



**PINAL COUNTY TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY**  
**EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES**

June 2009



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# Pinal County Transit Feasibility Study

## Existing Transit Services

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At the present time, transit service in Pinal County is limited. There are no county-wide services, and most available services are for senior and disabled residents. Public transit exceptions are limited to Cotton Express service in Coolidge and the new Maricopa Xpress services between Maricopa, Phoenix, and Tempe.

This document describes the public transportation services that do exist, and since most services are locally-based, the description is by geographic area.

### **REGIONAL SERVICES WITHIN PINAL COUNTY**

Currently, there are no regional public transportation services within Pinal County that are available to the general public, and only two limited services for elderly and disabled riders:

#### **On-the-Go Express**

The Pinal County Department of Public Health operates On-the-Go Express service in the eastern half of the county that transports older adults aged 60 and over and persons with disabilities to medical appointments and shopping in Pinal County. The service will also pick up and deliver prescriptions. The suggested donation for services is \$2, and it operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM. The service provides about 1,900 rides per year.

#### **Pinal Rides**

Pinal Rides is a pilot program that is operated by the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens (PGCSC) that provides one day a week service on two regional routes designed primarily to transport residents of outlying communities to medical appointments in Casa Grande. The two routes are:

- Tuesdays: Florence – Coolidge – Casa Grande
- Wednesdays: Arizona City – Eloy – Toltec – Casa Grande

Service is provided primarily for seniors and primarily for medical purposes. However, on a space available basis, Pinal Rides will also transport other (non-senior) riders and those making non-medical trips. For senior riders there is a suggested donation of \$3 per one-way or round trips, and for non-senior riders there is a charge of \$3 per one-way or round trip. Trips must be booked in advance at least 24 hours in advance, and medical trips are served on a first-come first-serve basis.

#### **PGCSC Senior Van Service**

PGCSC's senior van service primarily provides rides to and from senior centers in Apache Junction, Hayden, Coolidge, Casa Grande), Eloy, and Superior. However, limited transportation is also provided for medical and shopping trips. Service availability, fees, and donations vary by location.



## **APACHE JUNCTION AND VICINITY**

At the present time, no public transit service is available in Apache Junction. However, many residents can access Valley Metro services in neighboring Mesa for trips to and from Maricopa County. For seniors and disabled residents, East Valley Senior Services provides taxi subsidies, transportation for medical and shopping trips, and administers an innovated volunteer driver program.

### **General Public Transit Services**

As stated above, there are no public transit services that are available to the general public that operate within Apache Junction. However, Valley Metro's Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot is located six miles to the west of Apache Junction at the Superstition Springs Center mall (which is located at the intersection of Power Road and the Superstition Freeway in Mesa). Six Valley Metro local routes operate out of the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot (see Figure 1):

- Metrolink, which operates between Superstition Spring Park and Ride Lot and the Mesa end of Valley Metro's new light rail line.
- Route 30 University Drive, which operates between Mesa and Tempe, generally along University Drive.
- Route 40 Apache Boulevard/Main Street, which operates between the park and ride lot and Sky Harbor Airport along Apache Boulevard and Main Street.
- Route 45 Broadway Road, which operates between the park and ride lot and Phoenix along Broadway Road.
- Route 61 Southern Avenue, which operates between the park and ride lot and Phoenix along Southern Avenue.
- Route 108 Elliot Road, which operates between Mesa and Tempe, largely along Elliot Road.

In addition, four express routes serve the area:

- Route 532 Mesa – Downtown Phoenix via McKellips Road
- Route 533 Mesa – Downtown Phoenix via Superstition Spring Park and Ride Lot
- Route 535 Northeast Mesa - Downtown Phoenix
- Route 536 Northeast Mesa – Tempe/ASU

