

Tempe Light Rail group touts transportation benefits

Tempe Transportation Commission and Public Involvement & Marketing Committee sees a positive boost for local businesses in the Phoenix area when Metro Light Rail service begins in December.

“Historically, if you look at other cities and towns that incorporate the light rail, their businesses surrounding it tend to do very well,” said Judi Nelson, program manager for commute options at Arizona State University.

A study of the economic impact within a quarter mile of the light rail in Dallas found the value of retail properties increased 28.3 percent, industrial properties by 13 percent, residential properties by 32.1 percent, and office properties by 24.7 percent, committee officials said.

Delanna Willstead, management assistant for the city of Tempe Light Rail, said people are buying up land surrounding the new light rail stations throughout Phoenix. “People are very anxious to own a business or property around the light rail,” said Willstead.

Although the end result is expected to bring an economic boost, light rail has not always been good to local businesses. Many suffered as the lengthy construction process hindered the accessibility to their buildings.

“Construction was the hard part and the businesses weathered that, so now it’s going to be great for them,” said Tempe Transportation Community Outreach and Marketing Supervisor Amanda Nelson.

For local business owners it’s been a long haul since February 2005 when construction began.

“People just didn’t want to drive through Central Avenue,” said Marcelino Rosario, manager of Johnny’s Uptown Restaurant and Music Club. “Some of my regulars did it for awhile, but once they’d see that traffic, they’d rather go somewhere by their house.”

“Destination Tempe” light rail’s week-long grand opening event will feature parties at most of the stations throughout Tempe, Phoenix and Mesa with food and entertainment provided by local businesses.

Specifics of the grand opening have not yet been released. For more: www.tempe.gov/destinationtempe