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Board also approved \$407 million FY24 budget, and \$3 million toward improvements based on Social Equity Listening Tour findings

San Diego – The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board of Directors today elected San Diego City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn to fulfill the remainder of the Board-appointed chair term through 2023, and the next term which begins in January 2024. The Board also appointed El Cajon City Councilmember Steve Goble to Vice Chair, the position Chair Whitburn held prior to taking the top post. Chair Whitburn takes over for Nathan Fletcher, who resigned from the position in March.

“It is a great honor to lead our region’s public transit system,” said Stephen Whitburn, MTS Board Chair and San Diego City Councilmember. “There are so many positive things happening for transit in San Diego. The Board just approved a robust budget that keeps our service levels high, and continues efforts to make our transit system more equitable. MTS is recovering ridership at a much faster pace than many agencies across the nation after the pandemic. We also have major service enhancements happening this year with a new all-electric *Rapid* route in the South Bay, and the agency is on track to convert its entire bus fleet to zero emissions by 2040. I appreciate the trust and support of my colleagues with this appointment. This Board is a dedicated group of public servants that understand the value transit brings to all our communities.”

MTS Board Elects Stephen Whitburn as Chair

The MTS Board of Directors is made up of 15 local elected officials – four from the City of San Diego, two from Chula Vista, and one each from the County of San Diego, and the cities of Poway, Santee, El Cajon, La Mesa, National City, Lemon Grove, Coronado, and Imperial Beach.

Councilmember Whitburn was elected in 2020 to represent the 3rd Council District in the City of San Diego, which includes the neighborhoods of Downtown, Little Italy, Bankers Hill/Park West, Middletown, Mission Hills, Mission Valley, Hillcrest, University Heights, North Park, Balboa Park, South Park and Golden Hill. He has been a long-time neighborhood leader and public servant. Whitburn has lived and been involved in the communities of District 3 for more than two decades, working in the non-profit sector for agencies such as the American Cancer Society and American Red Cross.

“We look forward to working with Councilmember Whitburn as our new chair, and advancing our mission of providing safe and efficient transit service that San Diego residents depend on,” said Sharon Cooney, MTS Chief Executive Officer. “Chair Whitburn has demonstrated an

understanding and passion for transit, and he represents thousands of constituents who rely on it to get to jobs and educational opportunities in our region. We are fortunate to have a strong transit advocate taking this leadership position on our Board.”

Also as part of this meeting, a new budget for the 2024 fiscal year was approved by Board members and seeks to build on MTS’ commitment to provide clean, safe and affordable transit options for San Diegans across the county. The \$407 million budget will fully fund current and levels of Trolley service and increase levels of bus service. While the budget is balanced, MTS is still navigating a structural budget deficit of \$51 million due to lost ridership and revenue from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The approval of the Social Equity Listening Tour project priorities comes after a year-long community engagement effort with hundreds of participants, in-person workshops and pop-up events to collect priorities from vulnerable populations. MTS partnered with Pueblo Planning, an equity-oriented community engagement and planning firm, who, in turn, collaborated with five community-based organizations to collect feedback from traditionally underserved communities about ways MTS can provide better service and identify areas of improvements to make the transit experience an inclusive one for all riders.

In order to address the priorities identified in the report, including cleanliness, shelter, lighting and more, the following Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) funds were allocated to the listed service lines:

- Bus Stop Shelter Upgrades (\$1,696,250)
- Orange Line Lighting (\$446,750)
- Bus Stop Lighting Pilot Project (\$120,000)
- Bigbelly Trash Containers (\$250,000)
- Beyer Bridge Mural & Lighting (\$200,000)

MTS staff will also draft a new Board Policy on Equity as an outcome of the Social Equity Listening Tour findings. For the full project report, as well as details on the FY24 budget, visit [the Board meeting agenda webpage](#).

About MTS

The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) operates more than 100 bus routes and three Trolley lines in 10 cities and unincorporated areas of San Diego. MTS is a leader in advancing initiatives to create a greener, cleaner and better-connected transit system in San Diego. Each weekday more than 220,000 passenger trips are taken throughout the MTS system taking people to work, school, health appointments and other essential trips. In FY 2022, MTS served more than 57 million riders. For service schedule updates, news, alerts and more information on how you can use public transportation, go to www.sdmts.com.

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