

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



The Headline... Latest Sheriff-County Spat: Patrol Cars Arizona Republic, September 2nd, 2009

The Truth... September 3rd, 2009

Wednesday's article (9-2-09) by Arizona Republic reporter Craig Harris about the county's refusal to replace our dangerously outdated patrol vehicles with already paid for cars now wasting away in a garage was a balanced and fair report. Anytime that happens, we are grateful.

Still the reporter did bring up an issue which requires more in-depth coverage and that is the inmate transportation bus which senior county officials refuse to place into operation despite knowing how desperate our need for this new bus is.

The Sheriff's Office purchased a fully outfitted inmate transport bus to help deputies move a vast number of inmates to courts or other facilities. It's a specialized transport bus – safer for inmates, staff and the public at large. It was bought not with taxpayer's money but with special fund money from fines and bonds paid by people who have violated the law.

Because we didn't ask for permission to purchase the bus from the county – and there is no rule or regulation anywhere saying we had to – the Board of Supervisors and County Manager David Smith are "punishing" the Sheriff by refusing to put the bus into service by licensing and insuring it.

It may not seem like an important issue but it does underscore the petty behavior emanating from county officials, even to the detriment of public safety.

Currently because of the county's childish behavior, we are forced to continue to transport inmates in school buses – buses that, like our outdated patrol cars, require extensive and costly repairs to maintain road worthiness.

These buses are in such bad repair, in fact, that they are in the shop and non-functional nearly 50% of the time in recent months. The Sheriff's Office has had to spend tens of thousands of dollars for repairs to these buses. And yet, there is a new bus – paid for and ready for the road – sitting in a garage waiting to be put into operation. It's been sitting there since May...ready to do the work county taxpayers expect us to do, were it not for the behavior of a few people in the upper echelons of county government.

Sheriff Arpaio and his detention staff need that bus to be put into operation today. So far we see no light at the end of the tunnel – no move on the horizon to indicate that the county plans to license and insure the vehicle.

The Truth

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County Manager David Smith was not truthful when he indicated that the bus purchased by the Sheriff's Office is meant for long distance road trips and therefore not suitable for the Sheriff's purposes. Smith is fully aware that the county has three (3) buses made by the same company which the county uses every day to transport jurors three or four blocks only, from a downtown parking structure to the court building.

So, according to Sheriff Arpaio, you can expect that bus to be suspiciously parked in a prominent downtown location soon. Covered in signage aimed at telling the public how wasteful the county is being- Sheriff Arpaio wants you to see an example of government at its worst.

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