

FIESTA DISTRICT ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

Final Report



JUNE 2020



Introduction



Valley Metro and the City of Mesa, in coordination with the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), conducted the Fiesta District Alternatives Analysis (FDAA) study to evaluate potential high-capacity transit (HCT) improvements in west Mesa. The study examined different HCT modes, specifically light rail, enhanced bus and modern streetcar.

The FDAA study serves as a follow-up to the 2017 Fiesta Downtown Chandler Transit Corridor Study, a technical analysis that identified the feasibility of a future HCT route in west Mesa.

The results of the FDAA study will help the City of Mesa plan transit improvements in west Mesa and provide the building blocks to prioritize transit improvements along the recommended corridor.

This report summarizes the study's methodology, the recommended corridor and next steps to realize HCT along this corridor.

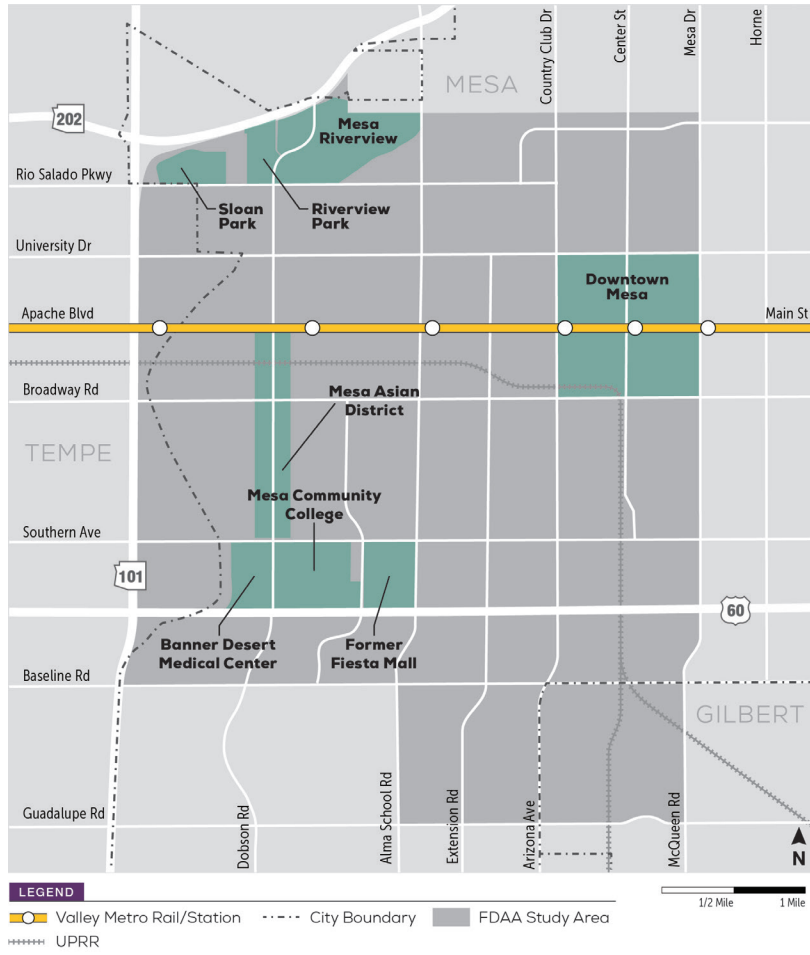
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Background

The FDAA study area generally follows the Loop 101 to the west, Loop 202 to the north, Mesa Drive to the east and Baseline Road to the south. This area has several notable activity centers and destinations.



Why is High-capacity Transit Needed in West Mesa?

- To provide additional transportation choices for people traveling to major activity centers in and around the study area.
- To connect the Mesa Riverview District and Fiesta District to the existing light rail system in downtown Mesa.
- To support local planning priorities for transportation, land use and economic development.
- To build towards greater regional connectivity by interfacing with potential HCT projects in Chandler along Country Club Drive/Arizona Avenue and Tempe along Rio Salado Parkway.

