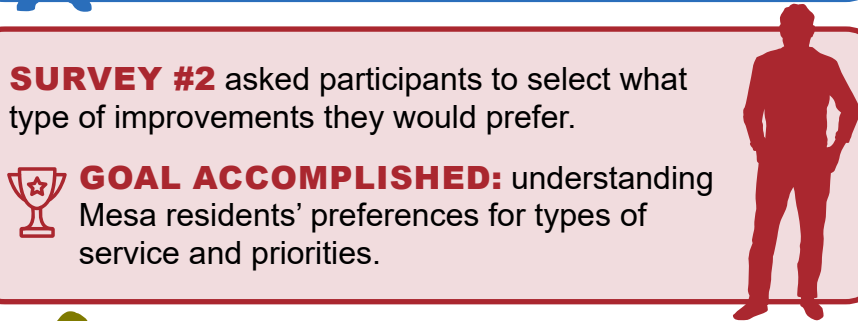
## Surveys

Surveys were deployed in three phases. The first survey was distributed to bus operators to gain insight into current operations from operators' points of view and hear their recommendations on improving transit services in Mesa. Surveys were also distributed citywide and advertised in many different forms to encourage residents to participate and provide their feedback.



**SURVEY #1** asked residents to share how they currently travel throughout the city and what they believe the biggest changes needed to encourage people to use transit.

**GOAL ACCOMPLISHED:** established current needs for Mesa residents.



**SURVEY #2** asked participants to select what type of improvements they would prefer.

**GOAL ACCOMPLISHED:** understanding Mesa residents' preferences for types of service and priorities.



**SURVEY #3** was aimed at soliciting feedback on proposed recommendations for Mesa's transit network.

**GOAL ACCOMPLISHED:** determining how improvements should be prioritized to best serve community members' needs.

# Help Plan Mesa's Transit Future

Mesa's Transit Master Plan is your chance to work with us to shape our transit services. Your input is a critical part of this Plan - we want to know what is working and what is not.

**Take a quick survey!**  
Tell us what you love most about Mesa and what could be improved.

**¡Tome una encuesta rápida!**  
Cuéntanos qué es lo que más te gusta de Mesa y qué se podría mejorar.

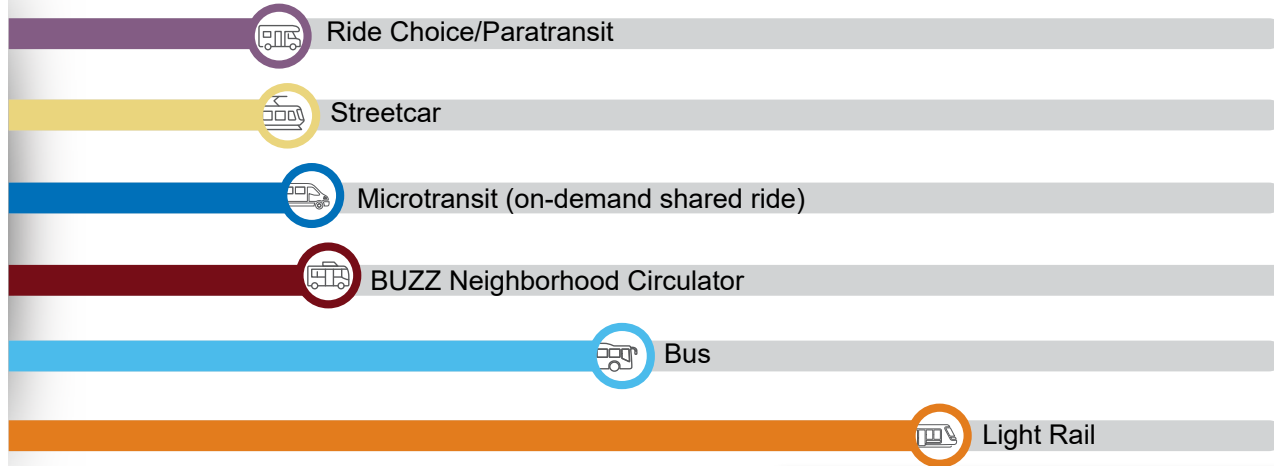
For more information, visit: [www.mesalistsens.com/transit-plan](http://www.mesalistsens.com/transit-plan)

TRANSIT MASTER PLAN

## What We Heard

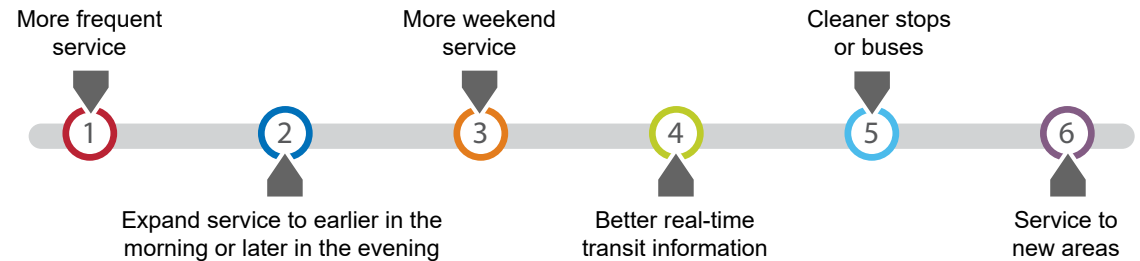
Mesa residents, in general, expressed their continued support for light rail and a desire for expanded service. This includes more bus routes, circulator service (like BUZZ), and rail service. Community members also said they would like improved frequencies on existing routes to speed up their travel times and more service on weekends. We heard that transit connections to regional centers like the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and East Mesa communities were high priorities for improvements.

### Thinking about the future, what transit modes do you envision will be important for Mesa?

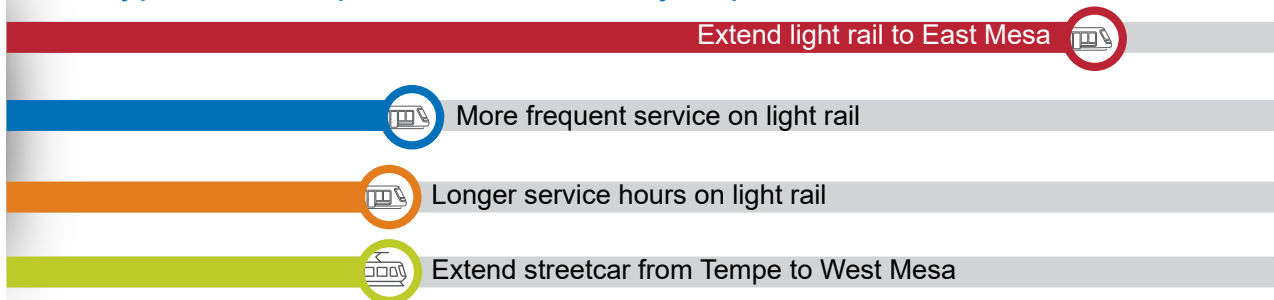


### What would improve bus service quality?

The overall ranking by survey participants with 1 being most important and 6 being least important:



### What type of rail improvements would you prefer?



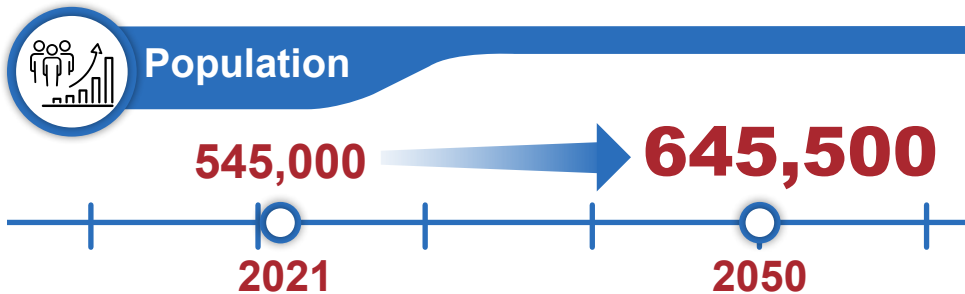
# NEEDS AND GAPS

Mesa is home to over a half million residents today and is expected to continue growing over the next several decades. The metropolitan region is growing quickly both in population and employment, with major employers in health, technology, and education adding jobs.

Where are potential gaps in Mesa’s current system, and what are the future needs that Mesa’s transit system should adapt to?

