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It's hard to believe, but it's already been one year since the PRONTO fare system launched! We launched PRONTO last fall with the goals of enhancing ticketing functionality for riders, providing better access to transit and convenience with best fare functionality (or fare capping). We learned *a lot* over the last year as we launched our first new fare system in over a decade, and we'll continue to learn and make improvements to the system in the months and years ahead. Let's take a look back on the past year and explore why PRONTO, how it changed our system, and what's in store for the future.

Over
1.2 Million



cards currently in use



818k

physical cards



420k

virtual cards



How did we get here?

Change is understandably hard. When we announced the switch to PRONTO, many customers asked "Why?"

The truth is, the Compass ticket machines were outdated and were nearing their end-of-life service. It was getting increasingly costly to fix the ever-more-frequent breakdowns, and soon, they would no longer be supported at all, and spare parts could no longer be acquired.

The system was also a little clunky (remember using that online portal to load your card and having to wait three days?) We wanted to make the whole system more responsive to user needs.

Another major factor was the future launch of the UC San Diego Blue Line extension. With the new stations being built, we wanted to ensure the latest technology was available at the new stations and wouldn't require all the fare infrastructure and hardware to be replaced within a short time of service launching (which would have meant double the cost, rider education and construction).



Trolley 40th Anniversary - The first PRONTO outreach event on July 31, 2021.

Go Time: Successes and Challenges

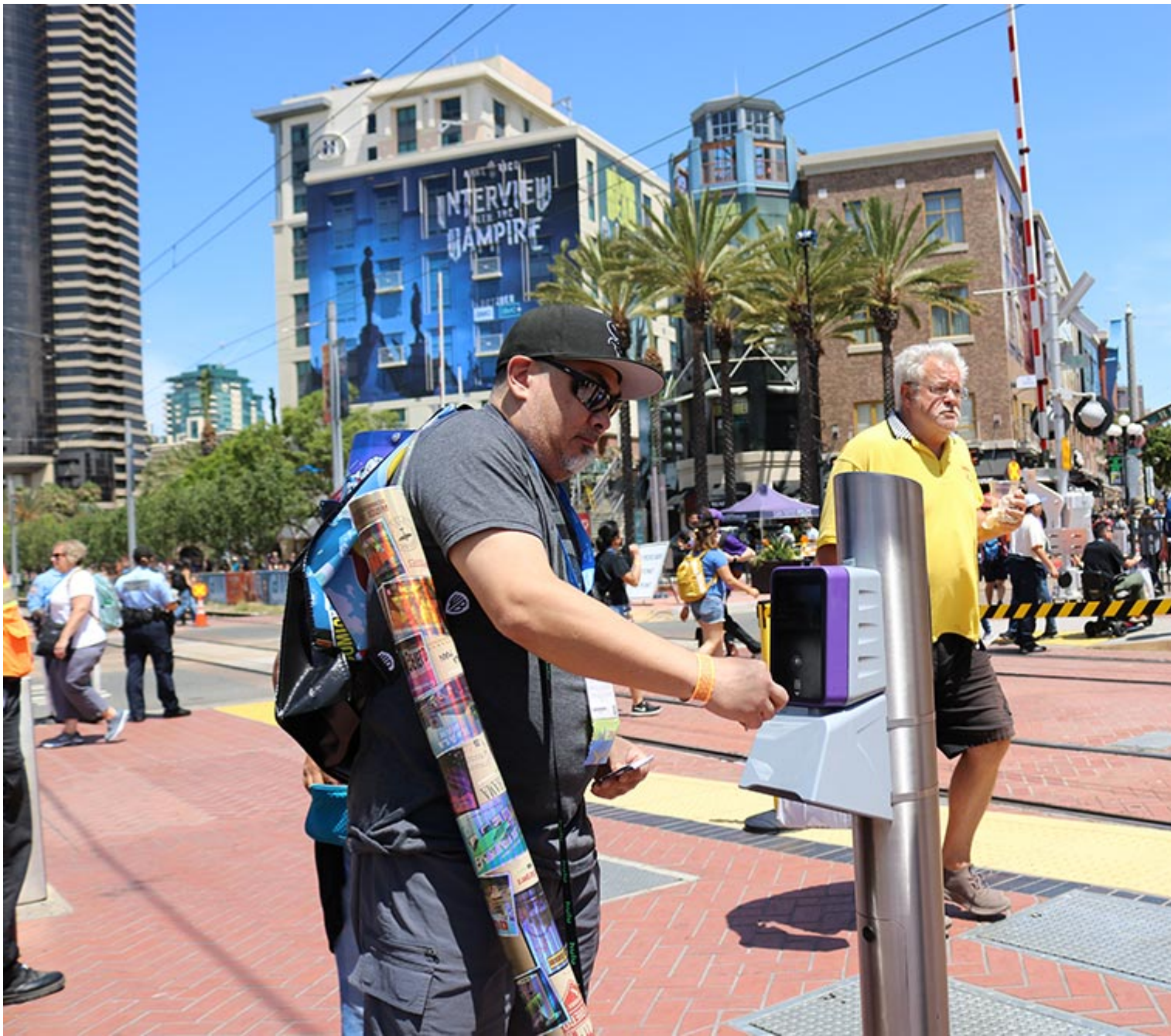
It's not uncommon for transit agencies to take 4 to 5 years to launch a new fare system from the time procurement goes out to the system going live. Our timeline? 2.5 years. (Eek!)

