

Light Rail Is Bad For Scottsdale

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Perhaps the biggest outrage in Scottsdale city government is the long-standing attempt by moneyed special interests and their allies on the City Council to force light rail on the citizens of Scottsdale.



It's easy to see why these special interests want light rail – they would reap hundreds of millions of dollars in benefits from constructing light rail and from the urbanization that would occur along the route. But there would be many more losers than winners if light rail came to Scottsdale.

The biggest losers would be taxpayers. Light rail is obscenely expensive -- Valley Metro themselves put the costs at 80-130 million dollars per mile and rising. At those prices we could give everyone who wants to travel along the route free Uber rides for life! Even if the federal government paid half the tab (not guaranteed) local taxpayers would be on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars in new taxes, making the generous subsidies we have dispensed in the past seem like chump change.

The next biggest losers would be the small local businesses along the route – the galleries, restaurants and shops in our Downtown that contribute to both our economy and to Scottsdale's special character. Many businesses in the path of light rail in Phoenix were closed for over two years to accommodate construction! Some never opened again. That's why Scottsdale businesses along the proposed light rail route are uniformly opposed to it.

Light rail isn't even a good transit solution. It is old (19th century) inflexible technology, so as traffic demands change light rail cannot be easily relocated. Even where light rail has been implemented in Arizona it carries less than 2% of commuters.

If the residents of Scottsdale are not clamoring for light rail then who is leading the charge for it? The answer is that it is the same groups that have been pushing the City Council for years to make Scottsdale more urban, with taller buildings, greater density and (now) more urban modes of transportation. That "vision" may be highly profitable for certain special interests but it is at odds with what we, the voters of Scottsdale, decided that we wanted for our city when we approved our General Plan. That plan describes a Scottsdale with open vistas and a suburban or, in some parts of the city, a rural environment. Bottom line, light rail is out of touch with the character of Scottsdale and with the preferences of our residents.

While the advocates of a more urban Scottsdale are entitled to their vision of our city, they are not entitled to subvert the desires of Scottsdale residents. And they are most certainly ***not*** entitled to destroy local Scottsdale businesses and raid the taxpayers' wallets for their own personal gain.

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