## Population and Employment Growth

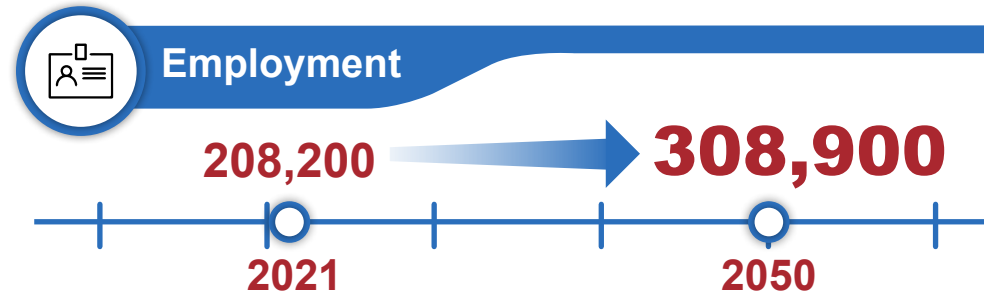
Today, Mesa’s population density is concentrated west of Gilbert Road with the highest densities near the Mesa Community College campus at Dobson Road and Southern Avenue. The areas surrounding both airports- Falcon Field Airport and the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport have some of the lowest population densities. By 2050, Mesa’s population will increase, primarily west of Gilbert Road.



As the population grows, neighborhoods like Guerro Park, Downtown, and the Fiesta District are likely to have the highest densities. Higher densities are easier to serve with transit as they put more potential passengers within reach of transit infrastructure. Increasing frequencies on existing transit lines along key corridors like Main Street, Alma School Road, and Southern Avenue would improve access to these growing areas. Other neighborhoods in East Mesa, like Parkwood Ranch and Eastmark, are also expected

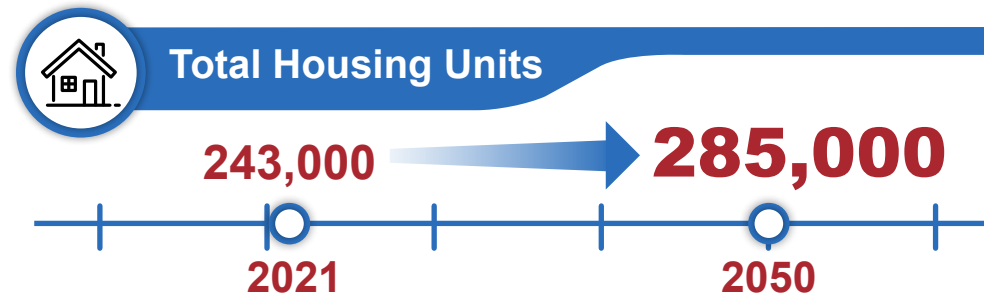
to experience population growth. These neighborhoods are currently not served or underserved by the existing transit network.

The area west of Val Vista Drive has the highest share of employment today. Jobs are highly concentrated along major corridors such as Southern Avenue, Broadway Road, and Alma School Road and within job centers like Downtown Mesa and Riverview.



## Land Use Trends

Land use has a significant impact on transit and some types of use are more strongly correlated with transit trip generation and attraction. An industrial area, for example, with a low population and large warehouses, is less likely to generate or attract transit trips than an office building downtown. Understanding the current and future land use within Mesa is the first step in matching service levels and types to potential transit demand.



*Note: All growth figures are from MAG Socioeconomic Projections 2023. Total population includes resident population and group quarters.*

At present, most of Mesa’s land is designated for single-family residential use. Commercial uses are largely found along arterial streets like Main Street and Southern Avenue. Just under 12 percent of Mesa’s land is currently vacant and the city is surrounded by other jurisdictions. As the city grows, these vacant areas will be developed and other areas will be redeveloped to accommodate additional people, jobs, and attractions.

The future land use vision for Mesa retains a significant amount of land reserved for traditional residential use, which includes single-family, low-height (under four stories) multi-family, and mixed-use development. The Main Street corridor is envisioned as an Urban Center with higher density multi-family and mixed-use development as well as commercial uses like offices, retail, and restaurants. Opportunities for added development and transit-oriented development around light rail stations position Main Street as a vital transit corridor.

Local employment centers along Main Street and Broadway Road and regional employment centers surrounding both the Falcon Field and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway airports will be important to serve with transit as residents commute to existing and future opportunities in these areas.

## Demand

Other factors that influence transit demand include job centers, activity centers, and transit propensity. Transit propensity refers to the likelihood of certain population groups to use transit services.

Concentrations of high transit propensity groups can drive transit demand that would otherwise be potentially overlooked when evaluating only population and employment densities.

### Higher transit propensity groups include:



**Minority populations** generally use transit more often than non-minority populations.



**Low-income households** also tend to use transit to a greater degree than higher income households, as transit offers significant cost savings compared to automobile ownership and use.



**Seniors (over 64 years of age) and youths (under 18 years of age)** are more likely to be unable to drive or choose not to drive. Providing non-auto alternatives is essential to ensuring participation in daily activities and needs.



**Zero-car households** with limited transportation options are more likely to use transit.



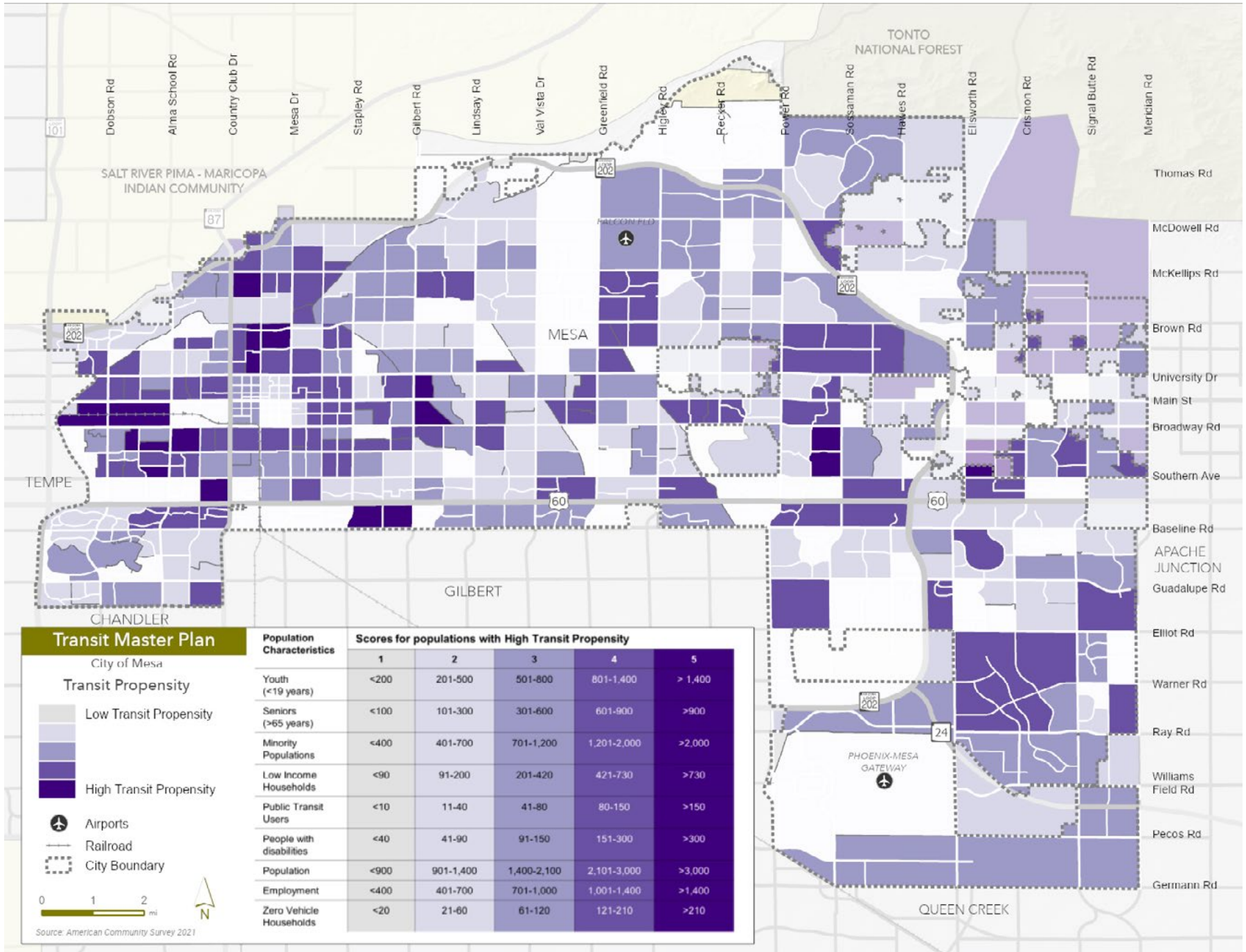
**Persons with disabilities** are unable to drive. This group uses transit, including regular fixed-route or ADA Paratransit service, to remain active and access daily needs.



**Current public transit users** are generally predisposed to continue riding transit.

High transit propensity populations are dispersed across Mesa, as shown in [Figure 6](#). Some concentrations are served by transit now, like those along Main Street between Dobson Road and Alma School Road, while others (like those between Elliot Road and Ray Road north of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport) are not.

Figure 6. Transit Propensity



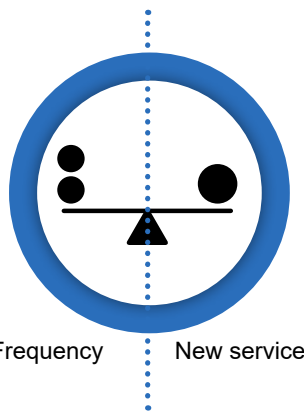
Mesa is home to a variety of activity centers from parks to museums and cultural centers, colleges and schools to medical centers. While many of these attractions are located west of Stapley Drive and served by transit, others near Falcon Field Airport and east of Power Road are not.

