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Commemorating another year at MTS!

It's hard to believe that 2022 is already coming to a close. As we have each December for a few years, we wanted to take a few moments to reflect back on all that happened in the past 12 months. It was a year of resurgence as things started to get back to how they used to be before the pandemic. Let's take a closer look at some of our agency's achievements in 2022.

You can read about some highlights below, or watch our recap video.

Increasing Ridership

One of our biggest highlights of the year was seeing an increase in ridership. Back at the start of the pandemic in 2020, ridership plummeted by nearly 75%. Some reasons for the boost in ridership include the easing of the pandemic, the opening of the Trolley extension to UTC, free rides for anyone 18 and under, and the return of special events like Comic-Con. Our ridership numbers have increased to an average of 230,000 daily trips, 80% of pre-pandemic ridership levels.

Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD)

For the past few years, MTS has seen an increase of interest and development of empty parking lots for new housing projects. In February, we broke ground on the construction of ShoreLINE, a 125-unit transit-oriented affordable housing development at the Grantville Trolley Station. Transit-oriented development helps communities by building affordable housing, reducing traffic congestion, and growing transit usage. ShoreLINE is one of several projects (with additional developments in the South Bay and East Counties) to reduce the housing shortage. The project is moving along at a good pace and is projected to open in 2023.



Donating Trolleys to Mendoza, Argentina

In May, we started saying *adiós* to the last of the high-floor cars in our system, the SD100s. As we modernize our Trolley fleet for all low-floor cars, being able to donate 39 SD100 cars gives them a second life in Mendoza, Argentina. Not only does this improve the fleet in Mendoza, but this environmentally-friendly option helps us to avoid sending these cars to the landfill. The shipment of all the SD100 cars is expected to be completed in late 2023.

Bus Division Improvements

Back in spring, MTS began construction on a new overhead electric bus charging system at our South Bay Division. The \$8.5 million charging system can charge 24 battery-electric buses at a time and will be the first of its kind in the San Diego region. Electric buses will be able to easily pull in and quickly charge a battery-electric bus within a few hours. The system also makes great use of the limited space in the bus yard by moving the charging overhead. This new system will charge buses for the new Iris *Rapid* route, scheduled to open in the second half of 2023.

In October, the MTS Board approved the site selection for a new, all-electric MTS bus division. The Clean Transit Advancement Campus, or CTAC, will usher in new state-of-the-art operations and maintenance facilities off I-94 and I-805 freeways. CTAC is an important component for the transition toward an all-zero-emission bus fleet by 2040.



Free Rides for 18 and Under

Free rides! Get your free rides! Back in May, Riders 18 and under were cheered by the news that MTS and North County Transit District (NCTD) services were now free thanks to the Youth Opportunity Pass program

. All youth (ages 6-18) need to do is sign up for a Youth PRONTO card or app account, carry proof of ID, and they're all set to ride! It's safe to say that the program is a favorite of youth riders and we saw a ridership increase an average of 38% through the first six months of the program.

A Summer of Special Events

Large-scale events were back in full force this summer after two years of COVID restrictions. We worked with the San Diego Padres to make transit the preferred way to get to Petco Park. The partnership was a great success with MTS providing rides for an average of 4,500 fans on weekday games and almost 7,000 fans for sellouts - like those exciting playoff games against the Dodgers and the Phillies!

In July, we helped riders get to the Big Bay Boom to see the fireworks for the 4th of July. We also saw superheroes and other cosplayers make their way back to Comic-Con in full force. MTS ran a Special Event line that provided direct service to the Convention Center from the Balboa Avenue Station. During the five days of Comic-Con, we saw ridership increase by 246,000 passengers!



Snapdragon Stadium

Fans rejoiced as the new Snapdragon Stadium opened its door on September 3, 2022. The long-awaited stadium made its debut to the public after two years of construction and, in tandem, the Green Line resumed service to the Stadium Station. On Opening Day, MTS carried an estimated 7,000 riders to the SDSU Aztecs football game. Later, Snapdragon hosted the San Diego Wave women's soccer matches and helped to carry a combined 17,000 riders to three matches.



Free Ride Day

MTS celebrated California Clean Air Day with a Free Ride Day promotion by providing free lifts on October 5th. We provided free transit all over San Diego County and it was a great opportunity for many to try out public transit. Many people responded by taking public transit that day as MTS provided an additional 20,000 passenger trips for Free Ride Day, a 17% increase in ridership compared to the previous week.



One Year of Trolley to UTC

In November, we celebrated one year of the UC San Diego Blue Line extension to UTC, the largest transit project in our region's history. In its first year, the extension has proven to be quite a popular route, accounting for 19% of all Trolley ridership. Blue Line ridership increased 73% and it was equal to 1.7 million car miles - or 3.5 trips to the moon and back! Behind all the success of the extension is the MTS Rail Team, which put in an additional 31,000 hours of service.

Looking Ahead to 2023

2022 was a busy year for our agency and we have a lot to be thankful for, especially all of the employees at MTS who help make our transit system run safely and on time. In 2023 we'll be focusing our efforts on continuing our Social Equity Listening Tour to fund transit priorities identified by community members, starting service on the Iris *Rapid*, and expanding our transit-oriented developments to help address the housing shortage with more affordable housing.

Free Rides on New Year's Eve

As we say goodbye to 2022 and hello to 2023, remember that all rides on MTS will be free after 6 p.m. for New Year's Eve to help you get to and from your celebrations. If you'll be heading out to welcome the new year, please be safe and take transit.

On behalf of all of us here at MTS, we wish you a wonderful year ahead and as always, thank you for choosing transit.

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