

Yuma 2014 Transit Tax Initiative

Julie B. Eldridge, AICP

Transportation Planning and Public Outreach

DBE Certified Consultant



Revised Tax Research Schedule	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14
Task 1: Legal Process Information and Data Collection					
Task 2: Detailed Expenditure Plan					
Task 3: Four Piece Brochure and Proposed Ballot Language					
Task 4: Presentation to YCIPTA Board					
Task 5: Schedule and Conduct Stakeholder Interviews					
Task 6: Summary of Recommendations, Campaign Plan and Board Presentation					
 Indicates Travel Dates to Yuma					

Lessons Learned: Phoenix Transit 2000 Tax Campaign

- Community leaders need to be active in the campaign
- A coalition of cities leads the effort
- Extensive public outreach effort builds support
- A commitment is made to voters to fund specific projects
- Tax measures are rarely successful the first time out

Scope of Work

- Background research
- Legislation analysis and taxation options
- Develop transit investment scenarios
- Project descriptions and cost estimates
- Creation of a six page brochure and survey

Scope of Work

- Conduct key stakeholder interviews and a survey
- Analyze survey results and summarize interview comments
- Create a campaign plan and budget
- Create the “Commitment to Voters” information pamphlet and proposed ballot language

Campaign Questions:

- Is there support to pursue a transit tax increase at this time?
- What are the most pressing needs for service improvements?
- Are elected officials and business leaders willing to help actively campaign for the tax?
- What is the process to file for inclusion in a given election year's ballot?

What the transit tax would bring:

- Creation of a countywide excise tax just for transit improvements
- Replaces County and City/Town General Fund contributions to transit
- About \$2.5m per year (in \$2014) at the .10% tax rate
- A 45% expansion of transit service operating hours
- Local match for capital improvements
- About \$60m in revenue over 20 years (current \$)

Transit Capital Investment Projects

- 2 new multimodal transit centers in Yuma and San Luis
- 5-10 (depending on actual costs) Park and Ride Lots
- A new bus maintenance facility
- 50 new bus stops with bus pull-outs, shelters, benches, ADA compliant waiting areas, solar lighting, map case, information kiosks, sign poles, trash cans, etc.
- Additional passenger amenities at existing bus stops, including benches, shelters, connecting sidewalks

Transit Capital Investment Projects

- 15 bike lockers and/or bike racks at major bus stops
- One bicycle sharing facility (seed money for a for profit business)
- About \$1.0 million in transit equipment and security: electronic fare boxes, radios, smart card readers, computers, furniture, software, minor bus equipment, scheduling software and security cameras on buses, etc.

What we have learned

There is no legal authority for an Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (IPTA) in Yuma County to levy and collect a tax. This issue must be pursued again through the Arizona Legislature and passed before any progress can be made on the transit funding issue.

What we have learned

Yuma County's privilege tax is lower than allowed by statute, and lowest among other Arizona Counties, so there is room to add a transit dedicated tax.

What we have learned

Alternative funding strategies, such as creation of a Regional Transportation Authority, establishing a local option gas tax, or pass-through funding to YCIPTA from local governments all have challenges associated with them that will require additional research and lobbying of law makers to achieve.

What we have learned

The survey respondents overwhelmingly stated that transit improvements are not the top priority in Yuma County right now.

Of the transportation needs listed, nearly all respondents said that expanding and widening roads was the top priority, and two write-in comments reflected a need for more road maintenance.

What we have learned

The overall perception is that YCIPTA is doing a good to excellent job of providing transit service (63% combined percentage). Only 23% said they were doing a fair job, and nobody said they were doing a poor job. 13% of respondents said they were not sure or didn't have enough information.

What we have learned

There is a high level of support for increased transit investment by social service agency staff whose clients rely on the bus for their basic travel needs. Many agency staff volunteered to assist with various tasks on the transit tax campaign effort.

What we have learned

Transit riders are generally not big voters in Yuma County:

- Hispanics
- Native Americans
- Senior “snowbirds”
- ADA community

What we have learned

Survey respondents said the top 3 needs for transit improvements were to expand basic service frequency and coverage:

1. increase the frequency of existing service
2. expand bus service to areas without service currently
3. expand service to seniors and the disabled

The #4 transit investment priority ?

“Add more bus benches and shelters”



What we have learned

More detailed site-specific cost estimates will be needed for the bus maintenance facility, intermodal centers and park and ride lots for property acquisition, facility design and construction, and a long-term facility maintenance budget.

Campaign Strategies

- Get started as early as 18 months prior to the planned election date
- Budget between \$200,000 and \$350,000
- Establish a 501(c)(4) organization to receive donations

Campaign Strategies

Promote the ways that the transit system supports a healthy economy by taking people to jobs, to school and to shopping, with images and messages:

“Yuma County Transit is an important part of a healthy Yuma economy”

Campaign
Message:

**“I take the bus
to work!”**



Campaign
Message:

**“I take the bus
to school!”**



Campaign Strategies

Include voter education that explains the dollar impact per person or per household per month of a .10% tax is recommended as part of the transit tax campaign messages.

Campaign Strategies

Conduct a “Get out the Vote” effort:

- Help bus riders get registered to vote in Yuma County.
- Pass out voter registration cards on the buses.
- Take transit dependent voters to the polls on election day.

Campaign Strategies

- Build a community support network
- Tap into volunteers and their networks
- Ask for donations
- Start a speakers' bureau to get the word out!

Any Questions?

