

Sun City Transit faces loss of funding, vehicles

Valley Metro preps for Dial-A-Ride merger

By **Rusty Bradshaw**
Independent Newspapers

Sun City Area Transit officials may face losing a third of their funding and all their vehicles unless they can make it up from community contributions.

The private nonprofit transit agency that serves Sun City, Youngtown and Sun City West receives 30 percent of its funding from government sources, mainly the Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority. However, RPTA officials are working to merge the nine individual Dial-A-Ride agencies in the West Valley into one larger organization.

"Right now these nine systems do not cross city boundaries," said Susan Tierney, Valley Metro spokeswoman. "The idea is to make it easier to go between communities."

She said RPTA officials were targeting Surprise, Peoria and El Mirage for the first round of mergers.

"We plan to merge all nine systems eventually," Ms. Tierney said. "But we're doing it a little bit at a time."

However, SCAT officials believe the merger will hamper its ability to operate without an infusion of additional cash, and it will force the agency to buy new vehicles. Bill Budlong, SCAT general manager, said buses now used by the agency were purchased with RPTA funds and technically belong to that agency.

"They (RPTA officials) have a variety of proposals and whoever gets it will get the

money," Mr. Budlong said. "All the vehicles belong to RPTA and will go back to them."

But SCAT officials have no intention of going out of business. Mr. Budlong believes even when the RPTA merges all the Dial-A-Rides there will still be unmet needs in Sun City.

"They only provide \$200,000 in funding to us, but we have a budget of \$600,000," he explained. "Only 20 percent of those needing them will get rides (under a merged Dial-A-Ride organization)."

Sun Cities Area Transit System has operated SCAT Dial-A-Ride since 1982.

Ms. Tierney also said the merged Dial-A-Ride program will be for Americans with Disabilities Act certified riders. That leaves many other SCAT customers who may not be ADA certified but use the service because they do not drive or have vehicles without service if SCAT cannot continue. That includes resident Dick Zambrano.

"I have relied on Dial-A-Ride for all of my services, from health care to groceries, etc., and since I need some type of transportation due to lack of a vehicle due to personal health issues, I do not want to lose this services," Mr. Zambrano stated in an e-mail.

He added he did not want SCAT merged with other agencies because each community has different demographics and specific needs.

While he does not use SCAT, Sun City resident Don Wade agrees.

"I doubt very much that a merger would benefit Sun City," he stated in an e-mail. "I think it would degrade the service now available."

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Ms. Tierney said communities targeted for merger would have other transportation options, but those would have to be funded by the communities. However, she said there would still be Prop 400 funds available for SCAT.

RPTA officials are in procurement for the planned merger and Ms. Tierney said for that reason they could not share much more information. She did say the project is being sent back out for bids a second time.

Mr. Budlong said SCAT receives about \$200,000 from the RPTA annually, but the Sun City service has an yearly budget of about \$600,000.

"If SCAT did not remain in business, RPTA would have only \$200,000 to provide to the contractor to service the Sun City area," he said. "That is not enough."

He added SCAT officials see advantages to the organization operating without RPTA funding.

"We would be free of government requirements and we could be more cost effective," he said.

As an example, he said vehicles SCAT might purchase to replace its existing buses would not have to include a number of features required of government-funded vehicles.

Mr. Budlong believes SCAT can raise the funds necessary to purchase new vehicles.

"We are in the middle of our annual fund

drive," he said. "We could get a fleet of vans for \$100,000."

Some residents are skeptical SCAT could survive long on community donations alone.

"As far as surviving on donations and local fares, I feel fairly confident they would fail within a year or two," resident Lucky Marr stated in an e-mail.

However, other residents disagree.

"It might be tough going, but I think SCAT would survive on community donations, especially if they could apply for some grants," Mr. Wade stated.

Marjorie Simons has not used the SCAT service but has contributed to it because she believes it is important to Sun City residents.

"I don't know if the SCAT can continue considering the present economical situation, but I would hope residents would donate to help their neighbors," she stated.

Resident Milton White, a SCAT board member about 10 years ago, said the biggest problem for the agency has always been finances, especially those gathered from the community.

"Hopefully, when the community sees the importance of financial support in keeping SCAT alive and well, money will be forthcoming," he stated.

Mr. White also believes a merged Dial-A-Ride system will not provide good service to riders.

"Unfortunately, I feel that a merged Dial-A-Ride service will become bogged down in its bureaucracy and will not function efficiently as one expects from SCAT," he stated. "I envision delays both in pick-up and delivery."

Resident Rick Gray believes there are opportunities for SCAT and a merged Dial-A-Ride service to coexist.

"I think there is a role for the new system for regional service, but SCAT is high quality and yet very reasonably priced," he stated in an e-mail. "Perhaps there is a role for both services working together. One takes care of the trips to other Valley communities and SCAT continues to provide the majority of the trips which are local trips."

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

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Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City Area Transit driver Pat Fisher, right, helps Marian Rizzo onto the handicapped lift as a second SCAT bus prepares to pick up more residents at Olive Branch Senior Center, 11250 N. 107th Ave. The nonprofit community transport agency will cease operation Dec. 31.

End of the Ride: SCAT quits

Loss of funding dooms
Sun City transit agency

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

The wheels on the Sun City Area Transit bus will not be going round and round all around the town after Dec. 31.

The community transportation agency's board of directors announced last week it will cease operation at month's end. The agency was also restricted since Dec. 6 in the type of passengers it could take, accord-

New Providers

Discount Cab - 602-200-2000

Valley Metro - 602-253-5000

ing to Judy Beeson, SCAT board president.

"We will only be able to provide rides to qualified ADA passengers traveling in the ADA zone, patients going to dialysis (including Saturdays) and the people that are already scheduled for medical appointments," she said.

The restriction is because of the existing contract between SCAT and Valley Metro's

Regional Public Transportation Authority, which will terminate at the end of December. That is also when funding from RPTA will cease going to SCAT and instead go to Total Transit, now contracted by RPTA to provide Dial-a-Ride services to ADA-qualified passengers.

RPTA contracted with Total Transit to operate the West Valley Dial-a-Ride services in nearly all West Valley communities along Route 106, the Peoria Avenue rural route, according to Carol Ketcherside, Valley Metro planning director during an Oct. 28 meet-

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ing at Olive Branch Senior Center, 11250 N. 107th Ave. The service will be available for residents qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act who live within three-quarters of a mile from Route 106. The consolidated services began Nov. 1 in all areas except Sun City. Previously, several different agencies, including municipalities, provided the dial-a-ride services, with SCAT serving as provider in Sun City.

Combining those services is the first step in creating a Valleywide consolidated service, according to Ms. Ketcherside.

"This system will provide service across jurisdictional boundaries without the need of transfers," she explained. "We have a long way to go, but the contract with Total Transit is the first step."

The closure of SCAT was described as a disaster by Marv Worthen, Sun City Taxpayers Association executive director. He believes the new service, cars provided through Discount Cab rather than buses, will neither be as comfortable nor does he believe Discount Cab drivers have the proper training to handle elder and disabled residents.

"The cab drivers are not trained to work with regular seniors or ADA seniors. Many of our seniors are unable to move as quickly as may be required by a nonunderstanding cab driver," he stated in an e-mail. "I am also concerned with the cab company screening techniques."

He also said the ADA nature of the dial-a-ride service eliminated transportation opportunities for residents living north of the Route 106 limits. He also stated the new service will put an additional strain on senior budgets.

"Several people a week arrive at the SCTA Office on Coggins Drive by using SCAT," he explained. "It is expensive for them to use this service now, but will undoubtedly become much more expensive in the future without SCAT."

Sun City resident Dick Zambrano stated in an e-mail the change to the new service will create inconveniences for residents that will hurt their quality of life. He is concerned trips outside of medical will not be available, that reservations will not be taken for doctor appointment trips and there will be longer waits for transportation.

"The vans could carry 4-6 passengers at one time where the cabs may carry no more than two if they are small in size," he stated. "It does not sound like a good proposition for anyone who has to use this service."

He stated he was not looking forward to the coming year and would do everything possible to find other means of transportation around the community.

Some residents believe the RPTA's plans to combine dial-a-ride services is an attempt to monopolize a service.

"This is another painful example of how low on the totem pole senior citizens are in these recession times," Sun City resident Thomas Stolt stated in an e-mail. "Services are reduced, for those who truly need and use them, to benefit city governments and private corporations as budget consideration."

Mr. Worthen agrees, claiming it is the work of a group from Phoenix being able to usurp money to carry on a program he believes has little chance of succeeding. He believes Sun City residents should revisit their charitable giving.

"It is time for Sun City to wake up — no one from Phoenix is sending contributions to our Sun City service organizations, but the Sun City residents send bundles of cash to the Phoenix organizations," he stated. "Sun City may be a 'City of Volunteers,'

but it we have no places left to volunteer it doesn't help much."

Ms. Beeson said SCAT will face a shortfall of about \$15,000 by the end of the month. However, she suspects that figure will be higher as people learn of the agency's impending demise and contributions will decline rapidly. That already began when Recreation Centers of Sun City officials, who had selected SCAT as beneficiary of its holiday giving, changed the beneficiary to Sunshine Services.

SCAT officials conducted a series of cost-saving measures over the last two years, including reducing paid staff salaries by 25 percent last year and laying off some staff in July. But the cuts were not enough to overcome declines in ridership and the loss of RPTA funding, according to Ms. Beeson.

"Over the years there just wasn't enough community support," she said. "And part of it is the economy, too."

Ms. Beeson said Discount Cab increased its fleet vehicle fleet in Sun City and Youngtown to handle the transportation needs throughout the community, either as an ADA or regular passenger.

"SCAT has done everything humanly possible to avoid this," she said. "We were aggressive in our marketing and public relations efforts, contacted local businesses and medical offices either by letter or personal visits, engaged in a fundraising campaign, had an open house in November to acquaint more of the public about SCAT, sold raffle tickets, laid off three employees in November, etc. The list goes on and on."

Some residents at the Oct. 28 meeting were not satisfied with service provided by the cab company. Ms. Beeson said during her time as a volunteer at Banner Boswell Memorial Hospital they experienced wait times of multiple hours.

"And sometimes they did not show up at all," she said.

However, another woman said she used the Discount Cab regularly and never experienced such problems. Resident Bob Kent, Faith Presbyterian Church administration and finance committee, stated in an e-mail last week he uses Discount Cab through the church to transport some members to services on Sundays and the service has been adequate with few miscues.

"We have to call them by Friday afternoon with pickup instructions, and they bill the Church directly," Mr. Kent explained. "SCAT discontinued this service in 2009."

Jerry Iannacci, a Homeland Security advisor who facilitated the Oct. 28 Sun City meeting, said transit officials will talk with Discount Cab leadership and solve any service problems. Mr. Wright said service problems can be dealt with through the detailed and defined contract with Discount Cab.

"If we get into situations where we have data, we can address this through," he said.

Mr. Wright added Discount Cab drivers go through rigorous training for assisting disabled people.

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com

SCAT to replace entire fleet

Board works to tighten operation

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Sun City Area Transit officials will replace their entire fleet of buses.

The agency's board of directors, which struggled with compliance and financial issues in 2008, is working to build a leaner, more efficient transportation system for area residents. The

bus fleet replacement is a part of that effort, according to Peter Davis, SCAT board president.

The agency officials expect to have six 2009 gas-powered E450s by February's end and another three by July, according to Vern Long, SCAT operations manager. The new vehicles will replace an aging fleet, several with more than 100,000 miles, he added.

Vehicle purchases will come at no cost to SCAT, as they will be funded through federal trans-

What fundraising options should SCAT officials explore?

portation grants, according to Mr. Davis.

"But the new vehicles will cost us more to insure," Mr. Davis said. "It will be about \$2,000 more per month."

SCAT board and management

What do you think?

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are working to improve customer services while keeping costs down. The agency had about a \$15,000 cash loss by Dec. 31, 2008, Mr. Davis reported in the Jan. 21 SCAT quarterly board meeting.

"I anticipate that we will have a cash loss at the end of this year as well," he said. "It is hard to turn it around in this economy."

However, the loss is expected to be less due to less spending and better scheduling of bus trips, according to Mr. Davis.

"Our spending was higher than normal in the second quarter of last year because we were dealing with the non-compliance issues," he said.

Those issues have been re-

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solved. None of the existing SCAT vehicles has a violation, according to Mr. Long. Officials established a maintenance program designed to spot problems and immediately correct them to avoid potential problems with federal transportation compliance in the future, he added.

SCAT officials are looking to a leaner operation in other ways. Executive Director Cheryl Holgate resigned last year and the board did not fill the vacant position. Instead, Mr. Long was employed as operations manager and Mr. Davis

and Tom Profico, another board member, are handling other executive director duties. SCAT has also gone to using more part-time and flexible hours employees to cut down on overhead, according to Mr. Davis.

Officials are also looking to new avenues for additional revenue to supplement rider fees. They will be the beneficiary of a \$20,000 private source grant through the help of the Piper Charitable Trust.

"But we won't get those funds until near the end of the year," Mr. Davis said.

SCAT suffered loss of riders early last year after announcing a rate increase, but ridership has

steadily increased since then, according to Mr. Long. SCAT buses averaged 105 riders per day in the second week of January and Mr. Long anticipated that would increase to about 114 in the third week.

The SCAT newsletter has been restarted for donors and officials established a donor database.

"We're trying to tell people what we are doing and how we are doing it," Mr. Davis said.

A weekly Saturday trip to Walmart was also established and officials are researching the possibility of regular trips to Trader Joe's in Surprise, according to Mr. Long. SCAT buses also take passengers to Basha's and Fry's

grocery stores 10 a.m.-3 p.m. five days a week, he added.

Board Member Kathy Stroy also suggested looking into a trip to Arrowhead Towne Center. Mr. Long said that trip could be problematic because of the size of the mall and the difficulty in finding a good dropoff and pickup point.

"Talk to mall officials because they have a merchants services program and will help set up those locations," Ms. Stroy said.

Mr. Long reported SCAT picks up six residents in the Peoria Transit district for transport to the Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun Cty. Ms. Stroy said she was disturbed by that decision.

"The board had looked at that

before and said no," she said.

However, Mr. Long said it was conducted on a two-week trial basis for those six riders only.

"We'll talk with the Peoria Transit people to see how we can continue the service and make a decision about extension at a later date," he said.

The board unanimously approved the trial period and gave its executive committee the authority to extend it. However, Mr. Long stressed it was for the designated six riders only and would never be increased, and as those six riders no longer need the service it will decrease and eventually be discontinued.

Previously, Peoria Transit took the six riders to the SCAT facility and a SCAT vehicle took them to the senior center. That necessitated the riders waiting up to an hour at the SCAT facility for transportation, according to Mr. Davis.

"And by Peoria dropping them

off at our facility, we were not able to collect the \$14.71 per passenger," he added.

While Peoria Transit officials may be upset at losing the revenue if the SCAT program is continued, Mr. Davis said he would be open to splitting the fare revenue for that program with them.

"Providing that service helps our revenue and it provides better customer service," Mr. Davis said.

Mr. Long tightened the SCAT bus schedules to help cut down on mileage and fuel usage. The rescheduling trimmed 2,000 miles from SCAT's monthly mileage, Mr. Davis said.

"But we'll have to be ready for real tight scheduling if gasoline goes over \$3 per gallon," he added.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. Sun Cities News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

Transit

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by a grant, were delivered in March. Another three vans were originally part of the purchase plan, but that did not come to fruition, according to Vern Long, SCAT maintenance director. He said tax revenues came in lower than projected and funds were not available through the federal grants, administered by RPTA, in sufficient amounts to get the additional vehicles.

But SCAT officials did get two more vehicles after the Maricopa County Special Transportation Services ended operations June 30. Mr. Long said two 2008 nine-passenger diesel vans were purchased from the defunct STS fleet.

"The only thing with these vehicles is the wheelchair door is on the passenger side in the rear and clearance is lower," Mr. Long

said. "But with a little training we will be fine."

SCAT had not received the vehicles by last week, as officials were waiting for Phoenix to release them.

"Both vehicles have less than 30,000 miles on them and are still under warranty," Mr. Long said.

SCAT ridership is down again this year and Mr. Long said the struggling economy and the triple-digit temperatures are factors. He said ridership is expected to increase in the fall when the winter visitors begin to return.

SCAT riders also have new features to utilize. Buses have been making Saturday trips to the Wal-Mart at 83rd Avenue and Union Hills Drive and the excursions have been popular.

"The buses are full on those trips and we have a waiting list," said Mary-Jane Gibson, SCAT board secretary.

Mr. Long said SCAT officials have so much interest in the trips — called seniors day out — they are ready to add a second vehicle.

In addition, SCAT officials were approached by Youngtown officials about providing service to town residents.

"They will buy tickets and distribute them to passengers," Mr. Long said.

However, that program has not yet been finalized, he added.

SCAT drivers are also extending their efforts for passengers, according to Tom Profico, who was elected board president at the July 22 meeting.

"The drivers are now asking passengers if there is anywhere else they want to go before they go home," he said.

SCAT officials continue their fund-raising efforts as driver Mike King took the added responsibility of serving as the agency's development coordinator. He has been can-

vassing businesses and service clubs for donations but found little success during the summer.

"They say this is not a good time," he said.

Mr. King said he was prohibited from soliciting for donations at Recreation Centers of Sun City meetings.

"So now I am concentrating on grants," he said. "I attended a meeting with the Virginia Piper Trust and got to meet a lot of people and picked up a lot of tips about applying for grants."

SCAT officials also added a Web site to their offerings. Visit www.scatdialaride.net.

Other SCAT board officers elected during the July 22 meeting were Alice Bradshaw, vice president, and Tim Ayres, second vice president and ombudsman.

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Sun City transit levels out

2 more vehicles added to SCAT bus fleet

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Sun City Area Transit continues to bounce back from a rough financial year in 2008.

The nonprofit agency provides bus service within the Sun City area with seven passenger vans and two in reserve. The SCAT board of directors approved a 2009-10 budget that is designed to break even and may even allow man-

agement to begin building a reserve, according to Pete Davis,

who served as board president until the July 22 quarterly meeting.

"We should be on a level basis within the first two months of operation in the 2009-10 fiscal year," Mr. Davis said.

SCAT officials also negotiated a new five-year contract with the Regional Public Transportation Agency, which provides some revenue for SCAT. It is expected to be approved by RPTA officials in their Sept. 17 meeting.

"Right now we are operating on faith with RPTA," Mr. Davis said. "But I have been assured we will not be denied."

Additional fund-raising and a more efficient operation helped SCAT climb out of a financial hole created last year when ridership dropped following a rate increase. The Sun City area bus service also cleaned up non-compliance issues with RPTA. SCAT was notified in September 2008 it was not in compliance in several areas, but most of those were resolved with new passenger vans.

Six 2009 gas-powered E450s vans, funded

Related Link

www.scatdialaride.net

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SCAT FACTS

YOU ARE ENTITLED TO KNOW THE FACTS

VOLUNTEERS Officers, Board, and office volunteers living in local areas.

AREA SERVICE AREA oriented to service the Sun CITIES, Youngtown and RPTA passengers.

VEHICLES Fleet of 9 vehicles, UMTA provided 80% of cost of 4; RPTA bought 4; and SCAT bought 1. SCAT, with RPTA and UMTA assistance, will obtain 3 vehicles annually for replacements or additions to fleet. Each passenger is #1 regardless of address.

EQUAL SERVICE Required for FY90 (July '89 - June '90). "EST" distributions; Sun City 51,800 rides; Sun City West 9,800 rides; Youngtown 4,200 rides; and RPTA route 106 transfers and fringe areas 4,200 rides.

70,000 RIDES YOUR DONATIONS Last year FY89 you donated \$96,351. SEED grew to \$500,200 but SCAT had to use \$26,000 of reserves to cover operations and capital costs.

SEED MONEY RPTA provides funds on a matching basis for SCAT's extension of regional bus No. 106 service throughout SCAT's service area. UMTA reimburses SCAT for about one-eighth of its operating expenses and provides an 80/20 MATCH on Capital Expenses.

MATCHING \$'s FY90 Budget - operations \$463,000 and capital \$92,000. RPTA is providing \$175,000; UMTA will provide \$133,500; fares will amount to \$105,000; and other income \$6,500. SCAT must raise \$135,000 in local contributions to cover remaining budgeted expenses and assure the MATCHING RPTA and UMTA funds.

\$555,000

YOUR DONATION IS VITAL!

SCAT - Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc. (LOCAL)
 RPTA - Regional Public Transportation Authority (STATE)
 UMTA - Urban Mass Transportation Administration (FEDERAL)



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 SCAT-RPTA CONNECTION

SUN CITIES AREA
 TRANSIT SYSTEM, INC.

P.O. BOX 1972
 SUN CITY, AZ 85372

977-8363

WHAT IS SCAT?

SCAT is a professionally managed non-profit, charitable organization. About 25% of the operating cost is from fares. Additional financial needs are met by individuals, non-profit organizations and businesses plus some matching funds from the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA).

CAN EVERYONE RIDE SCAT?

SCAT is a public transit company that gives special consideration to seniors, the disabled and wheelchair passengers. However, SCAT is not an ambulance service nor can our drivers be responsible for mentally confused individuals.

SCAT BELIEVES IN CLEAN AIR!

SCAT is a clean-air advocate . . . SCAT's prime fuel is CNG. Using compressed natural gas (CNG), vehicle pollution of carbon-monoxide is 1/7 of gasoline users.

WHO RIDES SCAT?

SCAT projects 70,000 passengers during the fiscal year of July 1989 to June 1990.

SCAT IS A

PEOPLE MOVER

BUY YOUR TICKETS IN ADVANCE!

Everybody can help improve SCAT service . . . drivers, dispatchers, office workers, maintenance folks . . . and SCAT passengers, too!

You can help by having the EXACT CHANGE ready - or better still; buy tickets in advance and save yourself all that wallet and handbag shuffling when you come aboard.

Call the office, 977-8363, for details on when and how to purchase tickets in advance.

10 tickets.....	\$15.00
15 tickets.....	22.50
20 tickets.....	30.00
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50 tickets.....	75.00

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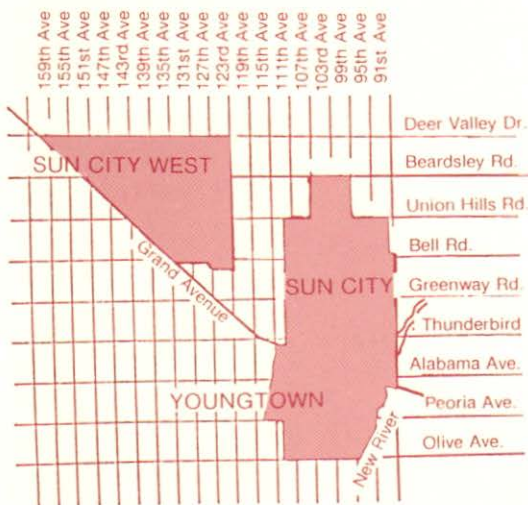
American Red Cross.....	972-3407
Easter Seals.....	254-3026
El Mirage Dart.....	583-8680
Glendale Dial-A-Ride.....	931-5432
Mesa Dial-A-Ride.....	962-1322
North Phoenix Dial-A-Ride.....	258-9977
Peoria Dial-A-Ride.....	486-4290
Phx. Reserve-A-Ride.....	262-7379
Phoenix Transit.....	253-5000
Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA).....	256-0996
Scottsdale Mobility.....	252-5332
Surprise Dial-A-Ride.....	583-8979

Dial-A-Ride is a door-to-door transit service for anyone traveling within the SUN CITY, SUN CITY WEST, and YOUNGTOWN area.

SCAT DIAL-A-RIDE operates 365 days a year.

SCAT - RPTA connection
Park & Ride - 107th Ave. & Clair Dr.

Transfers may be made to and from Route 106-Peoria/Shea at the Sun Bowl Park and Ride bus stop. SCAT vans meet every trip Monday through Friday 7:15 A.M. to 6:45 P.M.



Senior Citizen Bus Cards for reduced fares on Phoenix Transit are available at:

Sun City HOA
Sun City West PORA
Youngtown Town Hall

HOW DO I ARRANGE FOR A RIDE?

Call a SCAT DISPATCHER:

- For shopping and visiting. Call when ready.
- For medical or other appointments call 1½ hours before.
- For wheelchairs or handicapped. . .call the day before when a wheelchair lift is needed.
- To cancel... call at least 30 minutes in advance; otherwise, we expect no-show riders to pay the full cost.
- For special equipment - use of SCAT's wheelchair on SCAT vehicle.

APPOINTMENTS

RESERVED times can be arranged for certain eligible parties as follows:



Physically handicapped persons who are blind, deaf or require the use of the lift.

Sponsored groups of four or more paying passengers.

Standing reservations. Special cases call dispatcher. Same day, same time every week, without exception, unless cancelled.

PHOENIX (RPTA) BUS?



SCAT meets the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) bus #106 upon your request. Call 253-5000 for schedule information. Buses operate Monday-Friday.

- **OUTBOUND** - SCAT riders pay \$1.50 and receive a transfer to board bus #106.
- **INBOUND** - SCAT riders pay with transfer from bus #106 plus 75 cents fare.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST ME TO RIDE SCAT?

- SCAT fare is \$1.50 per passenger one way.

WHEN CAN I USE SCAT?

- SCAT operates every day of the year, Monday-Friday from 7:15 AM to 6:45 PM, weekdays and holidays from 7:15 AM to 4:45 PM.

DIAL-A-RIDE works best for **ALL** when you observe the following:

- **YOU ARE SHARING** the ride with others.

The Van may not take you directly to your destination. It may need to make several other stops first.

- **BE READY** to go when you call.

The Van may arrive early if it is close by. The Van will pull up in front of your location and honk. It can only wait three minutes, so please be ready.

- **HAVE CORRECT CHANGE READY** before boarding the Van.

- Drivers do not carry change and waiting to get your money out after boarding causes delays for everyone.

- **NO FOOD, DRINKS OR SMOKING** is allowed in the Van.

DRIVER ASSISTANCE

- Will help you carry your groceries or other packages to your front door.

- Will meet you at your front door when requested; however, they will not enter your house.

- Will help wheelchair passengers into and from medical facilities.

- Will use the Van's wheelchair and wheelchair lift to assist passengers into the vehicle if such assistance is needed.

REMEMBER SCAT is a "SHARED RIDE" NO SHOW and LATE PASSENGERS ARE UNFAIR to OTHER RIDERS.

REGIONAL PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION
AUTHORITY

Regional Bus #106

Operates MONDAY thru FRIDAY

from Sun Bowl on 40 minute intervals

DEPARTURES

First Bus ... 5:33 am

Last Bus ... 6:51 pm

ARRIVALS

First Bus ... 6:34 am

Last Bus ... 8:25 pm

SCAT Connection

Operates 7:15 am to 6:45 pm

Connects with Bus #106 at Sun Bowl

SCAT to RPTA

FARE

on SCAT \$1.50

on RPTA SCAT

Transfer

RPTA to SCAT

FARE

on RPTA 75¢ or 35¢

on SCAT ... 75¢ and

Transfer

On the Road Again: New buses prowling Sun City streets



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City Area Transit board member Tim Ayres and 21-year veteran driver Roger Brown show off one of the six new vans purchased by SCAT. The new vehicles allowed the agency to update its fleet through federal transportation grants.

SCAT board nearing break even point

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Thanks to some fundraising and a more efficient operation, Sun City Area Transit is climbing out of a financial hole created last year when ridership dropped following a rate increase.

The Sun City area transportation service is also continuing to clean up non-compliance issues with the Regional Public Transportation Agency. SCAT was notified in September 2008, it was not in compliance in several areas, but most of those were resolved with new passenger vans.

"With the most recent RPTA review, we just had one page of issues to deal with rather than the six we had last time," said Pete David, SCAT board president. I'm judg-

Contact SCAT

623-977-8363

9445 N. 99th Ave.

ing this by the number of pages, so we look to be in good shape."

He said most of the issues were minor maintenance issues.

Six 2009 gas-powered E450s vans were expected in February but did not get delivered until March. Another three vans were originally part of the purchase plan, but that will not come to fruition, according to Vern Long, SCAT maintenance director. He said tax revenues are coming in lower than projected and funds are not available through the federal grants, administered by RPTA,

in sufficient amounts to get the additional vehicles, he explained.

SCAT may have an opportunity to get some passenger vans from the Maricopa County Special Transportation Services, which will close operations June 30.

"We have been offered 3-4 STS buses, all diesels) with between 30,000 to 60,000 miles on them," Mr. Long said. "But I'll want to look at them before we make any decision on them."

The closure of STS connector services opens an opportunity for SCAT, according to Mr. Davis. SCAT could step in to provide at least some of the services connecting community transportation systems STS has offered. However, discussions are in the

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Buses

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preliminary stage and no details were yet available, Mr. Davis said.

During its quarterly meeting April 22, SCAT board members learned the ridership is continuing to increase, averaging 110 trips per day, according to Mr. Davis. Financially the agency is also seeing improvement, partly from a \$35,000 prepaid insurance reimbursement from RPTA.

"We had a cash flow problem earlier in the year," Mr. Davis said. "But we've had a positive cash flow two months straight."

He believes SCAT could be in a break even position in terms of the operations budget by June 30, the end of the final quarter of the fiscal year.

SCAT's finances also got a boost from a bulk mail fundraising campaign. Mr. Long said 31,171 envelopes were mailed earlier this year and four days later \$4,531 donations were received. The bulk mail effort cost SCAT \$9,237 to produce the letters and mail them, but by April 22 had received donations totalling \$5,308 above the expenses, according to Mr. Long.

"Our second highest amount received in one day was \$2,715," Mr. Long said.

SCAT's fundraising advisors had suggested a bulk mail campaign would not be effective, Mr. Davis said.

"But our advisor now tells us this re-

sponse indicates residents are happy with the improvements we have made and with the service we offer," Mr. Davis said.

SCAT officials sent no donation solicitations to Sun City West residents because they did not want to go into the Sun City West Foundation's territory, according to Mr. Long. However, Sun City West residents have made donations to the SCAT fundraising effort, he added.

George Powell, a SCAT board member and a Sun City West Foundation board member, said he saw no problem with SCAT seeking donations from Sun City West residents.

Mr. Davis told board members driver Mike King will become the agency's fundraising director.

The foundation ended its contract with SCAT October 2008 to begin its own transportation program within the Sun City West community. The two agencies continue to work together and there is still some overlap in service.

However, SCAT officials approved scaling that back beginning May 1. SCAT buses had been providing limited transportation to Sun City West residents to areas outside that community, but will now only provide transportation only for medical-related trips only.

"We want to do only the medical trips until we resolve the connector issue," Mr. Davis said.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. New Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

SCAT announces schedule changes

By Amy Neal

Independent Newspapers

For Bob Pieschel, the Dial-A-Ride transportation service provided by the Sun Cities Area Transit System was a "lifesaver."

His daughter, Sue Kirk, President of the Midweek Lions Club explained the service was vital to her father's ability to stay active in his community.

"He was involved with the Lion's Club for almost 50 years," Ms. Kirk explained. "He used Dial-A-Ride for about three years to get to meetings, church and appointments. It allowed him to remain an active member of this community."

Rising costs and decreasing revenues have, however, recently had Sun Cities Area Transit System officials scrambling to find ways to keep the transportation service running. Last week SCAT received a donation from the Midweek Lions Club that will help with financial woes.

"Community donations are critical to keeping the operation going," explained SCAT Board President Pete Davis. The organization depends on private donations for half of operating costs.

"The Midweek Lions Club members have been regular donors to our organization and we are most appreciative of their support," Mr. Davis said.

Other SCAT officials are pleased with community support as well.

"If the fund drive response had not been so positive, we would probably have had to severely limit service on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays," Executive Director Cheryl Holgate said in a press release. "We now feel that we can keep weekend service going, but we need to focus our resources more effectively."

Beginning June 12, some schedule changes are slated to help the organization toward that goal.

Mr. Davis explained that while the transportation service operates 365 days a year,

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Submitted to the Independent

Sue Link, president of the Midweek Lion's Club presents a check to Pete Davis, president of Sun Cities Area Transit System. SCAT executive director Cheryl Holgate, right, is pleased with recent public support.

SCAT

Continued From Page 1

there has been little demand for usage after 5 p.m. on weekdays, 2 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Streamlining the schedule could save about \$20,000 a year,

Mr. Davis estimated.

"We want to provide services based on a balanced budget," Mr. Davis stressed.

Weekday service will end at 5 p.m. Special arrangements can be made if an appointment keeps an individual at an appointment after that time.

Weekend and holiday serv-

ices will be available with advance arrangements. This change will also take place on June 12, Ms. Holgate explained.

SCAT has an agreement with the Sun City West Foundation to operate a vehicle in Sun City West from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. This

will not change.

Riders who have regular appointments will be automatically added to schedule. New passengers should call the SCAT Dial-A-Ride office at 977-8363 by 2 p.m. on the Thursday prior to the weekend services are requested.

SCAT drives into the red

Expenses greatly outweigh revenue

By Matt Loeschman
Independent Newspapers

The Sun Cities Area Transit System Board of Directors last week saw a grim 2007 financial picture.

Rising costs and decreasing revenues have SCAT officials scrambling to find ways to

reduce their deficit and keep the transportation service afloat.

Estimated fiscal year 2007 revenues are \$553,000 while expenses are \$785,000.

"The deficit will have to be financed from our reserves," SCAT Board President Pete Davis said at the April 26 board meeting. "And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but reserves will not last beyond 18 months."

Board members asked how much fares would need to rise to make up the deficit.

What do you think?

Do you rely on SCAT for transportation? Do you fear the financial troubles may cause the organization to shut down? You can post comments at www.newszapforums.com/forum29, e-mail mloeschman@newszap.com, write 10220 W. Bell Road, Suite 116, Sun City, 85351 or call our anonymous Speak Out line at (623) 445-2892.

"We'd have to raise them to \$13 per ride — we'd basically be in the taxi business," Mr. Davis

explained.

The board president said SCAT has provided about 60,000 rides per year since 2002.

"Back in 2002, our operating costs increased dramatically following 9/11 and insurance companies began to realize that their investments weren't covering the expenses and there were more risks involved than they ever thought of," Mr. Davis said. "Our costs went up and SCAT has been in deficit-spending mode ever since. We have

kept our same level of service but it's been a challenge. And by the end of this fiscal year June 30 our cash reserves will be somewhere around \$125,000."

Mr. Davis presented a chart depicting SCAT's deficit spending since 2001. At that time, the organization spent less than \$40,000 per year but that number has tripled in the past five years.

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Drive

Continued From Page 1

Insurance costs on SCAT vehicles have stabilized at about \$7,000 annually.

Board members Marge Murphy, James Lackey, Tom Profico and Alice Berg viewed the chart and listened as Mr. Davis explained cash reserves used to fund operations have also doubled since 2003.

"This is approximately \$100,000 annually," Mr. Davis noted. "In addition, major grants have been difficult to obtain and community giving is flat at about \$120,000 per year."

Regional Public Transit Authority funding to SCAT has topped out at \$225,000 annually.

With a fee increase to \$3 per ride, ridership has steadily decreased and fiscal year 2006 giving fell to \$100,000.

"We have lost some valuable personnel and we have seen an increased demand for out-of-area travel that we just cannot handle," Mr. Davis said. "We have also experienced longer response times due to our new personnel and all the traffic in the West Valley."

For the fiscal year 2007, SCAT expects RPTA funding to be \$195,000, United Way funding at \$40,000 and community giving increased to \$110,000.

However, insurance is likely to increase to \$8,000 per vehicle, workman's compensation is up 18 percent and natural gas up about 25 percent, leading to a

major shortfall.

SCAT data indicates 46 percent of their calls are taken between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

"Maybe we should also think about re-educating our riders, too. Some of those people riding at 10 a.m., maybe they could go at 8 a.m.," Mr. Davis said.

Recommendations for improving the financial situation include:

- Reviewing each element of service to determine the most efficient method;

- Looking at other organizations to determine best practices; and

- Partnering with other organizations to deliver services.

Bryan Jungwirth, RPTA deputy executive director, said other organizations are seeing similar financial shortfalls.

"From RPTA's point of view, we know SCAT does a great job," he said. "We are impressed with the service and we know it is sorely needed. But the rest of the region is also facing financial issues in their Dial-A-Ride services. You are not alone."

Mr. Jungwirth said compliance with the American with Disabilities Act is the most important aspect when RPTA looks at funding.

"Make sure you are in complete compliance," he explained. "That is extremely important."

In her report, SCAT Executive Director Cheryl Holgate outlined trends for the first three quarters of the last three fiscal years.

Total rides are down slightly, from 45,038 in 2005 to 44,721 in this fiscal year. Sun City rides have

risen slightly, making up 69 percent of the total rides, while Sun City West has decreased from 19 percent to 17 percent of the total.

Most rides are for shopping purposes (40 percent) and health-related services (30 percent).

Ms. Holgate said late-night requests for rides have increased sharply over the past two years.

The executive director said the new bus designated exclusively for Sun City West is on-site and running.

She said letters seeking financial support have also recently been sent to the community.

Treasurer Kathy Stroy's report indicated March's total income as \$43,343 with \$527,108 brought in for the fiscal year.

But expenses for the month topped the \$80,000 mark and year-to-date expenses are nearing the \$700,000 plateau.