Job centers form another type of activity center, drawing residents from across the city and region to job opportunities. Major job centers are formed by either clusters of smaller businesses or one large employer with a high number of employees.

**Major job centers in Mesa:** Mesa Falcon Field Airport, Downtown Mesa, Mesa Fiesta District, Mesa Broadway Corridor, Mesa Riverview, Mesa Superstition Freeway Corridor West, Mesa Superstition Freeway Corridor East, Mesa Gateway Area, and Mesa Banner Health.

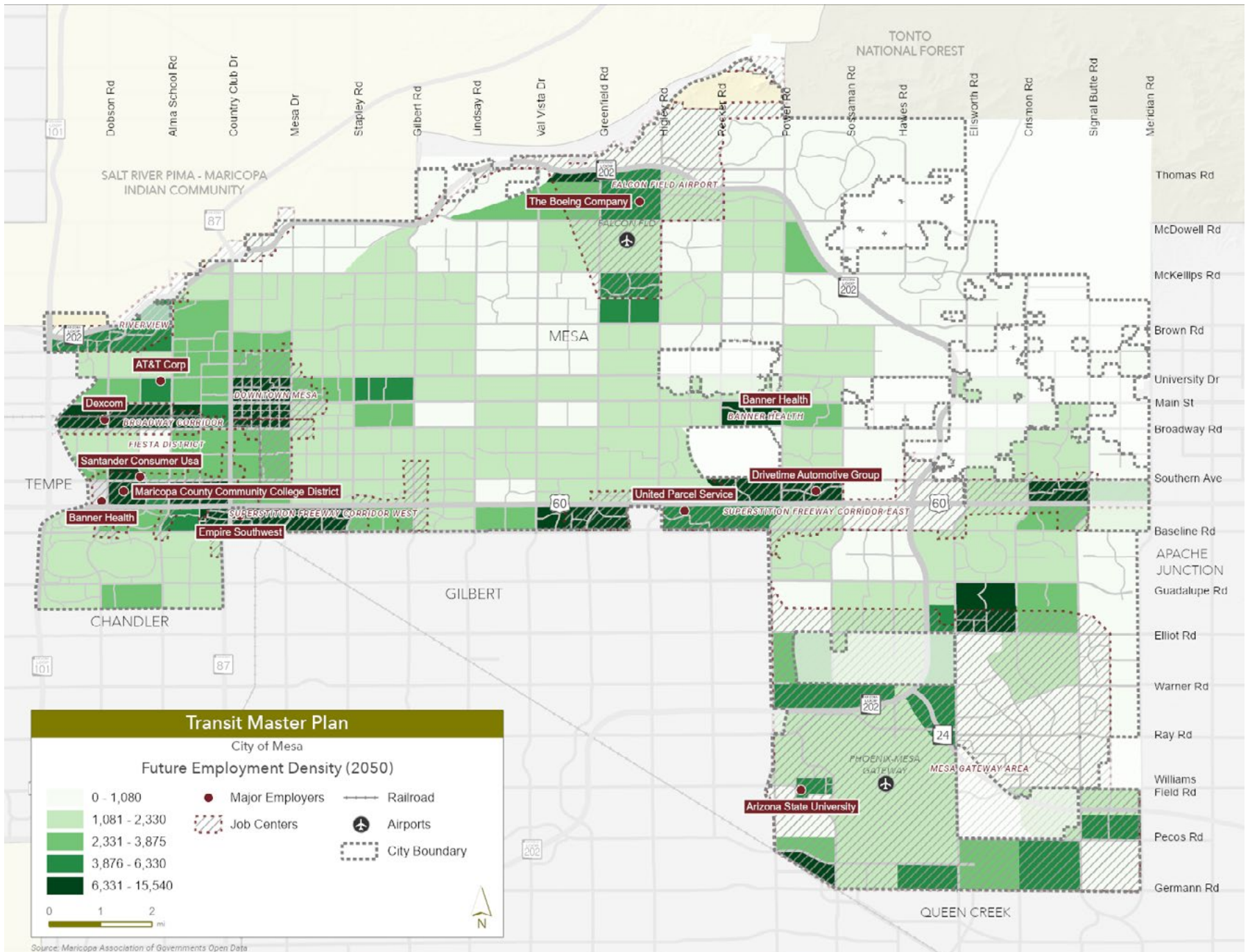
Figure 7 shows the major employers located in Mesa. Some employers, like Mesa Public Schools and the City of Mesa, have dispersed locations, while others are based entirely at one location. Understanding where major employers and job centers are located is a vital step in matching where people live with where they are trying to go. Mesa’s current network is primarily oriented east-west with a gap in north-south service between Gilbert Road and Power Road.

Employment growth and population growth is anticipated both in areas served today, like West Mesa and in underserved areas, like Falcon Field and Southern Avenue east of Loop-202. These underserved areas are also home to residents who are more likely to use transit. Looking ahead, improvements to Mesa’s transit network will balance increasing the frequency of services for higher density areas with expanding new services to growing communities.



Source: Valley Metro

Figure 7. Future Employment Density and Major Employers



# TRANSIT TOMORROW

By 2050, Mesa's population is projected to grow to about 645,500. New job centers will emerge and previously vacant areas will be home to new residents and communities. Transit recommendations have been identified to ensure Mesa's transit network is prepared to meet the needs of current and future residents. These improvements have been organized into phases for implementation from short-term to long-term.

## Transit Recommendations

These recommendations were developed to meet the needs of the future and fill the gaps in the current system while balancing coverage with frequency. The transit recommendations proposed here in [Table 2](#) balance providing frequent service in high demand areas with expanding service into lower-density communities.

Today, Mesa is served by many different forms of transit, from local bus and express bus service to BUZZ circulators and light rail. The transit recommendations proposed to meet the current gaps and future needs are likewise diverse. This plan identifies:

- More frequency for existing bus routes
- Modifications or extensions to existing bus routes
- New local bus routes
- More frequency for existing light rail
- New streetcar service
- New service in emerging markets

Local bus service and light rail have been introduced in Transit Today. Mesa is not currently served by streetcar but an extension of the Tempe streetcar into Mesa is currently being studied.

## Streetcar

Modern streetcar operate very much like light rail. Like light rail, modern streetcar vehicles are powered by overhead electric power. Streetcar vehicles travel along a rail guideway (travel lane/ travel path), typically at street level. This guideway can either be exclusive to the streetcar or shared with general purpose traffic. Streetcar stations are smaller than light rail stations and generally provide shelter from weather, seating, lighting, and real-time arrival/ departure information.



Source: Valley Metro, Tempe Streetcar

## Emerging Markets

Emerging markets is a term used to describe areas of Mesa that have not historically been served by transit but through land use and/or demographic changes are in need of new transit services. The two emerging markets identified in this plan are Falcon Field and its immediate surroundings and the growing Eastmark neighborhood in southeast Mesa. Neither area is served by transit today but both areas are growing in terms of population and jobs. These areas could be served by new circulator service, like BUZZ, or new on-demand microtransit.



Microtransit is a small-scale, on-demand public transit service that can offer fixed routes and schedules, as well as flexible routes and on-demand scheduling. An example of a typical microtransit vehicle is shown in [Figure 8](#). While Mesa does not currently offer microtransit service, other neighboring municipalities in the Valley have recently implemented microtransit. Chandler has launched a microtransit service called Chandler Flex and several West Valley communities offer WeRIDE on-demand service. Further study is needed to determine exactly what form this new service will take.

**Figure 8.** Example Microtransit Vehicle



Source: WeRIDE

## Passenger Rail

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) conducted a Passenger Rail Corridor study in 2015 to evaluate passenger rail between Tucson and Phoenix. During the five-year study, ADOT worked closely with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and other federal agencies, as well as local governments and planning organizations in Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties, to determine the feasibility of a passenger rail system.

In 2016, MAG initiated the Regional Commuter Rail System Study Update. The goal of the study was to update the data in the MAG 2010 Commuter Rail System Study with new forecasts and estimates. The study was completed in 2018, and its results will inform planning for long-range high-capacity transit investments to support mobility throughout the region.

The corridor was accepted into the FRA’s Corridor Identification and Development Program in 2023, and ADOT was granted funds to conduct the next phase of the study. This corridor travels through Mesa between Tucson and Phoenix. At this time, station locations have not been finalized; however, Mesa will coordinate with ADOT and other governmental agencies to integrate future stations with Mesa’s transit system.





























## Facilities and Programs

To support the transit recommendations proposed in this plan, new facilities are needed. New routes will require capital investment in bus stop infrastructure and new mobility hubs will require investment in amenities such as electric vehicle charging, seating, and shelters.