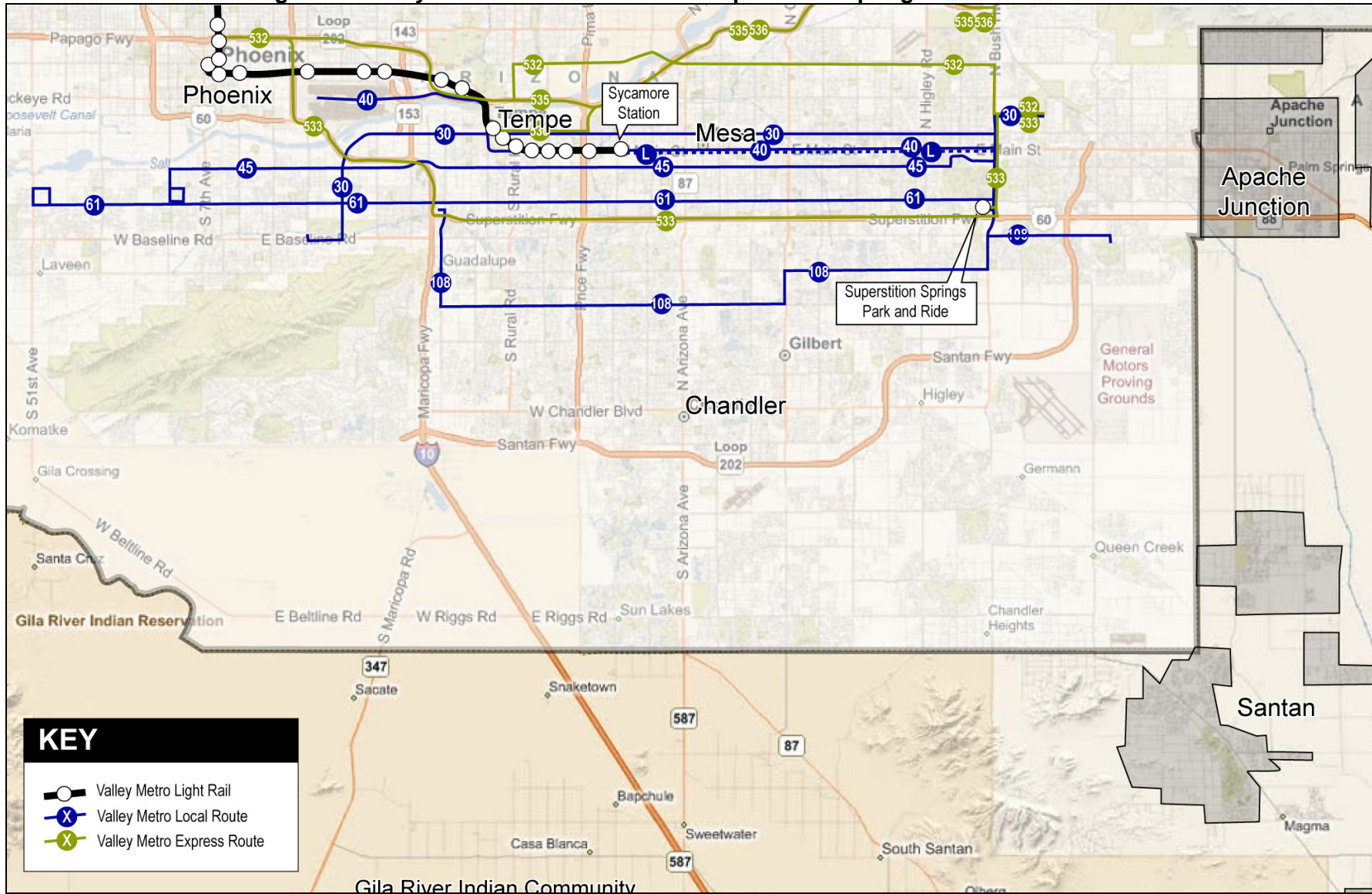
One option for providing transit service between Apache Junction and Maricopa County, and within Apache Junction, would be to extend one or more of these routes to Apache Junction, or to implement a new route that operated between Apache Junction and the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot.

### **Services for the Elderly and Disabled**

East Valley Senior Services (EVSS) operates three human service transportation programs that are funded by the City of Apache Junction. These include Ride Choice, Coupons for Cabs, and van service.



Figure 1: Valley Metro Service that Serve Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot





### **Apache Junction Ride Choice**

EVSS administers Apache Junction Ride Choice, which is a volunteer driver program. Through this program, older adults (aged 60+) and persons with disabilities can get a mileage reimbursement for a person who drives them. Qualifying residents who do not own or operate a car arrange for a driver of their choosing, and the program reimburses the drivers on a per mile basis (currently 44 cents per mile). Most passengers can claim up to 300 miles per month; the reimbursement is provided directly to the passenger, who is then obligated to pass it on to the driver, on a monthly basis.

