

Frequently Asked Questions

PROJECT OVERVIEW

What is the South Central Extension/Downtown Hub light rail project?

The South Central Extension/Downtown Hub (or SCE/DH) is a five-mile light rail extension connecting south Phoenix to the regional light rail system. It will offer connectivity and increased mobility options to the residents and businesses along the corridor between downtown Phoenix and Baseline Road along Central and 1st avenues. In addition to the new transit hub in downtown Phoenix, there will be eight new stations, one park-and-ride, and public art along the entire corridor.

With the opening of this extension, Valley Metro Rail will introduce a two-line rail system that will intersect at the Downtown Hub in Phoenix. The line operating between Gilbert Road/Main Street in Mesa and the Downtown Hub will be named A line. The line operating between Metro Parkway and the new end-of-line station at Baseline/Central Ave will be named B line.

Where are the new stations?

The Downtown Hub includes four platforms located at Central Avenue, Washington Street, Jefferson Street and 1st Avenue.

Along South Central Avenue, stations are located at:

- Lincoln/1st Ave
- Lincoln/Central Ave
- Buckeye/Central Ave
- Pioneer/Central Ave
- Broadway/Central Ave
- Roeser/Central Ave
- Southern/ Central Ave
- Baseline/Central Ave

Will there be additional parking near the new line?

The extension includes a new park-and-ride facility at Baseline/Central Ave that will offer 110 spaces for transit users.



SOUTH CENTRAL EXTENSION/ DOWNTOWN HUB

TITLE

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

TYPE



APRIL 2025

TIMELINE

When will the extension open?

The extension will open for passenger service June 7, 2025 and has been developed across the following timeline:

- Planning: 2011 – 2017
- Design: 2017 – 2019
- Construction: 2019 – 2024
- Train & systems testing: Fall 2024 – mid-2025
- Opening: June 7, 2025

Why did the opening date change?

The SCE/DH project was originally scheduled for completion in 2034. In 2016 with the passage of Proposition 104, the timeline was accelerated by Phoenix City Council moving completion to 2023, advancing the project by 11 years. In 2019, the Phoenix citizen initiative Prop 105 aimed to end light rail construction, which temporarily paused construction work and impacted the completion timeline, making the 2023 deadline no longer feasible. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there were workforce and materials supply shortages. Combined with extensive archaeological discoveries and unanticipated utility relocations, the project schedule was adjusted to complete most major construction activity by the end of 2024 and project testing and opening June 7, 2025.

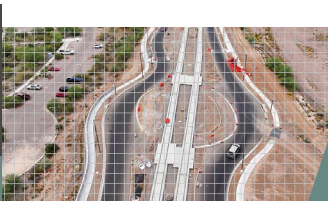
CONSTRUCTION

What was done during the years of construction?

Light rail construction consists of multiple elements/phases, including:

- Utility relocations
- Roadway and structural improvements
- Underground system
- Track and station
- Train power systems (overhead wires and substations)
- Train and system testing





SOUTH CENTRAL EXTENSION/ DOWNTOWN HUB

TITLE

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

TYPE



APRIL 2025

CONSTRUCTION (continued)

Utility relocation, in particular, is one of the most significant and beneficial aspects of light rail construction. Along the SCE/DH, we've modernized more than 200,000 feet of underground infrastructure – that's 30+ miles of new utilities. While this work is some of the most impactful, it delivers lasting benefits to the community, including:

- Replaces decades-old utility systems with new, modern infrastructure.
- System Reliability: Light rail requires consistent power and communications to operate safely and efficiently. By upgrading these systems now, we're building a reliable transit system now and for the future.
- Long-term Cost Savings: While utility relocation is a major investment upfront, it's far more cost-effective to upgrade aging infrastructure during light rail construction than to address utilities separately or handle emergency repairs later.
- Community Investment: This work represents a comprehensive infrastructure upgrade for the entire corridor. Residents and businesses will benefit from modernized water, power and communication systems that will serve the community for decades to come.

What were the archaeological discoveries made during construction? How were they preserved and protected?

Archeological investigations and preservation are an important part of the light rail construction journey. Through the dedicated work of archeologists and in working with the local Native American tribes (Gila River Indian Community and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community), a significant number of artifacts were identified and preserved along the SCE/DH.

All archaeological discoveries collected are taken to our archaeological consultant's office for further analysis and documentation. Construction in the field halts until these discoveries can be properly and safely identified and removed. Once all the documentation and analysis are complete, the artifacts are then transported to the S'edav Va'aki Museum in Phoenix for curation. To date, more than 101,000 artifacts have been recovered along the SCE/DH corridor.

