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**Editorial**

EDITORIAL

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# Valley Metro ahead of other cities in minimizing light rail disruption

**L**ight rail construction is moving forward at a rapid pace. The scope of work is mind-boggling. But for businesses along the light rail line through downtown Phoenix, into Tempe and along Main Street in Mesa, construction likely will be the most arduous challenge they face since opening their establishments.

That's not to say the 20-mile route, once completed, won't be a boon to the same businesses that struggle to stay afloat during its build out.

In fact, business owners from Houston, Minneapolis and Salt Lake City, who were in town to speak at light rail



PROVIDED BY VALLEY METRO

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**Workers dig a trench for the future light rail line along Washington Street.**

forums hosted by Valley Forward in Phoenix and Mesa, all agree if they had to do it over again, they would welcome the rail with open arms, despite the challenges (See story, Page 3).

The key, they say, is to be informed and prepared.

So, this isn't an editorial about the pros and cons of light rail. Been there, done that.

Yes, we favor progress and the very real concept that we will need to move people from point A to point B as our population more than doubles in the next 25 years. And yes, *The Business Journal's* office is in the heart of

downtown Phoenix — smack dab on the rail line. So as a business, we're affected, too.

This editorial is about offering sound advice to business owners bracing for impact.

For example, Tony Weller, a third-generation bookseller from Salt Lake City, says: Don't wait until you need money to meet your payroll to apply for a loan.

Some good news those out-of-town businesses owners shared is that the Valley's coordination of light rail is light years ahead of anything their communities had.

They say information was late in coming; signage to let patrons know their businesses were open during construction wasn't readily available; and communication with someone in charge was just about non-existent.

Valley Metro has learned from the

mistakes made in those cities. There's more information than most can pore over on its Web site ([www.valleymetro.org/rail](http://www.valleymetro.org/rail)); sandwich boards and banners can be found outside businesses that have requested them; and through its community outreach programs, light rail sector coordinators are available 24/7 to answer questions and handle complaints or concerns.

Metro also offers business-assistance programs and introduced a discount card called MetroMax so retail establishments along the rail line can offer special incentives to patrons.

Lessons learned from other metropolitan cities now running a high-ridership light rail program can go a long way in making our line a success.

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**Valley Metro:** 602-254-RAIL(7245)