Bus stop shelters with shade were also identified as a priority through conversations and surveys of community members. Other amenities, such as bike racks, particularly at future mobility hubs, will better connect with first-mile/last-mile modes and expand access to the transit network.

Programs such as transit-oriented development (TOD) plans and policies can also play a role in supporting the transit recommendations outlined in this plan. Other potential programs can include a transit ambassador program, which would place uniformed agency representatives onboard vehicles and/or at transit stations to provide wayfinding and other assistance to passengers. A limited number of agencies at present provide transit ambassadors. The City of Mesa and Valley Metro would need to undertake further study before piloting a program in Mesa.

**Table 2.** Transit Recommendations

Route Name	Type of Improvement		
	Route Extensions/Modifications	Service Improvements	New Routes
30-University Drive			
40-Main Street			
45-Broadway Road			
48-48 <sup>th</sup> Street			
77-Baseline Road			
104-Alma School Road			
108-Elliot Road			
112-Country Club Drive			
120-Mesa Drive			
128-Stapley Drive			
136-Gilbert Road			
156-Chandler Boulevard Williams Field Road			
184-Power Road			
277-Signal Butte Road			
Lindsay Road			
Greenfield Road			
Higley Road			
Sossaman Road			
Val Vista Drive			
Falcon Field Emerging Market			
Eastmark Emerging Market			
Light Rail			
Streetcar			

## Phased Transit Plans

Implementing transit improvements requires planning, funding, and collaboration. As a result, the proposed transit recommendations have been organized into different implementation phases. A two-step evaluation methodology was devised to determine the phasing of recommendations and the prioritization within each phase. The first step was a Needs Evaluation to quantify the relative need between each recommendation and phase them into Short-Term, Mid-Term, and Long-Term phases. The second step was a Productivity Evaluation to prioritize recommendations within each phase based on the potential cost-to-benefit ratio of implementing a given recommendation.

### Needs Evaluation

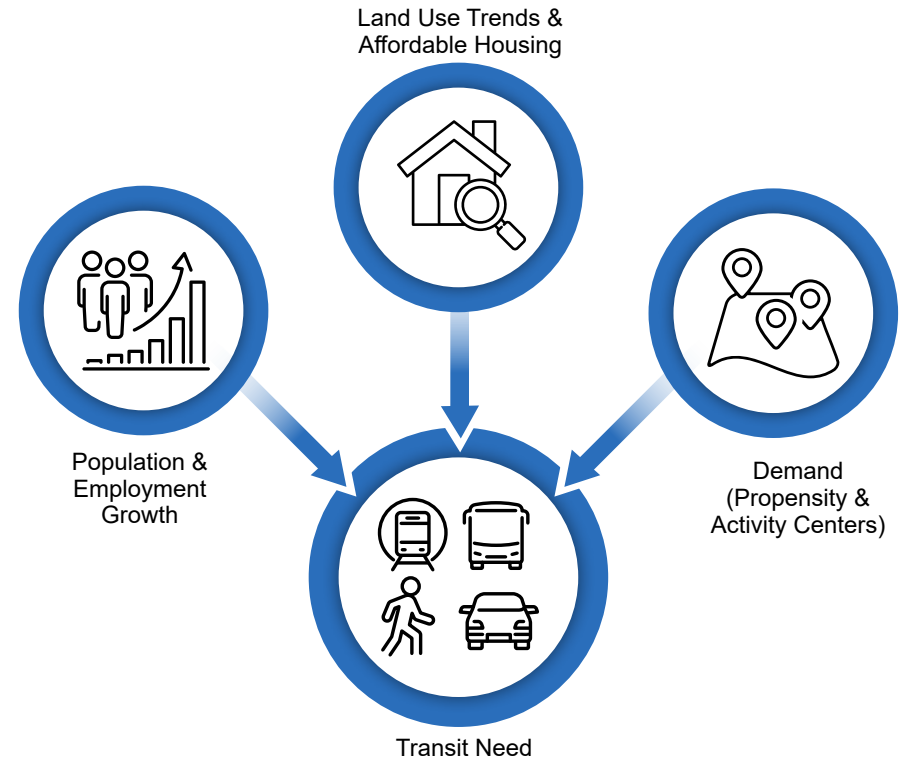
The Needs Evaluation, summarized in *Figure 9*, was conducted using seven evaluation criteria assessed using data from the American Community Survey, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) 2050 projections, and the National Housing Preservation Database. Each recommendation was evaluated on a relative scale (compared with each other) and scored for each criterion. Higher scoring recommendations were prioritized for Short-Term and Mid-Term implementation.

**Population:** One of the most common indicators of a successful transit route is the number of residents within walking distance of transit stops/stations. The more people who live close to transit, the higher ridership the transit route is likely to generate. This criterion analyzed the existing (2021) and projected (2050) population density.

**Employment:** Similar to population, walking proximity to employment centers from transit stops/stations is an important factor in generating transit trips. This criterion analyzed the existing (2021) and projected (2050) employment (job) density.

**Service Equity:** This criterion analyzed demographic factors that may indicate the presence of traditionally underserved,

Figure 9. Needs Evaluation Process



underrepresented, or transit-dependent communities that could most benefit from transit’s ability to provide “ladders of opportunity” through better access to housing, jobs, services, and education. Six population groups (scored at 5 points max each)—people under 18 years of age, people over 64 years of age, people with disabilities, zero-vehicle households, minority populations, and low-income households—were used as indicators to gauge transit needs.

**Affordable Housing:** Enhancing public transit options in areas with affordable housing can help residents save on transportation costs and expand job opportunities. This criterion documented the number of affordable housing units around transit stops/stations. Inactive affordable housing properties were not included in the counts.

**Study Compatibility:** Previously completed plans and studies were reviewed to identify proposed and planned transit projects relevant

to Mesa. Some of these proposed and planned transit projects were considered as transit recommendations in this Transit Master Plan. These relevant transit projects were given a higher priority due to their previous regional and local significance.

**Land Use:** Transit-supportive land use is defined as higher-density categories of multi-family residential plus mixed use that are typically prevalent in TOD patterns. This evaluation criterion identifies the presence of existing transit-supportive land uses and potential for development near transit stops/stations. The criterion analyzed the influence of single-family high-density, multi-family, commercial high-density, and mixed-use land, along with emerging developments. Current land use data was analyzed at the parcel level to score the number of high-density parcels.

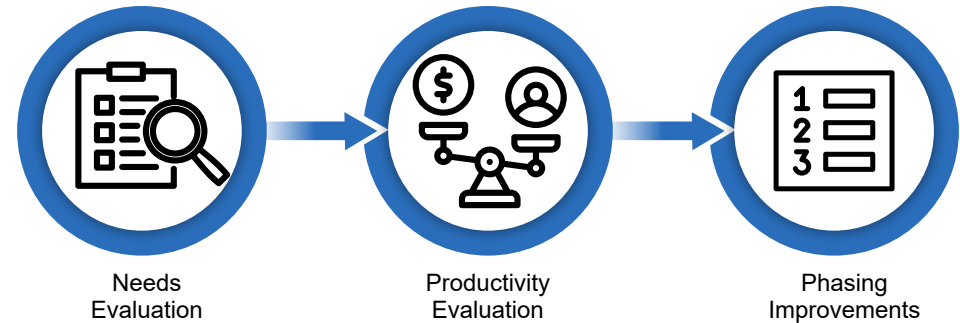
**Key Destinations:** Regional and local destinations were analyzed because they are primed to become development catalysts as Mesa grows in both population and employment. Key destinations included major employers, recreational/cultural amenities, educational facilities, and community resources.

### Productivity Evaluation

Two main components formed the foundation of the Productivity Evaluation- projected ridership and estimated costs. This evaluation served to evaluate the productivity of transit recommendations to rank and prioritize them within each phase. The Productivity Evaluation, summarized in [Figure 10](#), was also conducted on a relative scale and assigned each recommendation a score. Higher scores suggest that a given route could add more ridership while incurring a lower cost of implementation and these high scoring routes have been prioritized.

**Projected Ridership:** Ridership projections were calculated using the most updated MAG transportation model and are based on the

Figure 10. Recommendation Phasing



complete transit route network at each horizon year (2026, 2035, and 2050).

**Cost Estimates:** Cost estimates used in the evaluation were developed using the annual revenue miles for each local bus route within Mesa and cost per mile rates provided by Valley Metro for FY 2024.

The following phased plans proposed here are the result of the Needs and Productivity Evaluations. The horizon years for each phase aligns with the funding timelines in the MAG Regional Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Investment Plan, which outlines the funding allocation for transportation and transit-related projects between 2026 and 2050 based on the availability of funds.

## Short-Term (2026)

The Short-Term plan includes transit recommendations to be implemented between 2024 and 2026. Mesa aims to provide 15-minute service frequency across all local bus routes operating within the city. As shown in [Table 3](#), the majority of short-term transit recommendations are service improvements to increase frequencies to align with Mesa’s goal. Route 40 (Main Street) ranked highest in the Needs Evaluation for local bus routes, which contributed to its inclusion in the Short-Term plan.