### **Apache Junction Coupons for Cabs**

EVSS also offers a program called Coupons for Cabs. The program offers persons aged 60 and over and persons with a disability coupon book containing 10 tickets worth \$1 of cab fare each for the price of \$2.50 (i.e. a 75% discount). Most eligible clients can purchase up to \$100 worth of the tickets per month.

### **Shopping & Medical Transportation**

EVSS also provides additional transportation for shopping and medical trips:

- On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, EVSS transports clients to medical appointments for certain areas and purposes: Mondays in Gold Canyon, Wednesdays for blood draws and tests in Apache Junction, and Fridays near Power Road. Medical transportation must be booked one day in advance. The fare for persons with disabilities under age 60 is \$2.00, and the suggested donation for persons aged 60 and over is \$2.00.
- On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon, EVSS transports clients in the Apache Junction area to medical appointments.
- On Tuesdays and Thursday, EVSS transports clients to grocery stores for a two hour shopping period.

### **SANTAN**

Although Santan is now Pinal County's largest community, there are no public transit services available to the general public or to seniors or disabled residents.

### **MARICOPA**

In April 2008, the City of Maricopa recently instituted Maricopa Xpress express bus service between Maricopa and Phoenix, and between Maricopa and Tempe. At present, there are no other local services available for the general public, or for seniors of the disabled.

### **General Public Transit Services**

#### **Maricopa Xpress**

Maricopa Express, which was instituted in April 2008 by the City of Maricopa, provides



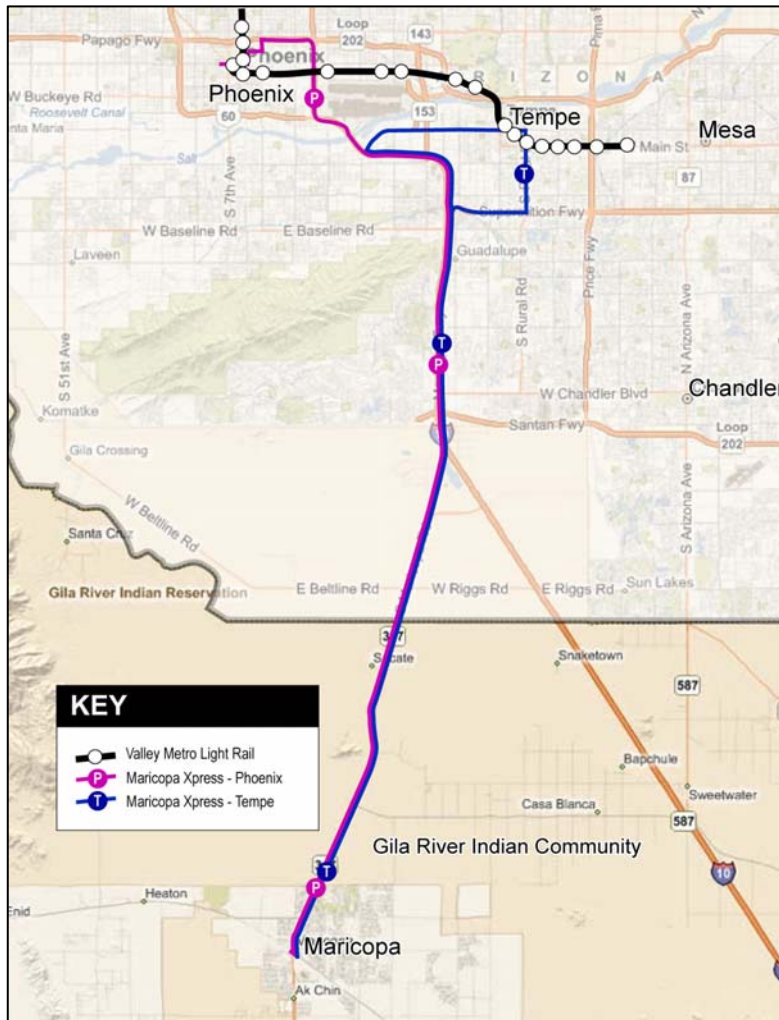
commuter service on two routes (see Figure 2):

- Maricopa – Phoenix
- Maricopa – Tempe

The Phoenix route provides two round trips per weekday and operates from the Maricopa Park and Ride and terminates in Phoenix at the State Capital Building. The route travels via State Route 347 and Interstate 10 into Phoenix. The two morning trips begin at 5:50 AM and 6:50 AM and each take about an hour to reach downtown Phoenix. The two evening trips depart Phoenix at 4:10 PM and 5:10 AM and arrive in Maricopa at 5:20PM and 6:40PM, respectively.