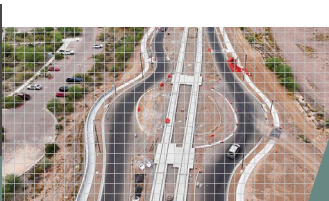
What measures have been taken to preserve or enhance the cultural identity of the local neighborhoods along this route?

Preserving and celebrating downtown and south Phoenix's rich cultural identity has been important in this project's development. This commitment is reflected throughout the project, particularly in our approach to public art and historic preservation.

18 artists, 14 of whom were local, were selected to create artwork that authentically represents the community's history and culture. Their artwork pays homage to the area's historical significance from its earliest foundations to present day. Through working with the community, the artists have captured the stories, traditions, and cultural narratives that make the downtown and south Phoenix communities unique.

In the design phase, the preservation of historic sites and buildings along the route were prioritized ensuring that important community landmarks remain intact. At all stations, signage will be added that tells the story of the artwork and area history for everyday riders and visitors to see and appreciate.





SOUTH CENTRAL EXTENSION/ DOWNTOWN HUB

TITLE

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

TYPE



APRIL 2025

BUDGET

What is the total cost of the South Central Extension/Downtown Hub project? What does this cost include?

The \$1.3 billion project encompasses:

- Decade+ planning, design and community engagement efforts
- Construction materials and labor
- New underground utilities and utility relocation
- Enhanced streetscape and pavement
- Station architecture and public art
- Overhead electrification system powering the system
- New landscaping and shade features
- New trains (14), vehicles and staff to support the operation

Is the project within budget?

Yes. The \$1.3 billion project has remained on budget, leveraging federal grants for more than half the cost alongside regional funding from Proposition 400 and local funding from Phoenix Transportation 2050.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant was competitively awarded based on project merits. If not awarded to metro Phoenix, this grant could have otherwise gone towards transit projects and job creation in other states or regions.

Below is the budget breakdown:

- **Total: \$1.34B**
 - Federal: 53.5%
 - FTA New Starts Grant: \$530M
 - CMAQ: \$102M
 - American Rescue Plan: \$81M
 - Surface Transportation Block Grant Program: \$6M
 - Sub-total Federal: \$719M
 - Regional/Local: 46.5%
 - City of Phoenix T2050: \$346M
 - Regional Proposition 400: \$280M
 - Sub-total Local: \$626M





SOUTH CENTRAL EXTENSION/ DOWNTOWN HUB

TITLE

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

TYPE



APRIL 2025

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE/STAKEHOLDER RESOURCES

What resources have been available to support businesses during construction?

- Direct financial assistance through the Small Business Financial Assistance Program, which focuses on small and micro businesses located along the SCE/DH construction corridor.
 - City of Phoenix, through the Phoenix Community Development & Investment Corporation and Transportation 2050, provided a total of \$1.76 million in grant funding to SCE/DH businesses.
- Business consulting services, which offer a variety of professional services, including marketing/advertising, social media promotion, accounting, and financial planning assistance, all at no charge to the business.
- Marketing and signage programs to draw attention and provide access to the businesses throughout construction, including sponsored discount lunch and community events, an online business directory and promotions to support and encourage local shopping.
- 90% of all neighboring businesses along the SCE/DH have utilized one or more of the above services.
- Dedicated and direct communication by our Business Assistance Coordinators, who are the businesses' primary points of contact, sharing construction updates and resources, as well as problem-solving around their specific questions or concerns.

How will light rail benefit local businesses once service begins?

Local businesses will benefit from increased regional accessibility, improved infrastructure, and a larger customer and workforce base. The service will also serve as a catalyst for economic development, attracting new, community-driven investment while creating walkable neighborhoods. Combined with upgraded utilities and streetscapes, these improvements create an environment where existing businesses can thrive and expand while reducing transportation costs for both employees and customers.

PUBLIC ART

How were artists selected for the extension?

The South Central Extension/Downtown Hub's public art program represents a thoughtful collaboration between Valley Metro and the local arts community. The selection process began in 2017, prioritizing local artists who could authentically capture the corridor's rich culture and history.

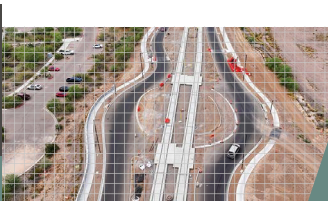
Selected artists were introduced to the community at public Meet-and-Greet events where they could gather inspiration and input directly from residents. After developing initial concepts, artists presented their work to the Stakeholder Art Review Committee (SARC) for approval, followed by additional public meetings and community feedback. Once concepts were finalized, artists moved through a detailed design process, developing their work to 60% completion and then 100%, before beginning fabrication and installation.

The SCE/DH public art will feature 14 local artists, including six first-time emerging artists.

Is there somewhere I can get information on the extension's public art program?

