

## Maricopa

# Cover Story:

## Your tax dollars at work in another city

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In light of new City Manager Kevin Evans' push to get feedback via the Labor Survey, one question surfaces with regard to this transit contract. If the aim of the City is to attract prospective employers to the city, then why send federal funds to an outside business, effectively forcing out a local owned and operated business? Having now lost both Mountainside Fitness and Ruby Tuesdays, it appears that the City's agenda does not include considering local commerce. In fact, when asked about this very ideal, Dennis replied, "It is not my job to funnel money back into the city. It is my job to pick the best service for the best money."

According to the Recommendation of Contract Award, of the four bids accepted, only 3 of them met the requirements outlined in the RFP. The criteria by which the different bids were judged included total cost to the city, demonstrated experience, adherence to the RFP, and references for each bidding company. Based on these criteria, the bids were each assigned point values with a maximum of 1000 points. After all considerations were finished, All Aboard America scored the

highest score with 873 points, while MTS scored only 435. However, MTS had already been removed from the running due to the Americans with Disabilities Act impact, which required the use of small buses as well as large buses, a requirement which, according to Dennis, was not met by MTS's bid. The City then proceeded to check the references for the remaining bidders, determining that All Aboard's reputation of stellar service and exceptional quality made them the best choice.

In a follow-up conversation with Mr. Peace, he touched on many problems he sees in the awarding of this contract. Referring to the original RFP, he points out many inconsistencies with the requirements set forth in the RFP in comparison to the criteria presented in the Award of Contract. In fact, these inconsistencies caused him to draft a letter of protest to the Transit Department, which he says was rejected out of hand. Among the contradictions are the grading of the proposed vehicles, the facilities costs, and the parameters surrounding the bidding process. The original RFP called for very specific transit vehicles, mainly "transit style," seating at least 37 passengers, and with both an entrance and an egress point

in each bus. The vehicle outlined in Mr. Peace's bid included a transit bus with a 37-passenger capacity with a door at the front and the middle of the vehicle. However, MTS was excluded from the final evaluation process due to a vehicle "not meeting the needs of the RFP." The City then went on to award the contract to All Aboard America, with the use of coaches instead of transit buses, each with only 1 serviceable access point. When asked about this inconsistency, Mr. Kirkland stated that he would not comment.

MTS's future is uncertain. Mr. Peace has pledged that he is not planning to leave the community, and will continue to operate within the city. He is cutting his losses by returning the leased transit buses, and is pulling his shuttle service from the lineup, relying primarily upon his taxi and limo service. Apart from his protest of the decision, Mr. Peace is disappointed by the treatment he has received from the city. He shared his thoughts in this way: "It hurts my heart to be forced out after I have given everything to the community."



The new Maricopa Xpress

## There's a i

By Doris Fightmaster  
Staff Writer

Just like Kellee Kelly announced at a Transportation Meeting months ago, a new city bus will start commuting to downtown Phoenix in April. The day was a little later than projected, but the 28<sup>th</sup> will be the start date. At \$3.00 regular or \$2.00 for seniors 60 and over for one-way trips, this service will fill the need of Maricopa residents. This need was presented to the City Transportation Officer, Brent Billingsley, when a woman in charge of the Ahwatukee Park & Ride called with a complaint that there sure were a lot of cars in their park and ride lot that

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