The Tempe route provides one round trip per weekday and operates from the Maricopa Park and Ride to downtown Tempe, and then loops down to Arizona Mills Mall. In the morning, the route travels along State Route 347, Interstate 10, and into downtown Tempe via University Drive, down Mill Avenue and US 60 to Arizona Mills Mall, and back into Maricopa via Interstate 10 and State Route 347. In the afternoon, the route runs in the opposite direction, first serving Arizona Mills Mall and then downtown Tempe.

**Figure 2: Maricopa Xpress Service**



The regular adult one-way fare is \$3, the senior fare is \$2 (aged 60 and up), and children aged five and under ride for free. Monthly passes are available for \$120 (\$80 for seniors), 10-ride ticket books are available for \$30 (\$20 for seniors), and 20-ride books for \$60 (\$40 for seniors), respectively.

**FLORENCE**

There are currently no transit services available in Florence for the general public. However, as described above, Pinal Rides provides one day a week service between Florence and Casa Grande via Coolidge that primarily serves medical trips for seniors, but will serve younger riders and other trip purposes on a space available basis. In addition, the Dorothy Nolan Senior Center provides service to seniors.



## **Services for the Elderly and Disabled**

### **Dorothy Nolan Senior Center**

The City of Florence, through the Dorothy Nolan Senior Center, operates a shuttle service for older adults aged 60 and over that is available for daily errands with pickup from 9:00 AM until 11:30 AM Monday through Friday. In addition there is a once a week trip to Coolidge (on Mondays), and a trip once every other month to the Superstition Mall in Mesa. Registration must be made in advance, and the fare is 50¢ for regular trips and \$1 for the Coolidge shopping trip.

## **COOLIDGE**

Coolidge is the only community in Pinal County that provides local transit service to the general public. The city also provides dial-a-ride service for seniors and the disabled.