It was a phenomenal effort to get PRONTO launched, but not without its own challenges and downsides.

Here's some of the lessons we've learned, hurdles we've faced and accomplishments as we

reflect on the past year:

- **Avoid global pandemics.** Communicating with team members in different time zones and countries? Trying to test the system in your test lab (where people can't travel to and team members are limited from close contact)? Chip shortages that threaten the delivery of your new fare cards? Noooo problem (lol). While this one wasn't in our control, our team planned and pivoted continuously to keep the project on track, setting up remote virtual test sessions, being aggressive with card orders, and more.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** We saturated the system with PRONTO purple. We won't bore you with the details, but safe to say word got out. During the month of August alone, our teams distributed more than 100,000 free PRONTO cards throughout our service area.
- **Go big.** To help people transition to the new system, we knew we needed to incentivize riders to get on board with PRONTO. Enter: Free Ride Month. Yep, a whole month of free transit to anyone who had the PRONTO card. Giving riders a full month where they access the system for free helped us shut down Compass and onboard PRONTO with minimal negative impact (and added a positive benefit) to the rider.
- **Have a Plan B.** When you go into "rip the band-aid off" mode, inevitably some things will not go as planned. One component in the PRONTO plan was an online portal to make applying for a reduced fare easier, and give riders alternative options than coming to the Transit Store. That project got pushed back on the timeline while more urgent matters were worked out. The solution? Our temporary online conversion request form has allowed more than 30,000 reduced fare card requests to go through and be processed within one business day. While it's only a temporary authorization (through July 2023), riders have access to the services they need, when they need them.
- **It works.** One of our goals was to have a more flexible fare system. Over the last year, not only did we launch an entirely new fare system, but we added new fare products and programs, too. All college passes (which were previously using stickers on ID cards) are now on PRONTO. We launched the Youth Opportunity Pass (YOP) program. Former foster youth also have access to free transit through PRONTO Extend.



A rider taps their card before riding the Trolley during Comic-Con.

What's next for PRONTO?

While there is a lot to celebrate, there is still progress to be made. Inevitably, launching a system on a tight timeline (and did we mention, during a pandemic?) means we have to keep first things first. Throughout this last year, we've focused on fully fleshing out the basics: cybersecurity, payment systems, data, etc. The trade-off? Some of the planned benefits weren't ready at launch. Here's what we see looking ahead:

- **NFC and Wallet Capabilities.** Maybe the most asked about feature. Good news: you can now use NFC while at a ticket machine to add money to your card. TBD: When will we be able to get your PRONTO card into your phone's wallet? There is a lot of work and coordination that has to be done with phone developers to get the system approved. To be honest, we don't have a timeline for when that will be feasible. We will update riders once we have news to report, we just don't have anything to share at this time.
- **Improving validation at Trolley Stations.** Are you tapping or scanning every time? (Like, literally, every time you make a transfer, do you validate your card/app? If not, you need to!) We know that validation on Trolley platforms has been tough for riders. We're working on a change order that will update the ticket machines to validate PRONTO cards. This change would increase the number of card validation sites across the system making it much easier for riders to tap or scan before hopping on the Trolley. (Hint: if you have been tapping at the ticket machine, you are not paying for your fare, only checking your balance.)
- **Getting the online reduced fare portal live.** Referenced above, an online reduced fare portal is in the works for next summer (before all the temporary reduced fare accounts expire). This will allow you to submit an application and proof of eligibility (like an ID card or medical note) for our Senior/Disabled/Medicare or Youth programs.
- **More access to buy and reload PRONTO.** The good news is that access to PRONTO is already way better than Compass. You can find PRONTO at 150+ retail locations (compared to about 60 before). But we're not done! The goal is to get to a total of 400 locations throughout San Diego County.

Want to learn more? [Watch the story of how PRONTO emerged](#) over on our YouTube channel.

Thanks for helping us celebrate the first year of PRONTO! There's more ahead as we improve and update our fare system. We are grateful to you for continuing to choose transit and helping make PRONTO a success!

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