The full build-out of the Short-Term network is shown in [Figure 11](#). The extension of Route 48 (48th Street) will serve to build a ridership base for future streetcar extension along the route.

Following the initiation of streetcar service, duplicate Route 48 (48th Street) service will be eliminated. Other route extensions, such as Route 77 (Baseline Road), will improve access to the regional transit network for more Mesa residents and provide additional connections to major destinations.

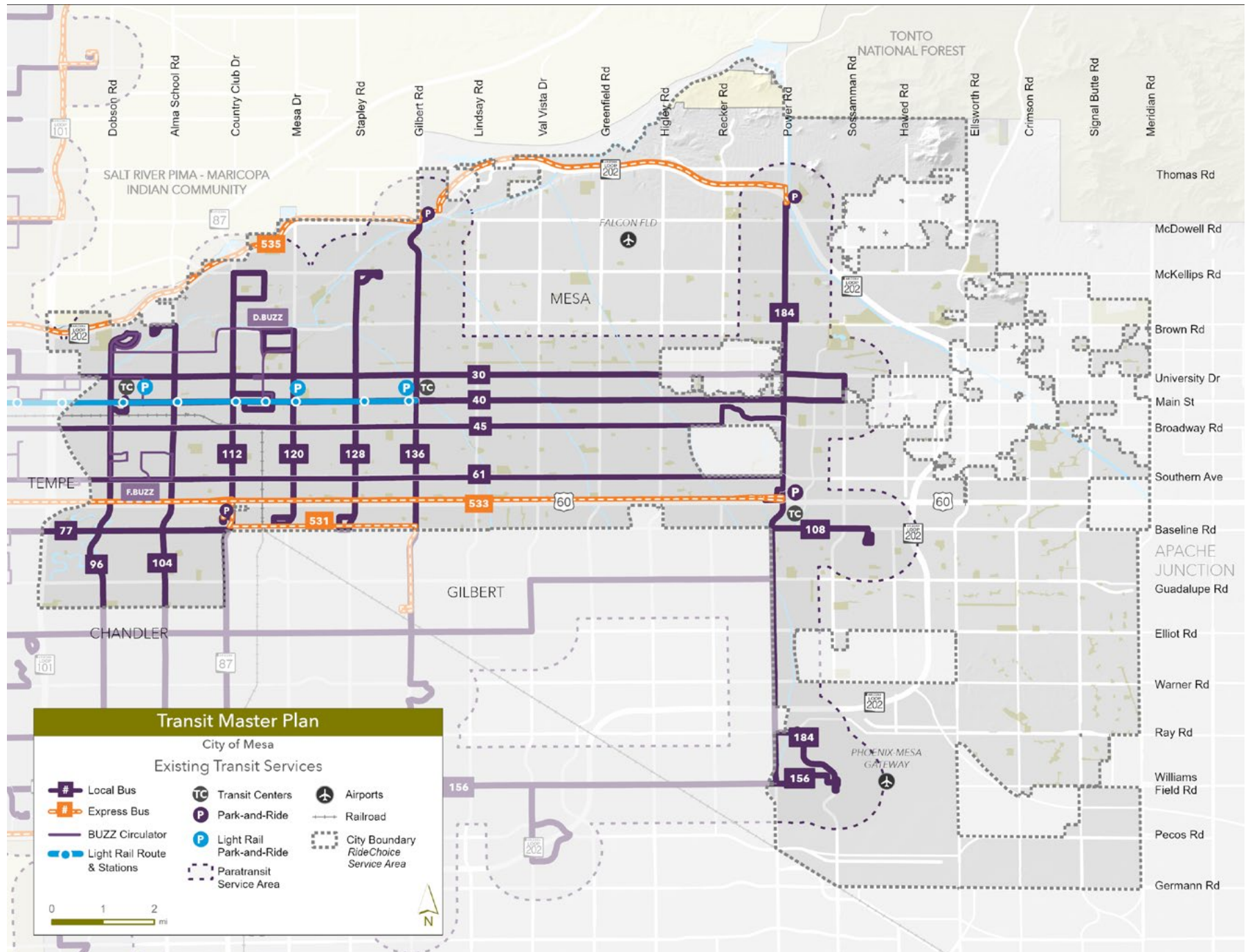
In addition to local bus recommendations, the Short-Term plan also includes a proposed frequency improvement for the Valley Metro Rail LRT. This recommendation would bring LRT weekday frequencies to 12-minute headways during peak service.

**Table 3.** Short-Term Plan Transit Recommendations

Route Name	Change Type	Description
40-Main Street		Saturday service improvement to 15-minute headways.
112-Country Club Drive		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways from Main Street to the end of the line at McKellips Road.
120-Mesa Drive		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways north of Main Street to the end of the line at McKellips Road.
104-Alma School Road		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways.
136-Gilbert Road		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways.
Light Rail		Improve weekday frequency to 12-minute headways.
48-48th Street		Extend along Rio Salado Parkway to Mesa Riverview with overlapping end of the line with Fiesta Buzz, Downtown Buzz, and Route 96, matching Tempe span of service and frequency.
77-Baseline Road		Extend along Baseline Road to Gilbert Road.
156-Chandler Blvd/Williams Field Road		Extend the route along Innovation Way to Tahoe Avenue, Sossaman Road, and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Passenger Terminal, returning to Innovation Way via Texas Avenue.

Route Extensions / Modifications
 Service Improvements
 New Route

Figure 11. Short-Term Plan



## Mid-Term (2035)

The horizon years for the proposed Mid-Term plan fall between 2026 and 2035. It was assumed that at this point regional funding collected as part of the Proposition 400 extension, Proposition 479, will begin to be available.











In total, 10 recommendations have been identified for the Mid-Term plan, as shown in [Table 4](#) and [Figure 12](#). In addition to the service improvements and route extensions/modifications planned for Mesa, new service is proposed for the Mid-Term plan.

A new north-south route along Greenfield Road originating at Red Mountain Community College and terminating at Baseline Road will

fill the existing gap in north-south routes between Gilbert Road and Power Road.

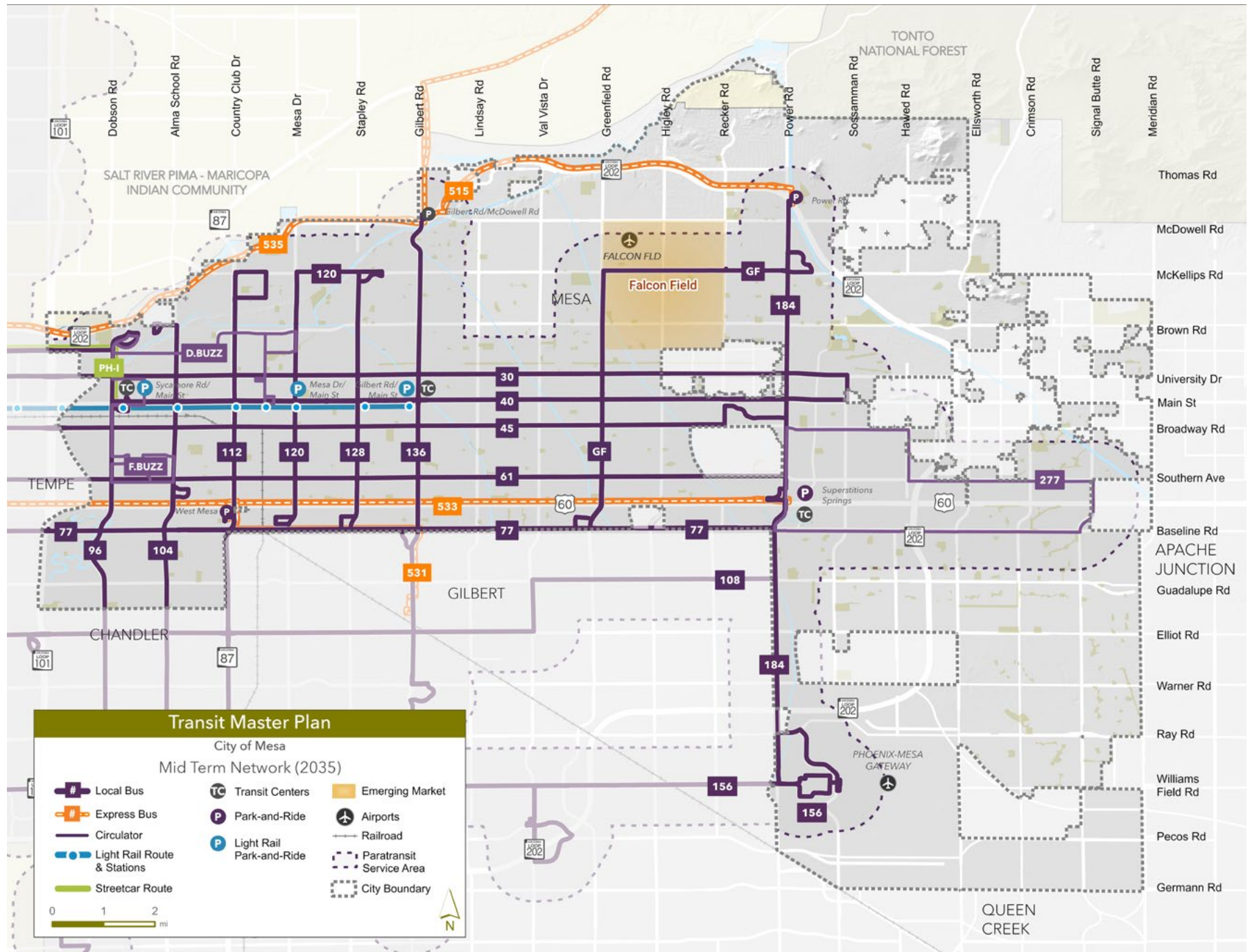
Other new services include the reinstatement of Route 277 (Signal Butte Road), which serves east Mesa between Broadway Road and Baseline Road and the Falcon Field emerging market. Further study to determine the most effective service delivery (microtransit or circulator service) is needed prior to implementation of emerging markets like Falcon Field. Phase 1 of the Tempe/Mesa Streetcar Extension is expected to be completed by 2035 and is included in the Mid-Term plan.

