

COUNCIL MINUTES

February 21, 2019

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on February 21, 2019 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

John Giles
Mark Freeman
Jennifer Duff
Francisco Heredia
Kevin Thompson
Jeremy Whittaker

COUNCIL ABSENT

David Luna

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Dee Ann Mickelsen
Jim Smith

Mayor Giles excused Councilmember Luna from the entire meeting.

1. Review items on the agenda for the February 25, 2019 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflict of interest: 6-d (Councilmembers Heredia and Thompson)

Items removed from the consent agenda: 6-d

In response to a question posed by Vice Mayor Freeman regarding agenda item 6-e (**Approving and authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Fourth Amendment to the Development Agreement and a Second Amendment to License Agreement with Palladium Grid, LLC, to modify certain compliance dates and replace the requirement for construction of a new parking structure with a requirement for development of a courtyard with resident amenities, and place additional requirements on the Developer on the use of the City-owned Pomeroy parking garage, all of which will facilitate the development of the City-owned property generally located at the southwest corner of Main Street and South Pomeroy and 34 South Pomeroy; the development commonly known as The GRID. (District 4)**) Downtown Transformation Manager Jeff McVay explained the City has placed a hold on the developer's permits until proof of financing has been provided. He added the developer has signed a financing agreement and it is anticipated that funding will be available in the next week. He advised no construction will begin until the project is fully funded.

City Manager Christopher Brady commented discussions will continue with the developer on the amenities and architectural features to ensure the quality of the project meets the expectations of Council and is completed as it was presented to staff.

2-a. Hear a presentation, discuss, and provide direction on the proposed realignment of the paratransit service area.

Transit Service Director Jodi Sorrell displayed a PowerPoint presentation. **(See Attachment 1)**

Ms. Sorrell advised the proposed changes are being introduced because the current system in place is not sustainable and the cost for Paratransit is continuing to increase. She explained the City's contract with Valley Metro increased from \$3.8 million to \$5.3 million for FY2019, therefore the estimated cost per trip will increase for FY2020. (See Page 3 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Sorrell detailed the outreach efforts completed by staff to educate residents on the proposed changes. She reported 75 individuals attended the public meetings and 90 comments were submitted. She stated the comments received were questions regarding the RideChoice program, as well as complaints and concerns about the proposed changes. (See Page 8 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Sorrell explained the difference between the RideChoice Program and Paratransit:

<u>RideChoice</u>	<u>Paratransit</u>
24/7 service	Available between 4:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m.
No advance reservation required	24-hour advance reservation required
No shared ride	Shared ride service
Lyft, taxicab and accessible vehicles	Accessible vans
\$3 for first eight miles; \$2 per-mile after	\$4 per trip fare

Ms. Sorrell commented that in December 2018 Lyft was added as a source of transportation for RideChoice and since that time over 50% of the trips taken have been through Lyft.

Ms. Sorrell stated seven other entities in the valley participate in the RideChoice program and all entities agreed that an eight-mile trip is an appropriate service area as the current average trip is 8 ½ miles.

Ms. Sorrell advised a common complaint received from residents was the need to take RideChoice in order to get into the service area of Paratransit. She added, although the transfer is not convenient, the passenger gets to pick where the transfer occurs and can choose a location that is safe and comfortable.

In response to questions posed by Councilmember Whittaker, Ms. Sorrell explained disabled individuals over the age of 65 currently qualify to use RideChoice. She advised the proposed change is to have a mandatory requirement that individuals that wish to use RideChoice must be ADA certified. She added approximately 400 residents that currently use RideChoice are not ADA certified and will need to become ADA certified in order to use RideChoice in the future. She noted the City supplements a bus pass to all individuals who are ADA certified, which allows the user multiple options for transit.

Discussion ensued relating to the contract renegotiation between Valley Metro and the Paratransit provider.

In response to a question posed by Vice Mayor Freeman, Ms. Sorrell advised the 15% of individuals affected by the proposed change are those that live outside of the Paratransit service area and would need to take RideChoice into the service area.

City Manager Christopher Brady clarified that individuals living outside of the Paratransit service area can also use RideChoice for their entire trip and not transfer to Paratransit. He added the model is setup to anticipate that individuals will travel within City limits and within an eight- or ten-mile range.