## **General Public Transit Services**

### **Cotton Express**

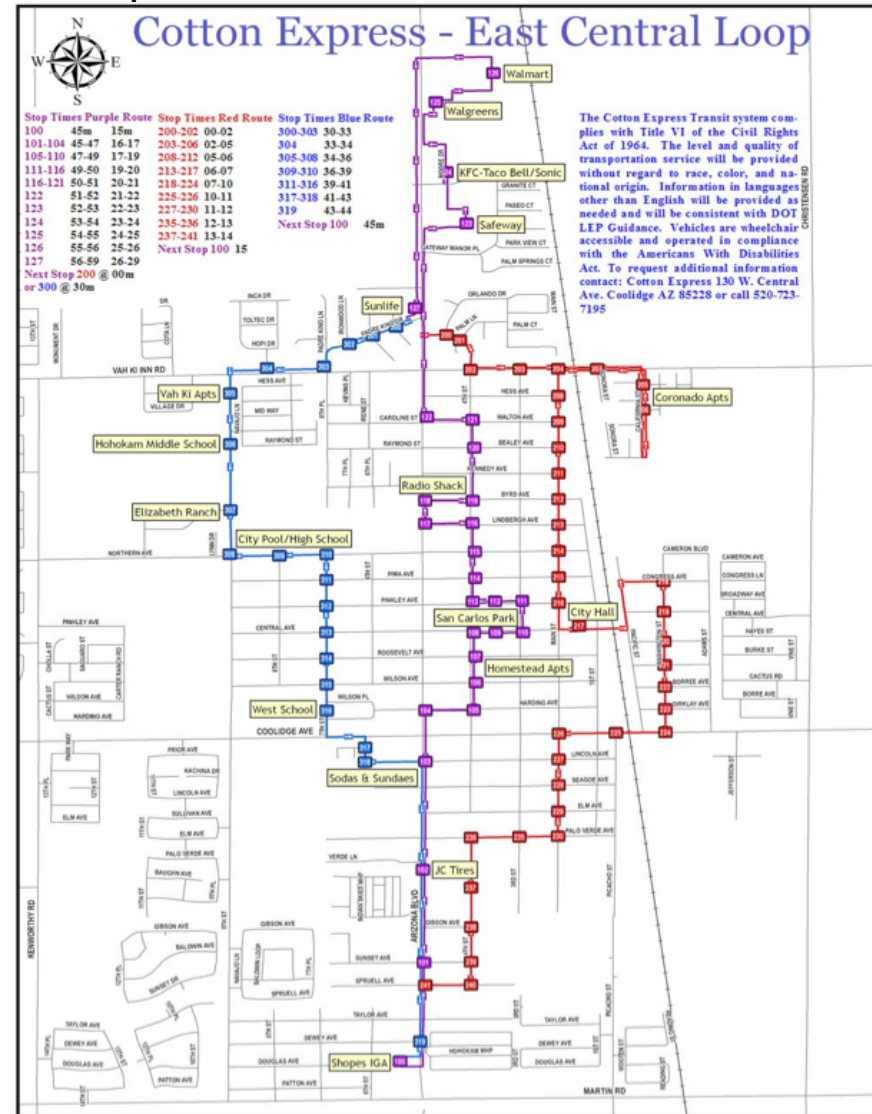
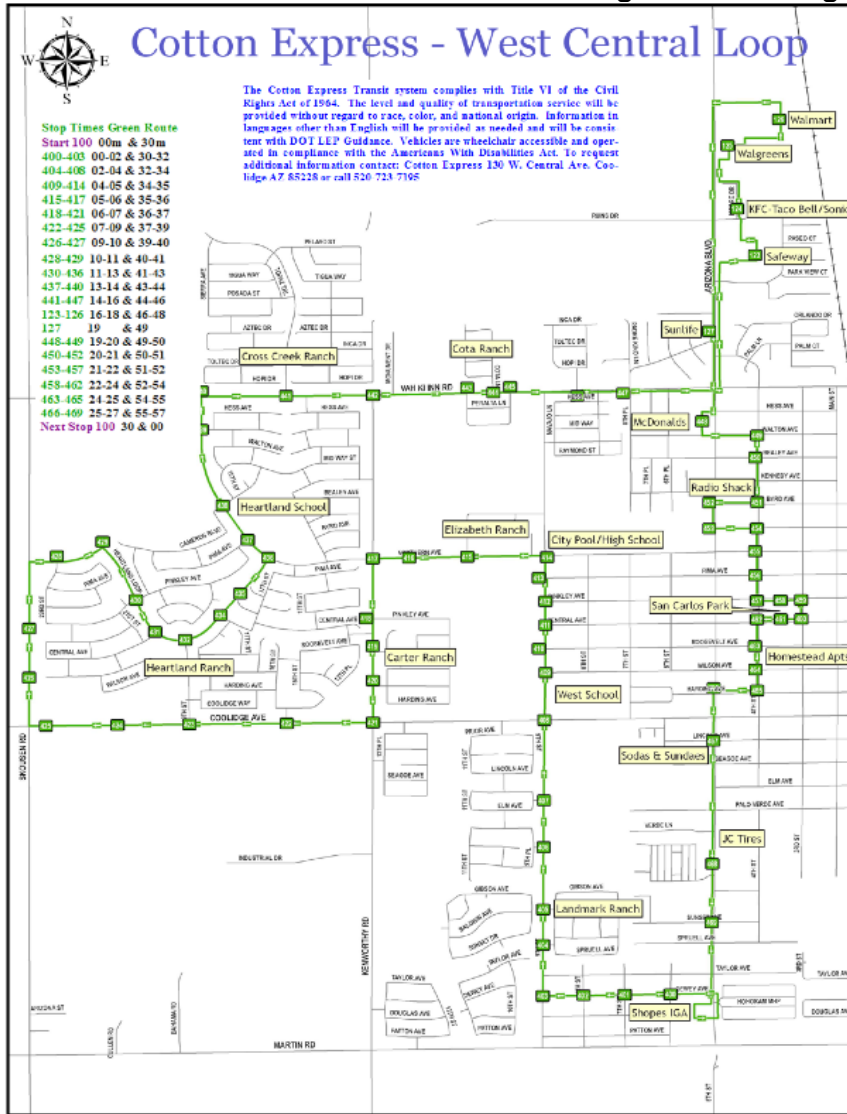
The City of Coolidge operates Cotton Express service that provides service on four bus routes that operate on weekdays from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM and that are identified by colors (see Figure 3):