**Table 4.** Mid-Term Plan Transit Recommendations

Route Name	Change Type	Description
30-University Drive		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways and Sunday service to 30-minute headways.
112-Country Club Drive		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways all day.
128-Stapely Drive		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways.
77-Baseline Drive		Extend along Baseline Road from Gilbert Road to Power Road.
120-Mesa Drive		Extend the route north and along McKellips and interline with Route 128.
108-Elliot Road		Route modification to end at Superstition Springs P&R and remove duplicative service with Route 277 East of Power Road
Streetcar Phase 1		Extend the streetcar along Rio Salado Parkway to Dobson Road and along Dobson Road to Main Street.
277-Signal Butte Road		Reinstitute the discontinued route along Broadway, Power Road, Baseline, Signal Butte, and Southern Avenue.
Greenfield Road		New North-South route from McKellips Road to Baseline Road, with service on McKellips Road to Mesa Community College Red Mountain campus.
Falcon Field Emerging Market		Implement either a circulator or microtransit zone. Connect residential areas with supermarkets and commercial establishments. Currently, this area has no service and high concentrations of transit propensity populations.

 Route Extensions / Modifications  Service Improvements  New Route

Figure 12. Mid-Term Plan





## Long-Term (2050)

The Long-Term plan spans from 2035 to 2050 and includes 10 transit recommendations. [Table 5](#) and [Figure 13](#) illustrate these recommendations. As discussed, the City of Mesa aims to bring all local routes to a minimum of 15-minute frequencies during weekday peak hours and a minimum of 30-minute frequencies on Saturdays. Routes that do not currently meet these standards have been identified for service improvement to reach this goal, including Route 108 (Elliot Road) and Route 184 (Power Road). Both routes are currently operating on 30-minute weekday and 60-minute weekend frequencies.

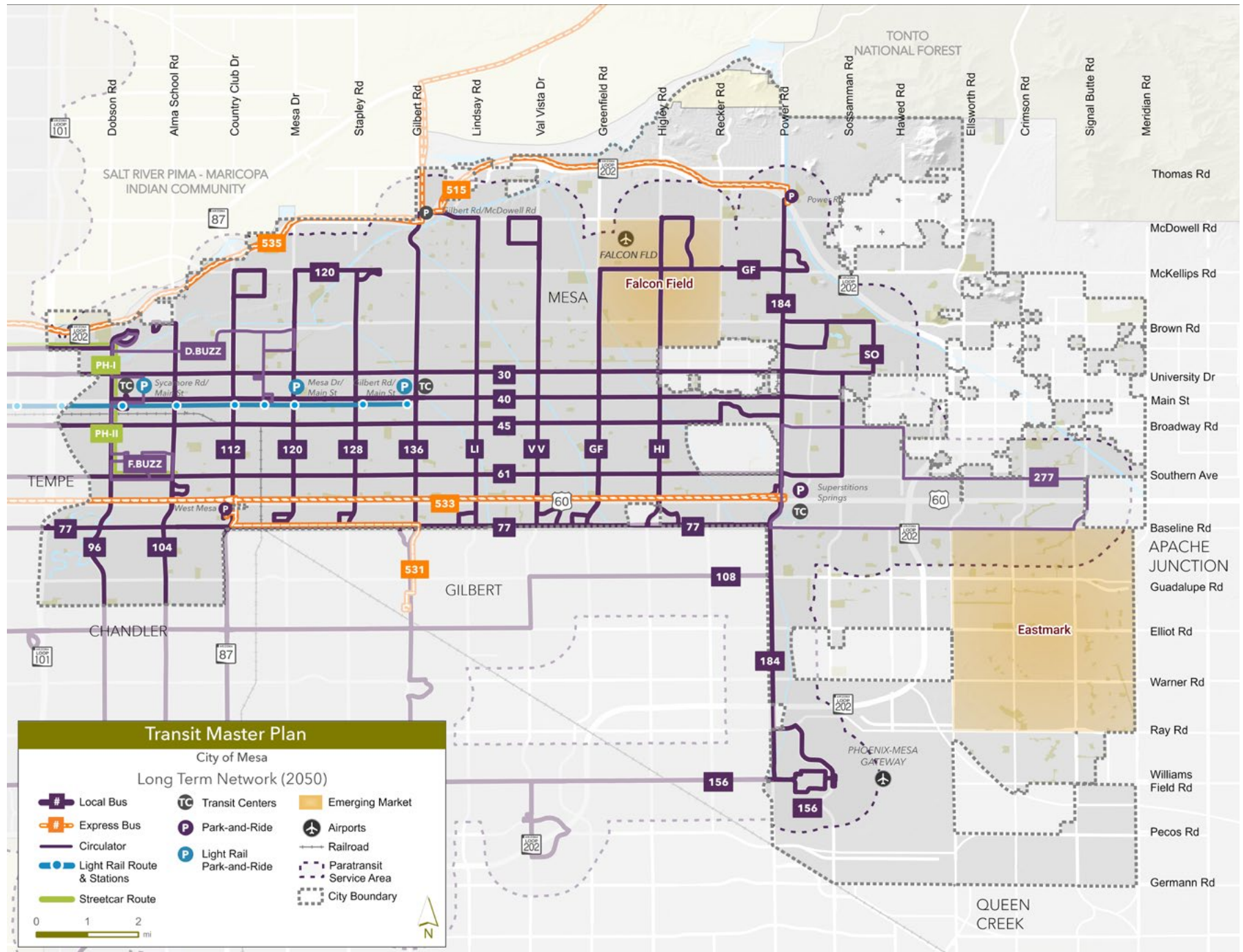
The Long-Term plan also features several new routes, filling in the remaining gaps in the north-south direction between Gilbert Road and Power Road in central Mesa. North-south routes are proposed for Lindsay Road, Val Vista, Higley Road, and Sossaman Road. These routes will provide additional service between McDowell Road and Baseline Road, operating entirely within the City of Mesa. The second identified emerging market, Eastmark, is proposed as part of the Long-Term plan. As described in the Mid-Term plan (2035), the specific form of service in this emerging market has not yet been determined. Additionally, the second phase of the Tempe/ Mesa Streetcar Extension is anticipated to be complete by 2050 and is included in the plan.

**Table 5.** Long-Term Plan Transit Recommendations

Route Name	Change Type	Description
<b>45-Broadway Road</b>		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways.
<b>77-Baseline Road</b>		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways.
<b>108-Elliot Road</b>		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways and Saturday service to 30-minute headways.
<b>184-Power Road</b>		Improve weekday frequency to 15-minute headways and weekend service to 30-minute headways.
<b>Streetcar Phase 2</b>		Extend the streetcar along Dobson Road from Main Street to Southern, then along Country Club North to Main Street.
<b>Higley Road</b>		North-South route along Higley from McDowell Road to Baseline Road.
<b>Lindsay Road</b>		North-South route along Lindsay Road from McDowell Road to Baseline Road.
<b>Sossaman Road</b>		New North-South route from the Red Mountain Park/High School along Brown Road, 80th Street, and University Drive to Sossaman Road, traveling south on Sossaman Road to the Superstition Springs Transit Center.
<b>Val Vista Drive</b>		North-South route along Val Vista Dr from McDowell Road to Baseline Road.
<b>Eastmark Emerging Market</b>		Implement either a circulator or microtransit zone. This area is currently not served by the existing transit network and has strong projected future employment growth.

Route Extensions / Modifications
 Service Improvements
 New Route

Figure 13. Long-Term Plan



# TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

Many factors can support or hinder transit performance from land use to technology. Coordinated planning and collaboration between city departments will allow Mesa to reap the greatest benefits from future transit investments. Through strategic land use and anticipation of land use changes, Mesa can increase ridership and ensure that the transit system continues to serve residents' needs. Understanding how key corridors are used and how they can be improved will likewise allow the City to use current strengths and address any weaknesses to enhance mobility within Mesa. Transit also benefits from the adoption of new technologies that improve the ease of use and overall operations of the transit system.