Ms. Sorrell noted the RideChoice program allows for individuals to use the service for 10 one-way trips a month and 50 one-way trips a month for work, school, or medical appointments. She reported 90% of the individuals using Paratransit do so to get to work, school, and/or medical appointments.

In response to a question posed by Councilmember Whittaker, Ms. Sorrell advised it costs the City approximately \$18 to \$20 a trip on Paratransit.

Councilmember Thompson expressed concern for the residents living in District 6 who would be outside of the service area for Paratransit. He explained those residents would need to take RideChoice to the Paratransit service area and would not be convenient.

Mr. Brady advised staff will be available to assist residents in locating transfer points and how to schedule a ride on Paratransit.

Discussion ensued relating to possibly extending the Paratransit service area.

In response to a question posed by Councilmember Heredia, Ms. Sorrell advised most cities that offer Paratransit service already adhere to the Federal requirement and offer a service area of a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile boundary. She added Chandler and Gilbert currently offer Paratransit city-wide, but are considering aligning their Paratransit service area to the Federal mandate. She commented that Phoenix will be making significant changes to their Paratransit service area as well.

Mary Hardle, a Mesa resident, advised it is difficult to use local cab companies to receive rides due to the fact the cab industry is decreasing. She advised her church will no longer be in the service area for Paratransit and she would need to use RideChoice. She described the issues she has had with Lyft drivers in the past and stated RideChoice is not dependable. She noted the map that was sent to those that use RideChoice and Paratransit is not accessible to blind/visually impaired individuals and suggested a written explanation of the changes be available. She questioned how the City will use the money that is saved by cutting the service area for Paratransit.

Mr. Brady clarified that the City will not be saving money by transitioning the Paratransit service area to the Federal mandated boundaries. He advised if the City chose to continue with the same model the cost would increase and other services that the City offers would need to be cut and/or not funded.

Ms. Sorrell advised staff will work with Ms. Hardle to ensure she can get to church, and staff will discuss the reliability concerns with RideChoice. She added staff will check the Valley Metro website to make sure the necessary information concerning the proposed changes is accessible for everyone.

Councilmember Thompson requested staff speak with Lyft to ensure vulnerable individuals are being taken care of properly while using their service as a RideChoice option.

In response to a question posed by Councilmember Heredia, Ms. Sorrell advised Paratransit drivers receive job-related training regarding their responsibilities for serving all passengers, including individuals with disabilities and seniors. She advised RideChoice is not a Federally mandated program therefore it is not required for the drivers to receive training.

Connie Ryan, a Mesa resident, advised she does not travel outside of Mesa often but is concerned for her friends and neighbors who will have a hard time commuting due to the Paratransit realignment. She expressed frustration regarding how expensive it will be for individuals living outside of the Paratransit service area and the new added cost to get to work and around the City. She stated the opinion that the map on Valley Metro's website is confusing and hoped additional information regarding the proposed changes will be provided for the visually impaired.

Angela Sarhaddi, a Mesa resident, explained she has been a frequent Paratransit rider for a long time and the proposed changes would affect many individuals. She stated the opinion that the changes should be studied further before implemented and requested Council postpone changing the Paratransit service area until next year. She expressed her disappointment in the service Lyft provides and advised drivers for Lyft are not trained properly to assist individuals with developmental disabilities. She noted the cost for her to use Paratransit and RideChoice will increase from \$4 a day to \$15 a day. She hoped staff will continue to educate and help individuals with the transition process.

In response to a question posed by Councilmember Whittaker, Ms. Sarhaddi stated it would be beneficial if there was no service area restriction and the allotment of 50 one-way trips a month was eliminated.

In response to a question posed by Councilmember Whittaker, Ms. Sorrell explained if the City chose to extend the RideChoice service area past the designated eight miles the seven other entities that participate in the program would have to agree with the decision before it could be implemented.

Discussion ensued relating to the cost impact if the City chose to postpone the proposed Paratransit service area changes.

