

Public Transportation in Tucson – the early years

- 1905** – The Tucson Rapid Transit Company (TRT) bought the existing horse-drawn streetcar transit system in Tucson.
- 1906** – TRT began an electric streetcar system, ending a 25-year era of animal-powered public transit in Tucson.
- Mid-1920s**
- TRT recognized its existing streetcar system was not keeping pace with the needs of a growing town and added two bus routes.
 - Transit pioneer, Roy Laos, began the Occidental Bus Line with one bus. This service provided a critical service to Tucson's south-side and his company expanded rapidly.
- 1931** – TRT replaced all electric streetcar routes with gas-powered buses.
- 1936** – A third operator, Mountain View Bus Line, was established as demand for bus service grew.
- 1941** – Mountain View struggled to survive and was bought out by TRT.
- 1945** – Seven million passengers were carried by TRT and Occidental Bus Line this year. Gas-rationing during World War II caused ridership on Tucson's bus companies to skyrocket. Rapid post-war growth followed, and the bus service continued to expand with larger, more modern buses.
- 1951** – Diesel buses were introduced and gradually replaced all gasoline-powered buses.
- 1950's through 1960's** – This was a period of steady decline in ridership, starting in the early 1950's due to labor strikes and increasing competition from the automobile industry.
- 1965** – Ridership had declined by 63 percent from the high in 1945.

Sun Tran's Beginning

- 1969** – The City of Tucson purchased Tucson Rapid Transit (TRT) and ridership grew dramatically. 65 new buses were purchased with the aid of federal grants. The frequency and length of existing routes were increased and new routes were added.
- 1975** – A contest ran in the newspaper to rename the system and the winning name, Sun Tran, was adopted.
- 1978** – Roy Laos' bus company operating on the south and west sides of Tucson, was having trouble keeping pace with the new expansion of the city system. The public in these parts of town wanted additional service the company could not provide; Sun Tran purchased the company, and Tucson had a single public transit system.

Important Milestones

- 1983** – To alleviate congestion problems, Sun Tran spearheaded the idea of several transit centers that would act as transportation hubs in Tucson.
- 1987**
- The first transit center, named after Roy Laos, was opened on Tucson's south side. Two more would soon follow.
 - Sun Tran converted a 35-foot GMC bus to use both compressed natural gas and diesel fuel. This was one of the first such buses in the country.
- 1988** – The American Public Transportation Association honored Sun Tran with its America's Best Transit System Award.
- 1991**
- Ronstadt Transit Center opened in downtown Tucson.
 - The City of Tucson opened a CNG-fueling station adjacent to Sun Tran, paving the way for the system's fleet to be alternatively fueled. Sun Tran purchased three dual-fuel buses, a first for the system.

Important Milestones *(continued)*

1994 – Accommodating transit needs on Tucson's booming northwest side, the Tohono Tadaí Transit Center was completed. This was the first transit center in Arizona designed under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) guidelines.

1996 – Electronic fareboxes were installed on all Sun Tran buses. During the six-month period following the introduction of the fareboxes, passenger revenue increased by 7 percent.

1999

– Sun Tran completed installation of its Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system allowing Sun Tran to track every bus while in service. This AVL system was integrated with Sun Tran's new automated annunciator system, which also met ADA guidelines.

– Sun Tran made further advancements when Passenger Electronic Revenue Collector (PERC) units were added to its electronic fareboxes. This technology enabled Sun Tran to convert paper tickets and transfers to magnetic passes and transfers and allowed for the development of new products such as day passes.

2001

– Digital video recorders were installed on most buses to enhance operator and passenger security.

– Sun Tran acquired 45 CNG-fueled Nova buses, making 100 percent of its fleet wheelchair accessible.

2005 – Sun Tran was named America's Best Transit System by the American Public Transportation Association.

2006

– Sun Tran received 50 new low-floor bio-diesel buses, to make 100 percent of the fleet utilizing cleaner-burning fuel.

– Sun Tran's maintenance facility was the first U.S. transit maintenance facility to receive ISO 14001 certification recognizing Sun Tran's capacity to maintain and improve upon its environmental performance.

2010 – Sun Tran accepted shipment of its first bus utilizing hybrid technology.

2012

– Sun Tran was named Arizona's Best Transit system by the Arizona Transportation Association.

– The Northwest Bus Facility, located at 3920 N. Sun Tran Blvd., was completed. The 25-acre facility was built in three phases:

Phase I–

- City of Tucson fleet fueling facility
- Sun Tran Boulevard construction and infrastructure

Phase II

- Operations building
- Driver dispatch center
- Maintenance building which consisted of 50 thousand square feet and 17 bus bays
- Parking for 150 buses and a fueling station

Phase III

- Maintenance building, which includes now 95 thousand square feet of space, which is longer than a football field, 30 bus bays, body shop, paint booth, fuel storage, and additional bus wash bays.
- Administration building: 27 thousand square feet of space built to house the regional center for transit operations

2013 – Sun Tran launched SunGO, the smart card fare payment technology designed to make transferring throughout the region easier. Valid on Sun Tran, Sun Express, Sun Shuttle and eventually the Sun Link Modern streetcar, SunGO provides many benefits to transit passengers.

July 25, 2014 – Tucson introduced the Sun Link streetcar to the public, Tucson's largest and most complex transportation construction project in the city's history. Construction began in March 2012 and was substantially completed in just over 19 months. The 3.9-mile route connects restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues at Main Gate Square, 4th Avenue, Downtown, and Mercado San Agustín and educational and medical facilities at the University of Arizona.

Important Milestones *(continued)*

2015 and 2016

- Sun Tran and the City of Tucson established the Frequent Transit Network – a system of 11 routes that run every 15 minutes or less between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays.

Tucson Transit Today

Today, Sun Tran is managed by RATP Dev North America, and services approximately 15 million passenger trips annually to destinations in and around Tucson. Currently 100 percent of the fleet utilizes Compressed Natural Gas, Biodiesel or hybrid technologies.

2017

- Sun Tran successfully negotiated a 3-year labor contract agreement without service interruptions. The new labor contract is in place through June 30, 2020.
- All existing Sun Tran bus stop signs (2,200) were replaced with new signs that include the updated Sun Tran logo, route numbers of routes serving each location, and a bus stop number allowing passengers to effectively use online trip planning and next bus arrival times.
- Sun Tran released the GoTucson Transit mobile app to give passengers the option to purchase transit fares from their smartphone.
- The City of Tucson Mayor & Council approved the Annual Pass and SummerGO Youth Pass program as permanent fare options for riders.

2018

- Sun Tran purchased 23 new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses to improve air-quality and lower the overall age of the fleet. The 40-ft. Gillig CNG buses were introduced to service in August and will replace 23 older buses, further contributing to a healthy air environment for the community.
- Sun Tran installed driver safety partitions in 94 buses and security monitors in the 23 buses.

- The City of Tucson Mayor & Council approved the 3-Day Pass and \$25 for \$20 program as permanent fare options for riders.