

House okays \$92 million for light rail completion, \$5.3 million for other projects including South Mountain circulator bus HUD funds to benefit Maryvale and South Mountain area centers.

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Transportation, HUD funding
approved for AZ projects

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WASHINGTON - Numerous transportation projects for Arizona would receive funding under a bill that was approved today by the U.S. House of Representatives, announced Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz. Pastor was a key figure in securing funding support for the local projects including **\$91.8 million for the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Project.**

"Ridership of the Valley's light rail is higher than expected, which tells me that Arizona's commuters desire improved transit systems and less traffic congestion," Pastor said. "I am working with my colleagues in Congress to help secure funding to help Arizona address its transportation challenges."

The funding was included in the Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which combined nine annual appropriations bills left over from last year, including Fiscal Year 2009 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

The light rail project, which began operations in December, is a 20-mile line that links activity centers in central Phoenix, downtown Tempe and Mesa. The funding in this bill represents the largest payment yet from the federal government for this cost-shared project. In a related project, Pastor also secured \$475,000 from the FTA for an analysis of a proposed extension of the light rail system along the Interstate 10 West Corridor. It would coincide with the Arizona

Department of Transportation's design concept study for lane additions on I-10.

Other local transit projects in the bill included:

\$1.9 million under the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Improvement Program for Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport for an ongoing program to replace asphalt runways with concrete to substantially improve the surface to better handle the harsh high temperatures of Phoenix. New taxiway edge lighting also would be installed as part of that construction projects. These two modifications would provide cost effective maintenance and improve the airport's safety levels.

- \$950,000 under the FTA for a South Mountain Village area circulator bus. The bus would help riders bypass multiple transfers and transport them quicker to major transit hubs, where they could connect with bus routes that go directly to their destinations. This is particularly promising for disadvantaged areas, where a more efficient transportation option would allow workers to pursue more lucrative employment opportunities than they may otherwise be able to access.

- \$2 million under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for a high capacity modern street car/light rail transit system in Tucson to connect major health facilities, the University of Arizona and several business districts, including the downtown area.

HUD funding for NCLR, South Mountain and Maryvale community projects

Under Housing and Urban Development Appropriations, the bill also included:

- \$950,000 for the National Council of La Raza's HOPE Fund, a program which assists low-income Hispanic neighborhoods with affordable housing and other community essentials to strengthen residents' quality of life.

- \$380,000 for a Maryvale community campus being developed by Chicanos Por La Causa,

Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Phoenix. The funding would be used to provide equipment, improvements, furnishings and other essentials as part of a \$17 million development project that would provide education, workforce development, recreation for disabled children, life skills training, and medical and behavioral health services to the economically disadvantaged Maryvale area in west Phoenix.

- \$380,000 for a proposed expansion of the Salvation Army's Phoenix South Mountain Corps Community Center at 1351 E. Broadway Road. The proposed expansion has received a sizable estate grant from Ray and Joan Kroc, but it is contingent on matching funds. Once the required match is met, the new facility would double its current size and would be an enormous asset to the 4440,000 predominantly low-to middle-income residents who live within five miles of the site. With 18 public schools within three miles of the center, it would benefit a quarter of all the children in the Phoenix metro area who currently live below poverty levels, in addition to providing services to seniors, new parents, young adults and those in need of life skills training.