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San Diego –San Diego Metropolitan Transit System Chief Executive Officer Paul Jablonski began his career as a bus driver. His transit career came full circle on Friday when MTS honored its late CEO with a procession of 40 MTS buses through downtown San Diego.

Many of the attributes Paul learned from being behind the wheel – leadership, attentiveness, accountability, public service, and more, he applied to every position he held in a career that spanned more than 40 years. Paul Jablonski passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, May 10.

“It was a fitting tribute for Paul,” said MTS Board Chair Nathan Fletcher. “This region will never know how much Paul did for public transit. He transformed the transit operation into a highly efficient system that provided more service to the communities that need it the most. He will be dearly missed. But we can honor his legacy by continuing to build on all the great things he did for MTS.”



In 2004, when Paul began his career at MTS, it was just after most functions had been transferred to SANDAG. “We don’t have the personnel to run payroll” was how Paul Jablonski was greeted on his first day at the helm of MTS. Paul figured out that challenge and many more. The Metropolitan Transit Development Board (as MTS was formerly known) was not a smooth-running multi-modal public transit provider on Day One of Paul’s tenure; but he developed one almost from scratch.

A timeline of accomplishments includes:

- Consolidated Bus and Rail operations under one board of directors
- Consolidated several bus operations under the MTS umbrella
- Implemented a new brand identity for the agency (MTS)
- Led the agency to back-to-back years of record ridership in 2014 and 2015
- Secured \$660 million in funding for Trolley Renewal – a project that rebuilt the aging Blue and Orange Trolley lines
- Secured \$205 million in funding to purchase 57 low-floor Trolley cars to help on-time performance and passengers with mobility issues
- Developed a market-driven approach to service through two systemic service changes – the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (2008) and the Transit Optimization Plan (2018) to boost ridership and on-time performance
- Led negotiations in dozens of labor agreements without a work stoppage
- Tackled pension reform and labor agreements to help ensure budget sustainability
- Parlayed \$54 million from SANDAG and MTS into the grand opening of two bus facilities built to LEED-certified standards within a two-year span
- Made MTS one of the most efficient systems in the nation with a fare box recovery of nearly 40 percent and one of the most modern in terms of vehicles, passenger amenities and State of Good Repair
- Four consecutive perfect scores from FTA Triennial Reviews – an unprecedented feat for a transit system
- Played a key role to secure funding for the Mid-Coast Trolley extension – one of the largest infrastructure , in 2021 the San Diego region will open the Mid-Coast Trolley extension - a \$2 billion, 11-mile light rail extension connecting the large job centers of downtown San Diego and University Town Center to the north.

Paul’s family and friends have set up an obituary page to honor his life, with photos, a guest book, opportunities to share memories and more.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Paul’s memory can be made to the National Park Foundation via his memorial page at <http://give.nationalparks.org/goto/paul-jablonski>.

Additionally, the American Public Transportation Foundation (APTF), a charitable affiliate of APTA, has established the Paul Jablonski Scholarship to provide opportunities to deserving students and transit professionals. To support their mission, please donate at <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/american-public-transit-foundation/paul-jablonski-scholarship>.

MTS continues to operate about 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines. Frequencies and spans have been modified temporarily due to COVID-19. Updated schedules can be accessed on the

MTS website. MTS asks that only essential trips be made on public transit, that people wear face coverings and practice physical distancing at all times.

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