"For the year to date, expenses have outweighed revenue by \$150,204," Ms. Stroy reported.

Following the regular meeting, directors met in closed executive session to discuss their financial challenges and also suggest possible staffing adjustments.

"We will do a series of on-board surveys to see what changes our passengers would like to see," Mr. Davis noted. "Based on the survey results and other recommendations, we will definitely have changes to announce."

Post your comments on this issue at www.newszapforums.com/forum29. Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or mloeschman@newszap.com.

Transit director retires after 13 years

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Tom Profico announced he is retiring from his position as executive director of the Sun Cities Area Transit.

Profico, who stepped into the position in early 1998, is being succeeded by Cheryl Holgate of Sun City. Holgate has served as SCAT's bookkeeper for 1½ years. She will be "acting" executive director until the board reviews her work and grants her the official title, Profico said.

Profico, a 65-year-old Sun City resident, began working at SCAT in 1992 as a van driver. He cited personal reasons for submitting his retirement resignation on Sept. 30, but said he plans to stay involved with SCAT.

Since joining SCAT, Profico has seen the dial-a-ride company ride out debt problems and high gas prices while continuing to serve the community through financial support from residents and businesses.

"After being here over 13 years, I've always enjoyed the service we do," he said. "This has been one of the most fulfilling and rewarding jobs

Fyi

■ For information about Sun Cities Area Transit or to schedule a pickup, call 977-8363.

that I've ever had. Thirteen years have gone fast."

Holgate said she's excited to take over the job of executive director.

"It's a great organization. I like the whole purpose of what they're doing, and I stand behind it," she said. "I want to help them succeed in the future — to keep us above water and moving in the forward motion."

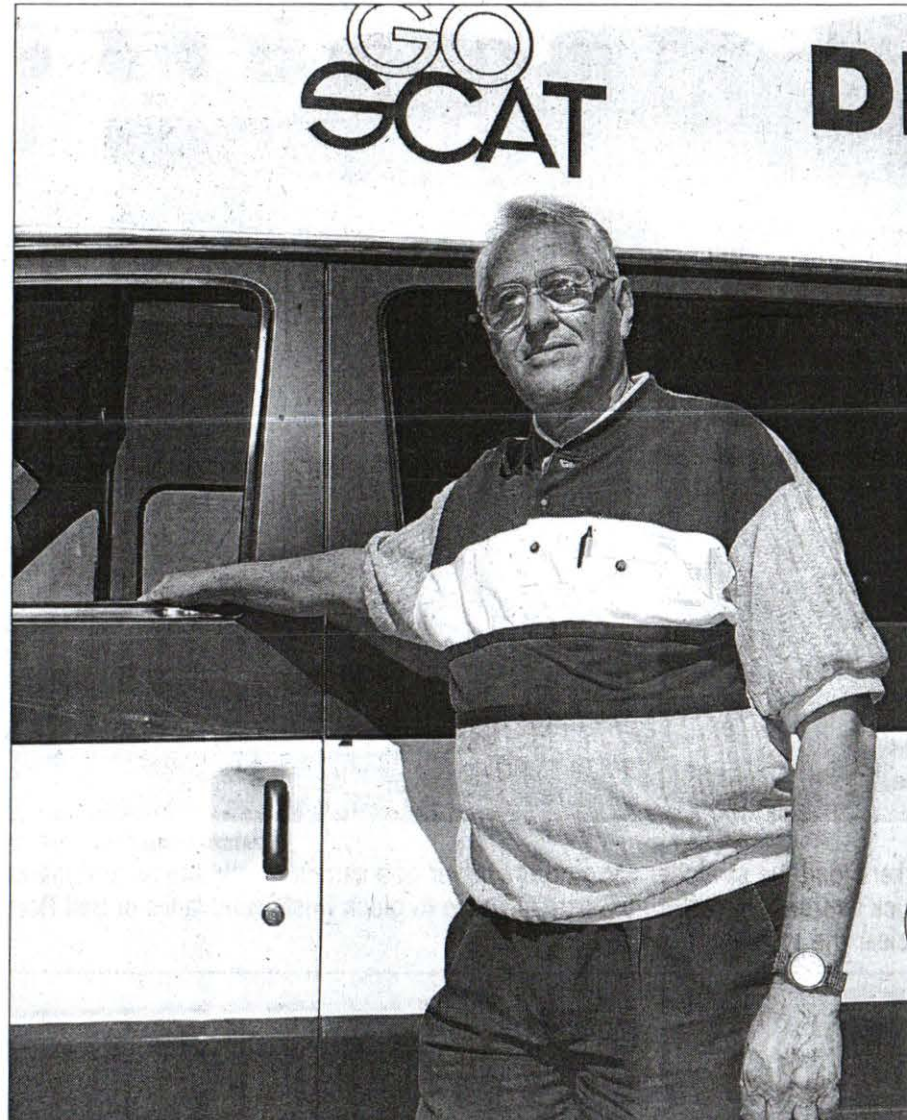
Profico, she said, will be missed.

"He was the best boss I've ever worked for," she said. "I've really enjoyed working with him. He's been an added plus to SCAT."

Profico said his advice for Holgate is to "ride the waves," taking the position one day at a time.

"It's about caring for the people and communicating with employees," Profico said.

New SCAT board members and officers will be announced at the next quarterly meeting Oct. 26.



Tom Profico, executive director of Sun Cities Area Transit, announced his retirement Sept. 30. Cheryl Holgate of Sun City will take his place.

RYAN D'AGOSTINO/DAILY NEWS-SUN

DAILY NEWS-SUN

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2005

SCAT falls short of cash, riders

Fund drive generates \$47,000

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit came out of its fiscal year lacking two key components — passengers and money.

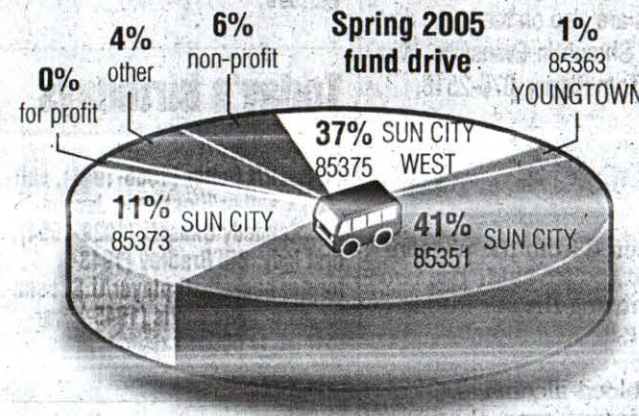
At a SCAT board meeting Wednesday, Tom Profico, executive director, said the nonprofit transportation organization saw a loss of more than \$34,500 during the 2004-2005 fiscal year, which ended June 30. With a net income of \$828,000 and

net expenses at \$868,000, the deficit would have been greater if not for the nearly \$5,000 brought in by auctioning off two of the fleet's older vans.

Riders were lost as well, said Russell Vick, SCAT board president. Reports show that nearly 3,100 fewer passengers rode the SCAT vans this year, compared to last. Vick blamed the drop in passenger numbers on the April 1 fare hike that increased the fee from \$2.50 to \$3 per one-way ride.

On July 11, Vick sent a letter to Board of Supervisors Chairman Max Wilson, R-District 4, requesting that the county contribute \$25,000 to

Sun Cities Area Transit



SOURCE: SCAT

CHARLES WADE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

SCAT in order to take advantage of the Regional Public Transportation Authority's

offer that if the county donates \$25,000, it will match that amount for a total

of \$50,000 in contributions.

Since 1989, RPTA has provided SCAT with \$175,000 a year. However, Vick said, that amount is no longer sufficient as it falls out of sync with current inflation of operating expenses, such as rising insurance costs. Receiving the extra \$25,000 from the RPTA hinges on whether the county donates the same amount, Profico added. Wilson's office has yet to respond.

SCAT renewed its insurance policies for the 2005-2006 fiscal year at a cost of \$123,567. The bulk of the expense is attributed to vehicle insurance costing about \$116,200. Insurance

expenses for the 2004-2005 fiscal year, including vehicles and other liabilities, cost approximately \$122,000.

The board was pleased to announce that to date, the ongoing Spring Fund Drive has generated more than \$47,000. Fifty-two percent of the donations collected during the drive came from Sun City residents and businesses, 37 percent were from Sun City West contributors and the remaining donations were from other surrounding areas and sources. SCAT officials say they hope contributions will continue to come in, as year-round fund raising is a necessity.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboone@aztrib.com.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

May 4, 2005

SCAT adopts \$681,000 budget

April fund-drive mailings on way to mailboxes

By Cecilia Chan
Independent Newspapers

The Sun Cities Areas Transit System Board of Directors unanimously adopted a \$681,000 spending plan for 2005-06 that projects a slight uptick in income from fares and donations.

Should the revenue stream comes in as anticipated and no

unforeseen emergencies arise, SCAT officials say they would be able to avoid dipping into the nonprofit agency's dwindling reserve funds of \$127,000.

"The budget we've proposed for 2006 is fairly close to the budget for 2005," SCAT Executive Director Thomas Profico said last week.

Cash fares are estimated to increase by \$15,000 to \$175,000

due to a 50 cents hike to \$3 per ride, effective April 1.

"We can't be sure of the ridership," Mr. Profico said. "If it doesn't change radically, we will have an increase in fares."

SCAT provides 60,000-plus rides a year, seven days a week, including late-night pick up from hospital emergency rooms.

Donations to SCAT also are

To give a tax-deductible donation, send to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, AZ 85372.

expected to increase by \$4,400 to \$164,400. SCAT is funded largely by grants and contributions. The agency kicked off its April fund drive last week, sending mailings to 46,000 homes in the Sun Cities and Youngtown.

Board Treasurer Kathy Stroy questioned if SCAT would

receive any funds from Proposition 400, which continues the half-cent sales tax for 20 years to fund transportation.

Mr. Profico said passage of the measure last year just ensures SCAT continues receiving the \$175,000 from the Regional Public Transportation Authority.

"If it did not pass, those funds would go away," he said.

The balanced budget anti-

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SCAT

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pates spending \$125,000 for insurance — a major on-going financial burden that has forced SCAT to deplete its reserves by roughly \$100,000 a year.

An independent auditor in January warned SCAT officials the Dial-A-Ride program will go broke unless they can shore up its revenue stream.

The Sun City Home Owners Association sponsored a letter-writing campaign, soliciting donations from professionals and merchants in the area. So far, \$2,500 came from that endeavor, Mr. Profico said.

"HOA is working on raising money," said Director Marge Murphy, who also sits on the HOA board. "They feel we have to get out to the public, go meet the doctors in person."

She said many professionals, including dentists still do not know about SCAT's financial dilemma because the letters, although addressed to them, are likely not seen.

She also said riders need to be encouraged to tell their doctors, dentists or stores they patron, they were able to get there because of SCAT.

Another big ticket item in the

budget is \$350,000 for salaries for seven full-time and 21 part-time employees.

The board also reviewed trends for the first three quarters of the 2004-05 fiscal year. The total number of rides came in at 44,030 in 2005 compared with 45,989 in 2004.

The bulk of the rides, 43 percent was for shopping and 31 percent was for health-related

visits.

Post your comment on this issue at
newsblog.info/0302

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SCAT budget counts on donations

Fund drive push on

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun Cities Area Transit board unanimously approved a 2006 break-even budget that estimates a \$15,000 income boost from the recently raised rider fee.

With the April 1 fare hike to \$3 from \$2.50, SCAT could generate \$175,000 from fares, according to the budget proposal presented by Tom Profico, executive director, at a SCAT board meeting Wednesday. The estimated actual income generated by rider fares in 2005 is \$160,000.

SCAT projects bringing in nearly \$50,000 more in donations in its fiscal year 2006 budget, for an estimated total of \$164,400 in contributions. SCAT spokesman Pete Davis said that's because SCAT is in talks with three unnamed groups that he said are hoping to contribute nearly \$50,000 among them to help the struggling nonprofit.

"It's a stretch, but it's not really that much (more)," Davis said of SCAT's efforts to solicit more donations.

To date this fiscal year, SCAT has accumulated approximately \$76,000 in contributions after its November fund drive. Another drive begins this month, and Davis said he expects it to bring in \$50,000 more.

Fyi

■ For information about SCAT, to make a donation or to schedule a ride, call 977-8363.

That soon-to-begin drive involves 46,000 letters that will go out this week requesting donations from residents of Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown, SCAT's coverage area.

The budget proposal estimates income for the 2006 fiscal year at \$681,000 and expenses at \$681,000. The 2005 fiscal year estimated actual income for SCAT is \$654,100, while actual expenses are estimated at \$699,000. Profico said he hopes SCAT won't incur any debt during the 2006 fiscal year.

There is approximately \$127,000 in SCAT's reserve fund, but the reserve is being depleted by rising insurance costs and other expenses, Profico said.

SCAT's financial woes are based primarily on higher insurance costs, the board said. For 2005, the budget proposal estimates the total insurance package, including vehicles and other liabilities, will cost SCAT approximately \$122,000. During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, that cost was approximately \$40,000. The 2006 budget proposal estimates insurance costs at \$125,000.

The Regional Public Transit Authority pays approximately \$35,000 for insurance costs, as the SCAT vans are registered in authority's name. That amount may have covered insurance costs in the past, but the authority hasn't increased its contribution to keep pace with the rise in insurance premiums, the SCAT board said.

In an effort to garner more funds from the authority, SCAT has requested an increase.

"They (RPTA) haven't come up with their 2006 budget, so we have to wait. It's their decision," Profico said.

Expenses for vehicle maintenance and repair are estimated at \$35,000 in 2006, a decrease of about \$15,000 from 2005, according to the budget proposal. Profico said this drop in cost is thanks to SCAT's fleet of nearly all new vans that are under warranty.

SCAT dial-a-ride has traveled more than 5 million miles throughout the coverage area, picking up seniors who may have otherwise been homebound. SCAT's 14 van fleet is available 365 days a year. Each vehicle is wheelchair accessible and runs on alternative fuel.

A driver is on call from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night to pick up passengers who need transportation from hospital emergency rooms during night hours. This service is free to area residents.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboone@aztrib.com.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Louise Bernard of the Nani Wahines Hawaiian Dancers shows Tom Profico, executive director of Sun Cities Area Transit, a few moves during the group's practice Wednesday. The group recently donated to SCAT.

14 of 300 respond to SCAT's request

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Of the 300 local medical groups, churches and businesses that were asked to contribute to the Sun Cities Area Transit, 14 have responded.

SCAT director Tom Profico said that's not enough.

"We're still hoping we see more support," Profico said. "We understand that some businesses take longer to run check requests through their accounting departments."

In early March, the Sun City Home Owners

Fyi

■ For information about SCAT, to make a donation or to schedule a ride, call 977-8363. To make a contribution by mail, send a check to: SCAT, P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, AZ, 85372.

Association sent about 300 letters to medical groups, churches and businesses in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown, asking them to make a donation to SCAT, the transportation agency that brings clients to their doorsteps and other area destinations.

A total of \$1,450 has been

collected as a result of the letters, and HOA Director Phyllis Roach said 14 donations from 300 letters falls short of expectations.

"There were many others contacted who apparently do not appreciate nor understand that those members need and depend on the transportation that SCAT provides," Roach wrote in a statement. "However, it is never too late (for) those businesses, medical persons and churches who have not yet sent in their checks."

The following is a list of medical groups, churches

and businesses that SCAT and the HOA would like to thank for their contributions:

- West Valley Lutheran Thrift Shop in Sun City.
- Anesthesia Medical Professionals.
- Paul Carlson, dentist.
- Roger Green, dentist.
- Matthew Wassel and R. Kennedy, dentists.
- Scott Jackson, dentist.
- Jack Luftman, dentist.
- Dental Impressions Dentistry.
- Dr. Edward Dubrow.
- Dr. Emilio Justo.
- Best Bakery Cafe.

- Jenner & Darling, CPA.
- Ken Meade Realty.
- Grandview Terrace and Grandview Sun Health Care Center.

The cost of a SCAT ride is \$3 each person, each way. In addition to regular service hours, a driver is on call from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night to pick up passengers who need transportation from hospital emergency rooms during the late night hours. This service is free to area residents.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboon@aztrib.com.

March 23, 2005

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SCAT riders to see fare hike

50 cents increase to take effect April 1

By Cecilia Chan
Independent Newspapers

Sun Cities and Youngtown residents will pay 50 cents more for each one-way trip on a Dial-A-Ride bus come April 1.

Officials of the financially strapped Sun Cities Area Transit System at a March 16 public hearing said the fare hike to \$3 a trip would help stave off ride reductions.

"Cutting service is the last resort," SCAT Executive Director Thomas Profico said. "It would

be the least desirable alternative." Tax-deductible donations can be sent to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, AZ 85372.

Nonprofit SCAT provides 60,000-plus rides a year. The last fare increase was in 1998 when SCAT raised the price of a ride to \$2.50 from \$1.75.

"I do take Dial-A-Ride," said Sun City resident Kay Kerst, one of only two residents at the hearing. "It would not be a hardship

for me to pay \$3, which is very nominal."

Riders unable to afford the increase can go to organizations such as the Sun City Foundation, which purchases ride tickets. And the Sun City West Community Fund is in the process of buying tickets from SCAT, Mr. Profico said.

The increase is expected to generate an additional \$25,000 to \$30,000 in revenue each year for SCAT.

"Our problem is not one of needing equipment or physical

assets," SCAT Board President Russell Vick said. "Our problem is cash."

SCAT generated \$713,081 in revenue and spent \$817,308 in fiscal year 2003-04. Cash fares totaled \$152,323 and donations came in at \$155,860 for the year ending June 30, 2004.

Most of SCAT's financial support comes from donations and grants and 25 percent comes from the Regional Public Transportation Authority and Maricopa

See **Fare** — Page 3



Independent Newspapers/
Cecilia Chan

Sun City resident Kay Kerst speaks at public hearing to raise SCAT's Dial-A-Ride fare by 50 cents for each ride.

Fare

Continued From Page 1
County.

Escalating insurance cost — a trend throughout the insurance industry — for its 14 vans in the last few years forced SCAT to dip into its rainy day fund. SCAT's insurance cost jumped from \$20,000 in 1999 to \$100,000 now.

Mr. Vick said SCAT in 1999 held \$600,000 in its savings account and as of Feb. 28, that cash reserve is down to \$200,000.

"At this rate we are depleting \$104,000 a year," Mr. Vick said. "Fortunately we had reserves or we would have cut service or increased fares long before this. We have two years to go to do something other than increase fares or increase fares to such an extent it's prohibitive to the community."

SCAT will go broke in two years unless more donations and highly competitive grants come in.

"I am not opposed to this," said Sun City resident Mildred Groat. "I have been riding SCAT



Independent Newspapers/Cecilia Chan
From left, Thomas Profico, SCAT executive director, SCAT Board of Director President Russell Vick and Vice President George Hartman listen to resident comment on fare hike.

for 20 years or more."

Ms. Groat, who catches a Dial-A-Ride van for shopping and the dentist, questioned if SCAT could charge more to riders who traveled farther.

"I would pay more to go to the dentist and Albertson's," said Ms. Groat, who lives in the far southeast corner of Sun City.

Mr. Profico said SCAT in its history attempted a higher fare for residents of one area but was told it could not discriminate among its riders. And to impose a tier fare would entail regulating miles

much like a taxi service, he added.

"There are lot of things we like to do but we receive government funds so we are restricted in what we can and can not do," Mr. Vick said.

The Sun City Home Owners Association, Sun City West's PORA and Youngtown officials are working together to find solutions to alleviate SCAT's financial crisis.

HOA sponsored a letter-writing campaign targeting businesses, churches and professionals

such as doctors to donate to SCAT, which brings clients to their doors.

Within one week of the mailings, SCAT so far received \$450 total from one business, one church and three doctors, Mr. Profico said.

Sun City resident and SCAT rider Deanne Vincent, who did not attend the hearing, expressed disappointment with the fee hike.

"They are going to lose half of their riders," said Ms. Vincent who is in a wheelchair. "People can not afford that in Sun City. We are the highest Dial-A-Ride in the county."

Ms. Vincent receives \$25 in ride tickets a month, the maximum from one charitable organization and has to pay for the rest of the month's rides herself.

"I can't afford \$3 a ride," said Ms. Vincent, who takes SCAT five days a week to get to places such as to her doctor.

*Post your comment on this issue at newsblog.info/0302
News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com*

DAILY NEWS-SUN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2005

SCAT fare increases April 1

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit system will increase one-way fares to \$3 beginning April 1.

Notices of the rate hike were posted in SCAT vans Tuesday, alerting riders or the increase from \$2.50 to \$3.

The SCAT board of directors approved the increase Friday after a public hearing attended by two people who both agreed a fee raise was fair.

The public also was invited to mail in comments about the rate hike. Two letters were submitted and both opposed the 50 cent increase, according to Paul Davis, SCAT spokesman. Telephoned responses were mainly supportive of raising the fare, he added.

"In general, no one is in favor of paying more money," Davis said. "But, people understand."

The actual expense to SCAT per ride is just over \$10. The last rate change came in 1998 when SCAT raised the one-way fare from \$1.75 to \$2.50.

Since 1999, the organization's reserve fund has depleted from about \$800,000 to \$200,000, due largely to rising vehicle insurance costs, said George Hartman, SCAT board vice president.

Hartman said SCAT can no longer afford to continue dipping into reserve funds, and because grants and contributions fail to cover all their costs, a rate hike is a good way to begin building up its bank. The rate hike is expected to bring in an additional \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year, Hartman said.

This week, SCAT board members are meeting with representatives of the Regional Transit Authority to discuss additional funding options, Davis said. Insurance expenses are supplemented in part by the RTA, but its contributions haven't increased as insurance costs have grown, he added.

For information about SCAT or to schedule a pick-up, call 977-8363.

SCAT inches toward security

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

Letters soliciting money from store keepers and professionals for the community's financially ailing transportation agency will hit mailboxes the first part of March.

Sun City Home Owners Association and Sun City West PORA leaders in their second meeting with Sun Cities Area Transit System officials checked their progress last week in saving the agency.

"I don't understand businesses not helping SCAT because their livelihood depends on SCAT customer getting to their shopping area," said HOA Director Phyllis Roach, who drafted customized letters for doctors, merchants and churches. "We want to get some people to make a commitment on a yearly basis."

To give a tax-deductible donation, send donations to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, Az. 85372.

Roughly 350 letters are expected to be sent.

With escalating insurance costs eating up SCAT's savings, the nonprofit agency is projected to go broke in three years. SCAT operates 14 Dial-A-Ride vans, picking up some 61,000 passengers a year from the Sun Cities and Youngtown.

PORA President Chuck Ullman asked how much money SCAT needed.

SCAT Board President Russ Vick replied the agency so far raised \$200,000 of the \$600,000 needed from the community. SCAT holds fund drives twice a year.

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SCAT

Continued From Page 1

SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico said donations from residents tend to be more impressive than from the business community.

"The reason why you are in trouble today is the insurance," Mr. Ullman said. "Can that be mitigated by the government somehow? If that is the problem either reduce it or eliminate it if possible."

Mr. Profico said SCAT would see lower insurance cost if it cuts back on the number of vehicles it operates, which means cutting back on service.

He said SCAT conducts annual insurance bids and cannot ask the county to pay for the insurance

because the vans are registered to the Regional Public Transportation Authority. RPTA would step in to cover the gap if SCAT is sued for more than its coverage.

Mr. Profico also said insurance was more expensive because SCAT transported both ambulatory and wheelchair passengers.

Ms. Roach suggested SCAT check if AARP offers any type of insurance plan it can use.

HOA Director George Davis said he had contacted state Sen. Bob Burns and will wait for Maricopa County 4th District Supervisor Max Wilson to recover from his heart bypass surgery before approaching him for help. Mr. Ullman said he has called state Sen. Jack Harper, who has asked for more information.

Mr. Profico said a meeting with Sun Health was in the process. Youngtown officials, who attended the first meeting, was looking at the possibility of including a donation for SCAT in its budget, he said.

Bob Budorick, who handles publicity for HOA, suggested they follow up on the mailings with

phone calls and acknowledged the donors.

"This whole endeavor is in the spirit of volunteerism," he said.

Post your comment on this issue at newsblog.info/0302

News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

February 9, 2005

Officials talk to help SCAT

Group comes up with list of ideas

By Cecilia Chan
Independent Newspapers

Finding matching corporate donations, lobbying state and county representatives and soliciting Sun Health, are some avenues to keep the doors open at the Sun Cities Area Transit System.

Sun City Home Owners Association, Sun City West PORA and

Youngtown representatives met with SCAT officials in a brainstorming session last week to find ways to generate revenue for the nonprofit transportation agency, which will go broke in three years from paying rising insurance costs.

"The county doesn't want us to go away because they could not pick up 60,000-plus rides a

year we are providing," said Tom Profico, SCAT executive director. "We have approached the county transportation services but have not heard back."

Sun City West's PORA President Chuck Ullman suggested they contact the area's state legislators and ask what they can do for SCAT.

"We can't live without it," Mr.

Ullman said of SCAT. "We don't have any other transportation."

He also suggested they pursue companies that make matching or higher contributions, which are easier to obtain than grants.

"Most of the big companies will match a contribution or triple the original donation for a (non-profit) if you submit an application," he said.

HOA Director Phyllis Roach handed out drafts of solicitation letters to be sent to professionals

To give a tax-deductible donation, send donations to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, Ariz., 85372.

such as doctors and dentists, and merchants in the community.

She said they need to get Sun Health to commit to annual contributions to SCAT.

"They make big bucks off

See SCAT — Page 12

Continued From Page 1

these people and lot of these rides are directly related to Sun Health and doctors," she said. "In the case of Sun Health, they are probably the biggest user of SCAT."

Mr. Profico said Sun Health provided SCAT seed money to launch its free, late night pick up of residents from emergency rooms.

He also said a fare increase was an option SCAT would be considering. SCAT charges a flat rate of \$2.50 a ride but it costs \$11 to provide each ride.

"I would say at minimum a token increase to show you are trying to help your own cause," HOA Director George Davis said.

Youngtown Town Clerk Shaunna Lee-Rice asked how it would impact low-income riders. She was told community groups purchase tickets for those who can not afford the ride.

Mr. Profico said the Regional Public Transportation Authority, up until the tremendous hike in insurance costs, helped support SCAT's 14 Dial-A-Ride vans, which are registered to RPTA.

He said SCAT could eliminate its fleet and use county vehicles, but that presents a problem.

"If we go to the county and use their vehicles the problems is the county can dictate where we go," he said. "We don't want to get into a situation where we are pulled out of the area."

The group assigned members to pursue options, including a letter-writing campaign, approaching Sun Health and APS, contacting state and county representatives and pursuing matching corporate donations and grants. The group plans to meet again Feb. 16.

February 2, 2005

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SCAT to look at fare hike

Agency may go broke in 3 years

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

Facing an empty piggy bank in three years, the Sun Cities Area Transit System may resort to a fare hike.

SCAT, a nonprofit agency that provides curb-to-curb transportation for the Sun Cities and Youngtown, is trying to stem the red ink

caused by the escalating cost of liability insurance for its Dial-A-Ride vans.

"Over the last couple or three years you guys are using your cash...up to \$108,000 every year at least for the last year," auditor Brad Jenner told the SCAT Board of Directors last week. "One thing you guys are in control of is the revenue you get from riders,

60,000 trips a year. Seems to me maybe the thing you ought to consider is raising your fare."

Mr. Jenner said SCAT cannot cut its expense any more than it has and recommended directors consider the hike sooner rather than later. He also advised directors to set up an endowment fund to augment its revenue stream.

To give a tax-deductible donation, send donations to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, 85372.

SCAT generated \$713,081 in revenue and spent \$817,308 in fiscal year 2003-04. Cash fares totaled \$152,323 and donations came in at \$155,860 for the year ending June 30, 2004. Most of its financial support comes from donations and grants and 25 percent comes from the Regional Public Transportation Authority

and Maricopa County.

"I'm for raising the rate right away and not wait," Board Vice President George Hartman said. "We've got to hit the nail on the head right away."

Mr. Hartman recommended doubling the current \$2.50 fare, which would cover SCAT's shortfall, until additional revenue comes in from donations or from an endowment fund. He added it

See **Transit** — Page 3

Transit

Continued From Page 2

would take money, time and expertise to set up an endowment fund.

"I'm for an increase but not that much," Board Secretary Ruth Phelps said.

She said SCAT would lose riders if the fare jumped to \$5 a ride.

Mr. Jenner suggested SCAT considers a fare hike in stages.

Director Marge Murphy, who also sits on the Sun City Home

Owners Association Board of Directors, said HOA was launching a letter writing campaign to solicit donations from supermarkets, doctors and dentists.

"We really, really feel they should be giving to SCAT because SCAT brings people to their front door and makes them money," Ms. Murphy said. "It's our only big transportation in Sun City. It's so important. We can't let anything happen to SCAT."

She noted HOA directors also met with Maricopa County 4th District Supervisor Max Wilson

"to see what he can do at the county-level."

Sun City West's PORA is scheduled to meet with HOA this week to discuss SCAT, said PORA President Chuck Ullman.

Mr. Harman suggested the board brainstorms for ideas where to find more dollars.

SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico said the board's executive committee will consider a fare hike at its Feb. 14 closed door meeting.

The entire SCAT board needs to vote on the issue and to hold a

public hearing before a fee increase can occur.

Some 11 percent of the riders are physically disabled and use wheelchairs and many other passengers use canes and walkers, according to SCAT. About 40 percent of the rides are for shopping, followed by health-related transports.

Post your comment on this issue at newsblog.info/0302

News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com

SCAT faces likely rate hike

Gradual increase could top out at \$5 per stop

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Riders of the Sun City Area Transit will see a rate hike unless money from other sources start coming in.

"We'll exhaust other possibilities, but then we'll raise the rates," said George Hartman, vice president of the SCAT board. "I'm for raising the rate right away, don't wait."

Brad Jenner, of Jenner & Darling Certified Public Accountants, reviewed SCAT's financial statements with the board at a meeting Wednesday. His recommendation for offsetting this year's approximately \$108,000 financial shortfall was to raise the passenger rate.

"Consider raising fares," Jenner told the board, adding that there are financial details SCAT isn't in control of, but the board can raise rates. "And consider doing it sooner rather than later. It would help your organization in the long run."

The rate is \$2.50 each person one way. Hartman suggested raising the rate gradually, eventually doubling the rate to cost \$5

each person, each way. The cost would still be below the actual expense to SCAT per ride, which is about \$10.

"We have to let the community know we're in trouble," Hartman said. "We've got to hit this nail on the head."

"I'm for an increase, but not that much to start," said Ruth Phelps, board secretary. "With a \$2.50 increase, we'll lose people."

FYI

■ For information about SCAT, to make a donation or to schedule a ride, call 977-8363.

See SCAT, A5



FILE PHOTO

Sun Cities Area Transit is looking for new ways to raise money before increasing passenger fees.

From A1

Board member Brad Hahn suggested raising the rates in two increments. This way, passengers won't be hit with a huge rate increase at the start, but the community may be more compelled to donate to SCAT to keep rates from rising even further. If the first rate hike doesn't produce effective enough results, raise the fees again, he added.

Russell Vick, board president, said the process for raising rates must follow federal guidelines, as SCAT receives state and federal funding. Before a rate hike is implemented, there will need to be a public hearing, which must be advertised in local newspapers and in the community, Vick said.

No decisions were made Wednesday, but the issue will be on the agenda at SCAT's

Feb. 14 executive meeting, he said.

The board agreed should rates be raised, SCAT would most likely upset and lose passengers who can't pay more or who are opposed to the hike.

"Some say it's outrageous to raise fees, but you can't run an organization without money," Hartman said. "There's always been a reluctance to fee raises in the community...people don't like it, but it's inevitable."

SCAT's financial woes are based primarily on inflating insurance costs, the board said. This year, the total insurance package, including vehicles and other liabilities, will cost SCAT approximately \$121,000. During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, that cost was approximately \$40,000.

The Regional Public Transit Authority pays

approximately \$35,000 for insurance costs, as the SCAT vans are registered in its name. That amount may have once covered insurance costs, but RPTA hasn't increased its contribution as insurance costs increased, the board said.

In an effort to garner more funds from the RPTA, SCAT board members plan to contact them and request they increase their funding to fall more in line with the higher costs of insurance. Should the RPTA provide the funds to completely cover insurance costs, the rider rate hike may not be necessary, Hartman said.

Other fund-raising efforts are underway as well. The Sun City Home Owners Association has drafted letters to local business, requesting they contribute to SCAT — the company that brings their clients to their doorstep.

SCAT's annual mail fundraiser began in November and continues through April. Already, the response has brought in about \$63,000. The amount of funds donated this year are \$3,000 more than what was collected at the same time last year.

SCAT dial-a-ride has traveled more than 5 million miles throughout the coverage area, picking up seniors who may have otherwise been homebound. SCAT's 14 van fleet is available 365 days a year. Each vehicle is wheelchair accessible and runs on alternative fuel.

A driver is on call from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night to pick up passengers who need transportation from hospital emergency rooms during night hours. This service is free to area residents.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboon@aztrib.com.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 5, 2005

HOA fosters transit's cause

Businesses cited for not donating to SCAT

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The future of the Sun Cities Area Transit hangs in the balance, and leaders say that without an increase in donations, services may be cut back.

After hearing of SCAT's financial burden at their Tuesday meeting, members of the Sun City Home Owners Association board of directors unanimously passed a motion made by Marge Murphy, HOA director and SCAT board member, to encourage the community and local businesses to donate to SCAT.

It's the local businesses, Murphy said, that should be compelled to give generously to SCAT. Without SCAT, local dentists, doctors, grocery stores, salons and other busi-

nesses would lose hundreds of customers who rely on SCAT for transportation in its coverage area, which includes Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown.

Churches, local organizations and individuals can be counted on for funding, while businesses cannot, Murphy said.

"If the professionals in the community who are receiving remuneration from the residents would also give a donation to SCAT, it would make a big difference in this financial picture," she wrote in a statement.

Pete Davis, SCAT representative, said one retailer, Sam's Club, gives \$1,000 a year to SCAT even though there are no Sam's Clubs in the coverage area. However, popular grocers in the area such as Fry's and Safeway have yet to make a contribution.

SCAT's financial scare is blamed on insurance costs that have tripled in four years, said Tom Profico, SCAT director.

This year, the total insurance package, including vehicles and other liabilities, will cost SCAT \$121,000. During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, that cost was \$40,000. Many on SCAT's staff are volunteers, but drivers are paid \$8.50 an hour.

Profico said it's imperative for SCAT to raise more money

to offset the "astronomical" insurance costs that could potentially grow even larger in the future.

"We'll probably have to cut back services without more donations," he said. "We're looking at ways to increase funding for the future."

In its fall mailing to the coverage area, SCAT asked the community to help raise \$200,000 this year to help offset its \$680,000 budget.

Annual income for SCAT includes approximately \$175,000 from the Regional Public Transit Authority, \$150,000 from individual and church donations, \$150,000 in rider fares and \$50,000 from the Valley of the Sun United Way/Sun City Community Fund. The remaining required income comes from various private organizations and miscellaneous donations, Davis said.

The HOA directors decided to devote a portion of their next board meeting to discuss how HOA can contribute to SCAT. Murphy suggested the HOA pay for a mailing to local businesses requesting they donate to SCAT.

SCAT dial-a-ride has traveled more than 5 million miles in the coverage area, picking up seniors who may have otherwise been homebound. SCAT's 14 van fleet is available 365 days a year.

Each vehicle is wheelchair accessible and runs on alternative fuel.

The cost for transportation is \$2.50 each person, each way. A driver is on call from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night to pick up passengers who need transportation from hospital emergency rooms during the late night hours. This service is free to area residents.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboone@aztrib.com.

December 29, 2004

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SCAT reviews service cuts

Liability insurance, prohibitive

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

Residents may soon find it harder to catch a ride to go shopping or do their errands as the Sun Cities Area Transit Systems look at scaling back services.

SCAT, a nonprofit transportation agency supported largely by community donations, blames the cost of liability insurance for its Dial-A-Ride vans.

"Right now, we are looking at the possibility of cutting back unless we get more funding and donations," said Tom Profico, SCAT executive director. "We need more donations by the spring or the next few months."

Initially, cutback measures include reducing the hours of curb-to-curb operation by one to

two hours a day and possibly limiting the Sunday transportation to religious services only, Mr. Profico said. Currently, SCAT provides transportation from 7:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. weekdays and 7:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. weekends and holidays.

Another SCAT service is free transportation home from a hospital emergency room from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

"The demand for that service has increases over the past year or two," Mr. Profico said. "We would not want to cut that. That is something that would be the last resort."

Liability insurance cost is about one-sixth of SCAT's annual \$650,000 budget, he said.

"It's a large amount," he said. "And that has been a major

impact on our financial situation. In looking at our current cash flow over the next two years or so, we will see a constant reduction in available cash to operate, mainly due to the increased cost of providing the service."

This year, SCAT also faced extra cost in repairing its outdated compressed natural gas system, which fuels the vans.

Some 62,000 Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown seniors each year use Dial-A-Ride, to the doctors, dentists, shopping and visit friends. The cost for a one-way ride is \$2.50. The last fare increase was in 1998.