- The Green Loop operates every 30 minutes and begins at Shopes IGA and travels clockwise primarily on Dewey Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Northern Avenue, Kenworthy Road, Coolidge Avenue, Skousen Road, Heartland Loop, Vah Ki Inn Road, and Arizona Boulevard, then serves the regional shopping area northward to Walmart. The route then turns south toward the Shopes IGA primarily via Arizona Boulevard and 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The Red, Purple and Blue routes all operate in the downtown area and complement each other on a north-south axis. The purple route travels northward from Shopes IGA along the same alignment as the Green Loop (but in reverse since the Green Loop only travels south along this path). After it passes through the regional shopping area and heads south again, the route travels south as either the Blue Route (beginning around Padre Kino Drive) or the Red Route (beginning around N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street). The Blue Route travels south primarily along Padre Kino Drive, Vah Ki Inn Road, 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Northern Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and Arizona Boulevard. The Red Route travels south primarily along Vah Ki Inn Road, (Coronado Apartments), Main Street, Washington Street, Coolidge Avenue, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The purple route operates on a 30 minute headway and the Red and Blue Routes on 1 hour headways (half each of the Purple Route trips).

All routes provide route deviation service for elderly and disabled passengers. The fare for the deviated fixed-route services is \$1.25 per ride, 75¢ per ride for children aged 3-11, and free for children 2 and under.



Figure 3: Coolidge Cotton Express Service





In fiscal year 2005, the Cotton Express carried 23,000 passengers, up from 21,600 in the previous year. Since Coolidge schools do not operate bus service, 50% of Cotton Express' ridership is students.

### **Services for the Elderly and Disabled**

As described above, Pinal Rides provides one day a week service between Florence and Casa Grande via Coolidge that primarily serves medical trips for seniors, but will serve younger riders and other trip purposes on a space available basis. In addition, the city provides local transportation for seniors and disabled residents.

### **Cotton Express Dial-A-Ride**

Residents aged 55 and over or with a disability that prevents them from walking two blocks to a bus stop can use the Cotton Express Dial-a-Ride (curb to curb) service. The service operates from 9AM until 4PM Monday through Friday. The service answers immediately to calls (rides do not need to be pre-booked) but riders should allow one hour from the time of the call to get from their origin to their destination. Dial-a-Ride service costs \$1.50 per ride for all passengers.

### **CASA GRANDE AND VICINITY**

Casa Grande currently does not provide transit for the general public, but is currently examining the feasibility of a local circulator service. For seniors and disabled riders, the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens (PGCSC) provides two different types of service.