Based on data from the MAG Regional Travel Forecast, by 2040 the study area is predicted to have:



35%
Increase in population



27%
Increase in employment



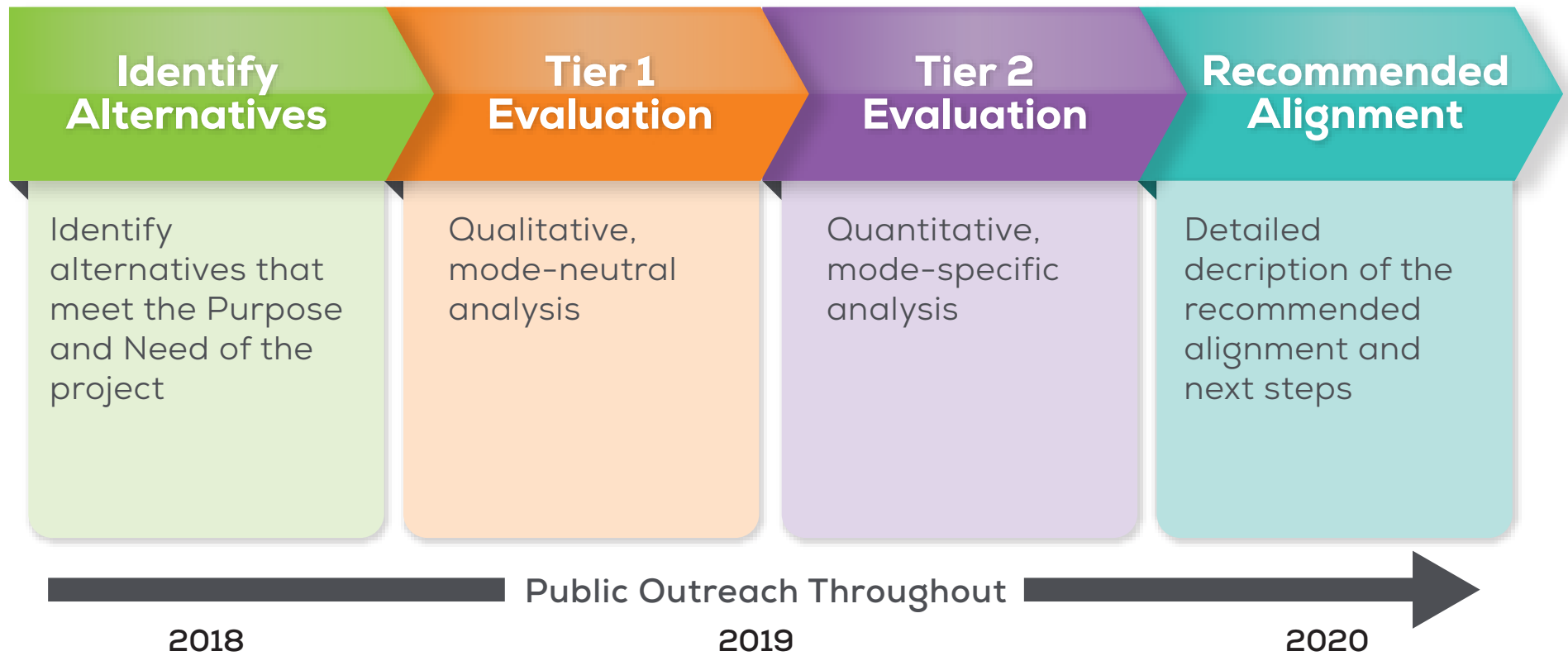
33%
Increase in time to travel by car between downtown Mesa and Riverview Park



95,500
daily one-way trips within the study area

Source: MAG 2017 Regional Travel Forecasting Model

Analysis Process



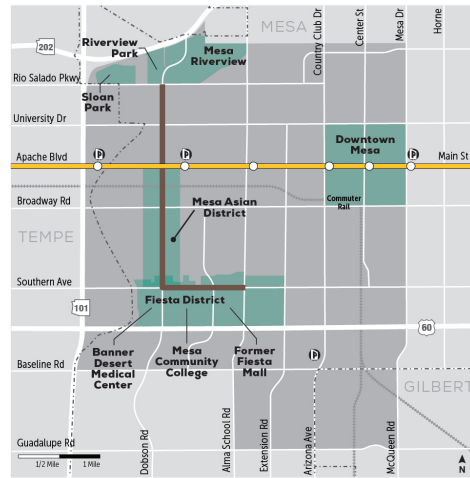
Eleven potential routes were identified at the beginning of the study. During the Tier 1 Evaluation, these routes were rated through several considerations:

- How many existing transit riders are there?
- What is the future population and employment?
- Is the route consistent with existing plans and policies?
- Are there many opportunities for economic development?
- Are there physical and engineering constraints to build HCT?
- Is the route compatible with existing transportation network?