About 11 percent of the riders are physically disabled and use wheelchairs and many passengers use canes and walkers, said SCAT Board member Marge Mur-

To give a tax-deductible donation, please send to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, Ariz., 85372. SCAT also is seeking suggestions to help with its financial situation.

phy.

She said some churches donate annually to SCAT in thanks for transporting their parishioners to services and if professionals that receive payment from SCAT passengers followed suit, it would help SCAT financially.

She suggested residents and businesses could pledge monthly or annual donations and individuals could set up bequests.

Post your comment on this issue at newsblog.info/0302

News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com

THURSDAY, SEPT. 9, 2004

SCAT back on track

Full service resumes

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit is running on all cylinders again after more than a week struggling with fuel problems.

SCAT's clients are now free to get to hair appointments and shopping centers, not just medical appointments, as recent restrictions had required, said SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico.

The restriction was put in place Aug. 29 after the nonprofit group's compressed natural gas pump broke, requiring the volunteer drivers to travel 20 miles round-trip to the Washington School District three or four times a day to refuel.

Profico said SCAT tried to use a pump at Wilhelm Automotive, but discovered it had been closed a month prior.

SCAT interim manager Pete Davis, filling in last week while Profico was on vacation, said replacing the compressor would cost \$250,000, so technicians were called to work on the old unit.

"Our executive committee will meet next week and talk about these issues once we decide the future of this compressor," Davis said.

Shortly after SCAT's pump broke, Davis asked the Peoria Unified School District if its drivers could fill up at the district's station near 67th and Peoria avenues, saving them the time and expense of driving to the Washington lot near 39th Avenue and Cactus Road.

Steve Highlen, the district's support services manager, said the district's station, which is located in the city of Glendale, is zoned only for governmental use, meaning SCAT isn't authorized to use it. He said he checked with Glendale to see if that restriction could be amended.

"Our knowledge still remains where it was ... that our site is only approved for a fueling site for governmental agencies, not for public use,"

From A1

he said.

Highlen said the Peoria district would consider allowing SCAT to use its compressor if Glendale officials gave the go-ahead, but the final decision would depend on how the use impacted fueling of the district's buses and cars.

"We would have to have our own vehicles as a priority," Highlen said.

Glendale spokeswoman Julie Frisoni said there appeared to be a misunderstanding in that the Peoria district had not made a formal request to allow SCAT to use its pump, but was just apprising the city of the situation.

"There has been no request," she said. "Someone just needs to make a request of the city."

A request would start a process through planning and zoning to see if the land use could be amended, possibly with a temporary-use permit, Frisoni said. Factors to be considered likely would include how many vehicles SCAT would be refueling, how much fuel it would need and how often the vehicles would be filled.

Profico said he will consider making a request to Glendale to see if SCAT can gain permission to use the station should it need it.

"I think in the future it might not hurt, just as a backup," he said.

Katy O'Grady may be reached at 876-2514.

FYI

■ For information about SCAT or to schedule a pick up, call 977-8363.

See SCAT, A5

SCAT curbs rides

Fuel problem limits trips to doctors only

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit service is being severely restricted for the foreseeable future because of a fuel problem.

As of Wednesday evening, trips have been limited to medical appointments only. That means clients who use the service to get to shopping centers, beauty salons and elsewhere will have to find alternatives.

SCAT's compressed natural gas pump has been broken since Sunday, requiring the nonprofit organization to make 20-mile round trips to Phoenix to refuel its fleet, said Pete Davis, SCAT's interim manager. Eleven of SCAT's 13 vehicles use compressed natural gas.

"Various technicians have

See SCAT, A5

From A1

been unable to get it going," he said.

SCAT also is working with the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center to make sure seniors who rely on the transportation service don't go hungry, Davis said.

"No one's going to starve," he said.

Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch manager, said only a handful of individuals take SCAT buses to the senior center for daily lunches, but the bigger challenge is helping those people who need to do grocery shopping. That issue is still being worked out, she said.

"We can mobilize our volunteers if we have to," Wixson said.

Some individuals have been waiting up to two hours for SCAT pickups, causing short tempers in some instances. For the most part,

however, clients have been understanding, Davis said.

Clients who need shopping transportation are being referred to Interfaith Community Care, which provides a shopping service.

Davis said he can't predict when service will be back to normal. "At this point, it is unknown," he said.

Officials are trying to get gasoline-powered vehicles in the interim, and are exploring other options to get residents to their appointments.

"We'll stay open Saturday, Sunday and Monday. We have people going to dialysis on Saturday, so they have to go," Davis said. "I would take them in my car if I have to."

SCAT also is working to ensure individuals can be transported to church services Sunday, and if possible, on some shopping trips on Labor Day.

SCAT is working with Luke Air Force Base to see if technicians from the air base can

be brought in to fix the compressor.

"They're trying to cut through the red tape to see if they can send a couple technicians to help us," Davis said.

Peoria Unified School District, which also uses compressed natural gas in its fleet, is unable to help SCAT for liability reasons, Davis said. Steve Highlen, the district's support services administrator, could not be reached for comment this

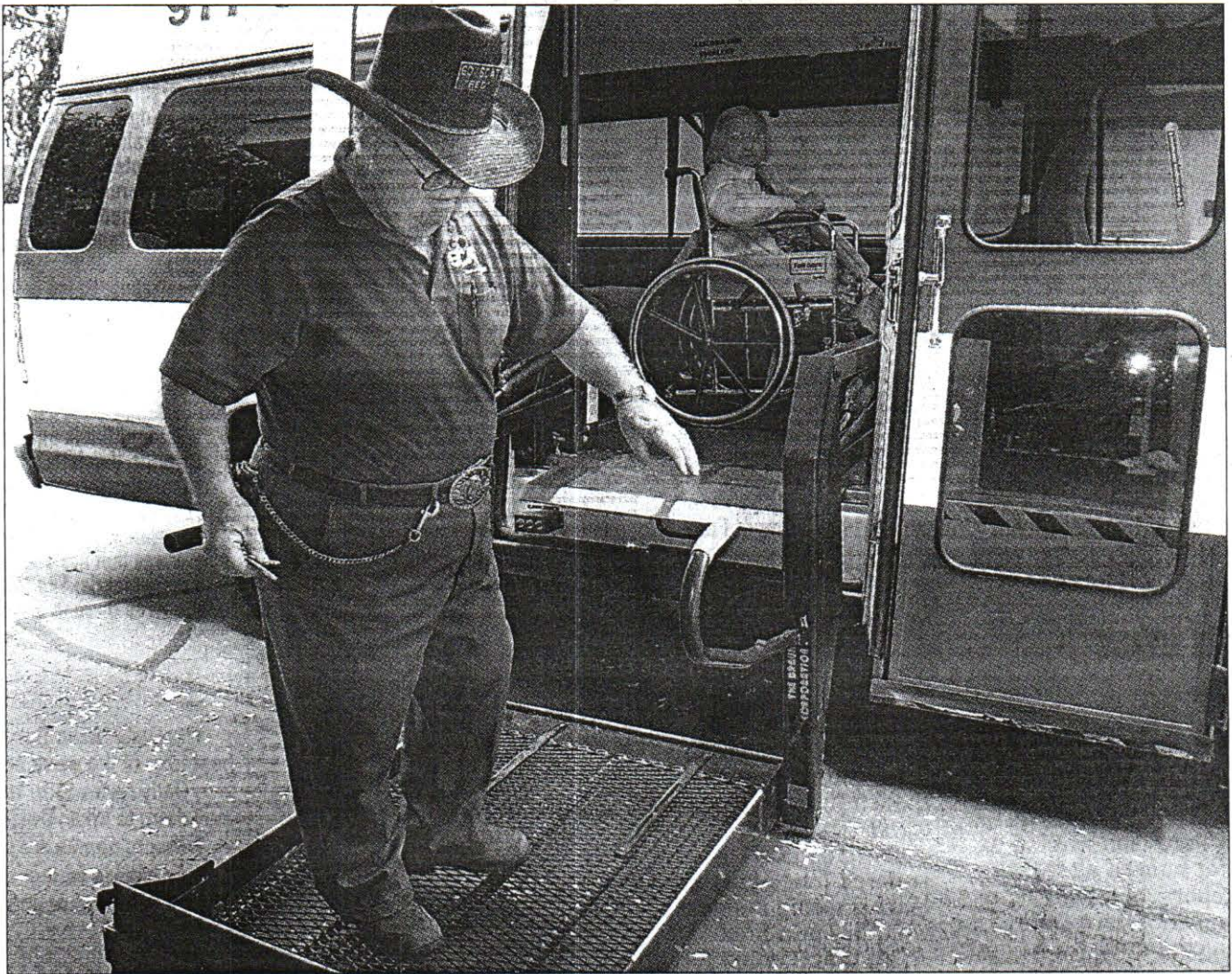
morning.

SCAT's vendor is recommending the agency replace the compressor, which will cost \$250,000.

"So that's a huge capital cost for us," Davis said. "We don't have it in the budget."

SCAT has been facing operational budget shortfalls for the past couple of years because of rising insurance rates.

Individuals with questions about SCAT's service should call 977-8363.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

SCAT driver Red Gibson pick up an unidentified rider in Sun City Thursday.

Supplement necessary for SCAT

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Funding and feasibility have long been the roadblocks to an improved public transportation system in the Sun Cities.

Efforts have been made over the years to implement a bus system to aid residents who don't drive, but they've faded away due to a lack of riders, money or both.

Still, area officials say they are happy to entertain any new ideas to help Sun Cities seniors get where they need to go.

"We have to do something out here," said Rep. Carole Hubbs of Sun City West, R-District 4.

Hubbs said she would be open to considering a public transportation system such as that in Logan, Utah.

"We can't continue to be a community and leave people stranded," she said.

Hubbs said she became acutely aware of the problem while serving on the Recreation Centers of Sun City West governing board.

"Once you're on the rec board and work with Interfaith, you really see how many residents are truly stuck in their homes," she said.

Interfaith Community Care provides social services to area

residents, and in February started offering monthly bus rides to Arrowhead Towne Center in Glendale to give otherwise home-bound seniors a chance to do some shopping.

The Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association offers

another transportation option. PORA's Consumer Services Department maintains a list of drivers and companies that can provide transportation to individuals who need it.

See SCAT, A5



BRUCE ELLISON/SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS-SUN

A woman boards a bus in Logan, Utah, where the transit service includes 10 routes and 200 individual stops.

OVER

The Sun Cities' biggest transportation provider, Sun Cities Area Transit, has been facing ever increasing insurance rates and a continuous budget crunch. The non-profit organization provides on-demand rides for \$2.50 each way.

Like Hubbs, SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico said the bus system in Logan, Utah, is worth a closer look, as is any other plan that might offer Northwest Valley seniors a better transit option.

SCAT's annual operating budget is about \$700,000, more than \$100,000 of which goes to insurance.

The insurance costs "used to be a third of that," Profico said. "Over the years it's just escalated."

Profico said SCAT is trying to get grants to continue its services, but many of the funding sources are available only to governmental agencies or to new programs.

"We're saying there's programs like ours that have been around more than 20 years. We don't need money to start something new," he said. "We need money to keep doing what we're doing."

Profico said any kind of bus system that was introduced to the Sun Cities would have to accommodate the demographics. Some residents are unable to walk to bus stops, and about 10 percent of SCAT's riders are in wheelchairs. In addition, the summer heat makes it difficult for many seniors to wait at stops for extended periods.

SCAT and Sun City's 40th Anniversary Committee tried to introduce a bus route in 2001, but it quickly ended due to a lack of ridership. The Circle 40 route averaged only two to three riders per day.

"Some couldn't walk a block or two to catch a stop, and then everybody wanted us to go on their street," Profico said.

Hubbs said she recalls several years ago when local officials tried to encourage area doctors to subsidize a transit system since many seniors use public transportation to get to doctor's appointments. The doctors declined, Hubbs said.

Like Hubbs, Maricopa County District 4 Supervisor Max Wilson said he, too, would consider taking a closer look at the Logan plan or something similar.

"If there's enough people that want to explore that possibility, I will be glad to look at it," he said. "SCAT has done the job, but the funds are running low."

SCAT Dial-A-Ride marks transportation milestone

ANNIE KARSTENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sidney Levine of Sun City was honored to be the 100,000 wheelchair passenger to be picked up by the Sun City Area Transit's Dial-A-Ride service.

At a special presentation ceremony Tuesday, Levine was recognized by SCAT board members and volunteers for being a symbol of the program's milestone achievement. He took the milestone ride on June 7.

"This means a lot to me," Levine said. "They've been very, very good to me."

Levine has been using the service for about a year and said the SCAT van picks him up from his home at the Woodmark Retirement Community three days a week to take him to his dialysis appointments.

As the 100,000 wheelchair transport, Levine received 50 complimentary SCAT tickets and a card of congratulations.

SCAT Operations Manager Tony Waskiewicz said that people in the Sun City area have come to rely on the Dial-A-Ride vans. The vans transport an average of 500 wheelchair passengers a month, in addition to the non-wheelchair patrons that also use the service.

"This is a very important service to the people in this community," he said. "We're not limited to the type of service available and with the growing number of people in our

community that are wheelchair bound, there are many who rely on our services."

Since 1982, SCAT has been answering calls from residents who need rides for shopping trips, medical appointments, church services or wherever their local daily travels take them.

This past winter, SCAT celebrated traveling its 5 millionth mile in the coverage area, which includes Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown. In February 1999, SCAT picked up its 1 millionth passenger.

"It's been extremely helpful for our residents," said Robin Burr, executive director of the Woodmark, who attended Tuesday's presentation. "It's affordable and so readily available."

SCAT's 14 van fleet is available 365 days a year, are all wheelchair accessible and each vehicle runs on alternative fuel, Waskiewicz said.

Three new replacement vans are expected join the fleet by the end of the year. The cost for transportation is \$2.50 each person, each way, he said.

A driver is on call from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night to pick up passengers who need transportation from hospital emergency room's during the late night hours. This service is free to area residents.

For transportation with SCAT Dial-A-Ride, call 977-8363.

Annie Karstens can be reached at 876-2532 or akarstens@aztrib.com



"RED" C. D. Gibson loads Sydney Levine onto the SCAT van Tuesday morning. Levine rides three times a week to go to dialysis. He received a 50 free ride pass for being the 100,000th SCAT rider.

MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

SCAT launches fund drive

Community donations vital to seniors without cars

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

For the past 14 years, independence for Erma Herman meant the Sun Cities Area Transit System.

At least once a week, the 96-year-old Sun City resident boards a Dial-A-Ride van that takes her where she needs to go.

"I'm handicapped to begin with," said Ms. Herman, who uses a walker. "I use (the service) to go to the doctor's, the hairdresser's and to the bank. I have to depend on SCAT for wherever I go."

Ms. Herman is one of the 62,000 senior citizens a year who rely on SCAT, a nonprofit transportation agency supported largely by community donations.

The agency recently kicked

If you go

For a shared ride call, (623) 977-8363 between 7:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. on weekdays and between 7:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. on weekends and holidays.

Please call an hour and half before pick-up time to schedule a ride. The cost is \$2.50 per ride.

To give a tax-deductible donation, please send to Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, Ariz., 85372.

off its second fund-raising campaign for 2003-04. The goal is to raise \$328,000, almost half of the \$685,000 budget needed to operate 14 wheelchair-accessible vans, 365 days a year. Two fund-raising events are held each year — in April and in November. The November 2003 campaign raised \$60,000 from individuals, churches and service clubs.

The agency also receives \$195,000 from government and outside grants and \$7,000 in

interest from endowment funds. Yearly fares of \$155,000 barely cover a fourth of the operating costs.

"SCAT is important for the community, especially for people without transportation," said Marge Murphy, a SCAT board director. "Many are handicapped and really are prisoners in their own homes if they don't have use of SCAT."

Ms. Murphy said community

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Drive

Continued From Page 1

contribution is essential to the program's longevity.

"If we don't get community donations, SCAT might have to close," she said. "One of the big issues is they have to pay over \$100,000 for insurance for this year and it's such a burden on the budget."

Insurance rates have increased by 225 percent in three years for SCAT, which provides curb-to-curb service for Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown residents.

Sun City resident Norman Reitman depends on the service to take him for dialysis treatment at Lakeview Medical Arts Plaza.

"I'd without it," said the 80-year-old resident, who undergoes 3.5 hours of dialysis three days a week. "I can make other arrangements but they are on time and very good for me to use."

Besides taking senior citizens to places including medical appointments, visits with friends and church, the agency also drives residents discharged from the Boswell and Del Webb hospitals' emergency rooms, between 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. The 4-year-old program brought close to 300 people home from the hospitals this past year, which is about a 34 percent increase for the service, said Thomas Profico, SCAT executive director.

"We would not want to have to reduce the hours of service or days of service," Executive Director Profico said. "The community needs transportation seven days a week."

He said roughly 10 percent or 6,000 of its passengers are wheelchair-bound. For the first three quarters of the 2003-04 fiscal year, the number of wheelchair riders

increased by 750, compared with the same period the previous year, he added.

If donations are down, the agency also may resort to fare hikes. The last increase was in 1998, when fares jumped to the current \$2.50 a ride from \$1.75, Executive Director Profico said.

"An increase in fares for some individuals would be difficult," he noted. "We've tried to maintain our service but we had set backs the last couple of years. There have been certain cost increases such as insurance that we have no control over."

News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com



Independent Newspapers/Cecilia Chan

SCAT driver Frederick Samuel sees to it that Sun City resident Norman Reitman gets to his dialysis treatment on time. Mr. Reitman, who is on fixed income, said the low-cost service is affordable.

VF SUN CITIES AREA TRANSIT (SCAT)

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

August 27, 2003

SCAT offers hookup to Valley Metro buses

By Matt Loeschman
Independent Newspapers

For Sun Citians, a bus trip to Phoenix is a phone call away.

While most residents may be aware that Sun City Area Transit (SCAT) provides on-demand transportation within the local area, they may not know that Valley Metro has a stop in Sun City and that they can get there, to catch a bus out of town, by calling SCAT.

"We can take passengers to the 106 bus stop," SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico confirmed. "A lot of our passengers utilize this connection to get into Phoenix. Those buses come out on Peoria Avenue and loop around back to the east. It's a relatively easy way for seniors to travel a far distance."

Valley Metro's 106 bus stop

is located between Cactus and Thunderbird roads, east of 111th Avenue.

In the last fiscal year, Mr. Profico reported, more than 600 passengers used SCAT to hook up with Valley Metro.

Buses travel from the 106 stop to shopping centers including Metrocenter and Paradise Valley Mall.

Sun Citians wishing to ride SCAT can call 977-8363 to have a van dispatched to their door. Riders are asked to call at least 90 minutes prior to an appointment or a day in advance should they need wheelchair assistance.

The service generally transports senior citizens to such destinations as work, stores and medical facilities.

"We are a demand-response

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Bus

Continued From Page 1
service," explained Mr. Profico. "We don't have specific routes that the drivers follow. We go curb-to-curb and take our passengers where they need to go."

SCAT, a non-profit organization established in 1982, has 14 vans in its fleet, although about 10 go out on a typical day. Vans run from 7:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. on weekdays and 7:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. on weekends and holidays.

Vans travel inside Sun City,

Sun City West, Youngtown and certain areas of Surprise. Their base is at 9445 N. 99th Avenue.

"We operate 365 days a year," Mr. Profico said.

SCAT, charging \$2.50 per person per ride, transports an average of about 200 people per weekday. Another 200 residents use the vans each weekend.

Valley Metro charge another \$1.25 per local trip.

Some residents have wondered whether SCAT could expand its coverage area.

"It's something we are look-

ing into, but if we extend ourselves too far, our passenger service starts to suffer," Mr. Profico explained. "We don't have the funds to be traveling all over the place and racking up the so-called dead-end miles."

Surprise offers a similar Dial-A-Ride van service, and the city is increasing its rates beginning next year. The Dial-A-Ride rates will be comparable to SCAT's rates.

Dial-A-Ride does not oper-

ate on Saturdays or Sundays.

"In the future, we may go to weekends," Surprise Community Initiatives Director Dan Lundberg said. "We'll take a look at the feasibility down the line."

The recent gas crunch did not affect SCAT's daily service.

"Our vehicles operate on compressed natural gas, so there was no problem for us," Mr. Profico said. "It was business as usual."

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

June 4, 2003

SCAT raises \$30K in latest campaign

By Chris Seggerman
Independent Newspapers

Donors have given approximately \$30,000 to the Sun Cities Area Transit System since its latest fund drive began in April, with more coming through the mail each day.

This is about half of SCAT's goal of \$60,000, the amount collected during last year's fund drive.

SCAT Executive Director Thomas Profico said the donations will keep coming until September, when a final total will be calculated.

"We never know until all the returns are in," Mr. Profico said.

Mr. Profico said the donation level is close to where it was last year at this time.

According to Mr. Profico, \$30,000 will fund approximately five percent of SCAT's operating budget.

Looked at another way, it would just cover the \$30,000 hike in insurance premiums at SCAT in one year, or almost make up for the \$32,750 SCAT was expecting from Maricopa County that was cut.

SCAT sustained a loss of \$172,780 during the first nine months of this year, up from a \$78,793 loss in the same period a year earlier.

SCAT received donations, including bequests, of \$83,750 between its November fundraising campaign and April.

Other sources of funding are various grants and foundations, including the United Way

and the Sun City West Community Fund.

Mr. Profico said SCAT was also looking into funding from environmental groups. SCAT's vehicles use compressed natural gas instead of gasoline, a practice the company began in 1988. SCAT had six vehicles converted to the alternative fueling system before acquiring eight vehicles made to run on natural gas.

SCAT's drivers are paid employees, not volunteers.

The company follows guidelines mandated by the Arizona Department of Transportation in its hiring practices.

SCAT receives some funding from the Regional Public Transit Authority, but relies on donations and support from local churches and organizations.

The Lion's Club donated SCAT's operating facility at 9445 N. 99th Avenue

SCAT operates seven days a week, 365 days per year. Rides cost \$2.50 per person per trip.

SCAT also offers a late night service from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Grants cover the cost of that service, which is for people taken to the emergency room via ambulance who need a ride home.

"So often, people don't have a wallet or purse if they're taken by an ambulance," Mr. Profico said.

SCAT is still soliciting donations, which may be mailed to P.O. Box 1972, Sun City, AZ 85372.

Losses mounting at transit agency

By **Mike Russo**
Independent Newspapers

Ridership was up, and profitability was down, for the first nine months of Sun Cities Area Transit's fiscal year.

Passenger count jumped 11.67 percent, from 44,536 through the first nine months of last year to 45,058 during the corresponding period this year.

However, SCAT sustained a loss \$172,780 for the period. During the same period last year, SCAT incurred a \$78,793 loss.

SCAT benefited from the generosity of local residents, receiving donations, including bequests, of \$83,750 between the November fund-raising campaign and today, said Tom Profico, SCAT executive director.

Another fund-raising campaign was scheduled to commence before the end of this month.

"We have to get some money in the kitty some way," said George Hartman, SCAT director.

One proposal to generate additional revenue will be pursued by a committee headed by SCTA director Ruth Everman. The committee will solicit donations or grants from

assisted living facilities to offset the high cost of transporting wheelchair patients.

Assisted living facilities do not offer transportation for wheelchair-bound residents, thereby avoiding the costly insurance premiums associated with transporting wheelchair passengers, according to Ms. Everman.

Portifico attributed SCAT's mounting deficit to soaring insurance costs and a loss of county funding.

SCAT experienced a nearly \$30,000 hike in insurance premiums in the last year, and \$72,000 over the last two years, according to Mr. Profico.

"We were supposed to receive \$32,750 from the county this year," he added. The county's financial shortcomings caused it to eliminate the funding, according to Mr. Profico.

Increased ridership resulted predominantly from more frequent use of SCAT services by wheelchair and late-night emergency room passengers, Mr. Profico noted.

"There has been a considerable increase in the transport of wheelchair passengers," Mr. Profico said. "Much of that is

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OVER

SCAT

Continued From Page 1

due to the Red Cross transport not operating out of here anymore."

The Red Cross ceased operations in Sun City about 18 months ago.

During the first nine months of the fiscal year, SCAT transported 3,993 wheelchair passengers, a 7.31 percent rise from last year's 3,964. However, the jump in wheelchair passengers over the last two years is up 26.76 percent, rising from 3,150 to 3,993.

The wheelchair transports are quite expensive, according to Mrs. Everman,

"It costs us nearly \$20 per wheelchair passenger per trip," Mrs. Everman said. That

includes the cost of insurance.

SCAT collects a fee of \$2.50 each way for a ride.

Through the end of March, SCAT provided late-night rides for Sun Cities' hospitals to 172 passengers, up 49.57 percent from the 115 such passengers using the service during the corresponding time frame last year.

"The late-night emergency room passenger increase is considerable," Mr. Profico said. "People are getting to know the service is available."

"This month we have transported 31 late-night passengers," Mr. Profico said. "As of (April 23), we have carried 203 passengers for the late-night service and we still have more than two months to go this year."

SCAT had projected trans-

porting 200 late-night passengers for the entire year, Mr. Profico noted.

"We have had as many as five passengers transported in one night," Mr. Profico said. "There have been several nights when we transported three or four passengers."

"The late-night service has really been tremendous," he added.

While insurance and some other expenses have risen, SCAT was able to save some money by using compressed natural gas as fuel.

"CNG has not risen in cost as dramatically as gasoline," Profico said.

The equivalent per gallon cost of CNG is under \$1, according to Mr. Profico. Gasoline prices continue to hover near the \$2 per gallon mark.

Staff reductions included in SCAT 2004 budget

By Mike Russo
Independent Newspapers

A budget of \$685,100 for fiscal 2003-04 was unanimously approved by the Sun City Area Transit Board Directors during its April 23 quarterly meeting.

That represents a .04 percent reduction from this year's \$688,000 budget. SCAT's fiscal year ends June 30.

"Most of the figures are pretty well the same as in 2002-03," explained Tom Profico, SCAT executive director. "We did budget 15 percent (increase) for insurance."

The insurance budget rose

from \$112,000 to \$130,000, a 16 percent jump.

"Insurance costs are almost equal to the money collected from cash fares," observed Ruth Everman, SCAT director. "That is appalling."

Fares are budgeted at \$155,000 for the coming year, the same as the 2002-03.

An economy that continues to flounder led SCAT to lower its expectations for local contributions.

Local contributions for next year are budgeted at \$315,000, down from \$318,000 this year.

The biggest savings will come for trimming staff.

Salaries were reduced from \$330,000 to \$310,000 in the 2004 budget. The reduction was accomplished by eliminating two full-time positions and using two part-time employees instead, according to Mr. Profico.

Staff reduction will also result in a \$3,000 decrease in benefits, which will drop from \$50,000 to \$47,000.

Mr. Profico said SCAT is fortunate that its fleet of vans operates on compressed natural gas, as well as gasoline, which affords the organization an opportunity for savings, since CNG is much less expensive than gas.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2003

SCAT identifies potential revenue source

ASSISTED-LIVING FACILITIES: Board to request contributions

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun Cities Area Transit, in light of being more than \$170,000 over budget for the current fiscal year, will ask some of its clients to dig into their pockets.

SCAT provides service to 24 assisted-living facilities in the Northwest Valley, and its board thinks those places are getting a bargain with rides at \$2.50.

Four SCAT board members will contact the centers and appeal for contributions.

SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico said he is pursuing grants to reduce the shortfall, but board member Ruth Everman had another idea.

Everman said SCAT could either request donations from the facilities or their parent companies.

"It's worth it to bring it to their attention that we are doing this for a ridiculous price," she said. "It is important for these companies to know. They do not know we are losing money because of this."

What SCAT won't do is

raise rates, because that would affect all Dial-a-riders, Everman said.

SCAT's 2003-04 fiscal budget of \$685,100 released Wednesday morning reflects a \$2,900 decrease from the adjusted budget of \$688,000 for this fiscal year.

SCAT budgeted \$76,000 for insurance in 2002-03, compared with \$130,000 for the upcoming year, with costs this year totaling \$112,000.

Profico said the assisted-living facilities should recognize they are getting good transportation for a minimal charge.

"We are losing \$10 for every ride we give," he said.

"It costs a lot more than \$2.50."

Profico said the facilities' other option would be to hire taxis, which charge considerably more.

In a budget review, Profico said he was being careful in estimating the insurance cost. He said the \$130,000 figure was being used as a safeguard because of rising costs.

Everman said rising insurance costs have to be dealt with some way.

"What is (surprising) is our insurance amount is as high as our cash fares," she said.

Cash fares are budgeted for \$155,000 in the

2003-2004 budget.

In another attempt to balance the budget, SCAT eliminated two full-time positions and added two part time for a savings of about \$20,000.

The rest of the budget in income and expenses closely resembles recent years.

The SCAT board also looked at ridership trends, and Profico said late-night emergency-room rides have increased significantly.

SCAT expected 200 rides in the late-night service for the current fiscal year, but already has had 207 riders with two months to go.

Michael Maresch can be reached at 876-2513 or mmaresch@aztrib.com.

SCAT pocketbook suffers financial hit

By Mike Russo
Independent Newspapers

Escalating insurance costs and a loss of county funding were the main contributors to a \$29,437 deficit racked up by Sun Cities Area Transportation in the first six months of the current fiscal year.

That performance, however, was an improvement over the same period last year, when the loss totaled \$37,521.

"We were to receive \$32,700 this fiscal year from the county, and that was cut completely (due to the county's own fiscal problems)," explained Tom Profico, SCAT executive director. "Also, our insurance has gone up from \$40,000 (per year) two years ago to \$112,000 now."

Liability coverage is the biggest component of escalating insurance costs, espe-

cially as it pertains to wheelchair passengers.

SCAT has experienced a significant increase in the number of wheelchair passengers it carries, Mr. Profico said. Ridership of wheelchair passengers has risen from 2,053 during the first six months of fiscal 2000-2001 to 2,568 this year.

SCAT President Alex Post attributed the increase "to the exodus of the Red Cross."

Overall ridership for the six-month period amounted to 30,280, up 3.76 from last year's count of 29,374 for the same six months.

The bulk of the passengers continue to use SCAT services during weekdays, rather than on weekends or at night.

An average of 5,046 passengers used SCAT services each month, up from 4,895

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SCAT

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the previous year.

Average weekday ridership for the period rose from 186 in 2002 to 193 this year.

Weekend ridership slipped slightly, as an average of 103 passengers rode SCAT vans on Saturdays and 80 were transported on Sundays. That was down from 107 and 84, respectively, last year.

Sixty-eight percent of SCAT trips are within Sun City; 18 percent in Sun City West; 8 percent of trips originate or conclude in Youngtown, and 6 percent of trips go elsewhere.

Forty-eight percent of riders use SCAT services for shopping purposes, and 36 percent of riders are destined for medical appoint-

ments.

SCAT picked up 91 percent of riders within 45 minutes of receiving a call, up 1 percent from the previous year. The ride duration was 30 minutes or less for ninety-three percent of passengers. It was 91 percent in 2002.

"We try our best to pickup passengers within 45 minutes," Mr. Profico said.

Late-night passenger service to the Sun Cities hospitals emergency rooms rose from 84 to 115. "I think that is reflective of how we serve the elderly," said George Hartman, SCAT board member.

When the program began a couple of years ago, both Del E. Webb and Boswell hospitals were patronized about evenly, according to Mr. Profico. "It now leans heavily to calls to Boswell," he said.

With SCAT experiencing losses for the past 18 months, Mr. Profico mentioned that the dial-a-ride service has implemented some cost-cutting measures in recent years, including replacing vehicles on a rotating basis. "We were putting a lot of money into repairing our vehicles," Mr. Profico said. "We had one vehicle with over 180,000 miles on it," he said.

SCAT is also trying to offset losses with its current fund-raising effort which has yielded \$75,153 since November according to Mr. Profico. The nonprofit organization was recently the beneficiary of two bequests; one from the trust of Henry and Mary Grewo, former Sun City West residents, \$9,151, and \$8,000 from the Clarence Johnson trust fund.

SCAT hurting

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Areas Transit is straining to make enough money to close a budget gap that has forced three budget adjustments in five months.

SCAT Executive Director Tom Profico said at Wednesday's SCAT meeting the transportation provider experienced a decline of more than \$29,000 for the first six months of the 2003 fiscal year, compared to last year.

Insurance costs jumped from \$83,000 to \$112,000 in the past year, causing the three budget adjustments over the last five months.

SCAT also took a hit when funds channeled to the agency through the county from a state program ended last year. SCAT used to get \$50,000 a year through the program and now needs to find a way to recoup this loss.

Because those funds were provided by calendar year, SCAT lost the \$25,000 it budgeted for last fiscal year, the \$32,700 it was to get this year and all state funding for the near future.

"Between those two we lost (roughly) \$70,000," Profico said.

On the plus side, he said SCAT's donation drive is going well heading into its last two months. So far, SCAT has received \$56,000 compared to last year's total of a little more than \$62,000.

"There is still some trickling in," Profico said.

Even with the recent bad times, the executive director said it does not compare to the situation SCAT faced five years ago.

"Five years ago, we were really, really running on a thread," he said.

SCAT woes mount

SEEING RED: Agency trims employee costs

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit will probably be operating in the red this fiscal year.

At a Wednesday-morning meeting, Executive Director Tom Profico said SCAT is trying to trim areas of its budget to offset increasing costs. He said SCAT will not fill a vacant position, while two other workers have agreed to cut back on their hours, adding that SCAT will save \$30,000 through these measures.

"We were looking at some cutbacks, and one person chose to leave voluntarily to look for another job," he said. "We were looking at reducing the hours of full-time employees."

Outgoing board President James Lackey said that even with the cuts, SCAT will likely encounter lean times.

"We will probably be in the red some," he said. "That is just some cold, hard facts."

Profico said SCAT will have

From A1

to dip into reserves if its budget does not recover, which he said is possible.

"We need grants; we need additional money," Profico said. "We have cut payroll as much as possible."

Riders pay \$2.50 for SCAT rides, though each costs \$11.48 to provide — the primary reason donations are needed.

"We have to keep working on it," Lackey said. "We are an agency that relies on donations."

Part of the reason SCAT expects to be in the red is, it is no longer getting money through the state administered by the county. In the past, SCAT received \$50,000 yearly from the state, and this year, Profico said, he was expecting \$32,500 and was surprised to hear the funding had dried up.

Profico revised SCAT's budget. Originally, insurance was budgeted at \$78,000, but that figure rose to \$112,000.

SCAT is gearing up for its

2003 fund-raiser. This year's netted \$54,132, and in 2001, SCAT donations amounted to \$50,423.

SCAT also released its trends from July 1 to Sept. 30, which reveal nearly the same number of passengers are relying on it as in years past.

In the 2002-2003 fiscal year through the first quarter, 15,172 passengers used the service, compared to 14,588 passengers over the first three months of last fiscal year. Sixty-eight percent of the passengers were from Sun City, 18 percent from Sun City West, 9 percent from Youngtown and 5 percent from elsewhere.

The primary destination for riders remained shopping facilities at 48 percent, followed by health-related trips at 36 percent, restaurants at 6 percent, recreation centers at 4 percent and churches at 3 percent.

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DAILY NEWS-SUN

THURSDAY, OCT. 24, 2002

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT JULY 31-AUG. 6, 2002

SCAT ends year with \$61,000 deficit

Transportation organization records first loss in three years

By Mike Russo
Independent Newspapers

The Sun Cities Area Transit finished its fiscal year with a loss for the first time in three years.

SCAT lost \$61,590 for the 12-month period that ended June 30. In contrast, SCAT posted a \$67,813.90 profit last year.

The loss is attributed to the increase in insurance and natural gas costs and a decrease in donations and state and county

funding, according to James Lackey, SCAT board president.

"A big part of the loss is the large increase in insurance costs," said Tom Profico, SCAT's executive director.

Insurance costs rose from \$40,000 in 2000-01 to \$86,332 this past year, and a greater increase is on the horizon for the present year. This year, \$78,109 was budgeted for insurance but the lowest bid received was for \$114,836.78, according to Mr. Profico.

"Our insurance costs have nearly tripled in two years," Mr. Profico said. "This is an appreciable increase."

SCAT was also hurt by the loss of \$25,000 in county funding, he noted.

The tragedy of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have also adversely affected SCAT. "Our donations did not fall off much but we have had to compete with many more other agencies for money from the county," Mr. Profico said.

SCAT's semi-annual fund-raiser completed in April generated approximately \$49,000, according to Mr. Profico. That was down about \$1,000 from the April 2001 fund drive.

While SCAT's financial picture changed dramatically during the past year, ridership was off only 1.5 percent, dropping from 61,317 two years ago to 60,400 last year.

Weekend ridership rose slightly and weekday use declined.

SCAT provided an average of 194 rides each Saturday and Sunday, up from 186 for the same two days last year.

Weekday trips slipped from an average of 198 to 193.

SCAT's cost per ride was \$11.48, according to Mr. Lackey. It charges \$2.50 each way for a ride.

"We have to reduce that cost per ride without reducing the

level of service," Mr. Lackey said. One way is to make sure the vans are running at top efficiency, Mr. Lackey noted.

One area of use that produced an increase in ridership was among wheelchair-bound patrons.

Wheelchair passengers were provided 5,185 rides in the recently completed fiscal year. That compares with 4,281 the previous year and 4,041 two years ago.