### **General Public Transit Services**

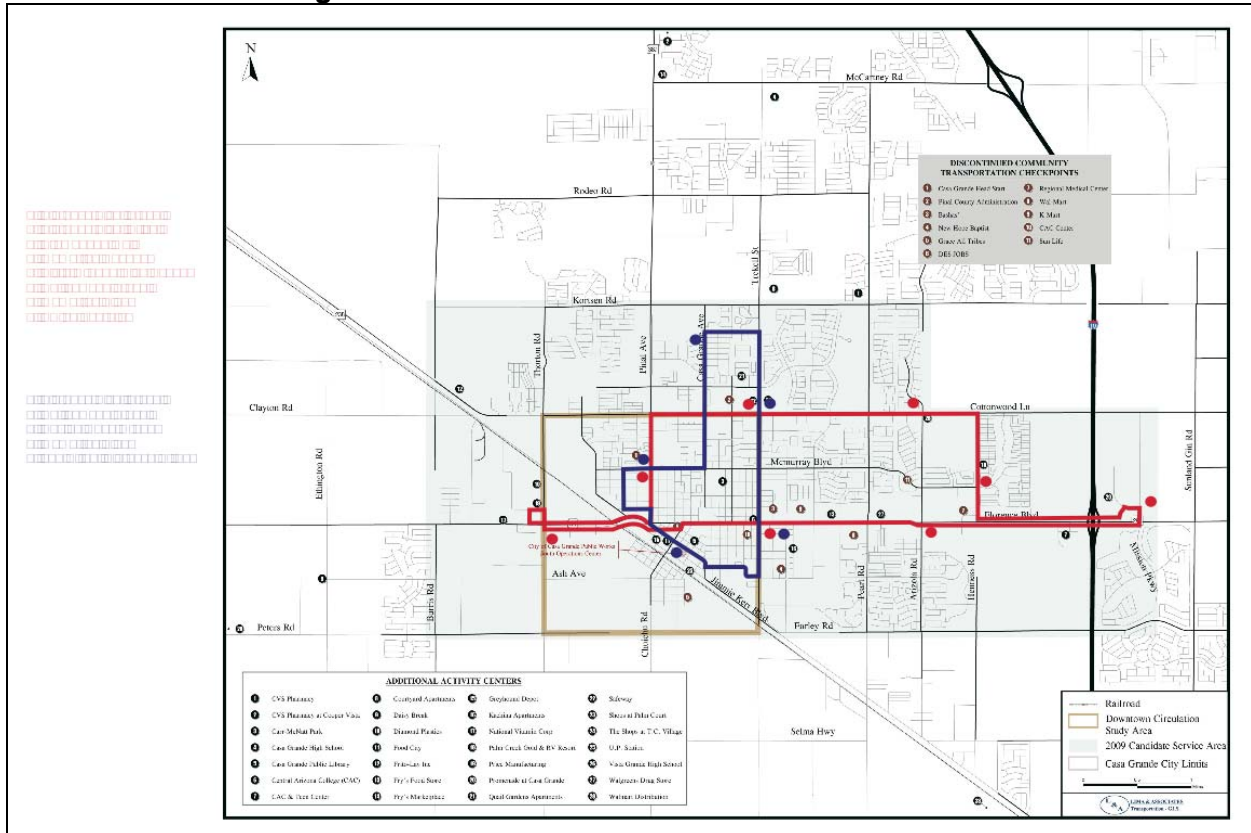
As stated above, the City of Casa Grande currently does not provide any general public transit services. It is, however, currently conducting a study to evaluate the feasibility of a local circulator system that would operate within Casa Grande. As shown in Figure 4, one option would be a two loop system that would serve most of the older part of Casa Grande plus the new Promenade at Casa Grande Shopping Center.

### **Services for the Elderly and Disabled**

The Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens (PGCSC), which is the Area Agency on Aging for Pinal and Gila Counties recently initiated two new transportation programs for seniors within Casa Grande, which are described below. In addition, the Pinal Rides service that was described above provides once a week transportation from Eloy and Arizona City to Casa Grande.



Figure 4: Casa Grande Public Transit Alternative



### Volunteer Driver Program

Similar to the Apache Junction Ride Choice program provided by Eastern Valley Senior Services, the PGCSC provides a volunteer driver mileage reimbursement for persons aged 60 and over with no other means of transportation. Seniors who receive rides from friends, neighbors and relatives can claim up to 400 miles per month for a 50¢ per mile reimbursement, which they must then pass on to their driver. As with Apache Junction, the drivers are not provided or matched through the program, rather the reimbursement goes to a driver that the client selects.

### Taxi Subsidy Program

Casa Grande residents who are 60 years of age or over who have no other means of transportation. Eligible participants may purchase cab coupons worth \$10 for \$2.50, which provides a 75% discount on taxi rides.

### OTHER SERVICES

In addition to the services described above, Greyhound, Douglas Shuttle, and Amtrak operate services that stop in Pinal County. In addition, Arizona Shuttle, which provides service between Tucson and Sky Harbor Airport, operates through Pinal County but does not make any stops within the county.



### **Greyhound**

Greyhound Lines bus service operates four trips per day (two in each direction) between Phoenix and Tucson that stop in Casa Grande.

### **Douglas Shuttle**

Douglas Shuttle operates shuttle service between Douglas (on the Mexico border) and Phoenix that stops in Casa Grande three times a day.

### **Amtrak**

Two Amtrak lines run through Maricopa and provide limited service to Maricopa on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

- Amtrak's Sunset Limited line that operates between Los Angeles and Orlando. Eastbound service stops in Maricopa at approximately 11:00 PM, and westbound service stops at approximately 2:00 AM.
- The Sunset Eagle Line that operates between Los Angeles and Chicago. Eastbound service stops in Maricopa at approximately 11:00 PM, and westbound service stops at approximately 2:30 AM bound.

Ridership on Amtrak from the Maricopa station has fluctuated somewhat over the past five years. In 2008, ridership was 8,288 passengers; this figure dropped in 2007 to 7,679 and by 2006 ridership had dropped to 4,713. However, since then ridership has since increased again to 5,655 in 2007 and 6,301 in 2008.