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San Diego - The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board of Directors approved a plan for passengers to ride free in September with PRONTO to help riders smoothly transition from Compass Cards to the new PRONTO fare collection system. The PRONTO system is scheduled to launch in September. Critical to the success of changing the fare system is distributing PRONTO cards to riders.

"Providing free rides during the entire month of September to those who switch to PRONTO accounts is a good way for riders to familiarize themselves with the new system and get the new PRONTO cards into their hands," said Nathan Fletcher, MTS Board Chair and Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "This Board of Directors is committed to making transit in San Diego more convenient; and this new system will help increase accessibility to our trolleys and buses. Riders who participate in the free ride program this September will quickly realize the new system is easy to use and convenient, making for a better user experience."

MTS is planning an aggressive campaign in August to make it easy for riders to transition.

"It will be a big effort to transition hundreds of thousands of people to PRONTO. But offering riders with a free PRONTO card and free rides during the launch is a great incentive," said Sharon Cooney, MTS Chief Executive Officer. "Once they start using PRONTO regularly, riders will quickly realize how much better and easier the experience is, and they will also see some of the other exciting enhancements we have waiting for them."

Ridership on MTS buses and Trolleys has been slowly increasing since it hit a low point in April 2020 at the height of the Stay at Home order. MTS is currently carrying approximately 134,000 passenger trips per weekday - approximately 50% of pre-pandemic levels. At its May meeting, the Board of Directors directed staff to report back with a comprehensive plan designed to attract riders back to the system. The centerpiece to the agency's plan is offering those who have either a PRONTO card or mobile app for the ability to ride free of charge for the entire month of September.

How to get PRONTO

Join the Mailing List: People can sign up for the [PRONTO e-newsletter](#) or call the PRONTO Call Center (619-595-5636) directly to sign up and be notified when the online application sign-up period begins. MTS will mail cards to those who complete the online application. A comprehensive FAQ about the new fare collection system can be found on the [PRONTO webpage](#) with the latest information about how the new system will work.

Visit a Transit Center Outreach Table: MTS will conduct more than 50 outreach events in August at transit centers seven days a week giving away PRONTO cards, helping riders download the app and setting up accounts to aid the transition. Visit the [PRONTO webpage](#) for a full list of dates, times and locations.

Visit the Transit Store: Riders can also visit the Transit Store beginning in August to get PRONTO. The Transit Store is open from 8am to 5pm, Monday - Friday.

Download the App: In September riders can begin downloading the PRONTO app to smartphones. The app is free to download for Apple and Android devices.

Other MTS efforts to increase ridership back to pre-pandemic levels and connect riders to the new PRONTO system include:

- Marketing efforts to take advantage of MTS operating 100% of service
- Capitalizing on the reopening of schools and businesses
- Building excitement about transit with the 40th Anniversary of the Trolley
- Celebrating the grand opening of the Mid-Coast extension of the UC San Diego Blue Line
- Launching new bus service to serve the UC San Diego Trolley extension
- The continued commitment to expanding the zero-emission bus fleet
- Enhancing the rider experience through technology such as a WiFi pilot program onboard vehicles and new applications to allow MTS passengers to see real time passenger loads in vehicles.
- An aggressive advertising effort that focuses on the established success of a "Choose Transit" campaign as well as efforts that feature "real riders" and MTS employees to welcome back riders to the MTS system.

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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