"That's a 25 percent increase in wheelchair passengers in two years," noted George Hartman, board member.

"About 18.5 percent of our passengers are wheelchair passengers," Mr. Lackey said.

"That indicates that Sun City is aging," Mr. Profico said.

"It does not require much more work to provide service for the wheelchair passengers," Mr. Lackey said. However, the larger volume of wheelchair passen-

gers is a major contributing factor to skyrocketing insurance costs, he noted.

The percentage of trips taken into specific communities has remained fairly constant.

Sixty-eight percent of trips were made into Sun City; 18 percent into Sun City West; 8 percent into Youngtown; and 6 percent into other areas.

SCAT's late-night emergency room service provided rides for 169 residents last year. That was down from 193 the previous year.

Approximately 67 percent of the late-night trips were provid-

ed for Sun City residents and 33 percent for Sun City West residents. Last year, it was about an even split between Sun City and Sun City West, Mr. Profico noted.

Part of the decline in Sun City West usage of the service was attributed to the personnel at Del Webb Memorial Hospital being unfamiliar with the program or reluctant to recommend it, according to Ruth Everman, board member. She mentioned that efforts are being made to rectify that situation.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT MAY 1-7, 2002

SCAT faces possible loss for fiscal year

Deficit would be first in 3 years

By Mike Russo
Independent Newspapers

A struggling economy has victimized Sun Cities Area Transit, which is facing the possibility of finishing the fiscal year with a loss for the first time in three years.

Through the first nine months of the current fiscal year, SCAT has posted a loss of \$78,793.

SCAT officials are optimistic the loss can be reduced to \$20,000 before the fiscal year ends June 30.

By contrast, SCAT ended fis-

cal year 2001-2002 \$67,813.90 in the black.

"We still are expecting some funding," explained Tom Profico, SCAT executive director.

In the midst of a semi-annual fund-raising drive, Mr. Profico is optimistic the effort will raise another \$40,000, and coupled with some other funding sources, the deficit can be trimmed to about \$20,000.

The loss is attributed to the increase in insurance and natural gas costs and a decrease in donations and state and county

funding, according to James Lackey, SCAT board president.

Insurance costs are up about \$27,500 through the first nine months of the fiscal year, according to Mr. Profico.

"Fund-raising has been harder since 9-11," he added.

State and county funding has also been cut as a result of the weak economy, according to Mr. Profico.

The fund-raising effort that kicked off earlier this month has thus far yielded slightly less

than \$10,000, according to Mr. Lackey.

"All fund drive letters should be sent out by the end of this week," Mr. Profico said. About 80 percent of the letters have been mailed.

Letters were initially sent to Sun City West this year. In years past, the initial letters were to Sun City residents.

Semi-annual fund-raisers are conducted in November and April.

Last November's fund drive generated about \$70,000, Mr. Profico noted. April's drive typically yields a lesser amount because some residents have

already gone for the summer.

Last year, April's drive resulted in contributions of approximately \$50,000, according to Mr. Profico.

Another factor contributing to the forecast loss is a dip in revenues as a result of slightly declining ridership.

Through the first nine months of this year, 44,536 rides have been provided by SCAT. At a comparable time last year, rides totaled 46,097.

Weekend ridership is up slightly and weekday use has declined.

SCAT has provided an average of 194 rides each Saturday

and Sunday, up from 184 for the same two days last year.

Weekday trips have slipped from an average of 199 to 189.

SCAT's cost per ride is \$10.76 and it recovers \$2.64, Mr. Lackey noted.

One area of use that has shown steady increases in ridership is among wheelchair-bound patrons.

Wheelchair passengers have been provided 3,964 rides this year. That compares with 3,150 at the same time last year and 2,985 in 2000.

"It's (wheelchair traffic) up about 33 percent since 2000," Mr. Lackey said. "That's a testa-

ment to the fact that Sun City is aging."

The percentage of trips taken into specific communities has remained fairly constant.

Sixty-eight percent of trips are made into Sun City; 18 percent into Sun City West; 8 percent into Youngtown; and 6 percent into other areas.

Approximately 67 percent of SCAT's late-night emergency room service this year has been provided for Sun City residents. Last year it was about an even split between Sun City and Sun City West, Mr. Profico noted.

OVER

SCAT adopts budget

By Mike Russo
Independent Newspapers

Rising insurance costs and escalating salaries have resulted in the Sun City Area Transit projecting a modest 4.35 percent budget increase for fiscal year 2002-2003, which begins July 1.

SCAT's proposed budget for the coming fiscal year is \$671,000, up from \$643,000 for the current year.

The largest expenditure projection is for salaries,

which are budgeted to be \$350,000. Last year's salary budget was \$329,000.

Insurance is projected to rise from \$76,000 to \$78,000, but bids are not due until early May, according to Tom Profico, SCAT executive director.

"We don't expect any great changes in insurance but we didn't expect any changes last time," observed James Lackey, president of the

SCAT board of directors.

Insurance costs skyrocketed, virtually doubling, from 2000-2001 to 2001-2002.

Liability insurance is the major component of insurance costs, but it also covers the nat-

ural gas compressors, which are used to fuel many SCAT vehicles, the radio transmitter tower in the White Tank Mountains and property and its contents.

Compressed natural gas, which many of SCAT's fleet of

vehicles use, is budgeted at \$27,000, up 8 percent from this year's figure, \$25,000.

On the revenue side, SCAT anticipates a reduction in county and Regional Public Transportation Administration funding. Those sources are budgeted to provide \$225,000 this year, but that is expected to dip to \$175,000 next year.

The county and state have cut back funding in many areas, according to Mr. Profico.

To offset the decline in state and county funding, SCAT is banking on a 34.98 percent increase in local contributions.

Comprising local contributions are grants, such as United Way and Sun City West

Community Fund, and fundraising activities.

SCAT has prepared grant requests for the coming fiscal year of \$62,500 to United Way — \$55,000 for the regular dial-a-ride service and \$7,500 for the late-night, emergency room service — and \$27,500 from the Sun City West Community Fund.

Mr. Profico is also preparing a grant request to be submitted to Soroptimist International. That request is due in early May.

Despite the less than glowing economic outlook, SCAT is not anticipating a fee increase. SCAT's fare is \$2.50 each way, per passenger.

SCAT in the red for last two quarters

Loss attributed to insurance cost hike

By Jeremy Pearlman
Independent Newspapers

The Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc. reported net income loss for the six-month period ending Dec. 31, 2001. It was the first such loss the corporation has had in the last four years.

Expenses for the non-profit transportation corporation exceeded income by \$37,521.07 for the first two quarters of its 2002 fiscal year.

The net loss is primarily attributed to increases in insurance costs for people on wheelchairs, according to Pete Davis, SCAT's bookkeeper

"Our insurance premiums for para-transit (transport operators who carry people in wheel-

chairs) have gone up from about \$36,000 for the prior year, to about \$76,000 for this year," Mr. Davis said. "Nationwide there's been an overall increase by insurance underwriters in covering handicapped transportation."

He said the increase is worrisome, but since underwriting for insurance is made on a three-year cycle, SCAT should not see any such increase in insurance premiums for a few more years.

Although SCAT showed a net loss for the beginning of its 2002 fiscal year, Mr. Davis does not believe there is any reason for concern.

"Not right now because we've had positive results in

fund-raising, we have four years of positive income and cash accumulations since 1998," Mr. Davis said. "We hope to finish the end of the year and break even."

SCAT had better than anticipated results with its fall fund drive, which began in November.

As of Jan. 14, SCAT received \$55,376 in donations from its fall fund drive, down from \$64,524. However, the total number of donations was higher this year.

SCAT officials are happy with the results of the fund-raiser because the drive began shortly after record numbers of Americans had made donations to Sept. 11-related charities.

"We have done better with the fund drive than we anticipated," said Thomas Profico, SCAT's executive director.

Mr. Profico believes community residents will continue to look at local charities which

directly benefit them, such as SCAT.

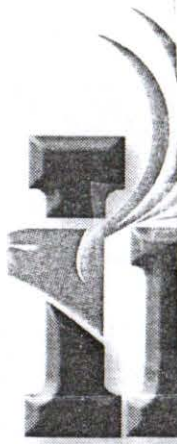
While increased costs can be attributed to insurance for transporting handicapped individuals, wheelchair ridership has been up for the first two quarters of SCAT's 2002 fiscal year in comparison to the same period in 2001.

A total of 2,648 wheelchair passengers used SCAT from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2001, compared to 2,053 from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2000.

Beyond wheelchair patronage, general ridership has maintained a similar level for the past two fiscal quarters, in comparison to last year, according to James Lackey, president.

"There's been no great change in the trends," Mr. Lackey said.

Total ridership from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2001, dropped by 951 passengers in comparison to the same period in 2000.



■ VANS

From Page 1

SCAT," said Mr. Park.

It is the first time that SCAT has ever operated a regularly scheduled service as far as Mr. Profico is aware. SCAT has been in existence for 17 years.

SCAT enters into this venture unsure about how many riders will use the service but Mr. Profico said, "We have had people request something like this. We are looking at good usage of this service."

Mr. Profico expects ridership to be bolstered by the fact that the van will also stop at shopping centers along the route.

"So many of the shopping centers are on the same route. We will not have to go our of our way," he said.

The Sun City 40th anniversary activities generated approximately \$110,000. Funds not used to purchase the vans will go the Sun City Foundation, according to Mr. Park. "They will invest it and use it as needed."

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COVERING THE NEWS OF SUN CITY, SUN CITY WEST AND YOUNGTOWN

25 CENTS

SCAT launches new Sun City service Jan. 15

Funds for vans generated by myriad 40th anniversary activities

By **MIKE RUSSO**
Independent Newspapers

Travelers in the Southwest are familiar with the Golden Circle that takes sightseers on a journey through the majestic natural wonders of Arizona, Utah and Colorado. Soon, Sun City will have its own version of the Golden Circle.

Starting Jan. 15, Sun City residents will be able to make the circuitous route to the community's recreation centers to partake of their

favorite recreation activities.

Using the proceeds generated by myriad 40th anniversary events, the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee has donated funds to Sun Cities Area Transit Authority to order two vans designated for use to shuttle residents to Sun City's recreation centers, and other nearby destinations, according to Fran Park, chairman of the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee.

The vans have already been ordered by SCAT and delivery is

scheduled for March. The program will begin using an existing van, with a second to be added as demand dictates, noted Tom Profico, SCAT executive director. The van will be emblazoned with 40th anniversary logo.



Fran Park

The van, which can accommodate seven passengers and a wheelchair, will depart the SCAT office at Peoria and 91st avenues at 7:15 a.m. Monday through Friday. The first stop will be at Mountain View Recreation Center. It will depart Mountain View at 7:30 a.m. on its circuit of all of the community's recreation centers.

It will take about two hours for the van to travel the route, Mr. Profico noted.

In addition to the 7:30 departure,

the van will leave Mountain View at 9:30 a.m., noon and 2 p.m. The van will return to the garage at 4 p.m.

SCAT was still working on the complete schedule as of late last week, and it will be subject to change based upon demand.

Reservations are not required to ride the van. The fare will be \$2.50 for each leg to the trip, according to Mr. Profico.

"This is a major departure for

See ■ VANS, Page 1

DEC. 26, 2001-JAN. 1, 2002

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SC Area Transit keeps rolling on

Fund drive nets higher than expected results

By Jeremy Pearlman
Independent Newspapers

Recent fund-raising efforts conducted by the Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., have so far netted better than anticipated results for the non-profit organization.

Although the country is mired in an economic recession and Sept. 11 relief efforts have garnered much of the nation's charitable contributions, SCAT has received more individual donations than at the same point in last year's fall drive, according to Tom Profico SCAT's executive director.

Solicitation letters were sent to all Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown residents and businesses on Nov. 16.

As of Dec. 18, a total of 2,053 responses have been received, up from 1,754 responses

received at the same point in last year's drive.

In light of the current world state, forecasted results for the fund drive were not high, according to Mr. Profico.

"We feel the response to us has not been as drastically affected as we thought it would be," Mr. Profico said.

While the number of total responses are up, actual donations are down by approximately \$5,000 from last year at this stage.

Mr. Profico believes donations will continue to arrive through the end of January.

SCAT offers shared-ride service to individuals seeking transit within Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown for \$2.50 each way. Transit hours are 7:15 a.m.-6:45 p.m. Monday-Friday and 7:15 a.m.-4:45 p.m. on weekends and holidays.

The call demand response

service is entering its 20th year in existence.

SCAT also offers late-night, home-return service for individuals visiting the emergency room of Sun Health hospitals. Funding for the late-night program is partially provided by both the Sun City West Community Fund and the Valley of the Sun United Way.

In addition to funds collected from fares, two annual fundraisers, grants and contributions from service agencies, churches, businesses and charities, SCAT receives nearly one-third of its annual funding from the state and county government.

Though cuts are being proposed to a slew of government-funded endeavors, Mr. Profico only foresees partial reductions in the funds obtained from Maricopa County and no reductions from the regional transit authority.

Currently, funds from Maricopa County provide some 7 percent of SCAT's total funding, while the regional transit authority provides approximately 26 percent.

"(Maricopa County) is looking at cutting the amount received by about a third," Mr.

Profico said. "We do not anticipate any change in (regional transit authority) funding in the next couple years. However, I can't be certain of that.

"I think we're holding our own here for at least the next few years," he said.

With or without possible cuts in government funding, no curtailment in SCAT's service is being planned.

"At this point we see no changes of service," Mr. Profico said. "There are too many people relying on us."

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT AUGUST 8-14, 2001

SCAT overnight bus service proves a success

Nearly 200 passengers used the service

By **MIKE RUSSO**
Independent Newspapers

A Sun Cities Area Transit program providing emergency nighttime transportation service from area hospitals was an unqualified success in its first year, according to Tom Profico, SCAT executive director.

SCAT transported 193 passengers between area hospitals and home during fiscal year 2000-2001, which began July 1, 2000.

The 193 passengers fell just seven short of the projection made by Mr. Profico upon the service's implementation.

"I said we would transport 200 people and we did 193," Mr. Profico said.

The program was launched July 1, 2000, to meet a need for people who are transported to the hospital and then, if released, in the wee hours of the morning, have no other way home.

Initial funding was provided by a \$5,000 United Way/Sun City Community Fund grant and donations from the Sun City Home Owners Association, Sun City West Community Fund, Sun Health, Sun City West's Property Owners and

See ■ SCAT, Page 5

Residents Association and the town of Youngtown. "We also had some private donations sent in specifically for this project," Mr. Profico said.

Public acceptance of the service has been fantastic, said Jim Lackey, president of the SCAT board of directors.

"This program has been very well received," Mr. Lackey said.

"Several people have expressed the opinion that this was a service that was needed," Mr. Profico added.

The program was started after SCAT had received suggestions from several Sun Citians to provide transportation for people stranded after hours at local hospitals.

Prior to SCAT's launch of the late-night service, ambulance driv-

ers were offering to take these people home and then charging them \$300 or more for the ride, according to Mr. Profico.

Now, when a person needs a ride home from the emergency room at night, an emergency room attendant will use a special number to contact SCAT, Mr. Lackey noted.

"We have designated people at each hospital who can call when someone needs the service," he said.

SCAT has an on-call driver ready to transport residents.

The rides are complimentary. "There is no charge for the service because few people take their wallet to the hospital," Mr. Lackey said.

Some grateful passengers have

later sent in a contribution in appreciation, according to Mr. Lackey.

Ridership was nearly equally divided between patients at Boswell Hospital in Sun City and Del E. Webb in Sun City West.

"Fifty-four percent of the riders were picked up from Boswell Hospital and 46 percent were from Webb," Mr. Profico said.

Mr. Profico further explained, "47 percent of the passengers were from Sun City, 47 percent were from Sun City West, 4 percent were from Youngtown and 2 percent were from the areas we service outside the communities, such as Immanuel Campus of Care."

Heaviest months of usage were January, 23; February and May, 21 each.

Encouraged by the first year of operation, SCAT is continuing the late-night service for fiscal 2001-2002.

The cost of operating the service is approximately \$10,000-\$11,000, according to Mr. Profico.

Funding for this coming year is coming from United Way/Sun City Community Fund, the Sun City West Community Fund and private contributions, Mr. Profico said.

"There are people making special donations to finance the program," Mr. Lackey said.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

AUGUST 1-7, 2001

SCAT revises budget

Spiraling insurance costs blamed

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Skyrocketing insurance costs caused the Sun City Area Transit board of directors to amend its budget for fiscal year 2001-02 during last week's meeting.

Insurance rates more than doubled from last year, resulting in that line item of the budget being raised from \$38,000 to \$81,600, according to Tom Profico, SCAT executive director.

The 2001-02 budget was originally adopted in April, prior to

insurance quotes being received, Mr. Profico explained.

"We anticipated insurance costs would be similar to last year," Mr. Profico said, and the budget was set accordingly. "But we had to amend the budget when insurance costs more than doubled."

Mr. Profico said he sent out requests for proposals to four insurance agencies; only three of which responded.

The lowest quote was \$75,713; submitted by Thornton-Dickerson

Agency, which insured SCAT last year.

"I was shocked by the quotes," Mr. Profico said.

The drastic jump resulted from the sharp rise in liability insurance to \$67,322, according to Mr. Profico.

The Regional Public Transportation Administration will contribute \$35,000 toward the insurance costs, Mr. Profico noted.

Mr. Profico said the major factor contributing for the sharp rise in liability coverage was "the company that had been providing our liability insurance stopped covering vehicles transporting wheelchair passengers for non-emergency purposes."

While liability insurance is the major component, insurance costs also covers the natural gas compressors, which are used to fuel SCAT vehicles, the radio transmitter tower in the White Tank Mountains and property and its contents.

Coverage was increased for the compressors, from \$125,000 to \$150,000, and the radio tower, from \$3,000 to \$6,000, contributing to increased insurance costs, according to Mr. Profico.

Mr. Profico said he believes the liability insurance for the public transportation industry has accelerated as the result of several large insurance claims filed nationwide, including one in Phoenix that involved a wheelchair-bound woman.

"There is really not much we can do about the rising insurance costs," said board President James Lackey.

Also, during the meeting, Treasurer Kathy Stroy reported that SCAT ended last fiscal year \$67,813.90 in the black.

THE WESTER Thursday, July 5, 2001

Moving people is SCAT's business

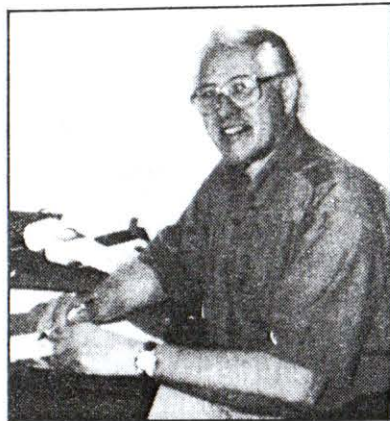
By Marie Scotti

Sun Cities Area Transit (SCAT) is a door-to-door bus service for anyone traveling within the Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown area. It operates 365 days a year, Monday through Friday from 7:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.; weekends and holidays from 7:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. The one-way fare is \$2.50 per passenger at this time.

"About 30% of the operating cost is from fares. Additional financial needs are met by individuals, non-profit organizations and businesses plus some matching funds from the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA)," says Tom Profico, executive director of SCAT.

SCAT is a public transit company that gives special consideration to seniors, the disabled and wheelchair passengers.

Telephone dispatch is SCAT's main channel of communication with passengers and is the first



Sun Cities Area Transit Exec. Dir. Thomas Profico coordinates the activities of 22 employees.

contact with SCAT by which callers judge the organization. "Because this is crucial to our continued existence, we are at all times, conscious of the need for special care in telephone conversations," said Profico.

There are two full-time telephone dispatchers and two part-time who can help at SCAT

headquarters with communication with its passengers. Profico reports that medical physicals are required by the Department of Transportation, since the government is involved. Drug testing is also required for dispatchers and drivers. SCAT has a total of 22 employees.

Dispatchers are required to learn the geographical area as part of their training and must know how to read a map. A huge wall map is located in the SCAT office.

For every request for transportation, the dispatcher quickly takes down the information while repeating it back to the caller. This is especially important for the pick-up, phone and destination. Besides accuracy of information, each dispatcher must be knowledgeable enough about the area and the people to know when to ask for further information such as suite number, store name, locations for pick-up, special needs of the caller (wheelchair, car/lift, etc.) and general accuracy of what the caller has told the dispatcher.

Just as with the telephone, the dispatcher will always maintain control of radio operations," says Profico. "This also means we must know every location before we dispatch it in order to avoid having to search maps if a driver has a question."

There are reservations available

to wheelchair passengers and the severely handicapped. They can be called in 24 hours prior to the requested service and both pick-up and return can be arranged at that time. There are also standing reservations. These are given to people who will be on an unchanging schedule.

Profico reports that the late night Emergency Room transportation service is available from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and is free to participants. From July 1, 2000 through March 31, 2001, of 141 passengers we returned home—69 were from Sun City West and 70 were from Del Webb Hospital.

To arrange for a ride in a SCAT van for shopping and visiting, call when ready. For medical or other appointments, call one and one-half hours ahead. Wheelchair users need to call the day before so that a wheelchair accessible Van is available. To cancel—call at least 30 minutes in advance. Otherwise SCAT expects no-show riders to pay the full cost. Telephone number is 977-8363.

Profico reports that from July 1 2000, through March 31, 2001, SCAT Dial-a-Ride carried 46,097 passengers. There were 3,150 wheelchair passengers during that period. Shopping and health related trips were most popular destinations.

Circle is broken; route halted

Special route fails to attract ridership

By JULI NESSETT
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Circle 40 route will no longer be making its loop around Sun City as of May 5, according to Sun Cities Area Transit officials.

During the April 25 SCAT board of directors meeting, Executive Director Tom Profico told directors the service would be temporarily discontinued through the summer, with the possibility of it resuming operation in the fall.

"We're just putting it on hold for now," said Mr. Profico.

The Circle 40 Route began operation Jan. 15 and as of the end of

March had only carried 103 passengers — an average of 1.93 passengers a day.

According to James Lackey, president of SCAT's board of directors, it would have taken 15 to 20 passengers a day to make the service successful.

The route was designed to make a complete circle around Sun City, making 15 major stops along the way. The 40th Anniversary Committee had hoped it would be a good source of transportation for residents in Sun City who did not have a car or could not drive any longer.

Cost for passengers to use the

service, which operated Monday through Friday, was \$1.50 each way.

The project was funded by the 40th Anniversary Committee, which worked throughout the year 2000 to raise over \$100,000 to fund two new vans and operation of the service.

The new vans are expected to arrive sometime in June and for the time being will be used for regular SCAT operations.

Mr. Profico said one of the reasons the service did not succeed is most regular SCAT passengers continued to use its regular service after the Circle 40 Route began.

He also said few people were going from location to location as originally hoped.

SCAT officials will meet with the former 40th Anniversary Committee, now called the Circle 40 Group, May 4 to discuss the situation further.



Submitted photo

In happier times, Linda Batista, Sun Cities Area Transportation driver, signals the start of the initial run of SCAT's new service to Sun City's recreation centers. The van used was donated to SCAT by the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee. The Circle 40 Route, which was inaugurated Jan. 15, has been suspended due to lack of riders.

Daily News-Sun • Thursday, April 26, 2001

Circle 40 runs out of gas

LACK OF INTEREST:
Ridership averages less than two people per day

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

In about a week, Sun Citians will lose one local mode of transportation.

Because of a lack of ridership, the Sun Cities Area Transit is suspending the Sun City Circle 40 bus route effective May 4.

Tom Profico, the organization's executive director, delivered the news to board members during SCAT's meeting Wednesday morning.

After the summer, SCAT officials will revisit the issue to see if the route can succeed in the future.

"We are putting it on hold," said SCAT President James Lackey.

Ridership during the route's short history has shown the interest is not there, Profico added.

"That has not lived up to expectations," Profico said. The route, which originated Jan. 15, has been criticized by many residents because of the distance between bus stops, as many people had no way to get to the bus pickup sites. Only two to three residents are taking the Circle 40 route on a daily basis, and it doesn't make sense to continue a route that is failing to pay for itself, Profico said. For the route to be successful, ridership would need to be at

least 20 passengers a day, he added.

"It's not been a success," he said. SCAT, he added, did receive a check for \$2,500 for the van and for the first few months of operation from the disbanded Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee, which was the driving force behind the route.

The Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee, after disbanding, reformed as the Circle 40 Group and concentrated its efforts on how to make the service a success.

"The Circle 40 Group requested and we agreed to continue service through May 4," Profico said. "It wouldn't be a money maker."

From Jan. 15 to March 31, the route carried 106 passengers during its weekday runs, which averages 1.93 passengers daily.

Board member Paul Schwartz asked if SCAT was going to have any type of route to help residents in lieu of the suspended line, but Lackey said bus stops could not be placed in just a few residential areas. People, he said, would be asking "why don't you come by my house?"

"Our agreement when we started this was the 40th Anniversary Committee would offset this," Lackey said. "I am not going to poke money down a rat hole."

After the meeting, Profico said the route was well publicized, but the public, for some reason, never embraced the new line.

Michael Maresch can be reached at mmaresch@aztrib.com or at 876-2521.

Residents criticize newest bus route

CIRCLE 40: Sun Citizens say SCAT should add stops

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Some Sun City residents are avoiding the new Sun City Circle 40 bus route, saying taking public transportation requires private transportation.

Sun Cities Area Transit has been trying to get the word out about the new route in hopes of attracting more riders, but the locations of the stops is the real problem, some residents claim.

Getting to the stops requires, in many cases, quite a bit of walking, which precludes some people from taking the bus.

Sun City resident M.G. McLuhan said many who live on Pineaire Drive are physically unable to make the trek to their nearest bus stop, at Bell Recreation Center at 99th Avenue and Hutton Drive.

"A lot cannot walk," McLuhan said. "A lot are partially crippled. That's all there is to it. It's a pretty big walk."

McLuhan said a new location halfway down the street on Pineaire Drive would benefit his neighbors: "That's a

good compromise."

If SCAT really wants more riders, he said, the transit organization needs to work with the community. He said airport shuttles come door to door, which shows citizens would take the bus if they could.

Fellow resident Cecelia Smith agreed, saying she is unable to use the new bus route because the nearest bus stop to her is a few blocks away.

"It's not any good to us unless we are able to walk to the center," she said. "It's a waste of money if it is not efficient. This should have been thought out before being put in action."

Jodi Krog, who also lives on Pineaire Drive, said she is fortunate she is still able to drive, but many of her neighbors cannot.

"I think that the people who use the bus would have a difficult time," she said. "We rely on our cars too much."

More bus stops, Krog said, would be one solution.

"The main (problem) is there is no way to get there," she said, adding that Pineaire Drive extends a few miles. "(The bus) needs to stop on the streets every two to three blocks. I do see the problem with it."

Jean Riklaitis, who also lives on Pineaire, said she is physically unable to walk to Bell Recreation Center because of the distance.

"Lots of people cannot walk to the center," she said. "I have to walk a half mile to get to the bus. They need to improve it."

And that is exactly what SCAT plans on doing. Tom Profico, the organization's executive director, said more stops may be forthcoming.

SCAT, he added, also is looking at different variations to see what will work. What wouldn't work, he said, is adding bus stops to numerous streets.

"It is difficult to have a (location) on every street," he said, adding that bus stops will not be placed on the busiest streets in Sun City.

"We look at safety factors," Profico said. "We want to have fairly safe areas. We are looking at alternatives and possibilities. We are still working on this. We haven't come to some concrete solutions."

One of the solutions, he said, may be more bus stop locations, but he added that it is too early to estimate how many, if any, would be added.

Profico said for those residents who have difficulty walking short distances,

Dial-A-Ride, which picks up residents at their doors, is still available.

A round-trip Dial-A-Ride trip, however, would cost \$5, compared with \$3 for a Sun City Circle 40 bus trip.

Michael Maresh can be reached at mmaresh@aztrib.com or at 623-876-2521.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Cecelia Smith says the nearest stop for the Sun Cities Area Transit Circle 40 route is too far from her home for her to use.

More riders needed for Circle 40 route

Changes being considered

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Ridership has improved slightly but more passengers are still needed to make the recently instituted Circle 40 bus route viable, according to Tom Profico, Sun Cities Area Transportation executive director.

Funded by contributions from the

Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee, which are funneled through the Sun City Foundation, the route has served two or three riders per day, according to Mr. Profico.

"To be successful, we are looking for a minimum of 10 passengers per day," he said. "If we had 20 or more riders a day, we would consider that doing very well."

The bus route, which went into service on Jan. 15, makes several complete circles around Sun City, stopping at all of the recreation centers, as well as some of the more popular shopping centers along the route, starting at 7:30 a.m. and continuing until approximately 4 p.m.

Monday through Friday. The Circle 40 route operates in addition to SCAT's dial-a-ride service.

When first instituted, the fee was \$2.50 each way, but was soon lowered to \$1.50. Reducing the fee has resulted in a slight ridership increase, according to Mr. Profico. "We are still looking at ways to make it more successful," he said.

Among the ideas being considered are reversing the route at some point during the day and deviating from the main route to pick up riders living in nearby neighborhoods.

The walk from their homes to the bus stop has been one of the major complaints voiced by residents.

"Maybe we can have people who

live near the route call in and the bus can pick them up," suggested George Hartman, a member of the 40th Anniversary Committee.

"We are still looking at getting people from their homes to where the route operates," Mr. Profico said.

Although the route has not been as successful as the Anniversary Committee was anticipating, Mr. Hartman said, "In general, we are pretty satisfied. These kinds of things take a little time to work out the problems and glitches."

"It really would take several months to get the people used to knowing the route is available," Mr. Profico added.

"We were hoping it would get a good response faster but in some areas word of mouth is slow," he continued.

While ridership has not met expectations, one local resident is delighted the service has been implemented.

Kay Kerst, who lives at Heritage Palmeras, has used the service at least once a week since it started and has used it as many as three times in a week. "It depends on where I am going," she said.

Ms. Kerst, who does not drive, walks to the bus stop to catch the SCAT van.

She said she read about the bus route in the newspaper and greeted its inception with joy.

"This way I have a schedule and know when the van will come rather than having to wait for a dial-a-ride van," explained the longtime SCAT patron.

The expediency of the regular schedule also attracted Evelyn Withington, who lives on Clare Drive.

"You don't have to waste time waiting," she said. "You have a schedule and it gets there on time at the pickup points."

SCAT and Anniversary Committee officials are also hopeful ridership will improve with the installation of more benches and signage, promoting the Circle 40 route.

Benches are presently located at Lakeview Bell and Sundial recreation centers.

"We're still looking at getting signs up," Mr. Profico said. "Also, the 40th Anniversary Committee is looking at other ways of getting more publicity for the service."

The route will operate on a trial basis until May 1, at which time officials from SCAT and the 40th Anniversary Committee will meet to evaluate the program.

"We are going to have to do more fund-raising if we are to continue this longer than a year," Mr. Hartman said.

SCAT fares dip

SUN CITY CIRCLE 40: Lack of riders on special route forces agency to cut fees

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Almost a month after its inaugural run, the Sun City Circle 40 bus route is struggling for ridership, so officials are decreasing the rate.

The route, made possible in a joint effort between Sun Cities Area Transit and the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee, provides several circular runs through the community, but ridership has been much lower than expected.

To attract new riders, the organizations agreed to decrease the standard fare from \$2.50 to \$1.50 per ride.

"We negotiated with SCAT to get the price down to \$1.50 in order to build ridership," anniversary committee Chairman Fran Park said. "We are trying to make riding the bus as easy as possible, and we hope the lower price will work. But this is the lowest price we can go."

SCAT President Jim Lackey said each ride costs about \$9 per person to provide, and subtracting the \$1.50 fee, the remaining \$7.50 must be made up through fund-raising and grants. And with the route already costing the 40th Anniversary Committee \$2,000 a month, the funds are likely to run out within two years — or sooner.

The bus route winds its way through Sun City, connecting major shopping plazas and recreation centers. Four circuits run each day, with one circuit taking about an hour and 45 minutes to complete.

Just one bus, which can seat up to seven passengers, including space for two wheelchairs, is being used right now, but SCAT officials expect two new buses to arrive this March. Those buses were purchased through money raised by the 40th Anniversary Committee, and one of them will be dedicated solely to the new route.

"In general, I believe with the route having scheduled stops at certain locations,

From A1

people will be able to plan their day if they use the bus," said Tom Profico, SCAT's executive director. "We are trying to get people to be aware of the route, and I think it can be a real convenience for many residents."

Since the new rate went into effect last week, Profico said there have been a few more riders than usual, and he said he thinks ridership will increase once more people become aware of it.

Park agreed, and said the bus route is beneficial to residents for a variety of reasons, including deteriorating driving abilities.

"If Rep. (Mike) Gleason's bill goes through for older drivers, then I think residents should really look into the new bus route," Park said. "As all of us age, this is one of the things that we are going to need in order to have adequate transportation."

District 15 Republican Rep. Gleason proposed a bill requiring drivers 75 and older to get a mandatory eye test every two years. In addition,

if these drivers are convicted of two or more driving violations within two years, they must undergo a medical review where doctors have the option of taking their driver's licenses.

Gleason said the bill has gained support in the weeks since its release, and it will be looked at by the rules committee Wednesday morning.

"I think that in Sun City and Sun City West, there is a real good ride service with SCAT," Gleason said. "I think as drivers age and can no longer handle their vehicles, they should look into programs such as SCAT."

As for the Circle 40 Route, Gleason said it is something the community should stand behind because very few places offer such services.

"There are several assisted-living facilities around the state that provide transportation," he said. "But those places are not for everyone. Not everyone wants that or can afford it. I think money should be given to programs such as the new bus route to give seniors the option to get around when

they are no longer able to drive."

Despite the lower-than-expected ridership in the first month of Circle 40 runs, organizers are optimistic more people will use it as awareness of the program builds.

"Riding the bus is cheaper than owning a car, for one," Park said, "especially when you take into account insurance and other fees. And let's face it, if people are going to live to 95, not all of us will be able to drive that whole time. The bus is a good alternative, and we think people will realize it."

Because of the fee decrease, the Circle 40 buses will no longer deviate from the bus route to pick up people from their homes. If someone needs a ride from

their home, they must schedule an appointment with SCAT and pay the full \$2.50 fare.

The Circle 40 buses run from 7:30 a.m. to about 4 p.m., making 15 stops along

the way. SCAT can be reached by calling 977-8363.

John Sokolich can be reached at jsokolich@aztrib.com or at 876-2526.

Destination	1st Run	2nd Run	3rd Run	4th Run
Safeway / Olive		9:25	11:55	1:55
Mt. View Rec.	7:30	9:30	12:00	2:00
Sun Bowl	7:35	9:35	12:05	2:05
Fairway Rec.	7:40	9:40	12:10	2:10
Oakmont Rec.	7:45	9:45	12:15	2:15
Grand Center	7:50	9:50	12:20	2:20
Lakeview Rec.	7:55	9:55	12:25	2:25
La Ronde Centre	8:00	10:00	12:30	2:30
Bell Camino Center	8:05	10:05	12:35	2:35
107th & Union Hills	8:15	10:15	12:45	2:45
Marinette Rec.	8:20	10:20	12:50	2:50
99th & Bell (Inc'l P.O.)	8:30	10:30	1:00	3:00
Bell Rec.	8:40	10:40	1:10	3:10
Greenway Terrace	8:50	10:50	1:20	3:20
Sundial Rec.	8:55	10:55	1:25	3:25
Thunderbird Plaza	9:00	11:00	1:30	3:30
Arrowhead Mall	9:10	11:10	1:40	3:40
S.C.A.T.	9:15	11:15	1:45	3:45

SUN CITY'S "Circle 40" Route

- Safeway / Olive
- Mt. View Center
- Fairway Center
- Oakmont Center
- Lakeview Center medical offices
- LaRonde Centre
- Safeway / Bell Camino
- Circle K
- Marinette Center
- Bell Center / Promenade
- Greenway Terrace Walgreens
- Sundial Center
- Thunderbird Plaza
- Arrowhead / Osc
- SCAT office

SCAT comes full circle with route

Fare reduced to \$1.50 each way to increase ridership

By JULI NESSETT
Independent Newspapers

1/31/01

Through the combined efforts of three local organizations, Sun City now has a new mode of transportation available.

The Circle 40 route, operated by Sun Cities Area Transit, has been up and running since Jan. 15.

Although the service has been slow in gaining acceptance, it is hoped residents of Sun City will pick up on this new service and start using it regularly.

The route makes a complete circle around Sun City, making 15 major stops along the way and operates from 7:30 a.m. to approximately 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Users of the service do not need a rec card and the cost of the serv-

ice will be lowered from \$2.50 to \$1.50, each way, beginning Feb. 1. There is also no need to call SCAT for pickup at any of the stops.

Funded through donations from the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee, which are funneled to SCAT through the Sun City Foundation, the Circle 40 route begins at Mountain View Recreation Center and completes its route at the SCAT headquarters. Stops include all of the recreation centers, La Ronde Center, Bell Camino Center, Thunderbird Plaza and Arrowhead Mall.

Benches with Circle 40 route banners have been placed at Lakeview, Bell and Sundial recreation centers, indicating pickup areas.