Information on each of the new art installations can be found at valleymetro.org/southcentral under the Extension Art tab. Artists will also be featured and engaging with the community during opening celebration festivities later this year.





**SOUTH CENTRAL EXTENSION/
DOWNTOWN HUB**

TITLE

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

TYPE



APRIL 2025

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Will there be a celebration for the extension opening?

Yes! Valley Metro is planning a community celebration to commemorate the opening of SCE/DH. We're working to actively engage the community through surveys, open houses, and planning support to help shape the festivities in a way that authentically represents the surrounding area.

Ahead of opening, there are also plans to host community events to celebrate project progress and prepare for the new line. These celebrations and events will build towards the official opening June 7, 2025.

How can the community continue to be engaged/have a voice?

Valley Metro and City of Phoenix are committed to keeping the community actively involved through the final phases of construction, testing, and into operations. Open houses will be held in Spring 2025 to give community members the opportunity to connect directly with Valley Metro and City of Phoenix representatives to learn about remaining work and opening plans. A community survey has also been deployed in January – February to ensure community feedback helps shape both the opening celebrations and future engagement opportunities.

Beyond opening, Valley Metro and the City of Phoenix will create an opportunity to continue engaging with the local community, though the methodology is still being determined. The survey referenced above will help to inform this process and the best way to engage.

How has the public been involved in the development of this extension?

Public engagement has been fundamental to the South Central Extension/Downtown Hub project with more than 140 public meetings, including the Construction Advisory Boards (CABs), and 1,500 1:1 stakeholder meetings since 2011. The CAB, comprised of community members who serve as voices for their respective communities, has been instrumental in guiding the project's development. All meetings and materials have been consistently provided in both English and Spanish to ensure full community participation.

Bilingual public and stakeholder meetings were utilized to gather feedback on route selection, station design and architectural elements; targeted sessions for public art integration; and continuous dialogue through our dedicated Community Relations team who canvass the corridor to provide updates, listen to feedback and problem-solve concerns. We maintain ongoing, bilingual communication through regular email and phone updates, in-person engagement and digital tools, including targeted social media and surveys, seeking to ensure broad community participation throughout all phases.

As we approach the opening, we continue to prioritize community voices. We're currently gathering input via open houses and community surveys to help shape our opening celebrations. Local residents, businesses and groups will remain integral partners as these plans develop.

This collaborative approach reflects our commitment to building transit solutions that truly represent and serve our communities. Each design choice and project element has been influenced by community feedback, ensuring the extension becomes a genuine asset to the neighborhoods it connects.





FUTURE SERVICE

What can riders expect with this new extension?

The extension introduces a new two-line rail system that intersects in downtown Phoenix and adds an additional five miles of light rail service to Baseline Road and Central Avenue. Through a transfer in the Downtown Hub, residents will be able to access more of Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa, connecting with schools, work, and entertainment opportunities. The extension is estimated to add more than 8,000 new riders to a system already serving 35,000 boardings per day.

What are the Valley Metro Rail operating hours, and will they change on opening day?

Valley Metro Rail operates 365 days a year and approximately 20 hours each day. With the opening of the SCE/DH, riders will benefit from enhanced frequencies.

Light rail service with SCE/DH's opening:

Weekdays (Monday-Friday):

- Operates every 12 minutes until 7 p.m. (improved from current 15-minute service) and every 20 minutes after 7 p.m.

Saturday:

- Operates every 15 minutes until 7 p.m. and every 20 minutes after 7 p.m.

Sunday:

- Operates every 20 minutes all day

What cities and destinations are served by Valley Metro Rail?

Valley Metro Rail is an urban system that travels to the most densely populated areas of Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa. Riders can get to shopping, restaurants, entertainment, medical appointments, schools and universities, Sky Harbor International Airport, employment centers, museums and much more. With the extension opening, regional travelers can also connect with the offerings in south Phoenix, including local restaurants, culture, outdoor activities, schools and services.

How does the new extension ensure accessibility for all community members?

The SCE/DH is designed to be fully accessible to all members of our diverse community. For riders with disabilities, the extension fully ADA compliant. Every station features level boarding between platforms and trains, high-contrast textured strips to indicate platform edges for visually impaired passengers, and accessible fare machines with Braille, raised print, and audio features. To ensure safety at pedestrian crossings, audible pedestrian signals are installed at intersections near stations.

To serve our Spanish-speaking community members, all station signage, safety information, and wayfinding elements are provided in both English and Spanish. Fare machines and emergency communication systems offer Spanish language options, and our customer service team includes bilingual staff members available to assist riders.

These comprehensive accessibility features ensure that all members of our community can navigate and use the light rail system independently and safely.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

How does Valley Metro ensure passenger safety on the light rail system?

