



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Date:** September 16, 2016  
**Contact:** John Standiford  
Deputy Executive Director  
(951) 787-7969

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### **Palo Verde Valley receives federal support for critical transit service to medical care**

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) has earned a \$185,753 grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to fund the Rides to Wellness Program for the Blythe Wellness Express (BWE).

The Blythe Wellness Express is a partnership to improve the lives of Palo Verde Valley residents, bringing together stakeholders in the transportation, medical, and nonprofit communities. This program will provide highly affordable lifeline transit service to hospitals and pharmacies to ensure that residents can access the healthcare they need in a region where transportation can be one of the biggest impediments to receiving medical care.

Blythe Wellness Express is one of only 19 programs in the nation to receive this grant, and one of only two awards in the State of California.

“Blythe is proud to receive this national recognition,” said Blythe Mayor and RCTC Commissioner Joseph DeConinck who also serves as the Chair of the Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency (PVVTA). “The Blythe Wellness Express will provide an

**-MORE-**

important service to making our community a healthier place to live. I thank the entire region for pulling together to support the City of Blythe.”

PVVTA and SunLine Transit Agency (STA) will provide transit service to medical facilities, while several community-based nonprofits will provide volunteer drivers and cash grants to ensure that patients can get a ride to their appointments or a pharmacy. Palo Verde Hospital will provide mobility managers to assist patients in arranging their travel.

The County of Riverside, through Supervisor John Benoit’s office, will provide Community Improvement Designation funds, and RCTC will provide technology assistance to PVVTA, administrative support, and coordination with FTA on behalf of the entire program.

“As a partner in this innovative project and a member of the PVVTA board of directors, I share the excitement for this successful grant award, a huge victory for the people of Blythe,” said Supervisor and RCTC Commissioner John J. Benoit. “Blythe Wellness Express fills a critical transportation gap, making it possible for more Blythe residents to access health care specialists, facilities and life-saving treatment.”

Pursuit of the Rides to Wellness grant is an outcome of the Transportation Workshop that RCTC held in Blythe one year ago, where the community came together and said that access to medical care was their top transportation concern. RCTC’s Multi-Modal Services Department led the coordination effort to compete for this federal funding.

RCTC thanks Congressman Raul Ruiz and Senators Feinstein and Boxer for supporting the Blythe Wellness Express and advocating for the Palo Verde Valley receiving this grant.