Due to the limited ridership thus far, the future of the route is uncer-

tain. It will operate on a trial basis through May 1. At that time officials from SCAT and the 40th Anniversary Committee will meet and evaluate the situation.

The 40th Anniversary Committee has made it clear it will use the funds raised for transportation in the area.

According to Phyllis Roach, first vice chairman of the 40th Anniversary Committee, the route is intended for everyone in the community but is aimed specifically at those who do not have a car or are incapable of driving.

The committee plans to stay together and continue raising funds to make this type of transportation available in the future. In case the Circle 40 route does not work, the

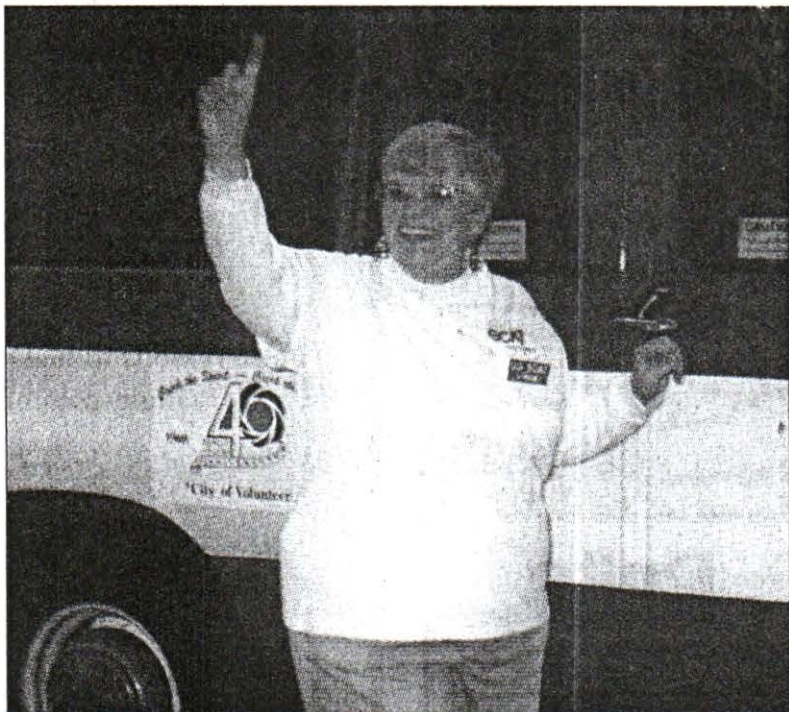
committee will consider buying a number of SCAT tickets and distributing them to those in need.

"We will continue to try to support the program and hope the general membership will too," said Ms. Roach. "Whether they realize it or not, there certainly will come a day when they may need this type of service."

James Lackey, president of SCAT's board of directors, says he hopes the reduced fare will bring an increase in riders.

SCAT will consider creating a reverse route when the two new vans, purchased for SCAT through donations from the 40th Anniversary Committee, arrive in March.

Letters to the editor may
be e-mailed to
suncityind@aol.com.



Submitted photo

Linda Batista, Sun Cities Area Transportation driver, signals the start of the initial run of SCAT's new service to Sun City's recreation centers. The van used was donated to SCAT by the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee.



Submitted photo

Members of the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee were present to launch the start of a new SCAT service, servicing Sun City's recreation centers. From left, Mary Janikowski, Phyllis Roach, Dick Elton, Doug Caravaggio, George Hartman, Fran Park and Lila Stephens. The van used for the new service was donated by the 40th Anniversary Committee.

Daily News-Sun • Saturday, Jan. 27, and Sunday, Jan. 28, 2001

New SCAT route needs more riders

At a time when roads clog with cars, the brown cloud grows and drivers 75 years old and older could soon face the prospect of losing their licenses after being retested, a SCAT bus comes along to save the day.

Earlier this month, a new bus route — made possible with money raised by the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee — hit the streets, providing circular runs through Sun City and making 15 major stops along the way.

Stops include shopping centers in the north and south parts of the community, and the bus goes as far west as Del Webb Boulevard and east to 99th Avenue. The cost is \$2.50 one way.

And that's a deal.

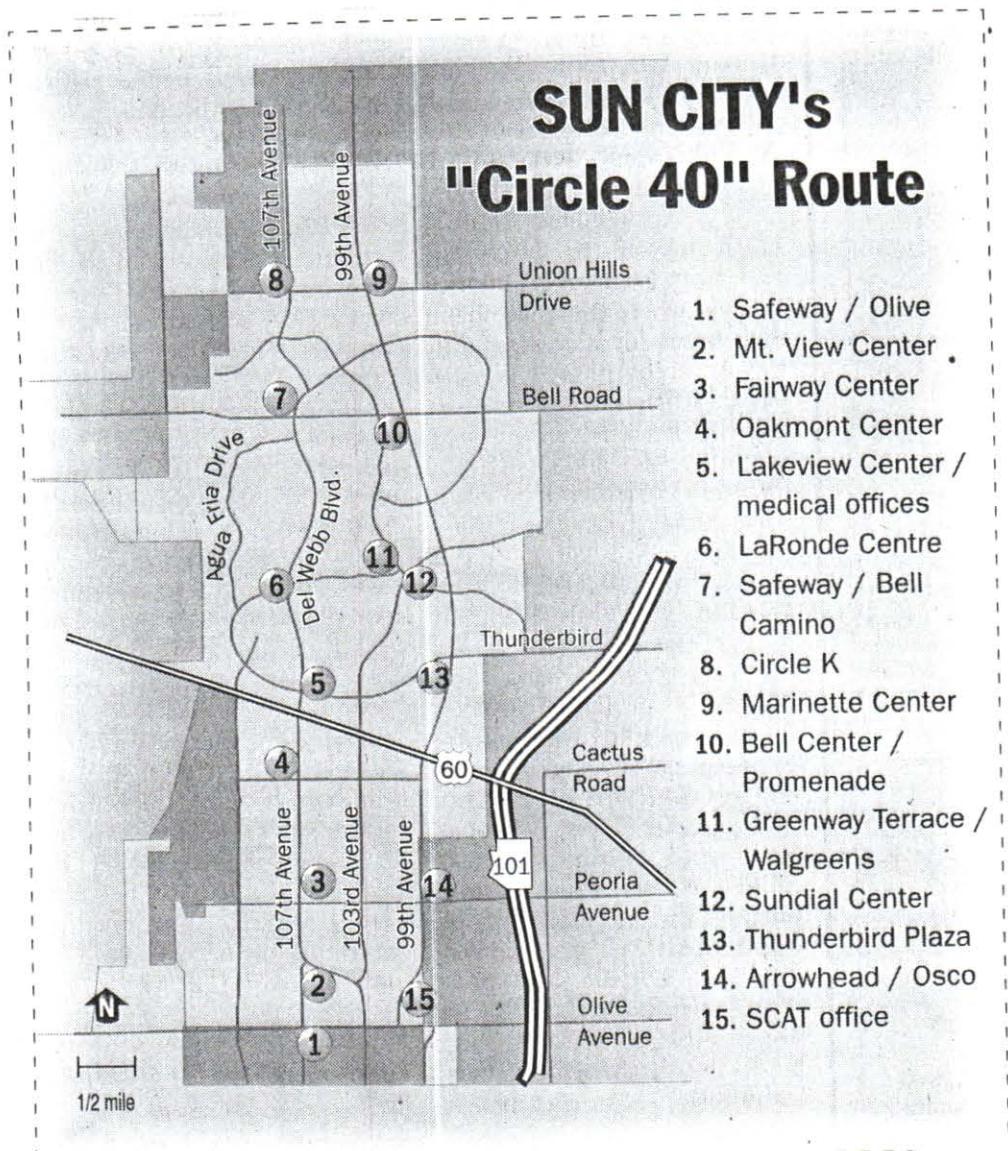
SCAT President Jim Lackey said each ride costs about \$9 per person to provide, and subtracting the \$2.50 fee, the

remaining \$6.50 must be made up through fund-raising and grants. So with the route costing the 40th Anniversary Committee \$2,000 a month, money is likely to run out within two years.

Fran Park said his committee will be conducting fund-raisers to ensure the service will continue well into the future. Keep an eye out for those monymaking efforts, then give whatever you can afford.

But first ride. You'll be helping the environment and keeping your blood pressure in check by staying off streets that aren't near as easy to navigate as they used to be.

Listed below are SCAT stops on the new Sun City Circle 40 route. Clip it and keep it handy for those days you just don't want to get behind the wheel of the family car.



SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT JANUARY 10-16, 2001

SCAT launches new Sun City service Jan. 15

Funds for vans generated by myriad 40th anniversary activities

by **MIKE RUSSO**
Independent Newspapers

Travelers in the Southwest are familiar with the Golden Circle that takes sightseers on a journey through the majestic natural wonders of Arizona, Utah and Colorado. Soon, Sun City will have its own version of the Golden Circle. Starting Jan. 15, Sun City residents will be able to make the circuitous route to the community's recreation centers to partake of their

favorite recreation activities.

Using the proceeds generated by myriad 40th anniversary events, the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee has donated funds to Sun Cities Area Transit Authority to order two vans designated for use to shuttle residents to Sun City's recreation centers, and other nearby destinations, according to Fran Park, chairman of the Sun City 40th Anniversary Committee.

The vans have already been ordered by SCAT and delivery is

scheduled for March. The program will begin using an existing van, with a second to be added as demand dictates, noted Tom Profico, SCAT executive director. The van will be emblazoned with 40th anniversary logo.



Fran Park

The van, which can accommodate seven passengers and a wheelchair, will depart the SCAT office at Peoria and 91st avenues at 7:15 a.m. Monday through Friday. The first stop will be at Mountain View Recreation Center. It will depart Mountain View at 7:30 a.m. on its circuit of all of the community's recreation centers.

It will take about two hours for the van to travel the route. Mr. Profico noted.

In addition to the 7:30 departure,

the van will leave Mountain View at 9:30 a.m., noon and 2 p.m. The van will return to the garage at 4 p.m.

SCAT was still working on the complete schedule as of late last week, and it will be subject to change based upon demand.

Reservations are not required to ride the van. The fare will be \$2.50 for each leg to the trip, according to Mr. Profico.

"This is a major departure for SCAT," said Mr. Park.

It is the first time that SCAT has ever operated a regularly scheduled service as far as Mr. Profico is aware. SCAT has been in existence for 17 years.

SCAT enters into this venture unsure about how many riders will use the service but Mr. Profico said, "We have had people request something like this. We are looking at good usage of this service."

Mr. Profico expects ridership to be bolstered by the fact that the van will also stop at shopping centers along the route.

"So many of the shopping centers are on the same route. We will not have to go our of our way," he said.

The Sun City 40th anniversary activities generated approximately \$110,000. Funds not used to purchase the vans will go the Sun City Foundation, according to Mr. Park. "They will invest it and use it as needed."

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See ■ VANS, Page 11

VANS

From Page 1

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Daily News-Sun • Thursday, Oct. 26, 2000

SCAT expects rise in late-night usage

DIAL-A-RIDE:

After-hours rides from hospitals fill need for Sun Cities area

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit officials expect to see an increase in the number of people using the system for late-night rides home from the emergency room this winter.

SCAT's board of directors released first-quarter passenger figures Wednesday morning, revealing late-night rides home were frequently a necessity. Since the program began this summer, 41 passengers have received the after-hour rides home from the emergency room, but board members said they expect those numbers to rise during winter.

"I think the service is proving very worthwhile, and the number of passengers will increase during the winter with the arrival of the snowbirds," said Executive Director Tom Profico.

The vans are available to residents who are taken to the hospital during the day but do not have a ride home. The transit system has a driver on call from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. to transport patients.

The late-night service, offered free to residents, is averaging fewer than four

rides a week. During regular operating hours, a ride on a Dial-a-Ride van is \$2.50. Money to fund the service comes from private donations and several larger public donations, according to Profico.

The Sun City West Community Fund recently donated \$3,000 to keep the service running at night, and 18 of the 41 passengers who have used the service live in Sun City West.

"The grant will definitely help us keep the program going," Transit President James Lackey said. "It's an expensive program, but something needed in the community."

Other figures released Wednesday show the number of Dial-a-Ride riders between July 1 and Sept. 30 of this year was just more than 15,000, compared to 14,000 during the same period last year.

According to the data compiled by the transit organization, 45 percent of riders use the vans to go shopping, and 38 percent use the service for health-related appointments. Restaurants, recreation centers and church account for about 13 percent of the usage.

Wednesday's meeting also revealed one of the vans recently was taken out of service due to high mileage and extensive mechanical problems. A replacement vehicle is expected to arrive in March, bringing the total fleet back to 14 vans.

John Sokolich can be reached at jsokolich@aztrib.com or at 623-876-2526.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 3, 2000

SCAT takes delivery of three vans

Wait was more than a year for alternative fuel vehicles

By JULI NESSETT
Independent Newspapers

The acquisition of new equipment is often a game of waiting but for Sun Cities Area Transit the wait is now over.

Three new vans, which were ordered almost a year ago, have finally arrived and will now be serving the Sun Cities area.

The new vans will replace three high-mileage and higher-polluting vans which will be returned to the Regional Public Transit Authority for auction.

The new Ford Econoline vans run on alternative fuel only.

"The three new ones came from the Ford factory designated for alternative fuels only, which means they do not run on gasoline. They only run on, in our case, compressed natural gas," said Tom Profico, executive director of SCAT.

"Prior to this, our vans could run on either fuel, gasoline or compressed natural gas. They had tanks for both. These new ones only run on compressed natural gas, which is

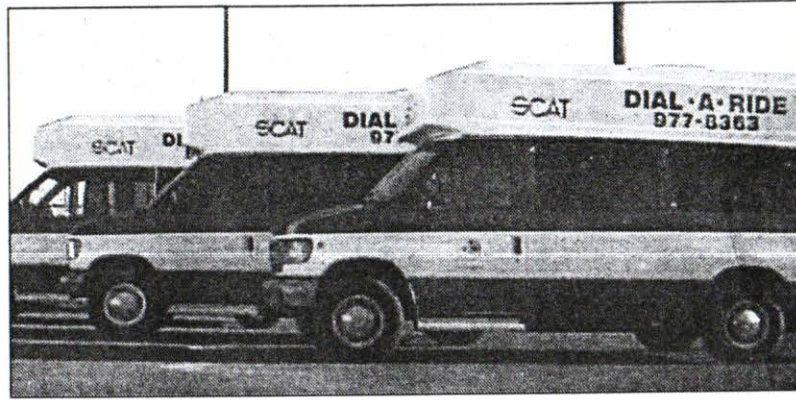


Photo by JULI NESSETT/Independent Newspapers

The newest additions to the Sun City Area Transit fleet sit poised for service.

like the gas from your gas line at home," he said.

SCAT has its own fueling system for compressed natural gas in its parking lot. The fueling of the van tanks is similar to filling a propane tank.

According to Mr. Profico, the natural gas is cheaper and burns cleaner, which leads to lowered pollution.

He also said Ford, as well as Honda, are now manufacturing cars

for public use which run on compressed natural gas.

SCAT acquired the new vans from RPTA for 20 percent of the actual cost.

SCAT's new late-night emergency room transportation program, which began in July, is also something which has been benefiting the community.

Since the program's inception,

over 40 people have used it, with an average of just over three riders per week, according to Mr. Profico. He said the numbers have been running fairly evenly between Boswell and Del E. Webb hospitals.

Jan Barrett, chairperson of the personal needs committee of the Sun City Community Fund, which helped fund the new service for Sun City, told a story about one woman in particular who was helped.

"I talked to one of the administrators for SCAT and he told us a story about a 92-year-old woman who had been taken to the hospital in the middle of the night and needed a ride home. So a van was summoned and when she was picked up and she said, 'I don't have any money. I left my purse at home, I can't pay you.' When the driver explained to her that it was courtesy of the Community Fund and there was no charge for the ride, she cried. She just got very emotional and just thought that was the kindest thing," said Mrs. Barrett.

SCAT will soon begin its November fund drive and its goal will be around \$225,000, according to Mr. Profico.

He said most of SCAT's contributions come from the residents of Sun City and Sun City West.

SCTA seeks vote

CAP PLAN: Fears
over higher-than-
anticipated water
bills launch appeal

PATRICK O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Taxpayers Association may try to persuade the Arizona Corporation Commission to put to a public vote a plan to bring Central Arizona Project water to the Sun Cities.

The group, fearing projected rate hikes would be more than predicted, elected at a meeting Tuesday to push for a vote so consumers could have a say in whether the pipeline plan was approved.

"Just let it be fair, let people know what they are buying," said Ray Dare, the group's president.

The SCTA board unanimously voted to pass a resolution calling for a public referendum on the more than \$15 million project that would add a line off the CAP canal north of Sun City. Although they are not against bringing CAP water to the community, group members believe the estimated cost of constructing the line would add more than the \$5.90-\$7.90 per month to residents' water bills.

Plans to bring the CAP water in have been submitted to the Corporation Commission, which is expected to rule on the plan by Nov. 1 and ask questions of Citizens Utilities officials and engineers. They would then have until Dec. 1 to respond to those commission questions.

As a registered intervener in the case, SCTA has the right to ask for a hearing, which could be granted based on the concerns raised by the group in letters to the commissioners, said officials in Commissioner William Mundell's office.

Once all public opinion had been gathered for the plan, the hearing officer could set the issue for a hearing or submit an opinion on it to the commission for consideration. If SCTA requested a hearing by Nov. 1, it would probably receive one, officials said.

Although the preliminary plan has been submitted, it could be several years before customers pay to bring CAP water to the area. The company cannot ask for an increase in its rates until all capital equipment is installed and operational, said Marvin Collins, customer and community relations manager for Citizens Water Resources.

"Once the pipeline is constructed, then we can go before the commission for a hearing on

a rate increase," he said. "Obviously we can't do anything without a hearing."

While the proposal represents a significant change in previous discussions — it has removed pump stations and millions in cost to go to a completely gravity-fed system — it should still be treated like a proposal, SCTA officials said.

"You have to realize preliminary plans are very vague, and you have to understand how much leeway they are going to get in a final plan," said board member Warren Miller.

Contingency costs for unexpected items, such as more money for unanticipated digging, concern group members who fear it could push up the monthly surcharge higher than estimated, Dare said.

The plan, however, should have some contingency built in, as most engineering firms will have a higher cost to cover factors such as inflation and worker shortages, Collins said.

If the preliminary plan eventually is approved by the commission, Citizens' officials would then seek requests for proposals to build the line. Depending on how much the proposals come back will eventually determine what rate increase residents may see, Collins said.

SCTA has written a letter to the three corporation commissioners about its concerns and those of its members, many of which revolve around who will pay for the water line and who it will belong to, said board member Gerry Dolezal.

"We feel that without a referendum vote, that this is unconstitutional," he said.

In other action, the board voted to accept four new board members: Charles Buck, Charles Sedgwick, David Goldberg and Roland Franquemont. Their terms run until 2002, with the exception of Franquemont, whose term ends in 2001.

The group also discussed its upcoming elections, scheduled from 1 to 4 p.m. Oct. 12 at the Lakeview Recreation Center in Sun City. It will borrow voting booths from the Maricopa County Elections Department.

Interested candidates are asked to call 933-3572.

Patrick O'Grady can be reached at pogrady@aztrib.com or by calling 876-2522.

Emergency-room patients to get late-night van service

By Jerry Nunez
The Arizona Republic

A one-time \$5,000 donation from the Sun City Community Fund Foundation, which is also part of the United Way, has made it possible for Sun City Area Transit to provide free late-night transportation for people leaving the emergency room.

A lack of late-night public transportation has made it difficult for Sun Cities resi-

dents to get home after visiting the emergency room.

"It has been a problem all these years," said Jim Green, Sun City Fund Foundation chairman. "Patients had no way home until 6 in the morning."

Patients at Del Webb Memorial or Boswell Memorial hospitals now have a wheelchair-accessible SCAT van available at any hour of the night to deliver them to their homes anywhere in Sun City, Sun City West or Youngtown. The SCAT emergency room pickup hours are 10:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. SCAT's regular hours are 7:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

In the past, people had to use a taxi or ambulance to get back home because the transportation system did not operate late at night. Others who could not afford the \$80 taxi or \$350 ambulance ride stayed the night in the hospitals' waiting rooms until SCAT began operating again at 6 a.m.

Green estimated that the service transported 10 people in July.

"This is a one-time gift," Green said. "It will cost \$15,000 per year to supply one van and driver. We are going to ask United Way to continue to support this service again next year. We are very optimistic that they will."

The Sun City Community Fund Foundation officially became part of Valley of the Sun United Way in July. It is an organization consisting of more than 200,000 donors and volunteers and has raised more than \$200,000 for Sun City health and human services this year.

(?)

JULY 26-AUGUST 1, 2000

SCAT receives donation for overnight service

United Way/Community Fund donate \$5,000

By JULI NESSETT
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Community Fund/Valley of the Sun United Way, through its foundation, has presented Sun Cities Area Transit with a check for \$5,000.

The money, raised through donations from Sun City residents, is going to fund SCAT's free nighttime emergency transport service, which began on July 1.

"United Way is keeping money raised in Sun City in Sun City to benefit the people who live here. Now, people leaving the emergency rooms late at night won't have the burden of trying to get home on their own. SCAT will be there to get

them home and the ride's on us," said Jim Green, chairman of the Community Fund and resource development director at Sun Valley Lodge.

Jim Lackey, SCAT board president, said people often just want to get home after being at the emergency room for many hours. He also said ambulance drivers were offering to take these people home, before the new program was in place, and then charging them \$300 or more for the ride.

"There never was a nighttime service like this before," said Jane Freeman, president of the Community Fund. "People had to use either a taxi or the ambulance that took them to the emergency

room. The cost in many instances became prohibitive."

SCAT has 14 vehicles in service and has hired a new driver for the program. The driver is on call every night until 6 a.m.

Mr. Lackey said SCAT expects to get calls about four times a week from Boswell Memorial Hospital and an equal number from Sun City West's Del Webb Memorial Hospital.

When a person needs a ride home from the emergency room at night, an emergency room attendant will use a special number to contact SCAT.

Each time a person is taken home

See ■ SCAT, Page 8

from the hospital at night they will receive a card explaining the ride is compliments of the Personal Needs Committee of the fund, along with SCAT's daytime number.

"This gift is a great example of northwest Valley people helping each other," said Mr. Profico. "We've already helped people home from Boswell, and they're extremely grateful for the service."

Mr. Green explained the donation from the Valley of the Sun United

Way/Sun City Community Fund is a one-year contribution because it is felt that the agency will want to pick up the entire amount next year (about \$11,000).

"We'll be glad to accept donations of any amount, from \$1 all the way up to \$1 million, but no more than \$1 million from each person," Mr. Green quipped.

For more information about the service or to donate, call 876-0178.



Photo by JULI NESSETT/Independent Newspapers

Tom Profico, right, SCAT executive director, accepts a \$5,000 check from Jan Barrett, a member of the Sun City Community Fund Personal Needs Committee, from left, Jim Lackey, SCAT board president, Jane Freeman, Community Fund president, and Jim Green, Community Fund chairman.

HOA approves donation to SCAT

Abandoned building discussed

By **JULIE RIDDLE**
Independent Newspapers

A search for candidates, a start to services and an end to any eyesore topped a list of issues discussed during the Sun City Home Owners Association board of directors meeting June 14.

President Blaine Donaldson said discussions regarding SCAT's proposed emergency transportation services are ongoing.

"Youngtown and HOA went to their respective boards to request help — we have not heard from the other entities. Sun Health is investigating possible participation," Mr. Donaldson said.

Without more support, it may be difficult to get the service started, he said.

"I think Sun Health will probably help — it will take several entities to get it off the ground financially," Mr. Donaldson added. The board voted to approve \$1,000 toward the project.

Complaints about a community eyesore in Sun City have been flowing in, according to Mr. Donaldson.

The building, located behind a Mexican food restaurant at the corner of Bell Road and Lindgren Avenue, was zoned commercial. Construction started and stopped more than once, and now appears to be over for good. It has remained half-built for about four years, and is now under the auspices of a trust.

"We have had a number of complaints about the community prop-

erty," Mr. Donaldson said. "It has been turned over for the county to handle. We told them we would cooperate anyway we can." At this point, it is uncertain who the owner is.

"Building permits expired — twice," Mr. Donaldson said. "Neighbors want something done. It is a real problem."

Getting something done about it will not be easy, he noted.

"Everything has to go through Planning and Zoning. It is hard to get anything out of them — their plate is full," Mr. Donaldson said.

With HOA's election on the way, current members are scrambling to find qualified candidates.

"We are having early voting at two locations," Mr. Donaldson said. "It will be at the craft fair. It was very successful last year." The fair will be held the weekend after Thanksgiving, Nov. 24-25. Election

Day is Dec. 12. Interested people must pick up a nomination packet at the HOA office, 104th Avenue and Coggins. A resume, along with one-year residency, home ownership, being a registered Arizona voter and HOA membership are required, according to Ione Boynton, HOA executive director.

HOA Director Bob Kortwright emphasized the need for new board members in the coming year.

"We need candidates who have an interest in maintaining and improving the lifestyle of the Sun Cities," he said.

One way the board hopes to do that is helping make the jobs of emergency services employees easier. Planning has begun to install 911 locator switches in Sun City homes.

"It connects to the outside — the light will flash so the Posse, ambulance, etc. won't have to look for

house numbers," said Director Jerry Swintek.

Price for the switch, which would be installed on a panel already inside the home, would be minimal, according to Director Gerry Unger.

"We are trying to get the lowest bid on switches. When we have an access to the market and agreement of price and delivery, we will then try to educate people as to what it is — half the (HOA) board didn't know what the switch was."

Nothing has been finalized, he said.

"We are investigating it and trying to determine what to do. I think it is a necessary thing for Sun City," he said. "We will arrange for purchase at cost and help people get it installed."

Mr. Unger is hoping to gather a group of retired electricians or handymen to install the switches.

"For an electrician or handyman there is nothing to it — it is an easy process."

Daily News-Sun • Thursday, June 15, 2000

SCAT extends pick-up service

FINANCING: \$4,500 still needed, but after-hours rides start July 1

HAYLEY RINGLE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities Area Transit System Inc. has received enough money to begin providing after-hour emergency pickup beginning July 1.

The Sun City Home Owners Association and Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association both voted Tuesday to give \$1,000 to SCAT.

Sun City West Community Fund has designated \$3,000; Sun Health is giving \$1,000; and SCAT also has received \$1,195 from private donations in the community, said Thomas Profico, executive director for SCAT.

"We certainly have appreciated the overwhelming response from the organizations and from the community who realized there was a serious gap in emergency-transportation needs that haven't been filled before," Profico said. "We're glad we can provide this service to the community."

About \$4,500 is needed for the remainder of the year to initiate the program that enables employees to be on-call and available to pick up individuals from Boswell and Del Webb Hospitals who arrived by ambulance and do not have a ride home during the hours SCAT does not usually provide service — from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Sun City Community Fund Special

'We certainly have appreciated the overwhelming response from the organizations and from the community who realized there was a serious gap in emergency-transportation needs that haven't been filled before.'

Thomas Profico
SCAT executive director

Needs Service also has expressed an interest in helping financially.

Approximately 200 people a year are stranded at the hospital in the late night and early morning hours, said Bob Kortright, a chairman of HOA's long-range planning committee.

"I've had a very good response and had a number of calls from individuals who had been in situations needing rides home and who appreciate the fact that we are initiating this service," Profico said.

There will be not be a charge for individual riders, but donations will be accepted, he said. The cost will be covered by incoming donations from organizations and the community.

"The only personal possessions they may have are their house keys," Profico said. "They're there without a wallet and it's already a stressful time for them. We hope that this will appease their suffering at the time."

SCAT 'emergency ride' services planned soon

Sun Cities, Youngtown to be served

By JULIE RIDDLE
Independent Newspapers

Plans to expand Sun Cities Area Transportation's services for medical emergencies were approved May 17, after a meeting with Sun City West's Property Owners and Rights Association, Sun Health, and the Sun City Home Owners Association.

The impetus for the idea came from a discussion at an HOA Transportation Committee meeting approximately two months ago, according to Tom Profico, SCAT's executive director.

"It is a problem we are trying to alleviate, and something we have been aware of in the past," he said. "We would offer emergency transportation from Boswell and Del E. Webb Hospitals for very late night and early morning transportation for

people who have no other means to get home from the emergency room," he said.

Tentative plans would entail having an employee reachable by cellular phone from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. to pick up those stranded, Mr. Profico said, rather than having the person pull a graveyard shift at SCAT's headquarters.

With nighttime fares proposed to be the same as those of daylight hours (\$2.50 one way), SCAT is now searching for a way to fund the remainder of the cost (approximately \$10-\$15 per ride). As a result, logistics, including a kickoff date, have yet to be finalized.

"The fare will not cover the actual cost (of the program)," Mr. Profico said. "We are looking at other sources of underwriting,

See ■ SCAT, Page 10

■ SCAT

From Page 1

including the other organizations, people whom we met at the meeting May 17 — it is all in the planning stages."

A Sun Health representative said they are currently in the evaluation stages of deciding whether to get involved. Bob Kortright, chairman of HOA's Long-Range Planning Committee, which was a major factor in fleshing out the idea, said they are currently working on obtaining funds.

"The Homeowners Association is going to the board to ask for a \$1,000 donation," he said. "I think it is an important community service. We went through the exercise and it looks like we will be able to affect a solution." According to Mr. Kortright, Sun City West, Youngtown and Sun City, along with PORA,

are now going to their respective boards for possible donations to get the project off the ground.

"SCAT has told us they expect next year they will be able to get sufficient funds from their normal sources on a regular basis," Mr. Kortright said.

Because no records are kept regarding people stranded at hospitals without a way home, it is uncertain how many rides might be taken during SCAT's extended hours, though Mr. Kortright predicted approximately 200 rides a year.

Until the program actually goes into effect, yearly costs can only be estimated.

"We are looking at about \$11,000 a year. Until we really know what the actual need will be, we do not know," Mr. Profico said.

SCAT's newest three vans, currently in the process of being modified, are expected to go into service next month.

Because details of the extended services have yet to be determined, Mr. Profico declined to comment on when rides might start, except to say that would happen in the "very near future."

"It is something we will work at," Mr. Profico continued. "We will not know the numbers until we initiate the program."

SCAT currently provides shared dial-a-ride services 365 days a year during daylight hours (7:15 a.m.-6:45 p.m.) Remaining costs are subsidized by community contributions and matching funds from the Regional Public Transportation Administration.

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MAY 3-9, 2000 — SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SCAT sets budget at \$599,00

Extra services proposed

By **JULIE RIDDLE**
Independent Newspapers

The Sun Cities Area Transportation budget for fiscal year 2000-2001, which begins July 1, was unveiled last week by the board of directors during its quarterly meeting.

The new budget of \$599,000 has been reduced from last year, as the average number of rides per month has gone from 59,090 in 1998 to 50,264 in 1999. Reduced vehicle

maintenance costs also helped.

"We were able to bring the budget down by \$24,000 less than 1999," Profico said. "It is a doable budget."

SCAT has been operating under a \$623,000 budget this next fiscal year, and that represented a \$25,000 reduction from 1998-99's budget, \$648,000.

The directors also discussed salaries, budgets and fund drives at their April 26 meeting.

One idea was to accommodate medical emergencies, especially in the case of a person being stranded at a hospital emergency room. The question at hand is who will provide the rides.

"We are not anticipating future hirings," said SCAT executive director Tom Profico. "The number of employees will stay relatively the same."

Should the issue be approved, fares would be about the same as a regular daytime ride, but at \$10-15 per ride, SCAT is searching for a way to underwrite the remainder of the cost.

According to SCAT President Jim Lackey, the need for such services is a big one in the Sun Cities.

"We really have given it a lot of thought," he said. SCAT already provides shared rides 365 days a

See ■ SCAT, Page 3

year, but at the moment runs only until 6:45 p.m. Monday-Friday.

"It is something we are looking at, primarily for people who are stranded at the hospital emergency rooms," Profico said. "We are still in the working stages of determining how it would be accomplished." Profico said he was unsure when a final decision might be made.

SCAT's three new vans, anticipated to arrive in the fall, will going

into service much sooner than expected. Designed to be more fuel-efficient and less polluting, they will also accommodate special-needs passengers.

"They will go into production May 22 and be starting use in June," Profico said. "They are being modified and built."

The cost-effective vans, which run on natural gas, will also bring in more support, Lackey said.

"If we expect 80 percent to be paid for by the federal government, we must switch to all compressed materials," he said.

SCAT's fund drive, inaugurated April 1, has been growing steadily according to Lackey.

"We have received more than \$25,000 in donations from the April fund drive," he said. "We sent out 47,000 letters."

Thursday, Oct. 28, 1999 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.

County gives \$50,000 to SCAT

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City Area Transit will have \$50,000 more to repair or replace its vans and offset rider costs under an agreement announced Wednesday between Maricopa County Supervisor Jan Brewer and the Regional Public Transportation Authority.

"This will definitely go to help operations and help subsidize some of the rides for passengers," said Thomas Profico, executive director of SCAT.

The \$50,000 allocation from the transportation authority doubles last year's regional funding, county officials said.

SCAT increased its fees from \$1.75 to \$2.50 a year ago to help offset repair costs for aging vehicles, Profico said. The service replaced six of its 14 vans during the past year at a cost of about \$50,000 each.

"With this money helping us to continue to operate, hopefully we won't

have to have a fare increase for a while," Profico said.

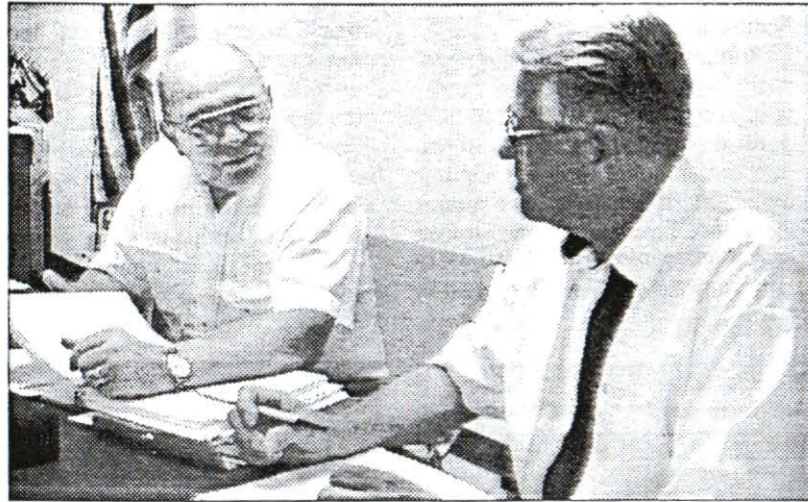
SCAT is a non-profit state corporation and provides on-call transit service to residents of the Sun Cities and Youngtown, with connections to other parts of the Valley.

The operation serves about 6,500 riders annually.

"This service really helps the individual to maintain an independent lifestyle," Profico said.

Funding for SCAT comes from the Maricopa County's portion of vehicle license tax, donations, grants and sponsorships, SCAT and county officials said.

Fare for a one-way ride anywhere in the Sun Cities and Youngtown area is \$2.50. The switchboard opens at 6:45 a.m. daily and transportation service runs from 7:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 7:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.



Jim Lackey, left, president of the Sun Cities Area Transit System, and Tom Profico, executive director, huddle during a board meeting July 28 to review the dial-a-ride service's fiscal well-being. For the first time in its 15-year history, SCAT reported a net gain in revenue.

SCAT sees reversal of fortunes

Transit system posts initial revenue gain

By **TOM BARRY**
Independent Newspapers

Although ridership fell by about 16.3 percent this past year, Sun Cities Area Transit System Inc., the local dial-a-ride service, reported a net gain in fare revenue of \$22,000.

It marked the first time the non-profit agency has not shown a net loss in fares, according to Jim Lackey, president of the SCAT board of directors.

Ridership declined to 65,279

from 78,000 in the previous year, but fare revenue rose to \$149,000, up from \$137,000 for fiscal 1997-98.

The gain was achieved by a 75-cent fare increase — from \$1.75 to \$2.50 for a one-way trip — instituted last September to help reverse a \$150,000 deficit in operating funds. It was only the second such increase in 15 years.

Established in 1982 to serve Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown residents, SCAT historically has

been a losing proposition. Cutbacks in federal subsidies and inflation, an aging fleet of vans and steadily-rising operating expenses took their toll.

In fiscal 1998-1999, however, SCAT reported a 31-percent increase in endowments. Coupled with the increased fare revenue, the agency has all but wiped out its deficit.

"It gives me a warm, fuzzy feel-

See ■ SCAT, Page 13

■ SCAT

From Page 1

ing to be in the black at the end of the year," said Mr. Lackey.

He attributed the reversal to several factors, including two fundraising drives this past year as opposed to one that generated higher public and private contributions. Both drives netted \$134,800, up from \$117,000 the previous year. Mr. Lackey also credited Executive Director Tom Profico's ability to curb operating expenses.

Endowments totaled \$357,000, as compared to \$273,000 last year. This includes a \$175,000 subsidy from the Regional Public Transportation Authority. Operating expenses declined sharply, from more than \$600,000 in fiscal 1997-98 to about \$542,000 this past year.

"It's very encouraging to see our hard work is paying off," Mr. Lackey said.