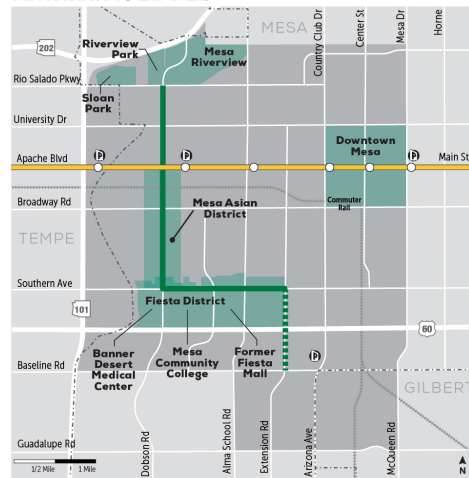
The four highest rated routes were carried forward to the Tier 2, final evaluation.

Tier 1 Evaluation Routes

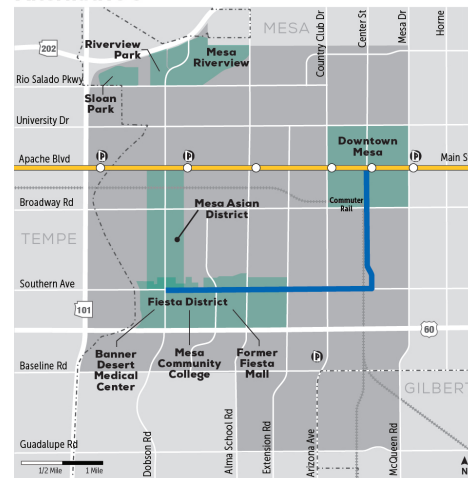
Alternative 1



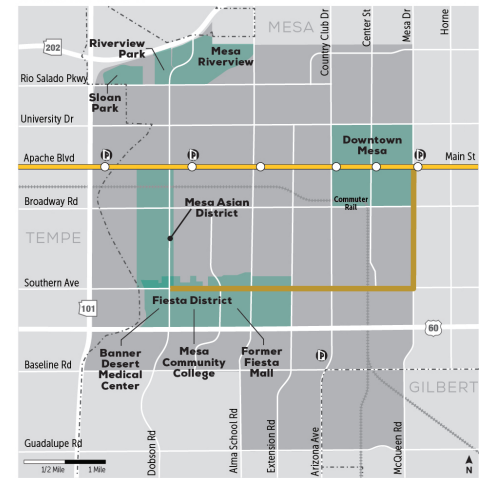
Alternatives 2a & 2b



Alternative 5



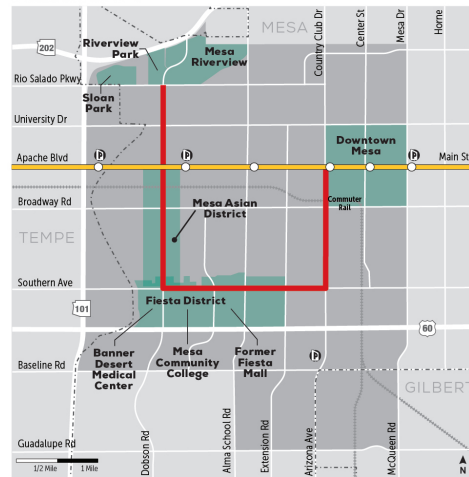
Alternative 6



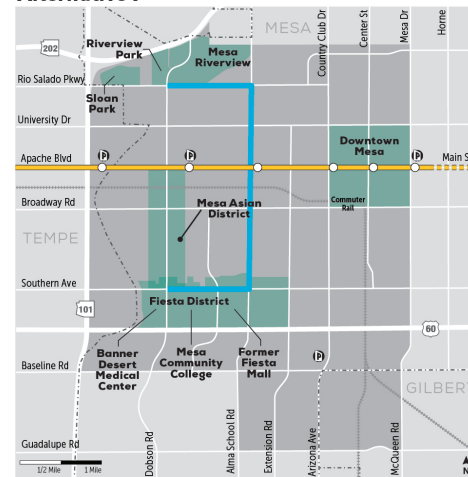
Alternatives 3a & 3b



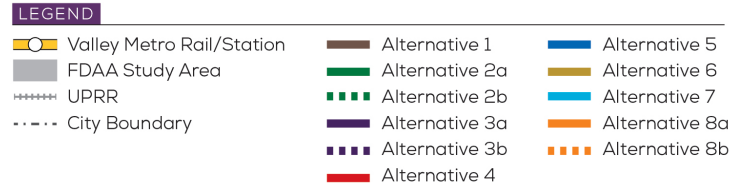
Alternative 4



Alternative 7



Alternatives 8a & 8b



Final Evaluation

Tier 2 Evaluation Routes



Alternative A:

South along Dobson Rd from Rio Salado Pkwy, east on Southern Ave and south on Extension Rd to Baseline Rd.