## Regional and Local Planning

Regional and local planning can support transit performance through short-range and long-range plans that strategically guide investment. Land use policy changes, development and transportation impact fees, and long-term planning work together to proactively seed future transit investment. Capital improvement projects, transportation master plans, and general plans can document justification for needed transit service upgrades and provide guidance to improve transit efficiency and coverage. Along with local planning efforts, regional coordination between the City of Mesa, Valley Metro, and MAG will ensure that, as the region grows, it does so in a more transit-accessible way.

As Mesa conducts future land use or master planning, the City can identify opportunities to support and prioritize transit access as a key element of community growth. The City can also identify opportunities to acquire sites and develop them with transit-oriented development (TOD) principles in mind.

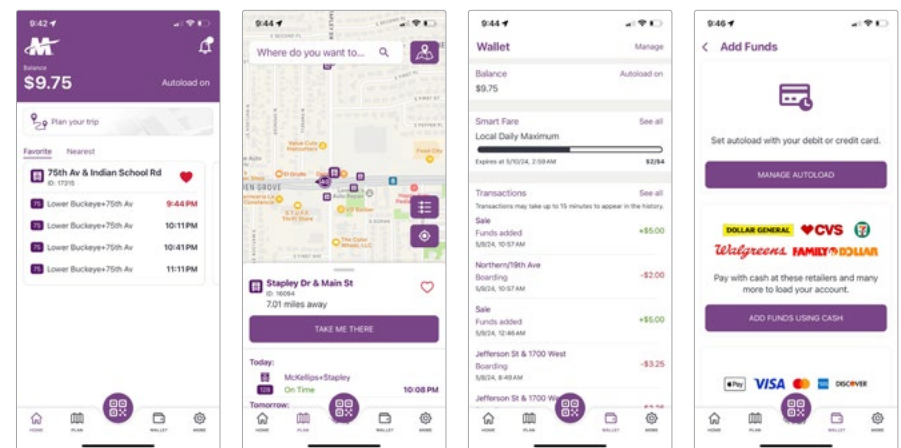
## Emerging Technologies

Partnership between cities, regional planning organizations, and

transit agencies are critical to help implement and potentially fund technology enhancements. The City of Mesa will work in partnership with Valley Metro and MAG to support improvements to transit operations, including technological improvements. Valley Metro initiated a systemwide fare technology modernization that will allow riders to purchase fares on their mobile device or through a reloadable fare card to scan or tap on new fare readers, as shown in *Figure 14*. Future studies, such as a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) feasibility study or a microtransit feasibility study, could add new modes and features to the regional transit network, improving the passenger experience.

MaaS as a technology refers to “a single platform where travelers can source and pay for rides across multiple transportation modes.”<sup>1</sup> MaaS is inclusive of all transportation modes, such as peer-to-peer car sharing, rideshare and other private transportation modes, microtransit, e-scooter and bike sharing, and public transit. Other agencies use MaaS to host an all-in-one travel tool that gives customers real-time travel information, mobile ticketing, and on-demand services through their phones for transit.

Figure 14. Valley Metro Mobile App



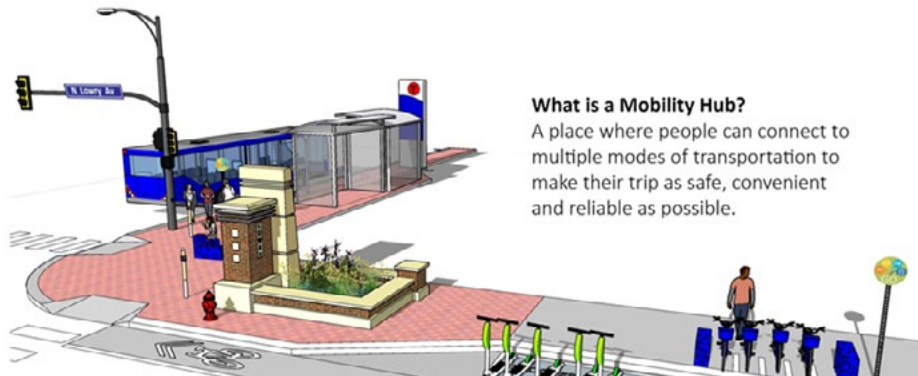
Source: Valley Metro

1 <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2018/04/uber-pivots-to-on-demand-everything/557528/>.

## Corridor Optimization

Individual transit routes typically serve areas or corridors with different blends of population, employment opportunities, roadway characteristics, and transit dependency. It is important for cities to understand and classify the types of corridors in their city by evaluating a corridor's existing conditions (demographic plus physical and environmental context), needs, and opportunities at various neighborhood levels. It is critical to have an awareness of distinct neighborhoods along a corridor because one end of a corridor can be very different from the other end. Optimization efforts incorporate safety and other transportation data while considering rider experience to improve key corridors and support mobility within the city.

**Figure 15.** Example Mobility Hub



Source: City of Tempe

Undertaking corridor optimization efforts can also lead to identification of potential mobility hub locations. An example mobility hub is shown in [Figure 15](#). Mobility hubs can increase the reach of the transit network by facilitating expanded first-mile/last-mile connections. Mobility hubs bring together multiple modes of transportation, such as micromobility (bicycle or scooter share), active transportation, microtransit, and ride-hailing. These hubs can also include complementary features like electric vehicle (EV) charging, secure bicycle parking, seating, and wayfinding elements.

2. FTA. August 2020. [FTA Guidance on Joint Development \(Circular 7050.1B\)](#).

## Transit-Oriented Development Program

The primary goal of implementing a TOD program in Mesa would be to create a vision that is focused on improving the integration of land use and mobility near stations and stops. A TOD program can create bridges between several City departments to accomplish similar goals around infrastructure and assets developed and owned by the City. Participation within the program could come from the Mesa Transit, Planning, Transportation, Economic Development, Real Estate Services, Sustainability, and Community Engagement departments.

Other goals of the program could include:

- Evaluating stations and stops to determine typologies based on station size, amenities, and adjacent land uses.
- Identifying potential locations for higher-density development in proximity to transit and major activity centers
- Facilitating development that meets the City of Mesa's Quality Development Design Guidelines.
- Understanding the user experience at stations/stops and within broader station/stop areas.
- Establishing a joint development policy.

Joint development is the process of forming a partnership to develop property around transit stations/stops to create additional value for the city through three opportunities—new revenue streams, increased ridership, or improvements to transit assets. Joint development projects do not require the property to be owned by the city or transit agency. Joint development is commonly associated with rail projects; however, the FTA recognizes joint development projects can occur around any mode of transit.<sup>2</sup> Under their definition of joint development, the FTA also includes:

- Intermodal facilities
- Regional bus and rail facilities
- Transit malls
- Historic transportation facilities

The City of Mesa has been awarded a \$920,000 federal grant to conduct comprehensive TOD planning along a 5-mile streetcar route in west Mesa. The project is called MesaCONNECTED and is ongoing as of May 2024. *Figure 16* shows the project logo. The streetcar route would connect four major economic activity centers in Mesa - Riverview Marketplace, Asian District, Fiesta District, and downtown Mesa. Mesa will use the grant funding to conduct comprehensive planning efforts, define design guidelines, and develop economic strategies.

**Figure 16.** MesaCONNECTED TOD Study



Source: City of Mesa

## Complete Streets

Complete streets integrate spaces for multiple types of mobility choices. Implementing complete streets is helpful in supporting transit because most people access bus stations by walking, bicycling, or perhaps using an electric scooter. Complete streets provide safe and welcoming spaces because the purpose of the street is to move people, not just cars. A safer street environment is more likely to attract pedestrians and bicyclists, who may also choose to use transit. *Figure 17* shows an example of a complete street. Different city departments are involved in the

overall streetscape and work together to implement complete streets improvements. As the City continues to invest in active transportation infrastructure around LRT stations and bus stops, it will provide safe connectivity and access to transit riders and enhance ridership.

**Figure 17.** Example of a Complete Street



Source: City of Mesa

# IMPLEMENTATION

The Mesa Transit Plan describes the current transit service in Mesa and identifies existing system gaps and potential future needs of Mesa residents. Transit recommendations have been presented to meet these needs, whether through providing new services, modifying existing services, or improving frequencies. Mesa is growing and changing, with emerging transit markets and shifting travel patterns. The recommendations outlined in this plan play an important role in Mesa residents' quality of life by supporting mobility and access for all residents. The City of Mesa has identified a path forward to realizing the vision presented in this plan.

## Capital Investments

Recommendations to add new local bus routes and extend existing bus routes will also require additional capital investment. Existing Mesa bus routes (not including commuter routes) generally have stops every 1/4 mile. The estimated number of bus stops was calculated for each new route and route extension following this same average stop spacing. The exact number of bus stops will be determined closer to the implementation of each route. The number of stops presented in [Table 6](#) reflect the target stop spacing of the bus stops every quarter-mile along local bus routes.