Mr. Profico said the revenue gains will be put toward the purchase of three new vehicles to replace its aging fleet. SCAT is al-

ready awaiting delivery of six new vans equipped with handicap access.

New federal guidelines for alternative fuels have eliminated funding for dual-fuel vehicles currently in use by SCAT that are fueled by both gasoline and compressed natural gas (CNG). That has forced SCAT to consider more costly vans that use only CNG. The \$50,000 price tag of each will be paid for primarily by 80-percent federal matching grants, he added.

"The downside is that the CNG-equipped vans will decrease our range from 120 miles to about 70 miles," said Mr. Profico. SCAT is studying the possibility of additional fuel capacity to extend the range.

Additionally, Mr. Profico said SCAT's existing computer system is outmoded and will soon be replaced with four new, Y2K-compliant computers, 80 percent of the cost of which will be matched by a federal grant.

Mr. Lackey said dial-a-ride service is being reinstated for residents

of Casa del Rio, a Peoria retirement complex near Sun City. Under the terms of an agreement, Casa del Rio will sponsor a van for at least four years at a cost of \$2,500 a year. SCAT will also retain all fare revenue.

Although the route extends into Peoria's dial-a-ride territory, Mr. Lackey said Peoria officials welcomed the agreement because most Casa del Rio residents require transportation to health care services and shopping in Sun City or Sun City West, communities that Peoria does not service.

Similar sponsorship agreements represent an important source of revenue, Mr. Profico pointed out. He said SCAT is realizing a greater interest among businesses, private institutions, area organizations and churches. Sponsorships include signage on both the exterior and interior of the vehicle.

"As more of these vehicles are seen in the public's eye I'm confident that it will spur more interest

among other organizations," said Mr. Profico.

He said SCAT is currently negotiating an agreement with the Recreation Centers of Sun City to accommodate residents and visitors who wish to attend various events during the community's upcoming 40th anniversary celebration.

In other business, Mr. Lackey welcomed Gretchen Olson of Sun City as a new member, and seeks to fill a vacancy on the 10-member board resulting from the resignation of Frank Frederickson.

SCAT's hours of operation are 7:15 a.m.-6:45 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 7:15 a.m.-4:45 p.m. weekends and holidays.

Residents are encouraged to call at least 45 minutes in advance for pick-up. Prior day reservations are required for wheelchair passengers. First-time riders with wheelchairs need to be assessed by SCAT prior to pick-up.

Call 977-8363 for more information on SCAT.



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JULY 22-28, 1998 — SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

SCAT considers 25-cent increase for one-way fare

Fare hike due to rising costs, deficit faced by dial-a-ride

BY JULIA DE SIMONE
Independent Newspapers

It may cost residents an extra quarter next year to ride their local dial-a-ride system.

Tom Profico, executive director of the Sun Cities Area Transit Inc., said board members are proposing increasing its fare from \$1.75 to \$2 for a one-way trip.

SCAT serves 6,500 riders a month in the Sun Cities and Youngtown, including 500 residents with wheelchairs, Mr. Profico said.

Before implementing a new fare they would post a public notice on the possible fare increase at least 30 days prior to public hearing, according to Mr. Profico.

He said the last fare raise — from \$1.50 to \$1.75 — was in July 1996. He added that prior to that increase, the fare hadn't been raised for 13 years.

The increased fare would generate an additional \$20,000 for the financially strapped transportation system.

"If there will be a fare increase (it will) help compensate for the cost deficit," Mr. Profico said.

According to Mr. Profico, SCAT is \$150,000 in debt.

He said although SCAT sought to raise \$320,000 from its annual fund-raiser in January, only about \$233,000 was generated — \$83,000 in public contributions and \$150,000 in private donations.

Mr. Profico said they also received an annual \$40,000 grant from the Valley of the Sun United Way, which will be distributed in quarterly installments. He added that SCAT will have to replace six of its vehicles at \$60,000.

"We're still running real tight," he said.

Mr. Profico said it costs them approximately \$7.63 per person one way to provide curb-to-curb transportation for residents. In addition, they also provide transportation to residents to some area shopping centers and medical facilities on the Peoria/Sun City border.

"We have a lot of passengers that travel to dialysis," he said.

In addition, Valley Metro officials recently held a public hearing to discuss the possibility of modifying the Northwest Valley Grand bus route. It serves the area from the Sundome to the Peoria Community Center.

Valley Metro officials said ridership has been low on that route. They said it is about .12 boarding per mile compared with an average 1.86 boarding in the rest of the lines. It is considered the worst of the 85 transit lines in the Valley.

Mr. Profico said they will discuss the possible modification of that line causing an increase in its fares, but he's not worried.

"We don't foresee that affecting us too terribly much with those (ridership) figures being low," he

said.

He said although they don't wait for a full bus before picking up clients, SCAT is set up differently than a bus route or cab.

"We don't want it to be like a taxi service, and it can't be that way but sometimes it does happen," he said.

SCAT's hours of operation are 7:15 a.m.-6:45 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7:15 a.m.-4:45 p.m. weekends and holidays.

Residents are encouraged to call an hour-and-a-half in advance for doctor or hair appointments and a day before if they have a wheelchair. First-time riders with wheelchairs need to be assessed by SCAT officials before being picked up.

"We have to make sure we can safely secure it in the vehicle and if the wheelchair is in good condition," Mr. Profico said.

He said a van sponsorship is also available to businesses. He said it includes signs on the exterior and interior of the van with the businesses name and logo. It costs \$2,500 per year for four years.

For more information on SCAT, call 977-8363.

Daily News-Sun

Friday, April 18, 1997

Dial-a-ride's needs multiply

By MARY L. CRIDER
Staff writer

Sun Cities Area Transit System dial-a-ride takes folks shopping, to appointments, to restaurants, to churches — but it is in a world of hurt when it comes to cash flow.

"I don't like to be the one to cry wolf, but I'd like the city to know — it would be tragic if SCAT had to close its doors," Board of Directors president Russell Vick told the SCAT Board Wednesday.

SCAT has 31 employees, \$56,222.30 in its operating funds account, \$485.19 in its payroll account, \$150 in its petty cash account and \$156,698.15 invested in money mar-

ket accounts, said board member Dale Shockley.

SCAT's fund-raising drive began in January, he said, and as of March, the agency received about \$85,500 in sorely needed donations. In the past fiscal year, the agency operated with a cash deficit of about \$96,000, Shockley said.

SCAT needs to replace three of its vehicles, Shockley said, and is shopping around for the best deal. When the board decides which model vehicle it wants, it must get together with the city of Phoenix, which performs vehicle procurement for the Regional Public Transportation Authority, the agency through which SCAT purchases vehicles.

Vehicle procurement is a nine-months-long process and a costly one, Shockley said.

"Scat needs to come up with 20 percent of the cost up front, and we have ratholed \$30,000 for that purpose because we have to prove we have the money," he said.

It costs \$665,000 annually to keep SCAT's 14 vans on the road seven days a week, executive director Donna Gilliland said in an earlier interview. And the need for the service is growing.

By the end of the third quarter of fiscal 1997, the dial-a-ride service had already provided 59,979 rides for area residents. It provided 59,035

rides in fiscal 1996.

So far, 71 percent of the rides provided were for Sun City residents, 15 percent were for Sun City West residents, 8 percent were for Youngtown residents and 6 percent were from other areas, Vick said.

Almost half, 46 percent of riders went shopping; 36 percent went on health-related trips, many to dialysis clinics; 5 percent went to restaurants; 4 percent went to recreation centers; 4 percent went to churches; 3 percent linked up with other public transportation and 2 percent went on other errands. From Jan. 1 through March 31, it provided rides for 1,353 wheelchair-bound clients.

THE WESTER Thursday, March 4, 1999

One-millionth passenger boards SCAT

By Marie Scotti

Violet Engel of Sun City boarded a SCAT van on Friday, Feb. 19, just as she always has done for many trips. Her destination was to visit a friend having a birthday. She was carrying a cake she baked for the occasion.

SCAT personnel announced she was the one-millionth rider during this trip. On Tuesday, Tom Profico, executive director of SCAT (Sun Cities Area Transit, Inc.) presented Engel with a floral arrangement and 50 free rides.

Sun Cities Area Transit has provided transportation to residents of Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown since 1982. SCAT Dial-A-Ride operates 365 days a year and now provides between 70,000 and 80,000 rides annually. Approximately 6,000

of these rides are provided to wheelchair-bound passengers, affording everyone the opportunity to live independently in their own homes longer than they could without transportation. SCAT is funded through grants and public donations.

Because of SCAT, Engel remains independent. "I have been driving with SCAT for about two years. I became legally blind at that time and I thought I'd lost my independence," said Engel. "I drove for 66 years, used to have my own car and learned I could go on the SCAT van and didn't lose my independence. I just kept going. I ride SCAT twice a week. Every Monday I go to the Olive Senior Center in Peoria. I can now go shopping, visit friends and go the hair dresser," Engel said.

"The SCAT drivers are fantastic. They help you on and off the bus, carry your packages to the door for you and help you with fastening the seat belt when you board the van. They are kind and very congenial persons," said Engel. "I plan to put my 50 free



Tom Profico, presented Violet Engel, SCAT's 1,000,000th passenger with a floral arrangement and 50 free rides as driver Fred Conklin looks on.

Photo, Jewett Conradson

tickets to work. SCAT is a marvelous organization," she added.

Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc. was formed in 1982 by a group of concerned residents who realized a growing need for some type of transportation necessary for many individuals in the retirement community who could no longer provide their own transportation. Many individuals, due to health problems, had found it necessary to discontinue driving their own automobiles. They now had to rely on others for transportation to medical appointments, shopping, attending churches, and visiting friends or going to a local restaurant.

The SCAT Dial-A-Ride charges riders \$2.50 one way and operates every day. For information, call SCAT at 977-8363.

SCAT announces 75-cent fare increase

Officials say cash-flow funds at 'troubling' levels

By CHRIS RASMUSSEN
Independent Newspapers

Sun Citians dependent upon dial-a-ride to get around town will have to pay an additional 75 cents for a one-way trip.

The increase is expected to go into effect in mid-September.

Gene Gravlin, chairman of the Sun Cities Area Transit, Inc. Oversight Committee, said the rate increase is needed to keep the transportation service in business.

"Cash-flow funds available for operations has declined to a level so low that it is troubling," Mr. Gravlin said.

Currently, SCAT has a deficit of \$150,000.

"In 15 years, we have only raised fares one quarter," Mr. Gravlin said. "Yet, our expenses have gone up 50 percent over that same time."

The last fare increase — from \$1.50 to \$1.75 — was in July 1996.

The increased fare is expected to generate \$60,000 annually, said Tom Profico, executive director of SCAT. It costs about \$7.63 per person to provide one-way transportation.

A public hearing will be held before the increase takes effect sometime in mid-September, Mr. Gravlin said.

He said two reasons have contributed to SCAT's financial woes.

"First, it is the cumulative impact of inflation over a 15-year period, which has raised our costs substantially, and the lack of appropriate fare increases to offset, even a small percent of these steadily-rising costs.

"The second reason adding to the problem has been the decline in funding by the Federal Transportation Authority. This has had the effect of a cumulative income reduction of \$60,000 over the past four years, and in future years it will exceed \$33,000 annually," he said.

A major contributor to SCAT's expenses has been keeping its ancient fleet of 12 vans running. Repairs on the vehicles has caused SCAT to run \$25,000 over budget.

Mr. Gravlin said repair expenses should decrease when SCAT gets six new vans in September. The cost for the new vans is \$60,000.

"Other dial-a-rides, like Peoria, get money from a general city fund. The Peoria City Council sets aside money for Dial-A-Ride, but we have to depend on donations," he said.

Riders who cannot afford the rate increase can apply for a discounted rate at the Olive Branch Senior

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In 15 years, we have only raised fares one quarter. Yet, our expenses have gone up 50 percent over that same time.

Gene Gravlin, chairman of SCAT Oversight Committee

Center (Peoria and 107th Ave.).

"We have a safety net for people who can't afford our fares already in place," he said. "If someone only has \$1.50, we'll take \$1."

Evaluations for the reduced fares are based on a person's ability to pay and are done on a confidential basis with the senior center's manager.

Every month, 6,500 Sun Citians use SCAT. The only other bus service in the Sun Cities is Valley Metro, and it has discussed modifying its Northwest Valley Grand bus

route.

"There are two reasons why most people use SCAT. To either go to the grocery store or their doctor," Mr. Gravlin said. "The only other alternative is taking a cab and that can cost \$10 each way.

"There is a small percentage who don't have transportation and they are desperate for it. They are prisoners in their own homes. For some seniors, they can use SCAT or move into a care home that provides transportation," he said.

Mr. Gravlin said SCAT depends

heavily upon residents' donations to keep the service running. Presently, 80 percent of the cost of each ride is subsidized by funds other than fare receipts.

"Of all funds received over the past several years (in Sun City), the most consistent, and encouraging has been the response to the SCAT fund drives by community residents, organizations and others.

"This is because they recognize the importance of SCAT to those, who for a variety of reasons, no longer have personal transportation," he said.

Voting unanimously for the fare increase, SCAT's Oversight Committee will look at other ways to break even.

"Along with other reviews of the SCAT operation, we are taking a hard look at ways and means to improve scheduling trips to both improve the service and reduce operation costs. We intend to solicit improvement suggestions from passengers, residents from the community at large and others to make SCAT the best that it can be," he added.

Van ads to boost SCAT revenue

By TINA SCHADE
Staff writer

Sun Cities Area Transit System is joining the ranks transportation departments that have turned to bus-side advertising to boost revenue.

Beginning as early as next week, the red-and-white vans may be bearing the names of local brokers, banks and other businesses, as announced at the SCAT quarterly board meeting Wednesday.

"What we're doing is having companies sponsor a van ... and so it will just say 'this vehicle sponsored by ... the name of the company' and the first one is Prudential Preferred Services," said Tom Profico, acting executive director of SCAT.

For \$2,500 a year, sponsors' names will be posted on the inside and outside of one of the 14 SCAT vans. Prudential Preferred has already signed on with the 15-year-old Dial-A-Ride program for a four-year sponsorship.

The sponsorship program will provide a more predictable source of income for the organization, which has historically relied on grants and donations to keep its wheels rolling.

The board also released its projections for the 1999 fiscal year. SCAT will be operating on a budget of \$648,000, down \$52,000 from last year's budget.

"We were projecting a higher number of ridership (81,000) but it looks like it will be closer to 80,000 so that's why next year's budget was amended. We had a couple slower months at the beginning of the year," Profico said.

Poor weather caused by El Nino led to the decrease in ridership, Profico said.

SCAT is also expected to acquire six new vans by the end of the summer. The vans will cost about \$49,021 apiece and that includes modifications for wheelchairs and ramps.

For information, call 977-8363.

Daily News-Sun

Thursday, July 24, 1997

SCAT still facing uncertain future

BY TINA SCHADE
Staff writer

The Sun Cities Area Transit System still hasn't received the necessary funds to meet its \$700,000 annual expenditures.

The 15-year-old nonprofit program, which provides more than 80,000 rides a year to residents in the Sun Cities and Youngtown, needs \$320,000 in local contributions to maintain the service.

Rider destinations include restaurants, recreation centers and churches. Almost 6,000 rides were given to clients in wheelchairs.

"The main thing is we are not sure

about donations," Dale Shockley, board member and past SCAT president said.

Other costs for the program are provided by organizations such as the Sun City Community Fund, but the fund has also suffered from lack of donations in the past. Some money is obtained through fares.

About 45 percent of SCAT's clients use the service for shopping-related trips, while 37 percent of its riders use the service for health-related reasons, yet the agency has received only \$2,500 from local businesses and medical agencies combined.

Members of the Community Council are hoping that meetings with

area businesses will stimulate the needed funds.

"SCAT provides a transportation service for all these businesses and medical facilities and we think that might be worth something to those organizations," Tom Engelhardt, vice president of the community council, said.

Members of the council would like to develop a system that would provide a more secure financial base for SCAT with funds provided by the business and medical communities. A meeting with local health maintenance organizations is scheduled for September.

"What we're trying to do is determine whether there are ways and means to provide a stable force of funding for SCAT. The first step is meeting with the HMOs and the medical-provider community to see whether they would provide additional funding," he said.

"We've made a presentation to the Rotary Council to just try to help people be aware," said the Rev. Fran Park, president of Northwest Valley Regional Community Council.

Donations may be sent to the SCAT office, Box 1972, Sun City, Ariz. 85372. For information, call 977-8363.

Transit concerns are aired

Sun Cities in spotlight

By Barbara Deters
Staff writer

If you've taken the bus in the Sun Cities area, you've stood sweltering in the 100-degree heat, with no place to rest and no shade.

But that's a problem that Rep. Jerry Overton, R-Litchfield Park, thinks can be easily solved.

Overton, who held hearings recently to receive input from residents of the Sun Cities about their transit needs, believes volunteer organizations could help improve transit services in the area by building benches to be placed along Valley Metro bus route 106. That route, which runs across Peoria Avenue to 107th Avenue, is the only bus line that comes into the Sun Cities.

What's more, he says it would be easy to contract with a company to build shelters at the bus stops for free, in exchange for that company's ability to sell advertising on the shelters, similar to an arrangement in Phoenix.

"There are no benches or shelters along the bus route, so we're looking at a quick fix there," said Overton, chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

That quick fix could come within a few months, he said.

Overton also is exploring ways to increase funding for the Sun Cities Area Transit system, which provides Dial-A-Ride services to Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown.

But that problem will take a bit longer to fix, Overton said.

One possibility is to seek money from state Lottery funds. However, Overton said any funds he might be able to get state Legislature to allocate from Lottery income would have to be split among all para-transit organizations throughout the state. Para-transit organizations are those that provide transportation on a more individualized basis, such as Dial-A-Ride and taxi services, as opposed to mass-transit services, such as buses.

Another possibility for increased funding comes from the Regional Public Transportation Authority, which gives the Sun Cities transit

system \$175,000 annually. The regional authority receives its funding from a half-cent sales tax for transportation approved in 1985.

"The funds from the RPTA to SCAT have stayed constant since Day One," Overton said. "It seems to me that's not fair. RPTA's money has been growing because sales taxes have increased but, in comparison, RPTA's donation to SCAT have not."

Overton said he will talk to the RPTA to see if it will voluntarily increase its contribution to the program.

But that might be difficult for the regional authority to do, since a number of Dial-A-Ride programs have sprung up throughout the Valley in recent years, thereby curbing RPTA's ability to give a larger sum to SCAT, according to Dale Shockley, president of the Sun Cities transit group.

"They don't have any big increase in money themselves," he said.

A third option may be to ask businesses in the area to support the program more.

"SCAT is getting only half of a percent of its contributions from business," Overton said. "Yet

SCAT is providing a service for these businesses (by bringing customers to stores and offices). I have a hard time trying to figure out why these businesses wouldn't contribute to it."

SCAT, which charges \$1.50 for a one-way trip and runs 365 days a year, has operated in the red for the past four or five years, Shockley said.

Shockley, who has operated the Dial-A-Ride service for 13 years, is using reserves from his early years to offset the losses, he said.

Last fiscal year's budget was \$653,000, and that has grown to \$668,000 this fiscal year.

Last year, SCAT received 20.1 percent of its income from fares. Another 40.3 percent came from local contributions from individuals, non-profit organizations and civic and church groups. Grants from the Regional Public Transportation Authority and the Federal Transit Authority made up another 38.2 percent and the remainder, 1.4 percent, came from interest earned on accounts.

But Shockley said he isn't sure where the extra money is going to come for this fiscal year's bills.

"I have a budget, but I don't know where it (the income) will come from," he said.

SCAT Riders Pay Less Than One-Fourth of Costs

By Mildred Baker

Sun Citians Area Transit System has maintained a \$1.50 fare for riders despite increasing costs that Dale R. Shockley, president of SCAT Board of Directors, now estimates to be nearly \$7 per ride.

At the recent quarterly Board of Directors meeting, Shockley observed that possible loss of Federal funds "will hurt every transit system in the U.S." The failure of Proposition 400 in November was also a setback for



Pres. Dale R. Shockley and Exec. Dir. Donna M. Gilliland address board members at SCAT quarterly meeting.
Photo, Mildred Baker

transportation progress in general. Earlier in the year, Rural Public Transportation Authority informed SCAT it cannot pay its 20 percent any longer and has stopped payment.

As a result of these diminishing funds, Phoenix has already adopted a 25 percent increase in bus fares.

How to face the issue drew suggestions from Board members—how to make up the loss without hurting the estimated 18 per-

cent of riders who would not be able to pay increased fare. Board member—Treas. Gene Gravlin suggested that a way be studied where those who have the ability to pay do so because there are many residents who could afford to own and maintain their own car. They may be restricted from driving for eye/health situations. A 25-cent fare increase was sug-

SCAT
Continued on Page 3

SCAT Riders Pay Less Than One-Fourth of Costs

Continued from Page 1

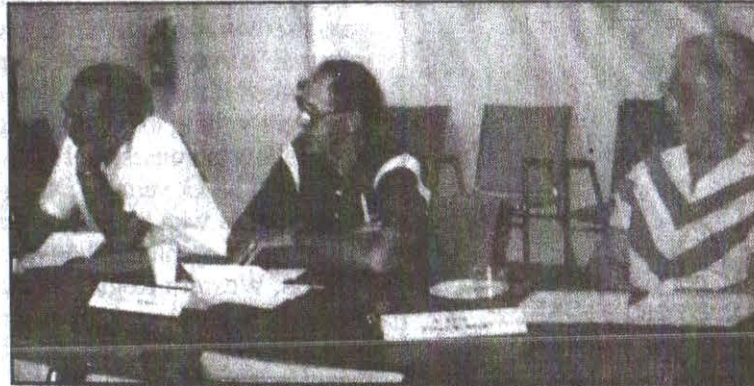
gested for those with the ability to pay.

"If we lose federal money, something has to change," comments board member Ruth Boyd, Sun City West. "People with ability to pay more will be happy to do so, I believe, rather than lose SCAT."

One member stated that the Senior Olive Center has a means test to determine payment ability. Shockley will appoint a committee to study the problem of fair fares.

Exec. Dir. Donna Gilliland reported that SCAT drivers are required to take regular examinations to determine whether any are alcohol-impaired. Each month three drivers go to Phoenix for alcohol testing. They are not informed in advance who will go. Arizona Department of Transportation required each SCAT employee to have a physical every two years. A driver cannot be employed beyond the age of 65 unless hired before arriving at 65.

In other items of business, breakdown of the most recent



Russell Vick, Sun City West, George Keyes, and Ruth Boyd, Sun City West at the SCAT quarterly board meeting. Photo, Mildred Baker

fund drive showed contributions from Sun City \$70,000, Sun City West \$16,957, Youngtown \$645, other \$1,632.

"We are \$30,000 in the black now, but that doesn't take depreciation into consideration, reported Shockley.

The number of miles a vehicle must be driven before being replaced has risen from 100,000 miles to 150,000. The three new vehicles to be purchased this year will be CNG (compressed natural gas) equipped. There is money on hand for a copier. Carpeting was donated and installed in the

office area.

A budget of \$668,000 was approved by the Board.

Shockley named a nominating committee to be chaired by Douglas Wright with Ruth Body, SCW, and George Keyes.

The communication problem between the new addition of SCW and SCAT dispatcher has been resolved with the F.C.C. license now in effect. Previously that area could call the SCAT office, but the dispatcher could not reach a SCAT driver in the new area because the tall hospital structure interfered.

Dee Wester

Jan. 26 - Feb. 1, 1995

SCAT May Lose Important Source of Funding Ridership Rises—Current Monies May Last Through June

By Mildred Baker

At the Jan. 18 Sun Cities Area Transportation quarterly board of directors meeting, convened in the Sun City Community Services Building, President Dale Schokley noted the possibility of Congress scrapping Federal aid to such services as SCAT. Although this reduction of aid has not yet been legislated, it is a threat. It could entail thousands of dollars of income reduction including a 40 percent vehicle replacement loss.

"Operation Assistance Fund may be eliminated," says Shockley. "It would mean running SCAT cars more years, resulting in more engine replacement costs, putting 150,000 miles on the vehicle," he continued. Present policy is to replace vans at 100,000 miles.

Failure of Proposition 400 in November was also a setback for transportation progress in general. As a result, Rural Public Transportation Authority has informed

SCAT it can no longer pay its 20 percent.

Previous fund drives plus funds from RPTA already designated plus the Transportation Assistance Fund are expected to run SCAT through May—"and possibly June" according to Shockley.

In the meantime, the annual fund drive is in progress, according to Exec. Dir. Donna Gilliland.

"Fourteen thousand letters for Sun City West area in the mail today," she reported.

According to current records, 13 percent of SCAT ridership represents SCW—up from 11 percent for the comparable period. Thousands of additional fund-seeking letters are being mailed to Sun City and Youngtown.

New drug and alcohol policies mandated by ADA will soon be in effect, according to Gilliland. They apply to all employees of SCAT.

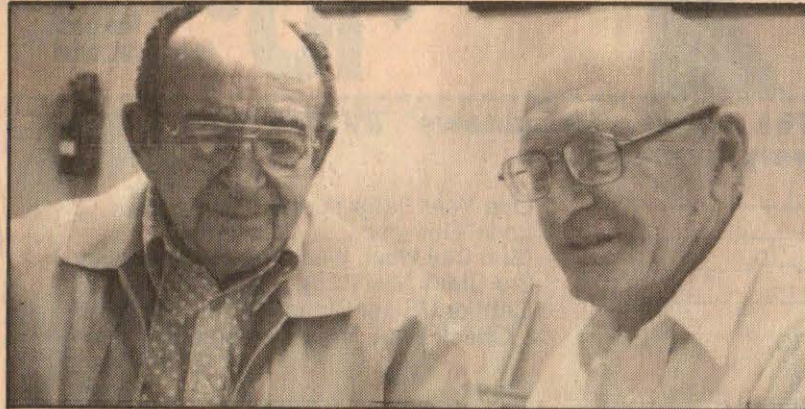
Of the 15 vans operating, 14

are wheelchair accessible. There are 650 wheelchair clients dependent on SCAT.

Schokley reported that two off-budget items were fortunately underwritten by service organizations. Soroptimist Club, of which Gilliland is a member, paid for the entire installation of the repeater station necessitated by expansion of Sun City West. Sam Higginbotham of SCAT Advisory Council convinced the Lions Club, of which he is a member, to finance the much-needed resurfacing of the compound at the 99th Ave. headquarters.

The fact that SCAT ridership is up indicates increasing need for SCAT in these communities. Heal-related trips increased from 30 to 37 percent, partly attributed to dialysis and wheel-chair destinations.

"Forty percent of our pickups



Sam Higginbotham (l.) and Douglas Wright are directors of SCAT. Each has a long history of volunteerism in this area.

Photo, Mildred Baker

SCAT May Lose Fund-Raising Source Continued from Page 1

were made within 15 minutes of passenger request," states Shockley. There is a constant effort to cut down time between calls and pickups and to improve all aspects of SCAT transportation.

SCAT wrestles with money woes

By J.J. McCORMACK
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The volunteer president of the Sun Cities Area Transit service can't stop worrying about the non-profit organization's finances.

"I hate to cry wolf every year. We've got enough money to finish out the year and we've got enough to start next year, but I can't assure you we've got enough money to finish out next year," Shockley told fellow directors of SCAT during a meeting earlier this week.

The board of directors adopted a \$567,000 fiscal 1995 operating budget during the meeting, despite learning that revenue boosts from local and regional sources are not a sure thing. "We've been skating on thin ice for

about two years. The ice is getting thinner," Shockley said.

SCAT's fiscal 1995 budget anticipates \$45,000 in additional revenue next fiscal year to help offset an overall \$52,000 increase in operating expenses and avoid a deficit.

The increase in operating expenses includes \$30,000 worth of employee pay raises and related personnel expenses, as well as increases in liability insurance and van maintenance costs. The budget projects \$112,000 will be collected in fares.

Shockley said SCAT hopes to collect \$200,000 from individuals and groups as a result of its annual fund drive. The figure represents about \$14,000 more than was collected last

year.

As of Wednesday, the local dial-a-ride service had collected about \$112,000 and received funding pledges totaling more than \$80,000, said Donna Gilliland, SCAT's executive director. The money has been trickling in since SCAT volunteers sent out 42,428 letters requesting financial support from the community.

SCAT annually receives \$175,000 from the Regional Public Transportation Authority, the organization that administers federal, state and local transportation funds. Shockley made a personal appeal to the RPTA board last month for an additional \$25,000, or \$200,000 total, in fiscal 1995.

The RPTA board, which is chaired

by Peoria Mayor Ken Forgia, is expected to act on the request during a meeting May 12.

Shockley said he asked the board for more money because SCAT's operating costs are rising and because the non-profit organization's reserve funds have been greatly depleted in recent years to cover budget deficits totaling \$25,000 to \$30,000.

The starting wage for SCAT drivers and dispatchers recently was increased from \$5 to \$6 to enable SCAT to compete for employees with other local transportation services, said Gilliland.

Existing SCAT employees whose wages were below the new starting rates were given raises, Gilliland

said. SCAT was having trouble recruiting new drivers and dispatchers until the wage was increased, she said.

Capital expenses SCAT has not secured funding for include communications equipment upgrades necessary to serve the Sun City West expansion area and repaving the parking lot and driveway outside SCAT headquarters on 99th Avenue in Peoria.

SCAT's existing radio equipment prevents drivers in the Sun City West expansion area from communicating with dispatchers. A repeater station is needed atop Del E. Webb Memorial Hospital in Sun City West at the



File photo

Sun Cities Area Transit, Inc., a dial-a-ride transportation system servicing Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown, has struggled this past year to generate enough contributions to make ends meet. Although area businesses benefit from the service, few provide donations.

Sun Cities dial-a-ride seeks support from area businesses

By ANNE RYMAN
Business Review

Sun Cities Area Transit System officials hope to enlist the support of local businesses and medical professionals with the start of its annual fund drive campaign.

Letters and brochures about SCAT will be mailed to every business in Sun City, Sun City West, Youngtown, as well as several in Peoria, in hopes of raising money for the dial-a-ride transportation service, Executive Director Donna Gilliland says.

An estimated 77,000 people will call SCAT for

rides in the next year, about 43 percent for shopping and 34 percent for health-related purposes. And while a majority of riders use the service to travel to businesses or doctors' offices, local businesses traditionally have not supported the transit system, SCAT officials say.

"It's sort of discouraging," says Dale Shockley, president of SCAT's volunteer board of directors, about a past mailing that netted only \$50 from one individual out of 250 requests.

Officials hope this changes in the future.

SCAT relies upon community support to meet

See ■ SCAT, Page 3

■ SCAT

From Page 1

its annual budget. Donations for fiscal year 1992-93 amounted to \$186,968, about \$13,000 less than the target, Mr. Shockley says.

Although this is the fourth consecutive year SCAT has operated at a deficit, Ms. Gilliland says donations amounted to about \$21,000 more than for the previous fiscal year.

"It's short of what we wanted but a lot better than last year."

She is pleased with the results.

"We had some people who came back and gave a second time."

SCAT offers curb-to-curb transportation in the Sun Cities and Youngtown. It receives most of its funding from the Regional Public Transportation Authority

Dale Shockley, SCAT president, calls support from area businesses "disappointing" and says the dial-a-ride service received only \$50 last year from local merchants.



and the Federal Transit Administration but relies upon donations from individuals, churches, civic groups and community funds for the balance of its operating budget.

SCAT needed \$200,000 in donations to meet its budget of \$655,000 for the fiscal year which ended June 30.

SCAT calls for donations

Transit system funding is \$30,000 short of goal

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

Sun Cities Area Transit System Inc. has a problem: Ridership is reaching an all-time high but SCAT's fund drive is falling short of its goal.

The organization sent out more than 39,500 letters to area residents requesting donations and received about 3,000 replies, SCAT President Dale Shockley said at Wednesday's meeting of the dial-a-ride's board of directors.

"Total local contributions to date are slightly better than last year, but they're going to be considerably short of the \$200,000 we need and had hoped to get," Shockley said.

SCAT will be able to operate until July with the money it has, but the dial-a-ride service needs more community support in the long term, Shockley said.

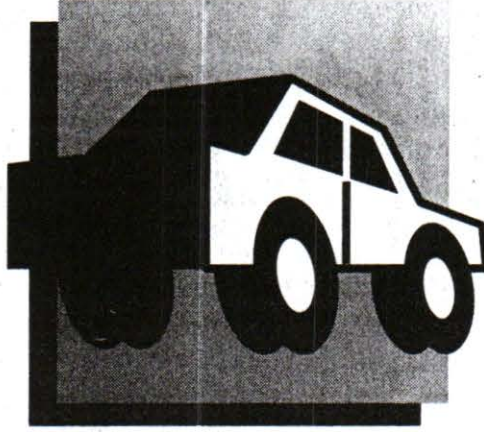
After July, "we'll have to take it one month at a time and see what happens," said Donna Gilliland, SCAT executive director.

Gilliland said getting more government funds is not an option and added that a cutback in service "would only just hurt the people."

SCAT has collected about \$130,000 from local sources, and almost \$68,000 of that came from individuals who received the fund-raising letters. Donations from Sun City and Sun City West community organizations, churches and non-profit groups made up the bulk of the rest of SCAT's local total.

Shockley projected that SCAT will receive an additional \$40,000 from local groups, such as the Sun City Community Fund. That money would leave SCAT \$30,000 short of its goal.

The fund drive comes as SCAT ridership is reaching new heights. Shockley said the service carried a weekday average of 250 riders dur-



ing the first three quarters of its fiscal year — a record high.

The dial-a-ride will carry almost 80,000 passengers this year, he added.

Shockley said he was "unhappy" with the low level of support SCAT received from local businesses and professionals.

Mailings sent to area offices in past years generated such a low return that SCAT officials decided not to sent letters out to the business community this year.

"I don't even give it a thought, because we don't get enough from them to pay for the postage to send it out," Shockley said.

"We carry people to those establishments all the time and they don't support us," he added after the meeting.

SCAT's operating budget this year is \$565,000; its capital budget is \$125,000.

The dial-a-ride service receives all of its capital budget and more than half of its operating budget from the Federal Transit Administration and the Regional Public Transportation Authority, but government money is awarded only if SCAT can show the community supports its efforts

through local donations.

The dial-a-ride service has been operating at a deficit for several years, using interest from its endowment to make up the shortfall. In October, Shockley had to ask the board of directors for permission to tap the endowment capital to carry SCAT through a cash-flow problem.

But an emergency \$30,000 donation from the Sun City Community Fund in December saved SCAT from having to touch its endowment.

The dial-a-ride has enough money to operate through the end of its fiscal year, which ends June 30, without dipping into the endowment, Shockley said, but "we're going to be in a deficit position again this year."

Gilliland said SCAT has had to rely on reserve monies for so many years that "we're close to not having anything in reserve."

Shockley said residents in the Sun Cities area might underestimate the importance of the service SCAT provides. Other local charities have very successful fund drives, he noted.

"Some of these things that are getting a lot of money are very worthy, but they're not as essential as transportation," he said.

SCAT will be purchasing three new vans this year using the \$125,000 capital budget, Shockley said. Two of the new vans will have seating for five passengers plus room for a rider in a wheelchair, and the third will have seating for seven and room for two wheelchair-riders.

Three small, older vans will be traded in at the same time, so SCAT's fleet will remain at 12 vans, he said.

The dial-a-ride's vans run on compressed natural gas, which is cheaper and less-polluting than gasoline.

SCAT official earns transit award

By ANNE RYMAN
Sun Cities Independent

The executive director of SCAT has been honored by a state transportation organization for her contributions to Valley transit in 1992.

The Women in Transit Supervisory, a group of about 70 people representing different aspects of transportation services, presented Sun City resident Donna Gilliland with its Outstanding Person in Transportation award for her work on several Valley transportation

committees.

Ms. Gilliland is active on 15 local, county and state committees including chairwoman of the Transportation Committee for the Western Maricopa County Coalition, an organization representing Northwest Valley interests. She is a member of the Phoenix Transportation Advisory Committee and was president-elect of the Arizona Transit Association.

Locally, she is president of the Valley of the Sun Soroptimists and president of the Council of Service Clubs of the Sun Cities, an organi-

zation representing 28 clubs.

In addition to her civic involvement, Ms. Gilliland says she puts in 50-60 hours per week as executive director of Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc., a dial-a-ride service that provides daily rides to residents in the Sun Cities and Youngtown.

SCAT has 12 vans, 28 employees and a 17-member volunteer board of directors.

"That keeps me very busy," she says.

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■ AWARD

From Page 1

Ms. Gilliland moved to the Northwest Valley in 1974 and worked as a comptroller for Luke Air Force Base. One year later, she moved to Sun City.

Before becoming general manager of SCAT in 1988, she worked as a business director at El Dorado

of Sun City and, before that, as business manager at Royal Oaks Life-Care Community.

Ms. Gilliland has a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Willamette University-Salem, Ore. and went on to do graduate work at Purdue University.



