METRO Light Rail History 1996-2009

Late 1980s

• VALTRANS planning containing a high-demand corridor from northwest to southeast part of the region initially identified.

September 1996

• Tempe voters pass Proposition 200, a half-cent sales tax initiative to support public transportation.

• Major investment study initiated for light rail starter line.

September 1999

• The Preliminary Map for Light Rail is unveiled
March 2000

• Phoenix voters pass a 4/10 cent sales tax for public transportation.

Fall 2000

• Phoenix and Tempe City Councils approved a 20-mile light rail transit alignment from Christown Mall in Phoenix to Dobson/Main in Mesa.

November 2000

• Final light rail alignment approved.

September 2001

• Footprint meetings begin with property owners immediately adjacent to proposed stations.

• City of Phoenix purchases first property for the light rail system at Camelback Road and Third Avenue.

October 2001

• Vehicle concepts placed on website for public input.

• Project announces the construction packaging plan, in which the route will be divided into five construction line sections, with each section constructed separately.

November 2001

• Glendale voters pass a transit referendum, which includes constructing a light rail line from downtown Glendale to link with the 20-mile starter segment through Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa.
December 2001

- City of Phoenix approves three park-and-ride locations: 19th Avenue and Camelback Road, Central Avenue and Camelback Road and 40th Street and Washington.

October 2002

- The agency formed to design, build and operate the Valley’s light rail system is formed. Valley Metro Rail Inc.—doing business as METRO— is an Arizona nonprofit corporation formed by the cities of Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa and Glendale, and operates under a Joint Powers Agreement pursuant to ARS 11-952.

February 2004

- The METRO initial line is included in President Bush’s federal FY 2005 budget, with a recommendation for a Full Funding Grant Agreement and a $75 million appropriation.

November 2004

- Maricopa County voters pass Proposition 400, which provides funding for additional transportation improvements Valleywide, including 27.7 miles of light rail extensions to the planned system.

January 2005

- Full Funding Grant Agreement signed, providing METRO with $587 million in federal funding for the 20-mile starter segment.
March 2006

• The first 200 feet of light rail track is installed near the Phoenix/Tempe border at Washington and 56th streets.

December 2007

• Line Section 4 construction finished on Dec. 27

• METRO begins testing vehicles on 1-mile section of Washington St. test track using its new traffic signal system; police officers are no longer used to control traffic.

June 2008

• First light rail vehicle travels into Mesa on June 17 to the end-of-line station at Main Street and Sycamore.

November 2008

• Vehicle testing occurs across all 20 miles.

December 2008

• The 20-mile METRO starter line opens for service on Dec. 27. More than 200,000 people ride the system during the two-day grand opening Dec. 27 – 28.
January 2009

- Revenue service begins Jan. 1 after five free-ride days achieving nearly 500,000 riders.

- There are three Light Rail-vehicle accidents in the first 14 days of service.

- January ridership returns higher than originally projected, from 26,000 to 30,600 for an average weekday.

- Total January ridership is 911,883 boardings.

April 2009

- April ridership totals 1,044,135 boardings – METRO’s first one-millionth month. The average weekday ridership is 37,386, average Saturday ridership is 32,720 and average Sunday and holiday ridership is 22,694.

November 2009

- November ridership totals 1,003,503 boardings, resulting in average weekday ridership of 40,211, average Saturday ridership of 27,129 and average Sunday and holiday ridership of 15,128.

Source: Valley Metro