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Free rides for public set for Saturday, August 28

San Diego –Transportation leaders and transit advocates today took the first official Trolley trip on the southern end of the Mid-Coast Extension of the UC San Diego Blue Line. The extension will be operated by the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and was built by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). The \$2.1 billion, 11-mile light rail extension is on track to open in November.

Attendees, including U.S. Senator Alex Padilla (CA), celebrated with a ribbon cutting at the Tecolote Trolley Station and then rode the Trolley north to the new Clairemont Drive and Balboa Avenue stations.

The public can experience the same ride on Saturday, August 28, between 10am and 1pm. MTS will run Trolley shuttles between the Old Town Transit Center and the Balboa Avenue Transit Center every 15 minutes during the Mid-Coast Community Celebration.

“Today’s milestone is a big step forward for our region,” said Nathan Fletcher, MTS Board Chair and Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. “It means we are well on our way to realizing a new option for people to connect to the University area, speed their commutes and help the environment. I can’t wait for the entire line to open on November 21. I also want to give a special thanks to Senator Padilla and the Federal Transit Administration. This project would not be possible without their support.”

“I’m proud to advocate for California’s clean transportation priorities and build on our state’s legacy of innovation,” said Senator Alex Padilla. “The Mid-Coast Trolley will connect communities, create new jobs, and improve the health of our planet. To build back better, we need to support bold infrastructure renewals like this one.”

“There are so many positives to a project like Mid-Coast. It will have a transformative impact on regional transit connectivity,” said Todd Gloria, San Diego Mayor and SANDAG Vice Chair. “Among many benefits, this Trolley expansion will create better job opportunities for families, and better access to education for students. It will help our fight against climate change and at the same time boost economic activity.”

“As one of the largest undertakings in our region’s history, we are extremely proud to have kept this project on-budget and on-schedule to begin service in a few short months,” said SANDAG Chair and Encinitas Mayor Catherine Blakespear. “We are thrilled to invite the community to join us for a sneak preview to ride along a portion of the new Trolley extension on Saturday at three of the nearly completed stations along Morena Boulevard.”

The project will expand the current Trolley network to provide a one-seat ride from the U.S./Mexico Border all the way north to the University community. The extension will connect the two largest employment centers in San Diego – the University area and Downtown San Diego, serve UC San Diego which supports 75,000 students, faculty and staff, and provide healthcare access to the VA San Diego Healthcare System’s 84,500 Veterans.

Major construction for the 11-mile Trolley extension began in 2016, and the project remains on budget and on schedule to begin service on November 21, 2021.

MTS and SANDAG want to remind people that there is no public access to the stations or the tracks until opening day on November 21, 2021. Construction is still ongoing on portions of the extension and active trains will be on the tracks. Testing and training on the extension will take place for approximately three more months to ensure the system is ready to carry passengers.

To support the extra service, MTS has added 45 new Trolleys built by Siemens Mobility and partially funded by TransNet, the region's half-cent sales tax for transportation projects. MTS added 128 new positions including train operators, security, maintenance, IT and more to manage the extension. MTS has also made significant enhancements to its bus service to align with the Trolley extension, and better-connect residents to the new Trolley stations. MTS will replace two existing express routes, modify seven exiting east-west connections and implement three new routes that connect to the Trolley.

About MTS

MTS operates 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines across 10 cities and unincorporated areas of San Diego County. Frequencies and spans have been restored to near-pre-COVID-19 levels. Updated schedules can be accessed on the MTS website. MTS requires people to wear face coverings at all times, and practice physical distancing when possible.

About SANDAG

SANDAG's Mission

We are the regional agency that connects people, places, and innovative ideas by implementing solutions with our unique and diverse communities.

SANDAG's Vision

Pursuing a brighter future for all

Our Commitment to Equity

We hold ourselves accountable to the communities we serve. We acknowledge we have much to learn and much to change; and we firmly uphold equity and inclusion for every person in the San Diego region. This includes historically underserved, systemically marginalized groups impacted by actions and inactions at all levels of our government and society.

We have an obligation to eliminate disparities and ensure that safe, healthy, accessible, and inclusive opportunities are available to everyone. In 2021, SANDAG will develop an equity action plan that will inform how we plan, prioritize, fund, and build projects and programs; frame how we work with our communities; define how we recruit and develop our employees; guide our efforts to conduct unbiased research and interpret data; and set expectations for companies and stakeholders that work with us.

We are committed to creating a San Diego region where every person who visits, works, and lives can thrive.

COVID-19 Response

To protect the health and safety of everyone, SANDAG offices are closed to the public. Most employees are teleworking to provide essential services and continue progress on critical regional projects. We continue to monitor COVID-19 in the region and follow guidance from the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency.

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