Donna Gilliland

Director drives service's success

Sun Cities Area Transit System timeline

- **January 1982:** The Sun Cities Area Community Council labels establishing a dial-a-ride service a high priority.
- **June 1982:** Sun Cities Area Transit System files for incorporation with the Arizona Corporation Commission.
- **October 1982:** SCAT begins service.
- **October 1985:** SCAT takes over operation of service from contractors.
- **October 1987:** SCAT begins operating a van on compressed natural gas.
- **January 1989:** The last of SCAT's eight vehicles are converted to CNG.
- **October 1992:** SCAT formally dedicates its CNG fueling station.

By JACQUE PAPPAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — It's not uncommon to see Donna Gilliland in a dress and heels with mechanics tools in her hands checking under the hood of a Sun Cities Area Transit System van.

The 58-year-old Sun City resident is the executive director of the SCAT — the only public transportation service for residents in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown.

Although Gilliland seems to be forever attending meetings and doing paperwork for the local dial-a-ride, she also spends much of her time in hands-on management of the non-profit corporation.

She changes engine parts, monitors the compressed natural gas station, checks the grade of tires for wear, makes sure electric chair lifts are in order and does much, much more.

"Any time something is wrong, I'm the one who goes out and checks it. I try to stay on top of what's going on

in this office," Gilliland said. "I never thought I would be doing something like this. I think my father would be very proud of me if he was alive today."

In July 1988 Gilliland was hired as SCAT's general manager, a title that was later changed to executive director.

Shortly after she was hired, Gilliland, former business manager of Royal Oaks and El Dorado retirement centers, took mechanics courses at Glendale Community College.

"I did it for my own protection so things couldn't get by me. Now when we lose an 'O Ring' I know what needs to be done," Gilliland said.

Gilliland said she attends 19 transportation-oriented meetings a month that give SCAT exposure to various officials in the Valley.

Through this exposure she has held a number of key administrative roles in transit groups and been asked to speak to a number of organizations about the dial-a-ride, compressed natural gas and other issues.

"I think I've helped bring out an awareness of the small transportation vendors and got them more exposure so annual transit conferences include a variety of topics and don't just focus on the big guns," Gilliland said.



Gilliland

OVER

Gilliland was former vice president of the Arizona Transit Association, editor of the group's quarterly magazine and was project coordinator of an association membership book that includes a wealth of information about the group.

She is chairman of the Transit Committee for Western Maricopa County Coalition, which includes representatives from Northwest Valley cities, and is a speaker on the Regional Public Transportation Authority's Community Action Committee.

Many of the projects that Gilliland has worked on for SCAT, such as drafting a drug and substance abuse policy, have been used as models by a number of other dial-a-rides and transit groups.

In addition, Gilliland leads a number of training sessions for SCAT employees on topics such as drivers safety and Americans with Disabilities Act.

In the community, Gilliland is also active in a number of organizations.

She is president of the Council of Service Clubs, president of the Valley of the Sun Soroptimists and the Soroptimists' Presidents Round Table, member of the Passport Club and Alaska Club.

"I don't think a lot of people realize that SCAT is in the caring busi-

ness too. If we see that one of our passengers is in need of help we refer them to the proper human services professionals," Gilliland said.

Since Gilliland was hired more than four years ago, SCAT's annual census has increased from 48,000 passengers carried to 75,000 passengers who ride the vans.

The vehicle fleet has grown to 12 vans and the office has 29 drivers, dispatchers, office workers and other employees.

She said devoted board presidents and enthusiastic employees have helped SCAT grow in the past years.

"In the past three months, 90 percent of our riders got to their destination in 30 minutes. It's hard to do that. I feel we do a good service to the people. Complaints have dropped considerably," Gilliland said.

Before moving to Sun City, Gilliland worked as a controller U.S. Air Force commands in Anchorage, Ala., and Germany. She also was a school teacher for several years.

Now, in addition to her SCAT duties and community involvement, Gilliland negotiates floral contracts with military bases and other entities.

"Wherever I've been, I've always tried to stay busy."

Dial-a-ride marks decade of area transit

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

At the Sun Cities Area Transit System's 10th anniversary celebration in October, Southwest Gas' Brian O'Donnell said that SCAT reminded him of a children's story: "The Little Engine That Could."

The little engines of SCAT have been serving Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown residents since 1982, when a group of volunteers rounded up by the Sun Cities Community Council established the dial-a-ride service.

When SCAT was first founded the organization didn't have its own vans; the group contracted with private companies to provide service. After the purchase and donation of several vehicles, SCAT assumed complete responsibility for operating the service in October 1985.

Two years later SCAT converted one of its vans to run on compressed natural gas. Today all of the organization's 12 vans use CNG.

O'Donnell, supervisor of industrial sales for Southwest

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Gas, said SCAT was a pioneer in the use of alternative fuels. "They were the first dial-a-ride service to use compressed natural gas in the country," O'Donnell said.

Since SCAT started using CNG, a number of other transit organizations, are exploring alternative fuels, O'Donnell said. The cities of Glendale and Tucson are using some CNG-powered vehicles, and Phoenix is doing some testing with natural gas, he said.

Although using CNG benefits the environment, since

vehicles running on the fuel have lower emissions, SCAT's main goal is to benefit area residents who need transportation.

Regina Vena was SCAT's 500,000th passenger, honored in October with 50 free tickets. Vena has been calling SCAT for about 6 years to get to doctor's appointments and do her shopping and says she doesn't know what she would do without it. "It's a wonderful service," said Vena.

SCAT President Dale Shockley has been with the organization since June 1982,

two months after the group was founded.

In the decade since then, Shockley said the dial-a-ride's vans had racked up an impressive record. "In the past 10 years, our vehicles have traveled over two million miles," Shockley said at the October dedication of SCAT's new compressed natural gas fueling facility.

SCAT's CNG facility takes natural gas at a pressure of 5 pounds per square inch and pressurizes it to 3,600 psi before pumping it into one of the converted vans.

Although the process of converting a vehicle to use CNG can cost between \$3,000 and \$3,500 dollars, O'Donnell said the savings from fuel expenses can be considerable — CNG costs about 50 cents a gallon.

And every little bit helps, since SCAT is experiencing a budget crunch this year. Its federal grants have been held up, due to a labor dispute at Phoenix Transit and the dial-a-ride's fund drive does not begin until January. SCAT needs about \$40,000 a month

to operate.

The service gets its funding from a combination of federal, county and local community support. The local component is particularly important because much of the federal grant money SCAT receives is contingent upon the service

getting local funding.

O'Donnell said he was "impressed" by SCAT employees and volunteers.

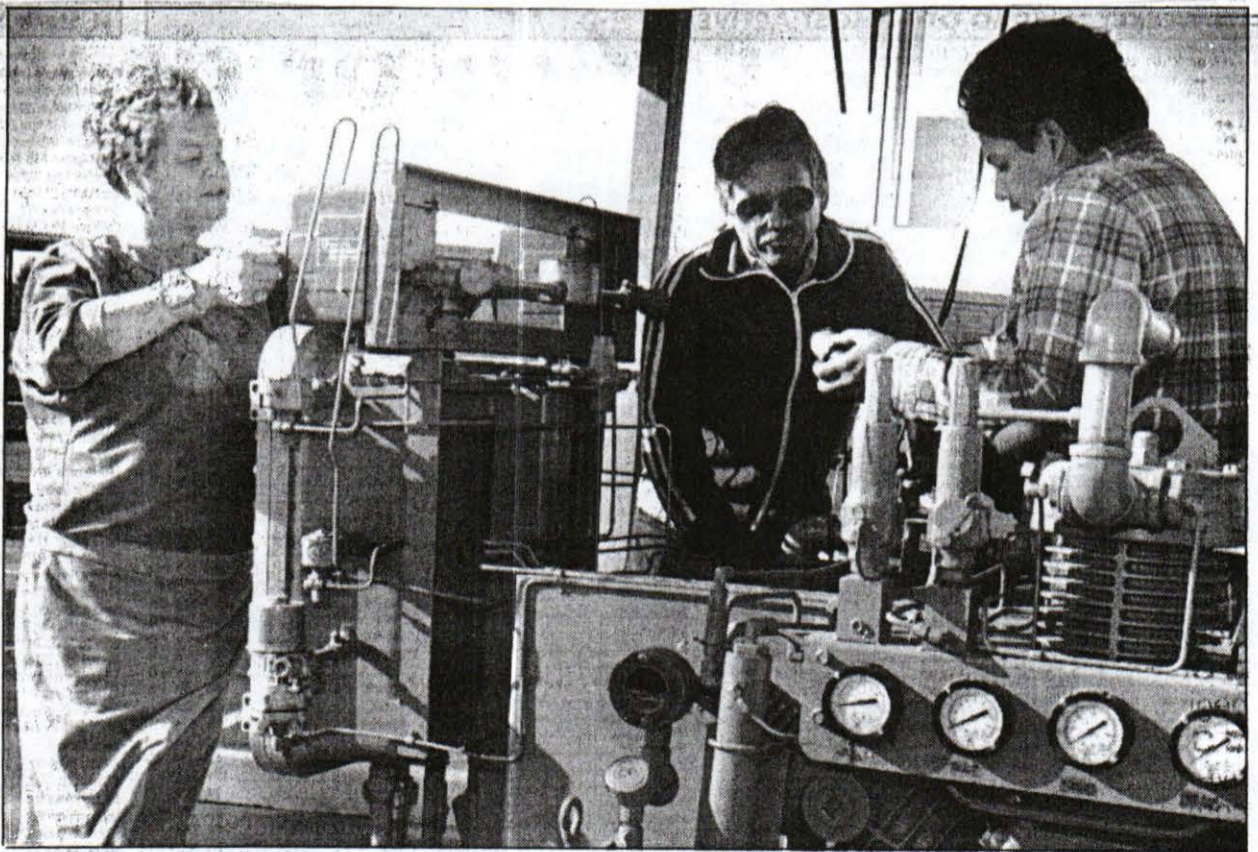
"I think it's just incredible that those people spend the amount of time that they do to help other people," he said.

OVER



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Refueling a SCAT van, Executive Director Donna Gilliland pumps compressed natural gas into the converted vehicle's tanks to a pressure of 3,000 pounds per square inch.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Donna Gilliland speaks with Al and Sam Acosta of Environmental Fuel Systems, the company that installed SCAT's natural gas compressor.

SCAT digs into reserves

Labor dispute causes problems for dial-a-ride

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

For the first time in its 10-year history, Sun Cities Area Transit System may have to spend some of its endowment capital to stay in business.

SCAT Executive Director Donna Gilliland Friday said the dial-a-ride service's federal funds had been delayed by a Phoenix Transit labor dispute.

SCAT relies upon money from federal and county transit organizations as well as local contributions.

The dial-a-ride service receives its federal funding through a complex process: Money from the Federal Transit Administration is given to Phoenix Transit, which distributes the funds for outlying areas to Maricopa County. A portion of the money distributed to the county is earmarked for SCAT.

The FTA gives SCAT operations-assistance funds and capital grants, expected to total around \$130,000

this year. But a labor dispute at Phoenix Transit has delayed distribution of the FTA funds.

"Hopefully we'll get ours between now and February," Gilliland said.

SCAT needs about \$40,000 a month to operate. Until money comes through from Phoenix Transit, the service will rely on its cash reserve.

"We have to have a reserve because our fund drive starts in January, but our fiscal year starts in July," said Dale Shockley, SCAT president.

From July until January, the service relies on a few contributions and income from the \$1.50 fare it charges passengers. "Anything beyond that has to come out of our cash flow reserve," said Shockley. But this year, he added, "Our cash flow reserve has gotten low."

At the quarterly meeting Oct. 21, Shockley told SCAT board members that the dial-a-ride service may need to tap into its endowment fund capital for the first time.

"We've never taken any money out of the endowment fund," Shockley said. "The idea of the endowment fund is that we only take out the interest."

SCAT's endowment is about \$150,000, Shockley said. Some \$42,000 of that money is kept accessible in a money market account. At last Wednesday's meeting, Shockley asked and received the board's permission to request from SCAT's endowment trustees as much of that \$42,000 as needed.

"Actually, I don't think we'll ever take that much," Shockley said.

Gilliland said SCAT's 1993 fund drive will begin Jan. 1 with 39,000 letters requesting donations. This year's goal for local contributions from all sources is \$120,000.

To raise more funds for SCAT and "to let the community know we're here," Gilliland said the transit service is holding its seventh annual ball Nov. 21.

6-17-23-92

SCAT installs new refueling station

Compressed natural gas cuts pollution and costs less than gasoline

By ANNE RYMAN
Sun Cities Independent

Sun Cities Area Transit vans began fueling up for service last week at a new \$125,000 compressed natural gas station.

The station increases fueling capacity and ensures the fleet will continue to run on compressed natural gas, an alternative fuel less polluting than gasoline, says Dale Shockley, president of SCAT's volunteer board of directors.

SCAT vans have been designed to run on either gasoline or CNG since 1988 and have used a demonstration fueling station on loan from Southwest Gas and the Regional Public Transportation Authority since that time. The Federal Transit Administration paid for 80 percent of the cost of the new station.

The demonstration facility could fill six vans in a slow-fill, overnight process, while the new station can fill all 12 SCAT vans at once.

"We didn't have the fueling capacity we have now. As we grew

from eight to 12 vehicles we needed more capacity."

Mr. Shockley says the slow-fill process, which takes eight to nine hours, requires less compressor capacity than the fast-fill process so it costs less money and equipment to operate. The new station includes 12 parking stalls for vans to be filled overnight and also has two posts to fill vehicles within 10 minutes for those vans that run low on fuel during the day.

All SCAT vans are equipped to run on either CNG or gasoline but run on CNG about 6 1/2 days of the week. Executive Director Donna Gilliland says. Drivers switch to gasoline once a week to lubricate the motor and pistons and keeps the systems working efficiently.

The new station weighs 10,000 pounds and compresses natural gas from five pounds per square inch to 3,000 pounds per square inch by the time it enters the vehicle's tank. By comparison, the natural gas used in homes is compressed at less than one-half pound per square inch.

SCAT officials say the CNG

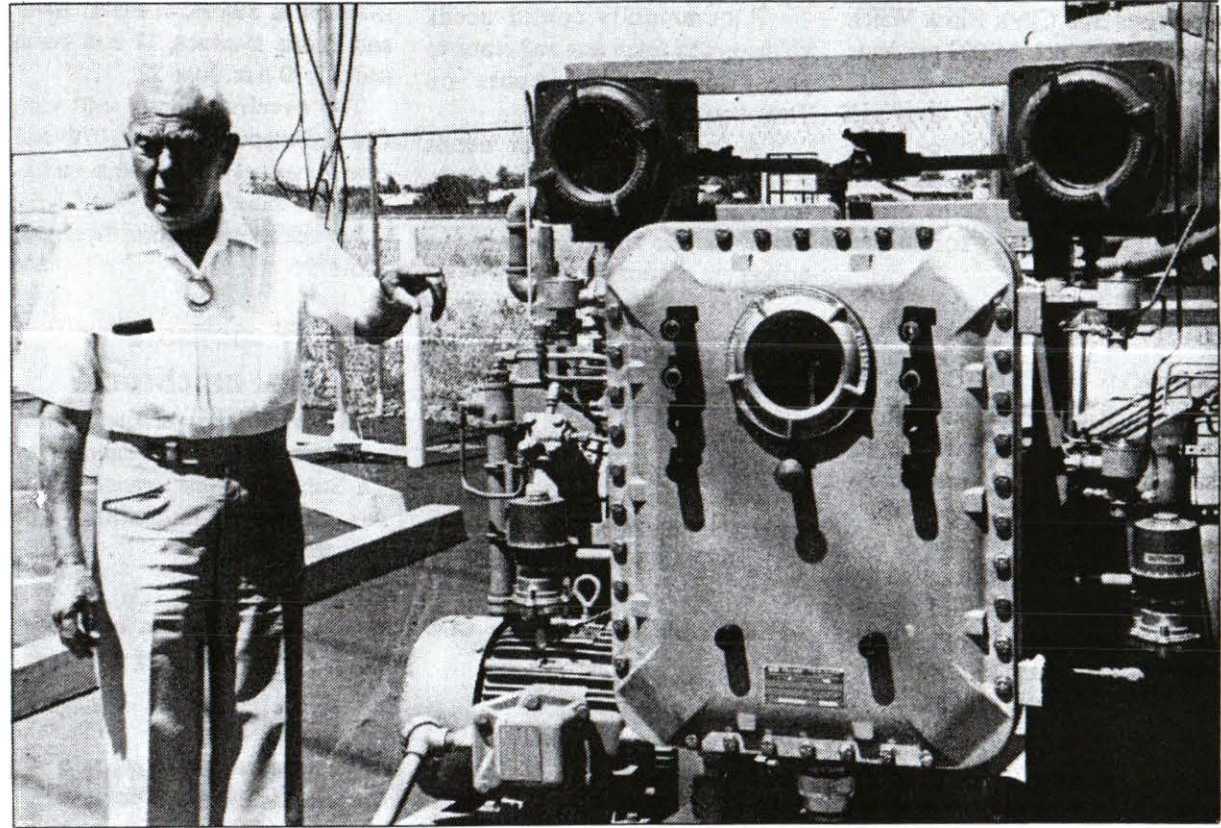


Photo by TYSON KUHRT/ Sun Cities Independent

SCAT President Dale Shockley points out the features on the organization's permanent compressed natural gas station. The twin-compressor weighs 10,000 pounds and has the capacity to fuel all 12 SCAT vans overnight.

OVER

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station does not pose a danger to the area surrounding the station at 9445 99th Ave., Peoria. The lights, lines and station parts are explosion-proof and the compressor will shut off automatically if one of the vans pulls away from the station without being disconnected from the gas line. Fire extinguishers are located between every two filling stations and two emergency switches can be activated by employees.

SCAT has used CNG in its vehicles since 1988 and other

transportation operators in Arizona including the cities of Tucson, Scottsdale, Glendale, Arizona State University-Tempe and Pima Community College-Tucson use the alternative fuel in an effort to cut pollution.

Natural gas has the lowest carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas) emissions of any of the fossil fuels.

CNG is not only less polluting but also cheaper than gasoline.

"Right now, CNG costs about half the price of gas," Mr. Shockley

says. "We can run seven of our vans on CNG and pollute no more than running one van on gasoline."

CNG as a transportation fuel has been used primarily by fleet operators and industry experts predict the number will grow. The American Gas Association estimates the number of natural gas-powered vehicles will grow to 1.4 million by 1995, up from 30,000 this year.

The Arizona Corporation Commission recently approved a

proposal that will allow Southwest Gas to transport natural gas to fueling stations where vehicle owners can purchase the fuel. One of the drawbacks to natural gas has been the few places vehicles can refuel.

Commission Chairman Renz Jennings says the decision will benefit consumers because it will reduce dependence upon foreign oil and will help clean up the air.

It costs about \$2,500 to convert a vehicle to natural gas.

SCAT president volunteers for transit needs

Need a ride? Just dial 977-8363 and talk to the Sun Cities Area Transit System. For \$1.50, a SCAT van will take you where you need to go in the area.

A van will pick you up as soon as possible, but ASAP might on some days stretch into a two-hour wait, said Dale Shockley, SCAT's president and one of the transit system's early organizers.

"We'd like to pick up every caller within 15 minutes," he said but added that to do that would require a small fleet of reserve buses.

"There's a fine line between reasonable costs and having enough vans to pick up everyone within 15 minutes," he said.

Since 1985, the SCAT Board of Directors has managed the system. Despite his 85 years, Shockley, a retired civil engineer, has found an unpaid career that keeps him working close to fulltime.

SCAT estimates that Shockley has volunteered an estimated 17,680 hours. "For many years, I worked eight hours a day and on weekends," Shockley said Wednesday.

Recently he cut back to approximately 30 hours a week. In

his years with SCAT, Shockley has negotiated contracts, written transportation specifications, projected transportation trends, and other planning and administrative functions that have shaped the service.

SCAT hasn't always been around to provide its service. It's one of those institutions that has grown up after the Sun Cities Area Community Council recognized the need.

Back before October 1982, "There was no other transportation, other than a taxicab out of Peoria," Shockley said.

Ten years ago, he said, Chuck McKinnis led the formation of SCAT, which began with a Tucson van company providing

passenger service. In its first year, SCAT carried about 20,000 passengers, Shockley said. This past year, the system transported more than 70,000 passengers.

"As the communities age, we get an increased number of people who have no way of getting around other than through SCAT or their neighbors," he said.

With an estimated 1,500 area people losing their driving privileges each year, he said, the need for SCAT continues to grow.

SCAT's financial reserves

have been dwindling as demand and costs have risen. Where federal grants paid for the planning and development of the service, contributions from individuals, non-profit groups and businesses are SCAT's mainstay and lifeblood.

He thanked the Daily News-Sun for its annual \$1,000 contribution, and said, he would like to see other businesses follow suit because contributions haven't increased over the years at the same rate as the increased ridership.

Connie Steele Young is a features writer with the Daily News-Sun.

DOERS PROFILE

Dale Shockley

Vitae: Bachelor's degree in civil engineering, Oklahoma A&M, now Oklahoma State University.

Hometown: Enid, Okla.

Valley Home: Sun City 12 years.

Marital status: Wanda for 60 years.

Self-portrait: A discontented self-starter, an explorer, a thinker who looks for a better way of doing things.



Motto: Do your job!

Greatest feat: Surviving at age 60 a plane crash into the Panamanian swamp and jungle before search planes made the rescue three days later.

Walter Mitty fantasy: I'll find SCAT a \$1-million-angel.

Inspirations: Wanda's sound thinking and support.

Good/bad habits: Neat/Never voluntarily throw anything away.

Favorite food/drink: Mexican/Beer.

TV programs: "Hallmark Hall of Fame."

Books at bedside: Newspapers and Reader's Digest.

Vacation spot/luxury: Visiting family/Time.

Key to longevity: Keep busy.

Last words: Stay calm. Work it out.



Russell Gates / Staff photographer
Dean Lockwood, lead driver for Sun Cities Area Transit, talks with SCAT Executive Director Donna Gilliland.

SCAT does the driving for many in Sun Cities

By Lori Baker
Staff writer

SUN CITIES — Four miles might seem like a short trip, but it can be an impossible journey for an elderly person without a car.

In the retirement communities of Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown, many residents do not drive. They depend on SCAT (Sun Cities Area Transit), a non-profit organization that provides transportation, using community donations for about one-quarter of its operating costs.

"Some people only ride SCAT for four blocks, and others go 13 or 14 miles," said SCAT board President Dale Shockley. "Most of the people out here are elderly and/or handicapped, and many are widows who have never driven."

More than 400,000 passengers have traveled about 1.68 million

miles since SCAT was started in October 1982 — an average of about 4 miles per trip. SCAT provides door-to-door service, picking people up at their homes and taking them to their destination.

"We take people to chemotherapy, kidney dialysis, physical therapy and doctor's appointments, as well as to shopping, haircuts, recreation or visiting friends," said Donna Gilliland, who has been SCAT's executive director for three years.

Since the first passenger boarded a SCAT van, service has been provided 365 days a year. That record sets SCAT apart from many transportation services that do not operate on weekends or holidays, such as Dial-A-Ride services in Glendale, Peoria, Tempe and Scottsdale.

Ten of SCAT's 11 vans are
See SCAT, Page 6

equipped to carry wheelchairs.

"We've carried 15,000 wheelchairs in the past three years, Gilliland said. "Our drivers received extensive training on how to load and secure wheelchairs."

For passengers wishing to go outside the Sun Cities and Youngtown, SCAT meets Regional Public Transportation Authority bus 106, which goes east to Metrocenter, Paradise Valley Mall, Scottsdale and to the Mayo Clinic at 130th Street and Shea Boulevard.

Demand for SCAT service has been steadily increasing, with the number of riders going up from 48,000 during the 1988-89 fiscal year to nearly 73,000 during the 1990-91 fiscal year.

To keep waiting times short, SCAT plans to add a new van to its fleet each year while replacing two older vans each year with new ones. By 1995, SCAT will have 16 vehicles in its fleet.

Community supports service

SUN CITIES — The Sun Cities Area Transit dial-a-ride service was the brainchild of community leaders and continues to rely heavily on community support for its operation.

About \$174,000 is needed for this year, said Donna Gilliland, SCAT's executive director.

Riders pay \$1.50 for each one-way trip, but the fare covers only one-fourth of the \$6 transportation cost, Gilliland said.

Besides utilizing community donations and fares, SCAT's \$670,000 operating costs for the 1991-92 fiscal year will be covered by funding from the Regional Public Transportation Authority and the Urban Mass Transit Authority.

Community leaders started SCAT in 1982 in response to Del Webb Development Co. stopping

its transportation service in the Sun Cities. DEVCO donated two vans and office space for the first two years. A couple of sedans were donated by Sun City residents who could no longer drive.

Since 1984, the Lions Club has been providing space at minimal rent for SCAT's administration, dispatching and van storage. In return, SCAT volunteers man a Lions Club phone line coordinating the pickup of newspapers to be recycled and assisting people who need glasses or eye surgery.

For the first three years, SCAT contracted its transportation services. But since 1985, it has been operating on its own.

The 17-member SCAT board of directors will hold a quarterly meeting at 9:30 a.m. Oct. 16 in the Lions Complex conference room, 9445 N. 99th Ave.

Early grant

Sun City West fund gives to needy SCAT

By CONNIE STEELE
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY WEST — The board of directors of the Sun City West Community Fund approved a \$10,000 grant to the Sun Cities Area Transit System (SCAT) at a recent meeting.

At that meeting, SCAT President Dale Shockley brought board members up to date on SCAT's status since losing \$35,000 in support.

"We lost about \$35,000 in financing this year with the failure of ValTrans," Shockley told board members meeting in the conference room of the Community Service Center, 14465 R.H. Johnson Blvd.

ValTrans, or Proposition 300, was turned down last spring by Maricopa County voters. It was a proposed transit system that included rapid transit.

In spite of ValTrans' failure, Shockley said he's still in contact with the Regional Public Transportation Authority and exploring all possible avenues of revenue outside the community.

One source is the Urban Mass Transit Administration. The federal transit program approves grants that pay 80 percent of the purchase price of new vehicles, Shockley said.

Shockley anticipates increasing the SCAT fleet by one vehicle through Urban Mass Transit Administration funds late in the next fiscal year.

"I think they'll approve three vehicles. We'll retire two old vehicles and add one new one," he said.

The SCAT board recently increased its budget to \$555,000. And although Shockley commended the communities of Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown for contributing about \$100,000 a year to SCAT during the past six or seven years, he said it isn't enough.



Daily News-Sun photo by Connie Steele

FINANCIAL HELP — The Sun City West Community Fund has approved a \$10,000 grant to help the Sun Cities Area Transit System. Dale Shockley, SCAT president, left, and Hugh Albers, community fund president stand as Dean Lockwood pushes a wheelchair up a SCAT van ramp.

He said SCAT needs about \$130,000 from the communities this year.

If the communities give SCAT as much as \$135,000, Shockley said Monday, that would leave a shortfall of only about \$10,000. The shortfall would have to be taken from SCAT reserves, he said.

"And those are very skinny reserves," he said.

SCAT has already sent appeals to all non-profit organizations in the area, but a community-wide drive won't be launched until mid-January 1990, he said.

Besides the failure of ValTrans and the subsequent loss of revenue from the Regional Public Transportation Authority, SCAT also has experienced

about a 15 percent increase in rides, Shockley said.

"We have a number of people whose rides have to be subsidized now," Shockley said. "We're running out of money."

Hugh Albers, fund board president, suggested raising the \$1.50 fee for a one-way ride to \$2. But Shockley said the community as a whole can support SCAT service better than many of the people who use it.

Some 40 percent of SCAT riders use the service to go shopping, he said, and 38 percent use SCAT to keep medical appointments. Riders are primarily disabled or non-driving elderly.

"To raise the fare to \$2 would put a \$4 surcharge on groceries," he said.

SCAT driver welcomes challenge

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — During the oil crunch of the 1970s, Joan English remembers meeting people who converted their cars to run on compressed natural gas.

"I thought it was an interesting concept because it is economical and helps keep the air clean," English said. "But I wasn't aware that it had been put to commercial use."

But English would one day be a driver for a Sun City area dial-a-ride service using vans that run on the clean-burning fuel.

English, who moved to Sun City about three years ago, started as one of 16 Sun Cities Area Transit System drivers June 1.

She also is one of the few women who have worked as SCAT drivers since the transportation service's first day of operation in October 1982.

"I had been looking for a while to get a driving job because I like to drive," English said. "It gives you a feeling of freedom because you're not cooped up in four walls all day."

"I have driven from the East Coast to the West Coast and from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. But there is a lot more to this job than just driving."

Every day, English compiles paper work on each passenger she transports, maneuvers wheelchairs on and off the vans and keeps tabs on the number of miles traveled.

English, a retired Air Force major, worked in the service as a

nurse for 21 years.

Although she is the only woman driver now working for SCAT, English said she has no trouble fitting in.

"I have always gotten along with the people here," English said. "Last Friday, the first three ladies I picked up mentioned something about my being the 'new lady driver.' But I am really just part of the team."

SCAT hired its first woman driver in 1985, when it assumed responsibility for the entire transportation operation, said General Manager Donna Gilliland.

Gilliland said SCAT has hired about three women drivers, all of whom eventually became dispatchers.

"I was very apprehensive hiring women drivers because being a driver for SCAT is not an easy job. We average anywhere from 400 to 500 wheelchairs a month and that means our drivers are moving about 10 on the vans every day," Gilliland said. "The driver has to get down on all fours to make sure those wheelchairs are secure."

Gilliland said SCAT trains drivers once a month on wheelchair and other riding safety tips.

She said drivers average about six days of on-the-job training.

"But Joan (English) only needed two days. She really studied the material and learned quickly," Gilliland said. "She is getting along just fine and works well with all the other drivers. She is a very likable person."



CLEANING UP

Sun Citian Joan English, a driver for the Sun Cities Area Transit System, sweeps out a van before she makes her first morning pickup. English is the only woman driver now working for the dial-a-ride service.

News-Sun

News-Sun July 22/89

SCAT official has learned the transit biz

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — When Donna Gilliland was hired as general manager for the Sun Cities Area Transit System (SCAT), she knew nothing about the dial-a-ride service.

Now, a little more than a year later, Gilliland is writing instruction manuals on transit driver training programs.

"Since I started working for SCAT I have learned so much. I eventually found that a lot of what I was learning could help others in the transit business as well," Gilliland said.

Gilliland recently compiled a drivers training program manual and a booklet on compressed natural gas.

The training manual contains a three-point driver interview and examples of paperwork, logs and maintenance checks.

It also contains forms used on a daily basis by SCAT drivers.

The booklet on compressed natural gas is called "Almost Everything Pollutes Our Precious Air Except Balloons and Safe CNG."

All the SCAT vans are fueled by compressed natural gas, a clean-burning fuel used as an alternative to gasoline.

The 16-page booklet contains common questions about the gas, the cost for setting up a station, safety precautions and other information on the natural gas.

"It shows that SCAT is really cooking on gas and that it's not so hard to work with CNG. I think it has really helped a lot of people. People from all areas have thanked us," Gilliland said. "As the first transportation system in the state to use CNG as its primary fuel, SCAT has first-hand knowledge."

Gilliland distributed the booklets at an Arizona Transit Asso-

'(Donna Gilliland) has gained recognition throughout the state with those in the transportation field. That helps enhance public mobility in Arizona and puts SCAT on the transit map.'

John Nardini
executive director
Arizona Transit Association

ciation annual convention in May.

Gilliland, who is marketing chairman and editor of the association's newsletter, also conducted several workshops at the convention.

Officials in the transit business say the information has helped many cities and towns

with dial-a-ride services similar to SCAT.

John Nardini, executive director of the Arizona Transit Association, said Gilliland has been an asset to the group.

"I think Donna's manuals have been very helpful to many people. She shared her information with others and they take it and use it," Nardini said. "She has gained recognition throughout the state with those in the transportation field. That helps enhance public mobility in Arizona and puts SCAT on the transit map."

After Gilliland was hired July 5, 1988, visible changes took place in the SCAT office.

Desks were moved, furniture was rearranged and employees gained more knowledge about office procedures.

In addition, Gilliland made a number of changes to help SCAT cut down on expenses.

By recategorizing job descriptions under worker compensation, she saved SCAT thousands of dollars.

SCAT president Dale Shockley said Gilliland has extended her influence beyond her general manager position.

"Within a couple of months she knew the routine and tasks that take most people more than a year to learn. She can do any part of the job out here — anything she asks anyone to do, she can do herself," Shockley said.



News-Sun photo by Stephen Chern...

DRIVING FORCE — Donna Gilliland, Transit System, has been with the dial-a-ride service for more than one year.

"She is perfectionist and doesn't mind working long hours. SCAT would be in a pretty tough hole without her."

Gilliland worked as a business manager for several retirement facilities in Sun City and is still

involved in a number of local organizations.

During the year that she has worked with SCAT, the dial-a-ride's ridership has increased by 11 percent.

"I've enjoyed working with SCAT and the transit commu-

nity. It has really been interesting," Gilliland said. "I've had memorable experiences like having a van battery blow up on my dress and eat up the fabric. I never dreamed that transportation would be interesting, but it is."

• SCAT

From page one

Survey of SCAT operation indicates increase in riders

When Sun City Area Transit System riders were polled to name their favorite bus driver, all 16 of the organization's drivers came out winners.

There were 19 regular SCAT passengers who declined to vote for any single driver, but cast their ballots for all of them.

There were three top winners in the contest: Alex Villanueva was the No. 1 vote-getter, fol-

lowed by Keith Harris and Dean Lockwood.

Mr. Villanueva will receive a blazer and a savings bond.

Complimentary dinners and gift certificates rounded out the awards for all the pilots of the fleet.

While SCAT ridership is increasing, a recent survey shows

See SCAT, page 3

that the age of the passengers also is increasing. Donna Gilliland, SCAT general manager, says a recent poll shows that 54 percent of area riders are between the ages of 70 and 84 and 14 percent are over 84 years of age.

Dale R. Shockley, SCAT president, announced at a recent board of directors meeting that, for ridership, March, 1989, was the biggest month in the system's history. The tallies placed May, 1989, ridership as second-largest on record.

Fiscal matters have monopolized the attention of the SCAT board of directors who voted approval for the 1989-1990 tentative budget last week.

The Regional Public Transportation Authority's board of directors has reserved \$175,000 for SCAT's 1990 operational budget, according to Mr. Shockley.

The \$175,000 is the same amount that SCAT received last year.

"We got some capital replacement funds last year, though, that we will not get this year," he says.

The RPTA board has not yet taken final action on its budget. "But we're not likely to find any changes."

SCAT board of directors determined a need for \$190,000 to meet expenses for the new budget year, and could not drop the additional dollars out of the program, says Mr. Shockley.

The suggestion was to take the additional funds from SCAT reserves. He proposed the transfer of \$18,000 from the reserves fund, for capital replacement.

"This is predicated on the belief that we will receive a grant from UMTA (Urban Mass Transportation Administration)," says Mr. Shockley.

SCAT has requested three vehicles for 1989. The vehicles will cost approximately \$90,000; UMTA funding amounts to \$72,000 (80 percent) of the cost of the vehicles. SCAT provides the remainder as a local amount.

The transfer of funds, says Mr. Shockley, is within SCAT's budget means. He explains that, after seven years of operations, SCAT has a total reserve fund amounting to about \$100,000.

SCAT's fund-raising program will start in February or March, 1990.

Saturday, Feb. 13, 1988 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.

Sun City transit system runs on natural gas

Vehicles cut down on pollution, officials say

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Since the end of November, the Sun Cities Area Transit System (SCAT) has been running vehicles on compressed natural gas with hopes of helping reduce air pollution in the Northwest Valley.

Now, three months later, SCAT officials say vehicles equipped with (CNG) emit much less carbon monoxide compared to gasoline-powered engines.

"We have enough data to show that CNG costs less and it's also a whole lot cleaner. Gasoline emits seven times more pollution (carbon monoxide) into the air than CNG," said Charles Kaehn, executive director of SCAT. "There is absolutely no doubt of reduction in costs and carbon monoxide pollution."

Last fall, the Regional Public

Transportation Authority (RPTA), SCAT and Southwest Gas Corp. worked out a cooperative testing program to evaluate the feasibility of using CNG on SCAT's dial-a-ride vans.

After 30,000 miles of testing, Kaehn said CNG also is economical for transit system use because SCAT has saved money on vehicle fuel costs.

Kaehn said vehicles using CNG cost about 10 cents a mile to operate, while vehicles running on unleaded gasoline cost 12 cents a mile.

"It begins to involve a considerable amount of money. And since CNG is a cleaner fuel, it has reduced our operational costs and will most likely give

the engine a longer life," Kaehn said.

Kaehn said the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) has sponsored the feasibility study and provided funds to convert four of SCAT's vans to operate on CNG.

Southwest Gas has loaned the CNG compressors and provided the natural gas for the experiment at no cost, Kaehn said.

"Next year we hope to have all of the fleet (except the mini-van) on natural gas," Kaehn said. "We are the only dial-a-ride service that has experienced a test with a wheelchair one-ton van equipped with CNG. It's a unique service."

Looking into the future, Kaehn said SCAT could do a lot

to help reduce carbon monoxide pollution in the Northwestern Valley and will continue using CNG to fuel vehicles.

Kaehn said SCAT just received a new van through the Arizona Department of Transportation that is wheelchair-equipped.