Alternative B:

South along Dobson Rd from Rio Salado Pkwy, east on Southern Ave to Country Club Dr.

Alternative C:

South along Dobson Rd from Rio Salado Pkwy, east on Southern Ave and south on Country Club Dr to Baseline Rd.

Alternative D:

South along Dobson Rd from Rio Salado Pkwy, east on Southern Ave and north on Country Club Dr to Main St.

LEGEND

- Valley Metro Rail/Station
- FDAA Study Area
- UPRR
- City Boundary
- Alternative A
- Alternative B
- Alternative C
- Alternative D

In the final evaluation, conceptual designs were created for the four routes and they were ranked in eight categories:



Mobility Improvements: forecasted number of riders that the route may attract (from STOPS computer modeling)



Access Opportunities: future population and employment, existing transit connections and bikeways/paths



Potential Impacts: environmental, historic and cultural resources, right of way and utilities



Land Use and Economic Development Potential: consistency with local plans, available land for redevelopment



Cost: high-level costs to build and operate HCT along the route



Efficiencies: how efficiently could the route be built and operated



Community and Stakeholder Input: general public and key stakeholder/businesses in study area

In coordination with city of Mesa, the project team identified four categories to receive greater weight in the evaluation:

- Mobility improvements
- Access opportunities
- Right-of-way and land acquisition impacts
- Land use/economic development

Recommended Route

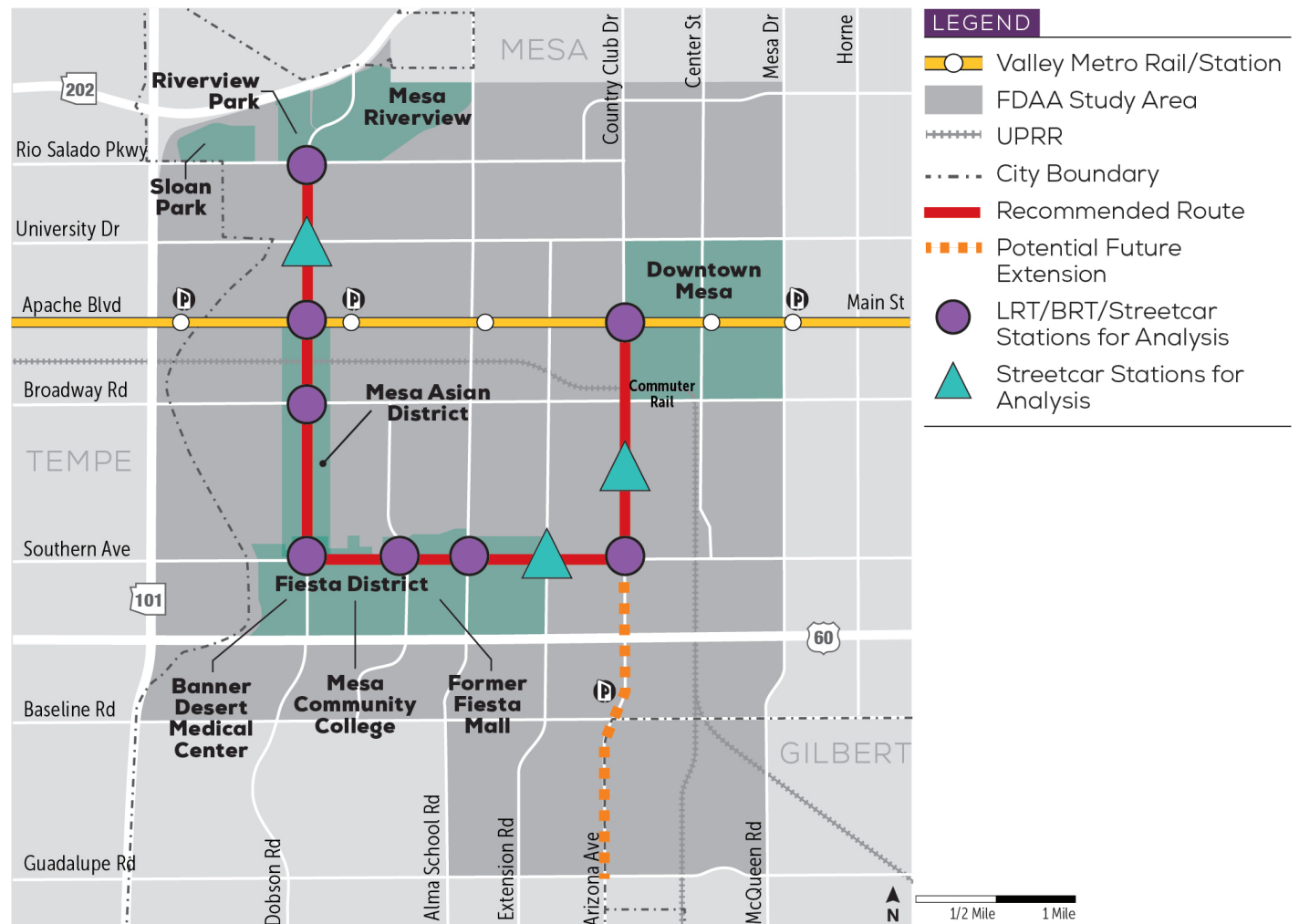
The recommended route is Alternative D.

