

LIGHT RAIL BLOG



Sean Holstege and other reporters from The Arizona Republic keep you updated on light rail. For more on light rail, go to lightrail.azcentral.com.

Metro to cut drivers, but promises no effect on service

Metro will not reduce the frequency of trains nor adjust the on-board thermostats, but will lay off [train operators](#) and others in an effort to save around \$2 million in its \$33 million operating budget.

In a letter last week, Metro told the firm hired to operate the system, Boston-based Alternate Concepts Inc., to eliminate four train operators, two supervisors and a transportation manager. Some of those positions are currently vacant, Metro spokeswoman Hillary Foose explained. ACI currently has 58 train operators. Pink slips will go out by Oct. 9.

Further [budget cuts](#) will be unveiled at a Metro committee meeting next week. Those include staff cuts from other contracts, including the one to maintain trains, and eliminating some consultant work, Foose said.

“This is part of budget adjustments across the entire organization,” Foose said. “The cuts are in reaction to higher costs than we anticipated when the budget was made in December.”

“We feel we can run the same level of service and have sufficient amount of train operators to do that even with these cuts,” Foose added, Metro is trying to squeeze more efficiency out of a pool of paid on-call operators that fills in for drivers who take unexpected days off.

Metro believes the pending cuts will see the agency through the [current fiscal year](#), which began July 1. Member cities Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa are facing their own mid-year budget problems, but none has asked Metro to reduce its operating budget this year, Foose said. Instead the effort is to curb costs on the existing \$33 million operation, now that Metro has a clearer understanding of what it takes to run the 20-mile system. What kind of budget Metro will have for the [next fiscal year](#) remains unknown, Foose said.

- Sean Holstege