The new van and another on the SCAT fleet that is not yet CNG equipped may be converted to CNG with the help of the RPTA, Kaehn said.

He said RPTA representatives hope to suggest the proposal at a board meeting later this month.

"We already expect to carry over 50,000 passengers about 225,000 miles in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown on

CNG equipped vans," Kaehn said. "If we could get additional Sun Cities area drivers to leave their cars home just one day a month and use our CNG vehicles, think how much that would contribute to reducing smog in the western valley."

Kaehn said several bills have been introduced in the Arizona Legislature that propose to reduce state taxes on CNG when used for automotive consumption.

And Don Cameron, special projects manager of SCAT, is one of the people who make sure that the CNG vehicles are running smoothly.

"I think it's great were using CNG because we're also helping to reduce oil consumption, which I think is a national problem," Cameron said.

By **BRET McKEAND**
Sun Cities Independent

Providing "quality service" to local riders and creating an efficient and smooth-running operation are the top priorities of the new general manager for the Sun Cities Area Transit, Inc.

As part of a restructuring plan, SCAT has hired Donna Gilliland as its new general manager. A Sun City resident for the past 13 years, Ms. Gilliland says a commitment to the customer will be the organization's No 1 priority.

"We want to pick up people faster and make our riders happier," says Ms. Gilliland, who took over July 5.

The organization's restructuring followed the resignation of Executive Director Charles Kaehn in June. SCAT has eliminated the executive director position and both Ms. Gilliland and President Charles McKinnis will oversee the operation of the dial-a-ride service.

Ms. Gilliland comes to SCAT from El Dorado of Sun City where, for the past two years, she served in a variety of positions, including vice president of marketing, director of business services, director of resident services and transportation.

Before that, she served as business manager for Royal Oaks, administrative manager for the Sun Cities Independent and worked in the accounting department for the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc.

Since most of her background includes work in managerial- and administrative-related positions, Ms. Gilliland admits she was at first hesitant when approached about the SCAT job by Mr. McKinnis.

"I didn't know much about SCAT. I saw them (SCAT vans) around the Sun City area and never thought that one day I would be attached to them," she says.

"But since I've been here, each day has been a new adventure."

And, although she has only been on the job a short while, Ms. Gilliland has already made noticeable changes.

Furniture in the office has been moved, vans have been sent for repairs and touch-ups, a dress code for all drivers has been enacted and a new system for tracking vans and hastening response time has been implemented.

I tell everyone that if we fail, we can only fail forward. We're going to do it over and over again until we get it perfect.



"We want to give the best service, the best response time and the best quality," she says.

"I tell everyone that if we fail, we can only fail forward. We're going to do it over and over again until we get it perfect."

The new general manager was able to find out first-hand what riders think of SCAT's service. Calling herself a "mystery rider," Ms. Gilliland spends time each week traveling on a SCAT van -- unbeknownst to the driver or fellow riders.

"I feel I can do a better check on what's happening (as a mys-

tery rider)," she says. "I want to be there and be a hands-on person."

She enjoys talking with passengers and so far, she says, most of the feedback has been positive.

The most important change, due to the restructuring, is that there is now one supervisor. "We had too many chiefs and not enough Indians," says Ms. Gilliland.

Ms. Gilliland says she wants to lead by example and it is not rare to find her moving furniture, painting the office, cleaning the floor or even driving the vans (she maintains a Class 4 chauffeur's license).

"I do not expect anyone to do anything that I wouldn't do," she says.

In addition to her supervising chores, Ms. Gilliland will be responsible for streamlining the office staff, cutting expenses and organizing fund-raising efforts.

In addition to the organization's annual charity ball, planned this year for Dec. 5, SCAT will also sponsor a fashion show fund-raiser next spring.

Although SCAT has been receiving funds from the Regional Public Transportation Authority for the past two years, Ms. Gilliland says the organization still depends a great deal on local donations.

This fall, Maricopa County voters will be asked to approve a half-cent increase in the county sales tax. The funds are earmarked for transportation and Ms. Gilliland says approval of the tax will help SCAT meet the future needs of the three retirement communities.

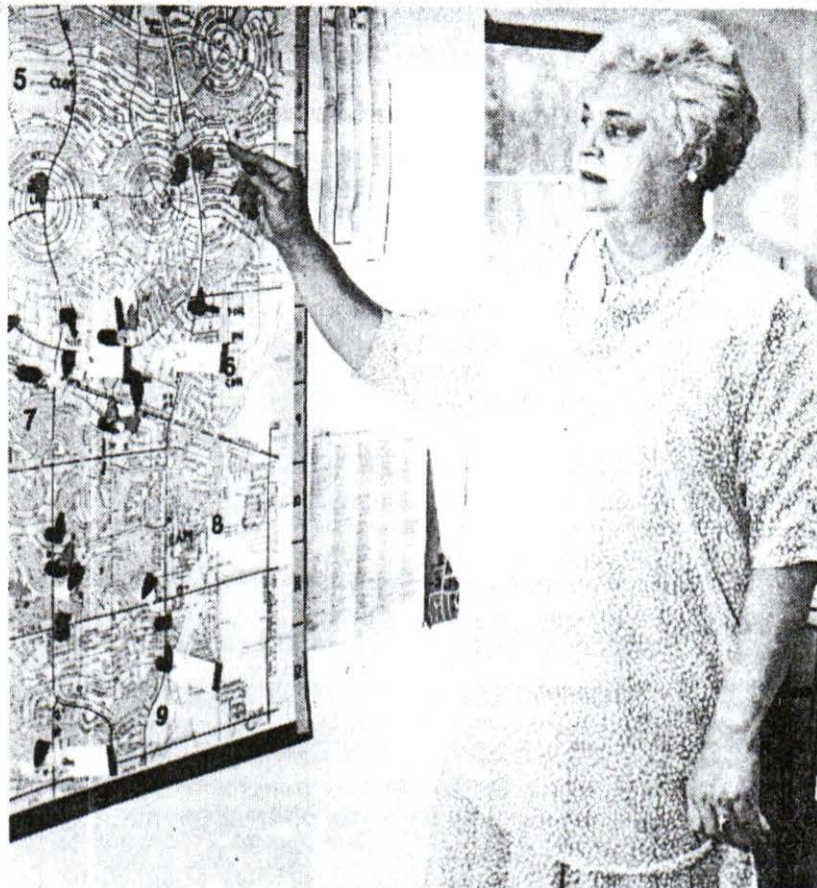
"It (the half-cent tax) is becoming more and more important to us," she says.

SCAT provided service to more than 55,000 riders in the Sun Cities last year. Ms. Gilliland expects that demand to increase to 60-65,000 next year.

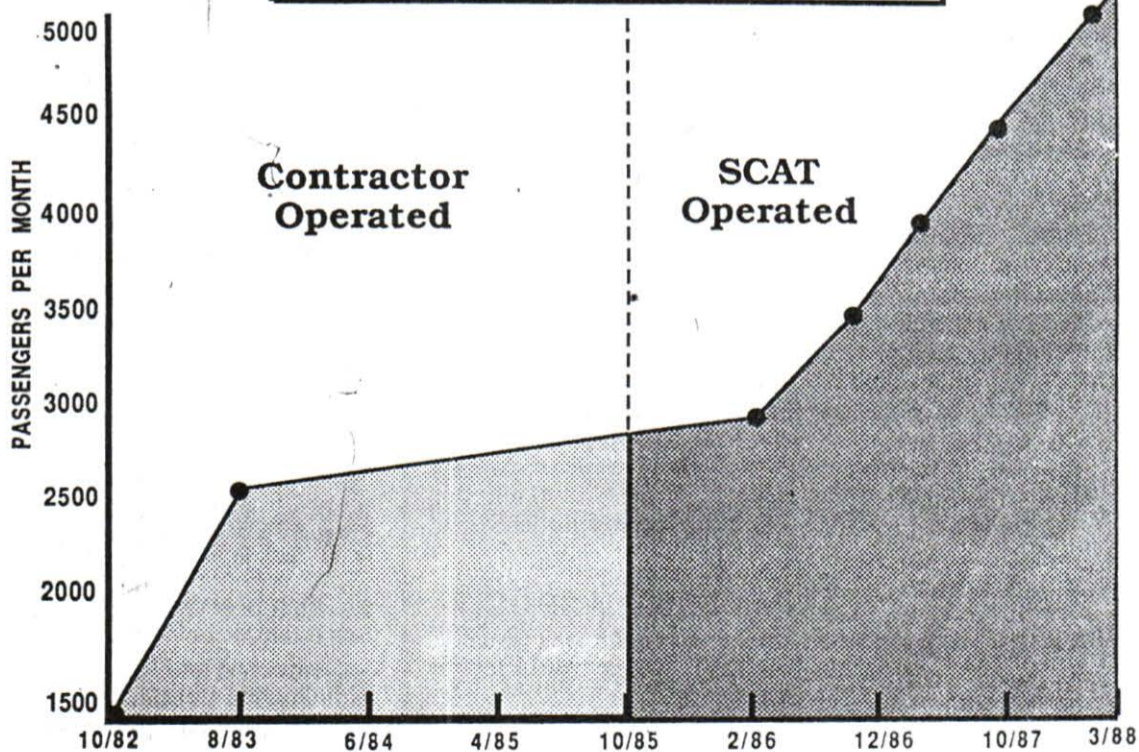
To meet that demand, she says, additional vehicles and personnel will be needed. "With the half-cent sales tax, this is feasible," she says, "without it, it is not."

NEW GENERAL MANAGER.
Sun Citian Donna Gilliland has been named the new general manager for the Sun Cities Area Transit Systems, Inc. Gilliland hopes to enhance the local transportation company image within the community, as well as cut costs and improve service.

Bret McKeand/Independent



SCAT GROWTH



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To every thoughtful individual contributor in the community, and to our corporate and non profit contributors.

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Non-Profit Organizations

AARP Chapter #4
AARP Travel Fund
Aqua Fria Kiwanis Club of Sun City
All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church
American Lutheran Church
B-4-9 Lions Club
Bell Art Club
Bell Lioness Club
Beta Sigma Phi Chapter P2129
Church of the Palms, U.C.C.
Congregational Women's Fellowship
Disabled American Veterans #0680
Episcopal Church of the Advent
Faith United Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Women's Association
Kachina Bridge Club
Kachina Kiwanis Club
Kiwanis Club of Royal Oaks
Ladies Exercise Club
Oakmont Men's Club
Registered Nurses Club
Rotary Club of Sun City
Saguaro Bridge Club
Sorooptimist Club
St. Joachim & St. Anne Church
Sun City Christian Church
Sun City Community Fund
Sun City Diabetes Lions Club
Sun City Early Bird Lions Club
Sun City Host Lions Club
Sun City Lakeview Rotary Club
Sun City Peddle Pushers
Sun City Union Club
Sun City West Community Fund
Sun City West Pioneers Club
Sun City West Rotary Club
Sun City West Sunrise Lions Club
Sun City Widow's Club
Sun City Women's Chorus
Sundial Men's Club
Sundial Rock & Gem Club
Sundial Silvercraft Club
Sundial Stitchers Club
Valley Church of Religious Science
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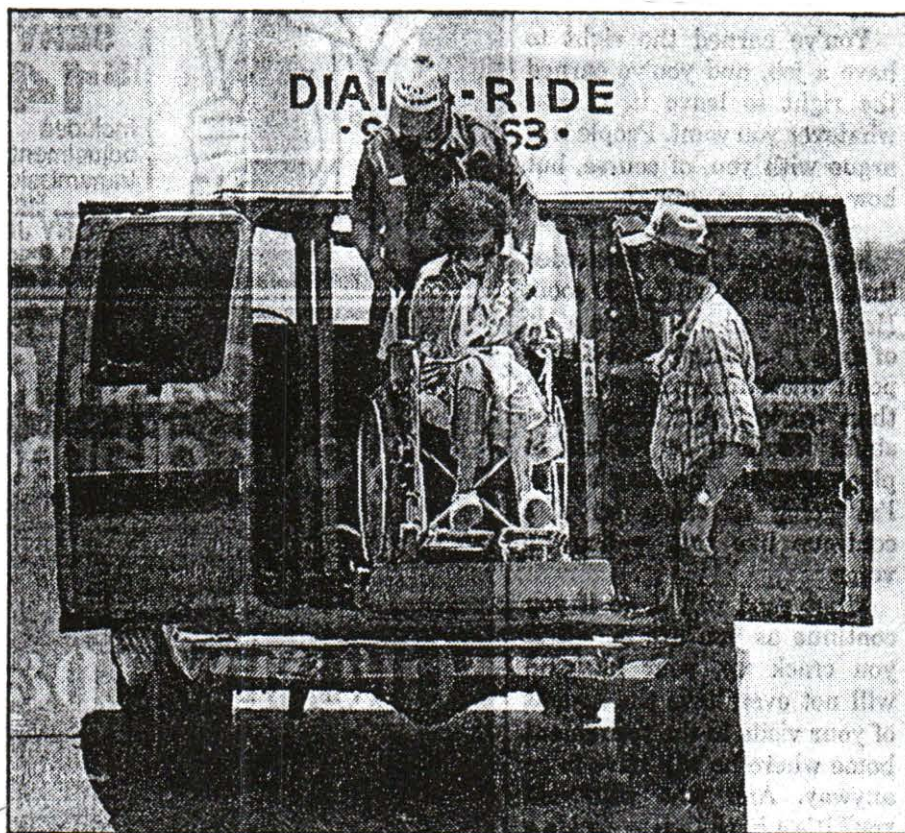


DOOR TO DOOR
TRANSPORTATION
IS FOR EVERYONE
IN
SUN CITY
YOUNGTOWN
SUN CITY WEST

*Transportation . . .
The Key to Independence*

SUN CITIES AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM, INC.
P.O. BOX 1972
SUN CITY, AZ 85372

Joe Paul guides Emma Smith's wheelchair onto the lift as Larry Place looks on. Paul and Place are drivers for Sun City Area Transit's Dial-A-Ride service, which handles about 100 calls a day with six vehicles. Riders pay \$1.50 for the subsidized service.



Doyle Sanders/Republic

Handicapped able to 'SCAT' thanks to Dial-A-Ride vans

SUN CITY — Joe Paul swerved to avoid a driver pulling out of a parking lot.

"I'd hate to hit a Cadillac," Paul said, staring at the car in his mirror. "They don't crunch too well."

Paul, driving a wheelchair van operated by Sun City Area Transit, or SCAT, pulled into the Boswell Extended Care Facility parking lot on Thunderbird Boulevard. He went inside to get a passenger.

"He's doing pretty good," observed Larry Place, a regular driver for SCAT.

Paul, a part-time volunteer, was spending a day last week as a trainee for Sun City's only Dial-A-Ride service. It was his first day in this vehicle, a modified van with a wheelchair lift in back.

"We've only got one wheelchair van today," Place said. "We've got two, but one of them broke down and is out of service today."

"All these people want us to pick them up right now, and they can't understand why you're late."

Public transportation is scarce in the Sun City area. Besides SCAT, there is only the Red Cross, which also has a van.

SCAT, which has six vehicles, handles an average of 100 calls a day.

It costs \$6.30 to transport each passenger, according to SCAT President Chuck McKin-

nis. The passenger pays \$1.50, and the balance is paid out of donations by businesses and private citizens and from Maricopa County revenue-sharing funds.

Paul wheeled Emma Smith to the back of the van and onto the ramp of the lift. Back inside the van, he anchored the wheelchair so it would not move.

"Which way?" Paul asked as he pulled into traffic.

Place pointed east. "You're doing fine," she said.

He held out a bottle. "Want some hot Pepsi?"

SCAT officials estimate that about 1 percent of the area's residents use the service.

However, residents such as Smith say they couldn't do without it.

"I use it three times a week," she said. "I like it. My sister-in-law takes me some, but she can't do it all the time."

As he pulled into an office complex, Paul said, "These parking lots are the worst place to drive."

"You got that," Place said.

"Nothing serious happens," Paul said. Just "lots of fender-benders."

After Smith was wheeled to a doctor's office, the dispatcher notified the driver to pick up a fare at Arrowhead Mall, 99th and Peoria avenues.

When they arrived, Place greeted the waiting rider.

"Hello, Marge, we're 10 min-

utes late," he said, opening the back of the van and lowering the lift.

"That's all right, but it's hot," Marge Keenan said as she drove her motorized wheelchair forward.

With Keenan aboard, Paul pulled into traffic and asked, "Do I go through the intersection or turn right?"

"Go through," Keenan said from the back of the van. "Go up to 105th and hang a right."

Keenan also depends on SCAT.

"I use it almost every day of the week," she said. "If it wasn't here, I'd be out of my mind. I go to Sun City West and Youngtown and any place new that I can shop. I don't like to depend on somebody else."

Keenan's words were echoed by many SCAT passengers last week.

"I think this service is absolutely great," said Lucille Palen.

On this afternoon, in the heat of the day, the van broke down.

"People don't realize that we run these vehicles nine or 10 hours a day, and it's hard on them," said Bill Misenko, a part-time driver. "There are a couple of them you can't turn them off or you'd never get them started again."

McKinnis said, "We are desperately trying to find the money to get new vehicles."

SC transit comes long way in 20 years

By P. ATWOOD WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

As the Sun Cities have grown, so has its transportation system which began in 1963 with an open trolley which seated 18 people.

The Sun City Shop-Lifter, similar to but not the same as the trolley now used by Del E. Webb Development Co. to shuttle Sun Dome visitors from the parking lot to the auditorium, was pulled by a jeep and operated between the Grand Shopping Center and other parts of Sun City.

In 1967, Del Webb put a small bus into service which was replaced two years later with a new and larger Blue Bird Bus freshly painted in Sun City colors and sunburst. It had plush 34-inch wide seats and stainless steel handrails, tinted glass and a chime system for passengers signaling their stops.

MRS. MARGARET Steffek was the first passenger and was issued a lifetime pass on the Sun City Bus Lines. She walked one-half mile to board the bus at 107th and Peoria avenues where she rode to her nursing job at the Sun Valley Lodge.

Mrs. Steffek recalls how driver Tony Fay was very accomodating, helping people with their packages. He left the route occasionally to assist a handicapped passenger for whom he also carried groceries.

Public transportation in Sun City ceased June 30, 1982, when the Webb Co. closed down the bus line. At the same time they also discontinued service on the two vans they had provided in Sun City West. The two vans were donated to the new Sun Cities Area Transit System, Inc.

SCAT WAS THE dream of Charles McKinnis, president of the Community Council. After being turned down by the Sun City Lions Club and the Home Owners Association, he presented it to the

council which backed the project.

A group of citizens met May 20, 1982, and the following committee adopted Articles of Incorporation: Mary Albert, Helen Cann, Jeanne Lloyd, Dick Meiner, William Mower, Raymond Nelson, Mathew Platt, George Seldin, Robert Kennedy and Chairman McKinnis.

The original directors were Robert Kennedy, chairman; Charles McKinnis, president and chief operating officer; George Seldin, vice-president; Raymond Nelson, treasurer.

PRESENT OFFICERS include Chairman Kennedy, President McKinnis, Mathew Platt, vice president; Dale R. Shockley, secretary; and Albert E. Dillow, treasurer. There are 11 directors and an advisory board of 15.

The first money received was a \$500 check from Art Hassel, president of Saguaro Life Member Club of the Telephone Pioneers of America. The board members

pledged an additional \$1,100. Maricopa County made \$30,000 of Revenue Sharing Funds available for their fiscal year 1983.

Del E. Webb Company gave SCAT two Ford vans and two years office space use, including utilities and telephone for \$1 per year. SCAT contracted with Handi Van to operate their Dial-A-Ride service which began Sept. 1, 1982. Service operates seven days a week, Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

and Sunday by reservation in advance from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

THE BOARD, executive committee and office workers do not receive salaries or expense accounts. Because of contributions from the public organizations and three business communities, the operation has survived. The first mail solicitation for funds was made February 1983.

Wheelchair lifts were installed in two vans and there are now approximately 50 people regularly using these facilities. SCAT picks up groceries and drugs and delivers them to shut-ins.

An analysis of the ridership is as follows: 10 per cent wheelchair; 20 per cent handicapped; 70 per

cent general public.

Airport Transportation Co. was selected to handle the operation of SCAT vehicles during the second year of operation. SCAT pays them \$1.55 for every ride; the passenger pays \$1.25.

Contributions to SCAT are recognized as tax-free deductions.

THE RECENT fundraising campaign has almost reached the half-way mark with a \$1,000 contribution (with \$4,000 more promised) by the City of Youngtown bringing the total to \$44,034. It is anticipated that there will be 40,000 riders during 1984.

Plans for SCAT transportation service will depend on the funds raised this spring. They hope to

replace the present vans and add station wagons as secondary vehicles. It is possible that service will be extended to 7:30 p.m. weekdays.

Meanwhile, the new Molly Trolley system which began service to the shopping centers in November, will be discontinued after Easter. Whether it will start up again in the fall is unknown.

MOLLY TROLLEY was the brainchild of A. W. Brooks Jr. of Del E. Webb Realty and Management Co.

The rides in the open air street car-type vehicles are free. Cost of the service is borne by merchants who buy advertising on the sides of the two trolleys.

D V E R



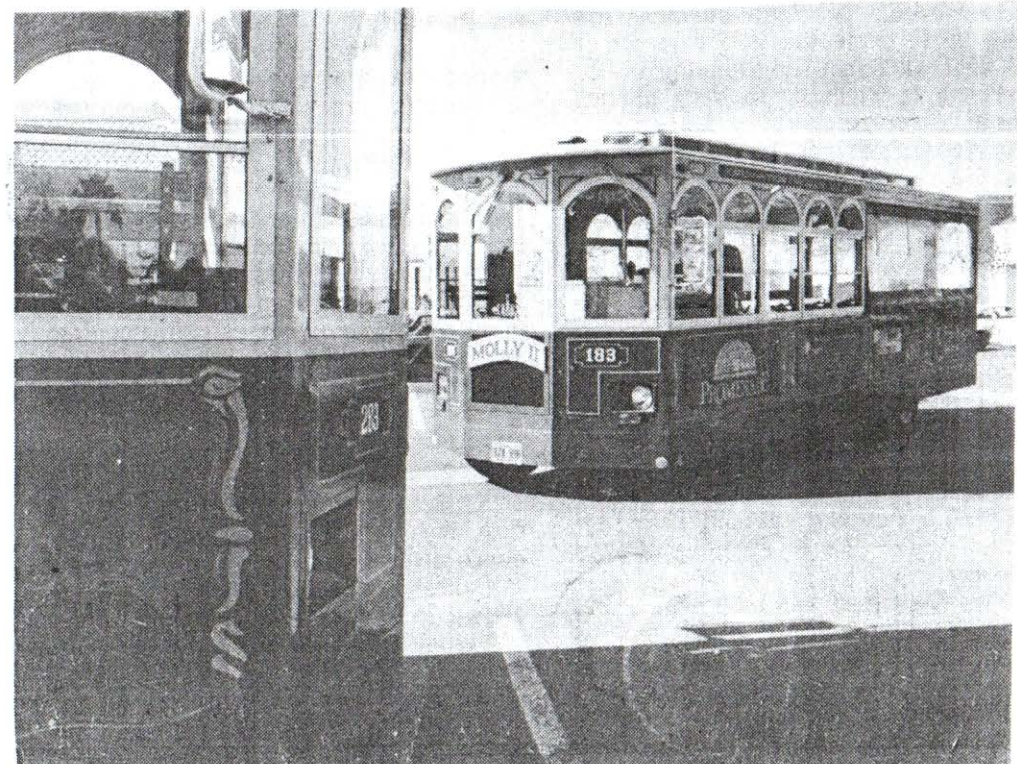
The first form of public transportation in the Sun Cities began when Del Webb Co. brought the Shop-Lifter into service in 1963.



The Blue Bird Bus was instituted by Webb Co. in 1969. An unidentified passenger stands in front of driver Tony Fay.



Today passengers can ride in comfort in the SCAT van or station wagon. It is estimated that 40,000 riders will use Dial-A-Ride in the Sun Cities this year.



Two Molly Trolleys began service last fall, carrying residents to and from several area shopping centers. (News-Sun photo by M.J. Hoppes)

NEWS-SUN THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1983

SCAT board sees uphill fund fight

Although the Sun Cities Area Transit system is lacking at least \$33,000 to continue transportation services for an additional year, President Chuck McKinnis told members of the SCAT advisory board he is confident it will succeed.

"It takes time to educate people about the advantages of the system," McKinnis said.

"We need to be supported by people who don't even know about or use the system," he added.

THE SCAT board met for a semi-annual meeting with its advisory board Wednesday in the Home Owners Association Building.

Because of the deficit in required funding, the board has applied to Maricopa County for additional funding, said Treasurer Albert Dillow.

"The wind is not blowing in our favor, however," Dillow said. "It's definitely an uphill situation for us."

"WE JUST need someone to come up with a large hunk of

money, but it's likely our request will be unsuccessful," he continued.

To resolve the shortfall in needed funds, the board may continue to campaign for additional funds from local businesses and individuals.

Another alternative is to increase trip fares, which are now set at \$1 in Sun City and Youngtown.

MCKINNIS SAID a new contract is being negotiated with the \$35,000 that was raised during the recent SCAT fund-raising drive.

SCAT officials will meet with representatives from several Valley transportation companies Friday to solicit bids for continuing the service through 1984.

Currently the contract is held by Handi Van.

Written proposals from each of the bidding companies will be accepted until May 20, McKinnis said, and a contract will be awarded by June 17, based upon a decision by the SCAT board.

SCAT

SUN CITIES AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM, INC.
P.O. Box 1972 Sun City, AZ 85372

Office Phone 972-0936

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Do You Know About Our New Community Transportation Service?

Sun Cities Area Transit (SCAT) is off and running. By dialing 977-8363 a van will pick you up within a short time and take you to any other location in Sun City, Youngtown or Sun City West, door to door. The charge will be \$1.00 within the Sun City-Youngtown area; \$2.00 within Sun City West and \$2.50 from Sun City West to the Sun City-Youngtown area. Return fare will be an additional same amount.

This service is available to EVERYONE. If your spouse has the car and you need transportation, just call 977-8363. The service is essential to many of our residents who are no longer able to drive for any reason.

SCAT like the other worthwhile community services needs the cooperation and help of the people in the communities served. Obviously the charges made do not cover the operating costs.

You can help by using SCAT and by your donations. At the present time SCAT operates Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. With your support we hope to be able to continue and expand the service. It is our hope that we will be able to increase the service to additional days and perhaps some evenings.

Why Don't You Use SCAT?

SCAT · DIAL-A-RIDE - 977-8363

Please detach and return

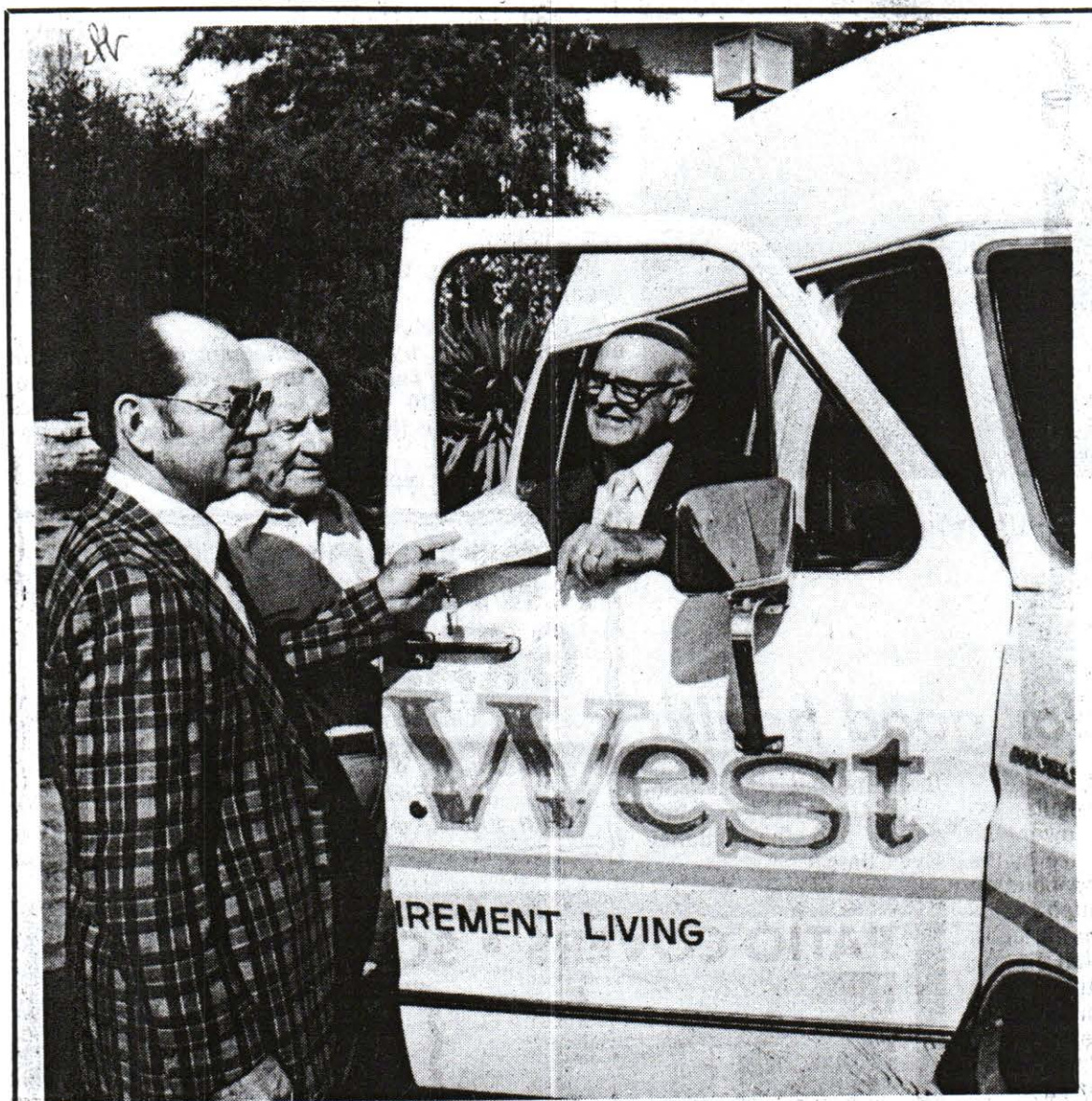
Yes, I want to help — and here is my contribution.

Please find enclosed \$ _____ Quarterly pledge \$ _____

Name _____ Address _____

Comments _____

NOV 5 1982

NEWS & SUN
SUN CITY

George Reeve, left, president of Del E. Webb Development Co., hands passenger van keys and title to Sun City Area Transit system president Chuck McKinnis, right.

Van was one of two donated by Devco in a nearly \$50,000 package to the transit system. Center is Dick Meinert, SCAT operations director. (News-Sun Photo)

OVER

Devco gives aid to transit system

By LYNN NEWTON
Staff Writer

The Sun City Area Transit system received a contribution of equipment and office space totaling almost \$50,000 Thursday from Del E. Webb Development Co.

Devco's donation included two 12- to 15-seat, radio-equipped passenger vans, a mobile radio base station and a 22-month lease on three rooms of furnished office space in the Bell Plaza South office complex.

SCAT received one van Thursday and will receive the second on Dec. 1.

OFFICE SPACE, which SCAT has occupied for almost one month, will be leased at a reduced rate.

Chuck McKinnis, SCAT president and chief operating officer, said he contacted Devco when SCAT was formed to see how the development company could help the new organization.

George Reeve, Devco president and general manager, said he had been examining ways to aid SCAT for several months. "We have a genuine concern for transportation in the Sun Cities," Reeve said. "The efforts of SCAT and its officers and directors are a tribute to the determination of this community. I'm glad we could help."

McKINNIS WAS ELATED about the acquisition. "There's no question that this is a real boost for SCAT," he said. "Without this support, we might never have been able to get off the ground."

SCAT contracts with Glendale's Handi-Van service to provide reliable, low-cost transportation for residents in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown. The new vans will be put into service immediately, serving only the Sun City and Youngtown areas.

"These vans have given us some additional security and flexibility in our arrangement with Handi-Van," McKinnis said. "We can lease them to Handi-Van at an easy rate, but if our contract fails, we can still run the service ourselves."

SCAT OPERATES with a convenient, door-to-door service five days a week. Cost per trip in Sun City and Youngtown is \$1 per trip. Trips in Sun City West are \$2 because of low ridership.

SCAT has been in existence since June 25, but did not begin providing transportation until Oct. 1. McKinnis said he hoped the service would expand to a six-day-a-week service in the future. For transportation service, passengers may call 977-8363.

SCAT SERVICE

SCAT provides service to the general public and persons with disabilities.

Non-ADA Service Hours

- Monday-Friday 7:15 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
- Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays 7:15 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
- Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays are by reservations only. Must call the previous Thursday by 2:00 p.m.
- Saturdays: Medical Appointments only
- Sundays: Church Services only
- Holidays: Medical Appointments or Church Services only

ADA Service Hours

- Monday-Friday 4 a.m.-9:00 p.m.
- No ADA service on national holidays when fixed-route bus service is not provided.

Fares

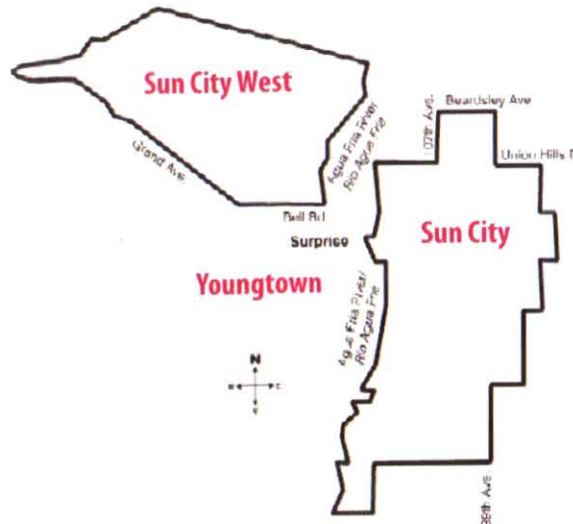
- General Public \$6
- ADA Passengers \$2 - \$4
- Intercity trips \$10
- Cash and SCAT tickets accepted



623-977-8363

Transfer Policy

- To/From Fixed-Route Bus Service:** Passengers transferring from SCAT to local fixed-route bus service must request a bus transfer slip and are not required to pay additional fares or charges. Passengers transferring to SCAT from fixed-route bus service receive a \$1.00 discount when they board with a bus transfer. Request a slip from your Dial-A-Ride or bus driver upon boarding.
- To/From Other Dial-a-Ride Providers:** Transfers to Peoria Dial-a-Ride can be coordinated. Non-ADA passengers transferring to SCAT pay full fares; no discount is offered. ADA passengers pay a flat-rate fare to the Dial-a-Ride provider serving the area where their trip begins; they are not required to pay additional fares or charges when transferring to another Dial-a-Ride provider.



25
YEARS OF
SERVICE

**Sun Cities Area
Transit Systems, Inc.**

P. O. Box 1972
Sun City, AZ 85372
www.scatdialaride.net

623-977-8363

OUR MISSION

To maintain the independence of the seniors living in our communities through the use of appropriate transportation methods in a safe and effective manner.

Our goals are:

- ❑ To provide access to medical care, recreational activities, shopping and religious services.
- ❑ To provide a climate of safety and caring for our passengers.
- ❑ To utilize the best practices in technology and processes to benefit our passengers.

What is SCAT?

SCAT is a professionally managed non-profit, charitable organization.

SCAT Dial-A-Ride is a curb-to-curb, shared ride public transportation service providing rides to the general public as well as members of our senior and disabled communities. SCAT began the senior and disabled service in 1982.

SCAT Dial-A-Ride provides over 50,000 rides per year.

Facts you should know about SCAT:

- ❑ **Vehicles:** Fleet of 10 Vans
- ❑ **Funding:** *Donations from residents are the key funding source.* Regional Public Transportation Authority provides funding for essential services only. Valley of the Sun United Way provides funding for only about 5% of operating costs.

Who Can Ride SCAT?

SCAT is a public transit company that gives special consideration to seniors, the disabled and wheelchair passengers. However, SCAT is not an ambulance service.

How to Arrange a Ride

Call **(623) 977-8363** at least 90 minutes in advance for a ride within your city limits. Rides between cities should be made 48 hours in advance. Cancellations should be made at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled pickup. Appointments can be made up to 30 days in advance.

When Riding SCAT

Please be ready to go when you call. Have correct change ready. No food, drink or smoking will be allowed in vans. This is a ride-sharing experience.

SCAT drivers will help you to and from your door. They will assist you in boarding and exiting the van. They will assist you in entering and exiting any medical facility.

They will carry your groceries and/or packages to your door, but are **NOT ALLOWED** to enter your home. They are also not allowed or provide emergency medical transportation.

Animals must be crated before being allowed on vans. This does not apply to service animals.

How You Can Help

Your donations are vital! ONLY 25% of the operating cost is from fares. Fares charged make up a very small amount of the funding needed to keep SCAT in service. If you have a matching gift form, please include as it allows your gift to be doubled. SCAT is a 501c(3) Tax Deductible Organization. In addition to mailing a donation, you may make one online at www.scatdialaride.net at any time.

Keep
SCAT rolling...