# 438

Estimated new bus stops



## Potential expansion

of Superstition Springs Transit Center to accommodate future transit services

**Table 6.** Estimated New Bus Stops

Route	Number of Bus Stops	Phase
156- Chandler Boulevard	7	Short-Term
77- Baseline Road (Phase 1)	16	Mid-Term
120-Mesa Drive	13	Mid-Term
277- Signal Butte Road	36	Mid-Term
Greenfield Road	54	Mid-Term
77 - Baseline Road (Phase 2)	41	Long-Term
Higley Road	42	Long-Term
Lindsay Road	44	Long-Term
Sossaman Road	43	Long-Term
Val Vista Drive	42	Long-Term
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	-

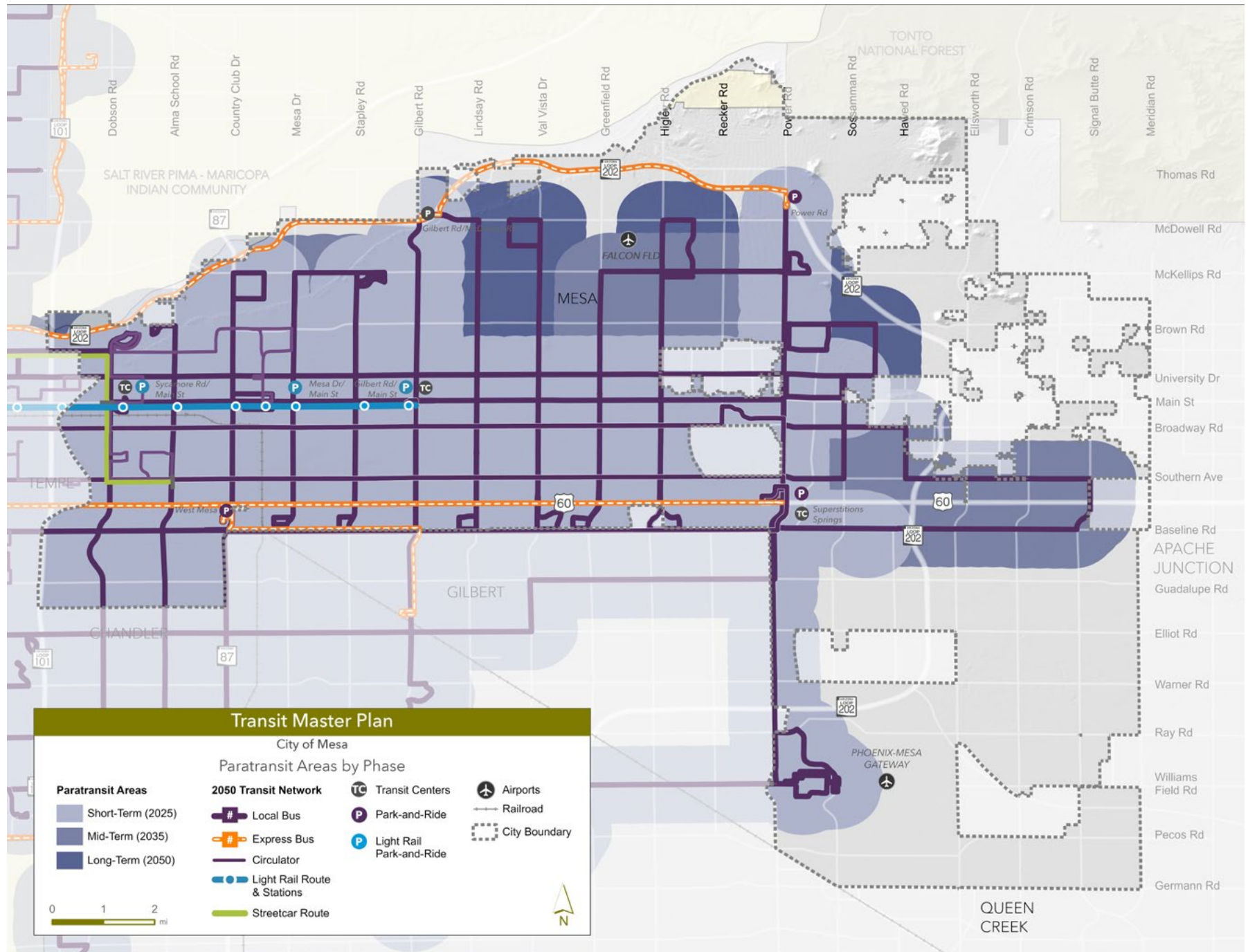
*Note: Bus stop values have been estimated by multiplying the route length by 1/4-mile.*

## ADA Paratransit Changes

New services will also expand the ADA Paratransit service area as well as require new bus stops to serve the forthcoming routes. ADA Paratransit service will expand throughout the implementation of this plan. In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ADA Paratransit service is provided within 3/4-mile of fixed routes to provide equal access to transportation for people with disabilities that prevent them from using regular bus service.

*Figure 18* shows how the paratransit service area will grow in each phase. For example, the addition of a new local bus service, such as Route 277 (Signal Butte) in the Mid-Term plan adds additional service area. Long-Term recommendations, such as the new route along Sossaman Road and Val Vista Drive, will also result in increased area coverage by 2050.

Figure 18. ADA Paratransit Areas by Phase



## Funding Opportunities

Mesa has several options to explore when looking to fund the transit recommendations identified in this chapter. Funding is available at various levels, including federal sources, the State of Arizona, regional funding from MAG, and local sources.

### Federal Sources

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) distributes annual formula grants to transit agencies and maintains a host of discretionary funding programs. These programs are competitive and eligible applicants (such as transit agencies or local governments) submit applications to receive funding for local projects. Key federal funding programs include:

- 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grants
- 5309 Capital Investment Grants (CIG)
- 5337 State of Good Repair Formula Program
- 5339(a) Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Program
- 5339(b) Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Program
- 5339(c) Low or No Emission Vehicle Program
- Congressional Member Designated Projects
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)

When considering potential federal funding opportunities, carefully reviewing the associated federal requirements is crucial. The FTA provides detailed requirements for each program in both the published Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) as well as in its [Circulars](#).

### State Sources

Two main sources of funding are available at the state level—the Arizona Lottery and funds from the Vehicle License Tax (VLT). A portion of proceeds from Arizona Lottery ticket sales are placed in

the Arizona Lottery Fund (ALF) for transit. Up to \$23 million may be deposited into the ALF each FY. This funding is distributed by the Arizona Department of Transportation to counties, cities, and towns to maintain and improve their public transportation programs. Funding is distributed proportionally by population with a minimum amount of \$10,000. Municipalities with more than 300,000 residents, like Mesa, must use these funds for mass transit. According to the approved FY 24 budget, Valley Metro received approximately \$11.2 million in ALF funding for FY 2023 and FY 2024.

### Regional Sources

Regional funding is a key funding source for Valley Metro transit operations, including transit routes operating within Mesa. Prop 400, a 20-year voter approved sales tax, replaced Prop 300 when the original provision expired and extended this half-cent tax. Revenue from Prop 400 is intended to fund freeways/highways, arterial streets, and transit. Of this revenue, 33.30 percent is used to fund the Public Transportation Fund (PTF), which supports capital expenditures, maintenance work, and regular operations. PTF dollars are allocated through the Transit Life Cycle Program (TLCP), which is updated annually by Valley Metro. Non-rail transit funds, which include regional local bus routes, Express bus routes, and ADA Paratransit, are distributed based on jurisdictional equity to its member cities. Over the life of Prop 400, Mesa will receive just under \$300 million.

Prop 400 expires December 31, 2025. Further extension of the regional tax will be put to local voters for approval during the November 2024 election cycle. In planning for a potential extension of this funding source, MAG has developed an updated framework to guide regional transit funding.

### Local Sources

The City of Mesa also supports local transit operations from the general fund and does not have a dedicated transit-specific tax.



# CONCLUSION

This document was developed to direct future investment in the City of Mesa's transit network. The planning process was guided by the Mesa Public Transit Department's vision for a reliable, productive, and well-connected multimodal transit system that fosters economic growth, diversity, and inclusiveness for the City of Mesa.

It is the culmination of extensive community engagement that took place over the course of two years, from stakeholder outreach to public surveys and community events. The recommendations outlined here are aimed at bridging gaps in the existing system and addressing anticipated future needs to best serve Mesa residents.

The resulting Short-Term, Mid-Term, and Long-Term plans were designed to meet these needs through service improvements, extensions and modifications, and new services. New modes have been envisioned for Mesa, including streetcar and emerging technologies. Implementing the changes detailed here will require capital and operating investments. To this end, funding opportunities have been identified for potential pursuits to fund additional services and infrastructure. Enacting recommendations presented in the Transit Master Plan plays an important role in making strides to fulfill the City's vision for transit in Mesa.



Source: City of Mesa

