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## RTA unveils plans for regional seamless transit system

One of the goals of the Regional Transportation Authority will be realized today with the introduction of a regional seamless transit system. The regional seamless transit concept began with voter-approval of more than \$500 million in transit service improvements as part of the RTA plan.

In order to ensure that all of the new transit services work together as efficiently as possible, the RTA formed a working group in 2006 to discuss the best way to retain and attract riders to the growing regional system. The working group included all the transit partners from the jurisdictions to develop the regional approach.

On Jan. 31, 2008, the RTA Board approved the group's recommendation for a seamless transit system and the funding needed to implement the improvements.

The components of the regional system will be phased in:

- The first is a newly branded look and family of names for all regional transit vehicles. Colors for the new image are a mix of metallic silver, blue, yellow, and white and will be used on all the vehicles to provide a unified look.

The timing of the new look is in conjunction with the delivery of 47 new Sun Tran buses, 37 of which are funded through the RTA, and 42 Sun Van paratransit vehicles. The buses will begin going into service on Feb. 16.

The branding includes a commonly linked name for all the transit services beginning with the word "Sun" to tie it to the name associated with the largest transit system currently in operation, Sun Tran.

The new names include: Sun Express for all express buses serving outlying areas; Sun Van for Van Tran; Sun Connect for Pima County Rural Transit routes serving Ajo, Marana, San Xavier, Tucson

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Estates, and Green Valley/Sahuarita, and future neighborhood circulators in Marana and Oro Valley. Sun RideShare is the new name for RideShare, a vanpool and carpool program that is managed under Pima Association of Governments, which also manages the RTA.

- New park-and-ride lots in Oro Valley and Rita Ranch also will open in February to support new Sun Express service, which is funded by the RTA (see related press release). Additional park-and-rides will open at a later date to support other regional service expansions.
- Work is already under way to develop consolidated customer information for the seamless system. Elements include a new Web site featuring trip planning, schedules, maps and fare information; a single customer service center with one phone number; and a transit schedule booklet that includes information for all the transit providers.
- A new fare payment technology will become available in 2010 with the introduction of a “smart card” that people may use on Sun Tran, Sun Express and Sun Connect. This will simplify the process of transferring from one transit vehicle to another, including the modern streetcar. The smart card will be tapped on a fare collection box, allowing for faster boarding, and deducts the appropriate fare every time it is used.
- New signage for bus stops and transit centers will be installed in the future to provide improved information about the integrated system, connection information and maps.

The funding for the regional seamless system concept is \$8.2 million and includes \$2.9 million for the system branding, consolidated customer services and enhanced bus stop information.

“It’s important to note that the buses which are being delivered for service in February are new and would have required design work regardless,” said Gary Hayes, executive director of the RTA. “It was more cost efficient to purchase these vehicles with the new colors rather than redesign the look at a later time.”

Hayes also noted that during the current economic situation, the RTA Board-approved projects and services that are being implemented are helping to support local business.

“When we initially presented the RTA plan to Pima County citizens, one of the factors we conveyed is that an investment in transportation will lead to new jobs and increased economic productivity,” Hayes said. “Over the life of the plan, thousands of jobs will be created to support road construction projects, new transit services and other improvements. In fact, local businesses are thankful for the work the RTA has been able to provide during these tough times.”

*The Regional Transportation Authority is the fiscal manager of the \$2.1 billion plan approved by Pima County voters on May 16, 2006. The RTA Board is comprised of representatives from the local jurisdictions in Pima County, including the cities of Tucson and South Tucson, Pima County, the towns of Marana, Oro Valley and Sahuarita, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and the Tohono O’odham Nation. A representative of the Arizona State Transportation Board also serves on the board. For more information about the RTA plan, visit [www.RTAmobility.com](http://www.RTAmobility.com) or call (520) 770-9410.*