This route connects several major activity centers in west Mesa including:

- Sloan Park
- Mesa Riverview
- Mesa Asian District
- Fiesta District
- Banner Desert Medical Center
- Mesa Community College
- Downtown Mesa

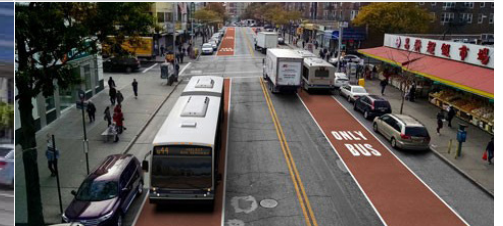
This route performed better than the other routes in the final evaluation as it has:

- Greatest potential to attract riders
- Densest population and employment areas
- Slight advantage for potential future economic developments
- Strongest community support
- Connects to existing light rail at two locations

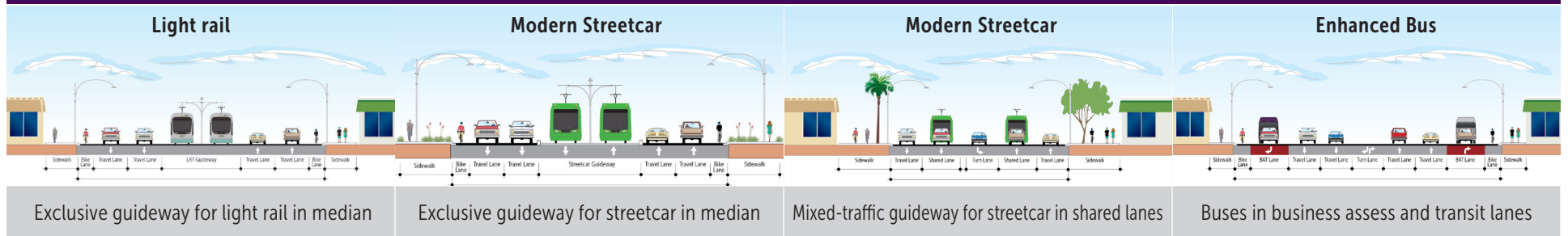


Potential Types of Transit

	LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT	MODERN STREETCAR	ENHANCED BUS
Purpose/Market Type	Higher-speed, high-demand regional connectivity	Low-speed, moderate-demand local connectivity	Higher-speed, high-demand local or regional connectivity
Operating Environment	Dedicated or semi-dedicated guideway	Mixed traffic or semi-dedicated guideway	Mixed traffic or semi-dedicated guideway
Spacing of Stops	1/2 to 1 mile	1/4 to 1/2 mile	1/2 to 1 mile
Passenger Capacity per Vehicle	160 to 200 (3-vehicle train capacity of 480 to 600)	130 to 160	60 to 90
Relative Capital Cost	\$\$\$	\$\$	\$
Relative Operating Cost	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$



ILLUSTRATIVE HCT AND ROADWAY CONFIGURATIONS



Community Outreach

Targeted community outreach was conducted for this early-stage technical evaluation. Broader community outreach will be a part of future studies.