Danielle Jones, a Mesa resident, expressed concern for students that travel from Mesa to the two training centers for the blind located in Phoenix and the cost impact to use Paratransit because of the proposed changes. She advised individuals that are visually impaired will have a difficult time at transfer points as there is a risk of getting lost and needing further assistance.

Marcia Schmit, a Mesa resident, advised she relies on Paratransit to commute to her job and is concerned the regional option will no longer be available in the future. She stated in the past, while using RideChoice, she has sat at a transfer point for 2 ½ hours and described the service as unreliable. She highlighted the safety concerns associated with disabled individuals using RideChoice and public transportation. She expressed concern regarding the proposed cost increase to disabled individuals that will need to use RideChoice and/or Paratransit to get around the City.

Ms. Sorrell assured Ms. Schmit that the regional service option will continue to be offered in Mesa and staff will assist Ms. Schmit in finding the best option to get to her place of employment.

Mr. Brady reiterated that the proposed changes would not take effect until July 2019, which will allow time for staff to assist the community and prepare for the changes.

In response to a question posed by Mayor Giles, Ms. Sorrell advised Lyft does provide some training to their drivers, however staff will follow-up with the vendor. She added it is imperative that individuals notify Valley Metro or City staff when issues arise while using public transportation.

Mayor Giles recognized the inconvenience the new changes will impose on some individuals in the City but agreed that it is necessary as the current model is no longer sustainable. He pointed out the many transit options available to disabled individuals and stated staff will assist to ensure all community members understand the Paratransit realignment. He requested staff update Council on the progress of assisting residents.

Councilmember Thompson and Vice Mayor Freeman agreed with Mayor Giles on implementing the proposed changes and requested staff continue to work with the ADA community.

Councilmember Whittaker requested statistics be provided to Council regarding the time it takes for RideChoice to pick up a passenger after a ride has been requested.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Heredia, that staff's recommendations be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Giles-Freeman-Duff-Heredia-Thompson-Whittaker

NAYES - None

ABSENT - Luna

Mayor Giles declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

Mayor Giles thanked staff for the presentation.

2-b. Hear a presentation, discuss, and provide direction on an update of staff recommendations for regulating shared active transportation vehicles (commercially-rented bicycles, scooters, etc., with self-contained locking mechanisms.)

This presentation was continued to the February 25, 2019 Study Session.

3. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

Councilmember Thompson: Cactus League Luncheon

Vice Mayor Freeman: Queen Creek State of the Town Address

4. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that the schedule of meetings is as follows:

Monday, February 25, 2019, 5:00 p.m. – Study Session

Monday, February 25, 2019, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:23 a.m.

JOHN GILES, MAYOR

ATTEST:

DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 21st day of February, 2019. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

mh
(Attachments – 1)

Change to ADA Paratransit Service Area in Mesa

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

FEBRUARY 21, 2019



Purpose

Align Mesa's ADA paratransit service area to the Federal mandate – $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from local bus and light rail lines

