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Friday, June 17, 2022

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: June 17, 2022

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**San Diego:** The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD) approved a new pilot program to offer access to free transit fares for people 18 through 24 who have previously been in and exited the foster care system, or who are currently in Extended Foster Care. The PRONTO Extend pilot program, which launches July 1, aims to provide support and improve access to opportunity for former foster youth and young adults currently in foster care as they transition into more independent living.

“Young adults who have aged out of the foster care system face unique challenges as they enter adulthood,” said Nathan Fletcher, MTS Board Chair, and Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. “Many of the transitional age youth don’t have social safety nets or financial support from their families. Our goal with the PRONTO Extend program is to offer additional resources to ease that transition from foster care to more independent living. Being able to have free transportation to school or jobs is an important stepping stone to help them succeed.”

The PRONTO Extend program will be valid for all MTS and NCTD fixed-route bus service, the Trolley, SPRINTER and COASTER. Passes will become available for use starting the month of July.

“Whether participants are going to work, out for a day of fun or headed to school, transit will be their answer for a free ride they can rely on,” said Jewel Edson, NCTD Board Chair and Solana Beach Councilmember. “The NCTD Board of Directors are hopeful that PRONTO Extend will open a world of opportunities for the participants and bolster their lives.”

According to research by CALYouth, approximately 25% of youth exiting foster care in California experience homelessness. About 77% wish they could get a higher education degree, however, by age 21, less than 25% of them is able to enroll in a two-year or four-year college due to financial hardship or lack of resources. The PRONTO Extend program can help youth achieve work and educational goals by providing access to free transportation.

“Like any youth transitioning into adulthood, the young adults who are or were involved

with foster care have significant needs to become independent; and reliable, affordable transportation is at the top of that list,” said Kimberly Giardina, Director of Child Welfare Services, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency. “The PRONTO Extend program aligns perfectly with the County’s re-imagined General Management System strategic initiatives that places community at the center through increasing the well-being of our residents.”

The program will run up to 18 months, from July 1, 2022 through December 31, 2023.

### **Program Eligibility:**

To qualify, participants must currently be aged 18 through 24 who have exited the foster care system or are in Extended Foster Care. Eligible participants will have one of the following current, valid forms from the County of San Diego, or other County jurisdiction:

- Notice of Action form
- Proof of Dependency/Wardship Letter

### **How to apply:**

- **Online:** [sdmts.com/PRONTO-Extend](https://sdmts.com/PRONTO-Extend)
- **Via Mail or in-person delivery:** 100 16th Street, San Diego CA 92101 Attn: PRONTO Extend Eligibility
- **Via Fax:** 844-299-6369

Applications can take up to three weeks to process, so interested users are encouraged to apply early. Once approved for the PRONTO Extend program, participants will be able to download a free transit pass to their PRONTO app or PRONTO card for MTS and/or NCTD services each month.

For more information and full program guidelines, visit [sdmts.com/PRONTO-Extend](https://sdmts.com/PRONTO-Extend).

### **About MTS:**

MTS operates more than 100 bus routes and three Trolley lines in 10 cities and unincorporated areas of San Diego. Frequencies and spans have been restored to near-pre-COVID-19 levels. Updated schedules can be accessed on the MTS [website](#).

### **About NCTD**

The North County Transit District is a public transportation agency providing over 10 million passenger trips in Fiscal Year 2019 throughout North San Diego County and into downtown San Diego. NCTD is designated as a rail common carrier by the Surface Transportation Board based on the movement of interstate commerce on the tracks and the Railroad of Record by the Federal Railroad Administration responsible for safety over the entire San Diego portion of the LOSSAN corridor. NCTD’s system includes BREEZE buses (with FLEX service), COASTER commuter trains, SPRINTER hybrid rail trains, and LIFT paratransit service. NCTD’s mission is to deliver safe, convenient, reliable, and user-friendly public transportation services. For more information visit: [GoNCTD.com](https://GoNCTD.com).

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