

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

31 MAY 2019

Goals:

- Build support for Amtrak to include a Phoenix-Tucson link as part of its state-supported short-range corridor system.
- Build credibility among regional politicians, managers and organizations as the critical organization with expertise in rail.
- Support Valley Metro Rail in its hour of need.
- Recruit new members and raise funds.
- Work as Coalition Coordinator of the Western National Network Trains Coalition.

Meeting with Rob Brantley of STV

Chuck Mott, Roger Clark and I met with him over lunch. We asked him to join, both personally and at the corporate level. We spoke at length about the Amtrak situation, the Phoenix-Tucson rail situation and the Valley Metro Rail referendum. He pointed out the issues we're having with our website and the problems with communicating with our members.

Western National Network Trains Coalition

- Finalized Coalition Work Plan.
- Created master spreadsheet tying together states, activists, station towns, local politicians, congressmen and senators along with their appropriate committee assignments.
- Sent out initial e-mails to all RPA members identified by Peter LeCody as possible state coordinators and activists to gauge their interest in working with our coalition.
- Mike Christensen replied that he had Utah under control, had already met with the mayors and would not need our help.
- Provided voiceover and shot the opening of John James' video at the old Tempe train station.
- Asked Mayor Jonathan Rothschild of Tucson to contact his two congressmen and Sen. McSally to get Amtrak support on their respective agendas. I informed him that we would be happy to come to Tucson to hold meetings similar to the ones we held in Yuma. He said he had things under control would let us know if he needed us to come to Tucson.
- Asked Mayor Christian Price of Maricopa for the same. No response thus far.
- Built press kit based on deliverables from Steve Roberts and Peter LeCody.

Valley Metro Rail Extension Opening

Roger Clark and I attended the opening and spoke with Mesa Mayor John Giles and Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego. Both indicated that they would like to meet with us.

Transportation Choices Coalition Meeting

There were several new faces at this meeting:

- Cyndy Gaughan, Special Projects Director, Phoenix Community Alliance;
- Chelsea Smith, Urban Phoenix Project;
- Dana Kennedy, State Director, AARP;
- Tony Cani, Vice President, Resolute Consulting.

I asked if AARP could give us their list of Arizona members so that we could launch a membership drive. They said it was against AARP policy to do so.

The bulk of the meeting was a presentation by Tony Cani, who is in charge of fighting the anti-light rail initiative.

- Proposition 105 is the anti-light rail initiative. Proposition 106 is also on the ballot; it would prevent Phoenix from investing in anything but pensions and police. Both are being fought at the same time. Outside money is backing both initiatives.
- The unions and contractors are on board with us, along with their respective war chests.
- There are 100,000 more voters in Phoenix than in 2015 when the last vote took place.
- We're in a stronger position than the 2015 vote.
- We tend to talk about projects rather than outcomes. This needs to change.
- This is a "persuasion" election. Cani did not want to talk about polling results for fear they would leak.
- Resolute is working on both a mail campaign and a social media campaign.
- AARP will run its own campaign based on the large number of members it has in Phoenix.
- Ballot arguments have to be filed by May 29. Diane Brown asked us to write up an argument against Prop 105.

Ballot Argument Against Proposition 105

I wrote up a ballot argument against Proposition 105 for the voter's pamphlet that goes out before every election. Diane Brown of the Arizona Public Interest Group gave it a rave review and said she was happy to work with an organization as efficient as ours. She forwarded it to other organizations as a template for what a good ballot argument should look like. Chuck and Roger filed the argument with the City Clerk of Phoenix on May 28.

Strategy Meeting

I met with Chuck Mott and Roger Clark to update them on our effort to save Amtrak and our other effort to save Valley Metro Rail. We left with an updated battle plan and assigned tasks.

Conference Call with RailPAC on October RPA Meeting in Sacramento

The call was concerned with filling the speakers' slots and finding volunteers for some of the duties required. These calls will now occur every other Wednesday evening.

Meeting the Goals

- Reached out to the mayors of Phoenix and Mesa.
- Wrote ballot argument against Proposition 105.
- Met with Rob Brantley of STV for recruitment purposes.
- Launched interstate effort to save Amtrak.

Next Month

- Send out e-mails and make phone calls to RPA state contacts to update them on the Western National Network Trains Coalition work plan and recruit their participation. This will happen as soon as the video is ready to be posted to You Tube.
- Meet with key players in Tucson and Benson to get them to contact senators and congressmen about Amtrak support.
- Transportation Choices Coalition meeting.