Safety and security are built into every aspect of the Light Rail System starting with its fundamental design. Utilizing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, we've created spaces that naturally enhance security through strategic lighting, clear sightlines, and thoughtful landscaping. This design approach works alongside our comprehensive security program that includes 24/7 monitoring, security and fare inspection teams, partnerships with local law enforcement and modern technology solutions.

Every station features bright lighting, emergency call boxes, and continuous video surveillance. Our security team maintains a visible presence through regular platform visits, mobile security patrols and dedicated staff.

For the SCE/DH, we're enhancing security further by hiring additional security officers and implementing 24/7 security coverage at the Baseline/Central Ave park and ride location.

Riders can easily report concerns through the Alert VM app or texting solution, providing a real-time response to customer needs. Also on the system, riders will engage with our Customer Experience Coordinators who provide a friendly face, customer information, and serve as another set of eyes and ears for our passengers. In cases of immediate need, 911 can be called for dispatch of first responders to the scene, including light rail vehicles.

This layered security approach – from environmental design to active monitoring and rapid response capabilities – work together to create a safe and welcoming transit environment for all riders.

How will emergency vehicles navigate the corridor?

The SCE/DH corridor maintains a minimum street width of 20 ft. to ensure emergency vehicles can quickly and safely navigate the area. The design allows automobiles to pull over when emergency vehicles are responding to calls, maintaining crucial access for fire trucks, ambulances, and other emergency vehicles.



LIGHT RAIL BENEFITS

Why was the downtown and south Phoenix areas chosen for a light rail extension?

The selection of south Central Avenue in Phoenix for a light rail extension was based on a comprehensive technical analysis and extensive community input, guided by local, regional and FTA principles. Our evaluation, dating back to 2012, considered multiple factors including ridership potential, mobility improvements, community impacts, and economic development opportunities. This corridor emerged as a priority for several key reasons:

Transportation Equity: In the south Phoenix area, 44% of residents near the route have limited or no access to personal vehicles. The SCE/DH provides essential connectivity through affordable, convenient, and reliable higher-capacity transportation options.

Economic Development: Light rail has consistently demonstrated its ability to generate economic prosperity for historically underserved communities across metro Phoenix. By making south Phoenix’s unique offerings more accessible, the extension attracts new customers, businesses, and jobs to the area. Future economic development in the area will be driven by the South Central Transit-Oriented Development Community Plan, developed with the community and approved by Phoenix City Council in spring 2022.

Regional Connectivity: The extension creates seamless access to regional destinations, including restaurants, museums, sporting events, educational institutions, and employment centers enhancing opportunities for both current and future generations.

The SCE/DH serves as a bridge connecting south Phoenix to the broader metropolitan region while catalyzing sustainable, economic growth for the community.

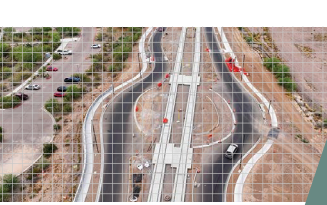
What benefits does light rail bring to the community?

Light rail brings multiple benefits that enhance quality of life for residents. While the system has historically spurred over \$17 billion in public and private investments along its routes, creating jobs and expanding the tax base for rail cities, its positive impact extends far beyond economic development.

For South Phoenix residents, the extension delivers significant community improvements including new bike lanes, enhanced sidewalks, and desert-adapted landscaping that provides much-needed shade. The project has also created workforce development opportunities through construction jobs and skills training programs for local residents. The extension opens up new employment and educational possibilities by providing reliable, affordable transportation to job centers and educational facilities across the Valley. South Phoenix residents will have access to employment opportunities in downtown Phoenix, the airport area, and other commercial corridors. This improved mobility helps remove transportation barriers that may have limited job options in the past.

The extension promotes public health by reducing vehicle emissions and encouraging active transportation. New bike and pedestrian infrastructure make it easier for residents to walk and cycle safely in their neighborhoods. The addition of over 550 trees along the corridor helps combat urban heat and creates more comfortable outdoor spaces for the community.





**SOUTH CENTRAL EXTENSION/
DOWNTOWN HUB**

TITLE

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

TYPE



APRIL 2025

LIGHT RAIL BENEFITS (continued)

Not only does light rail being a transportation option to south Central Ave, but also brings new infrastructure along the alignment as well. Underground utilities are relocated as part of the construction process and modified during this time. Utilities such as water, sewer, storm drain, gas, irrigation, fiber, and much more are not only replaced but upgraded. On a surface level new ADA compliant sidewalk, additional street lights and signalized pedestrian crossing provide a safe and comfortable experience for all who travel along this corridor.

What will this project do to my property values?

According to the Maricopa Association of Governments, properties within a quarter mile of light rail saw their values soar by over 300% between 2000 and 2019 -- double the countywide average.

