

## Transit Evolution Continues

Government, like nature, is most successful when it adapts to changing conditions. NAIPTA, the regional transportation authority which runs the nationally recognized, award-winning Mountain Line transit system, is dividing and multiplying in the Verde Valley. This change signals both the value of public transportation in getting people where they want to go and the value of local government partnerships in delivering services in a progressive and cost-effective manner.

Following 6 years of building and overhauling transit systems in the Verde Valley, including the new Verde Lynx commuter express route which moves workers from Cottonwood to Sedona, local cities are moving towards forming their own transit authority modeled on NAIPTA's success, but with a more local flare. According to the Sedona City Manager in a January 10 report to Sedona City Council, "Implementation of a Regional Transportation Authority is a concept with many potential benefits on the local level pertaining to levels of efficiency. At the December 2011 Mayors and Managers meeting there was unanimous support to create a Verde Valley Authority". Simply put, the Verde Valley has a bright transportation and economic development future, and its tools, like Flagstaff's, are maturing and growing in sophistication.

Since NAIPTA's inception, Mountain Line has brought more than \$18 million of federal funding to the Flagstaff area to erect buildings, construct transitways, build shelters, buy hybrid electric buses and meet our mission of "getting people where they want to go". While it is exciting to see Yavapai County and the Verde Valley communities chart their own cooperative public transportation future, the question "where does Flagstaff want to go" is as vital today as it was in 2006 when NAIPTA was originally formed. In those short six years Transit Ridership has grown from 500,000 annual trips to approximately 2,000,000. Gas prices have risen, the economy has struggled, and concerns about carbon emissions and dependence on imported oil have continued. NAIPTA services not only get people to work, school, medical care and shopping, they do so using an efficient and cooperative governance model that has not only proven its success, but is being replicated around the State.

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