Community outreach included:



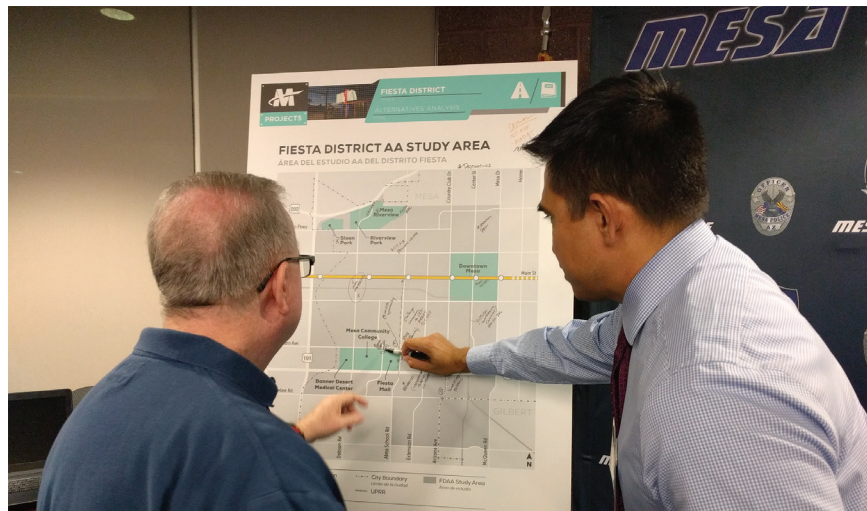
Key Business Stakeholders
12 meetings



Public Meetings
Twice during the study



Online Presence
2 online surveys and webpage



Key Business Stakeholders

- One-on-one meetings were held with 12 key business stakeholders in the study area.
- Stakeholders included large employers, special interest groups and commercial property owners.
- Discussion focused on understanding the study process and the future transit needs of the area.
- Most stakeholders expressed support for transit as many were projecting growth in the area.

Open House Meetings

- Two public meetings were held at different stages of the study.
 - October 26, 2017: introduced the study to the community and received input on the study goals.
 - November 14, 2018: presented results of the evaluation and received input on the selected routes.
- Both meetings were held at the Mesa Police Department Fiesta Division at 1010 W. Grove Avenue in Mesa.

Online Website and Surveys

- A webpage for the project was created on Valley Metro's website and updated quarterly and/or as needed.
- Two online surveys were held in conjunction with the public meetings and survey results were used to guide the study's outcomes.
 - Survey 1 inquired about the communities goals for the study
 - Survey 2 inquired about tradeoffs in the selected routes.
- There were a total of 153 responses from both surveys.

Next Step: Transit Supportive Decisions

This study is a key step toward improving the mobility choices in west Mesa via a new HCT route. However, there are actions that can be taken to enhance HCT development along the recommended route. These steps include:

- Establishing an early-action transit service along the route, such as a branded circulator bus to enhance the current transit market.
- Continuing to invest in the existing transit services within the area by increasing frequency and improving transit travel speeds.
- Engaging with future and potential developers along the corridor to implement transit-oriented development (TOD) elements, orienting buildings toward the street, lowering required automobile parking and encouraging high-density mixed uses.
- Coordinating with specific City of Mesa departments (e.g., economic development and public works) for buy-in to set policies for this recommended route that would encourage TOD, create safe pedestrian and bicycling connections, and encourage decision making that will be supportive of future HCT (e.g., placement of new utility lines).



ONLY FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Ground and upper floors retail (restaurants/bars) and offices | 4 Repurposed right of way for bike lanes, streetscape, etc. |
| 2 Retrofitted strip mall with "big box" retail and infill developments | 5 Improved ped. crossings with high-visibility crosswalks |
| 3 Light industrial or commercial parcel with screened off-street parking | |

This is a future project with regional impact that will be a candidate project for the new MAG Regional Transportation Plan.

- A separate study is evaluating the feasibility of future connections between this recommended route and the Tempe Streetcar.
- This project could compete for future regional funding from the extension of Proposition 400, the regional sales tax for transportation.