July 1, 2019 implementation

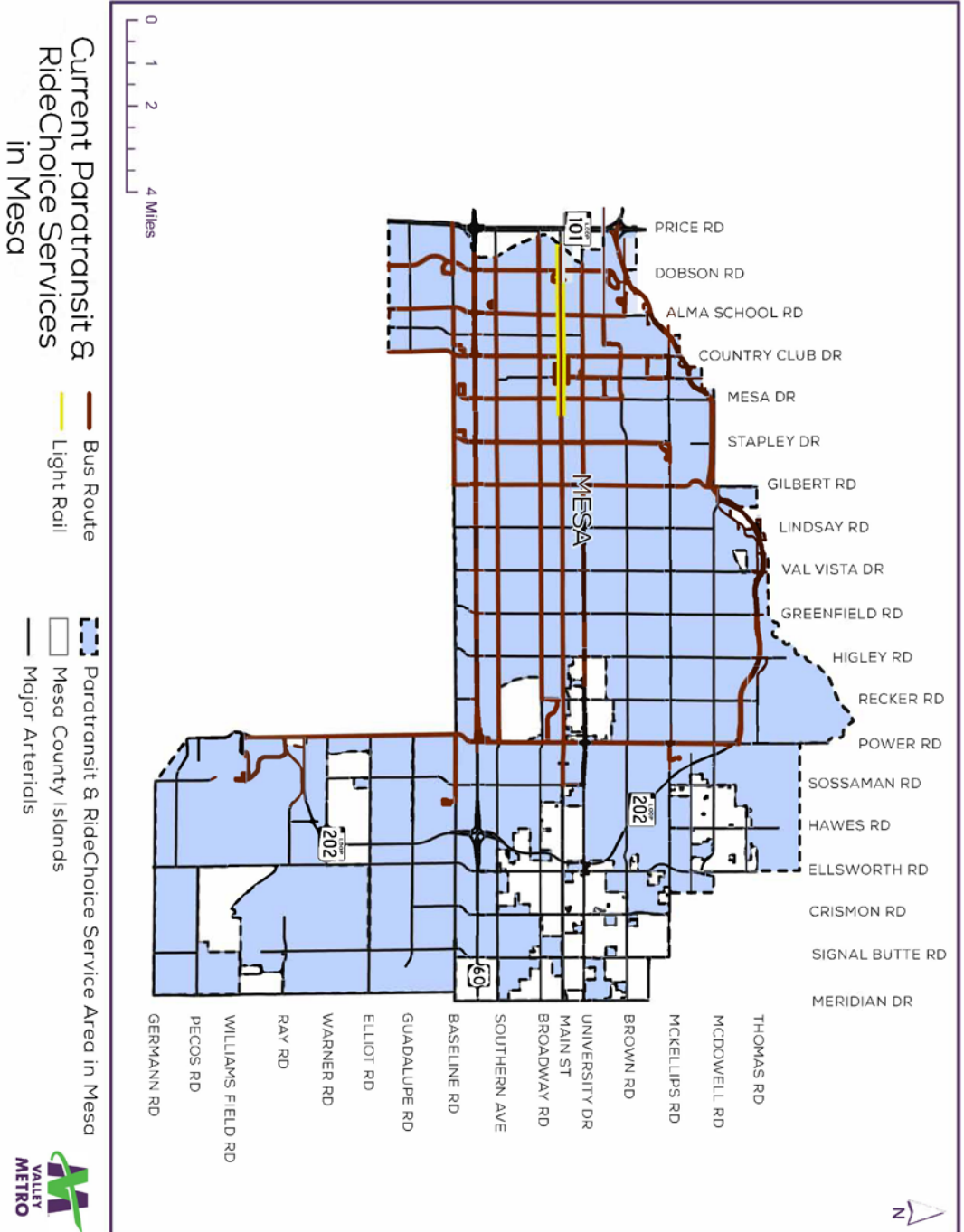


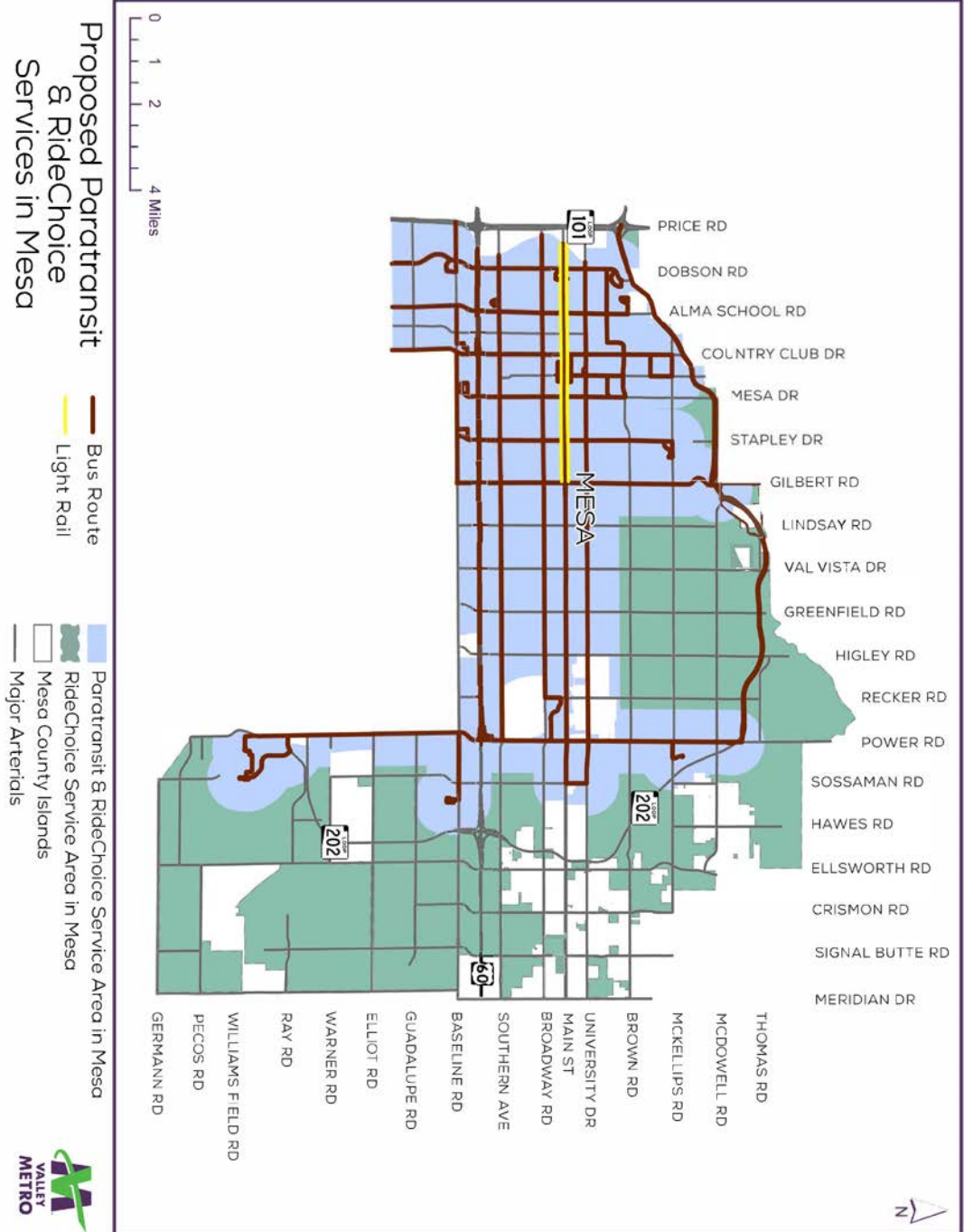
Why

To ensure the long-term sustainability of transit services including paratransit

In January Valley Metro increased FY19 our paratransit estimate \$1.3M due to necessary contract negotiations with the paratransit provider.

Our FY19 estimated cost/trip is \$46/trip and in FY20 our estimated cost/trip increases to \$48/trip







Impact

No current customer will be left stranded
85% of the current customers experience no change

All ADA certified customers will continue to have access to paratransit for trips that begin and end within the federally-mandated ADA paratransit service area

All ADA paratransit certified residents of Mesa will have access to Valley Metro RideChoice



By the Numbers

(FY18)

ADA Certified

3,990

ADA Certified outside area

584

Unique paratransit users/year

2,000 +/-

Average paratransit trips/mo
6.7

RideChoice Users

1,009

RideChoice Users outside area

88

Average RideChoice trips/mo

2.5

7



Summary of Outreach Efforts

- Letters to customers
- Flyers distributed on vehicles
- Telephone calls to affected customers
- Visits to high frequency destinations
- Presentations to Advisory Boards
- Project webpage with comment form
- Community outreach meetings
- Comments accepted in person, via phone, mail, and online



Addressing Customer

Concerns

No current customer will be left stranded

All customers eligible for RideChoice

- 24/7 service
- Lyft, taxicabs and WC accessible vans
- No advanced reservation or shared ride requirements
- \$3 for up to eight-mile trip; \$2 per-mile after
- Can transfer to ADA paratransit



Next Steps

Ongoing:

- Paratransit and RideChoice eligibility
- Trip planning
- Continued community/stakeholder outreach
- Letters, calls, on-hold messages and flyers
- Additional assistance
 - One-on-one
 - Identification of safe transfer locations

July 1, 2019 – Service change implementation