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Tuesday, November 23, 2021

More than 85,000 trips estimated on opening day

San Diego – The new Trolley extension to University Center was met with high excitement and demand when it opened on Sunday, November 21. Preliminary numbers by the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) show an estimate of more than 85,000 trips taken on the entire Trolley network on opening day, including more than 60,000 trips on the UC San Diego Blue Line. Compared to the previous Sunday ridership estimates, Trolley system ridership increased approximately 74% (up from 49,000), and ridership on the UCSD Blue Line, which runs between San Ysidro and UTC, more than doubled (approximate 140% increase from 25,000 to more than 60,000).

“When we began this project, we knew it would be a game-changer for our region. This line had been under construction for five years, and the excitement and anticipation we all had at MTS was equally matched by the community,” said Sharon Cooney, MTS chief executive officer. “The new Trolley extension expanded our system by 20%, and is already opening opportunities to connect thousands of community members to healthcare, education and new jobs.”

The Trolley extension, built by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and operated by MTS, provides a direct connection from the U.S./Mexico Border to the University City Community. MTS estimates about 24,000 trips were taken from the nine new stops along the extension, with over 16,000 trips at the UCSD Central Campus and UTC stations alone.

Ridership on MTS buses and Trolleys has been slowly increasing since it hit a low point in April 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home order. Prior to the Trolley extension opening, ridership was up to approximately 65% of pre-pandemic levels, and approaching 70% on weekends. This ridership momentum is expected to continue thanks to the positive impact the new Trolley extension and corresponding bus connections bring to the region.

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.

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