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A set of rims, a fish tank, and a leaf blower. What do these things all have in common? They were items turned into MTS' Lost & Found.

It happens to all of us - you get distracted and put an item down. Your stop is nearing, and you deboard in a rush - accidentally leaving an item behind! You are in good company if you thought the item was lost, never to be found. But there's hope. There's a sanctuary for many of these items. It's called the MTS Transit Store. Located at the 12<sup>th</sup> & Imperial Transit Center, the Transit Store is MTS's one-stop-shop for riders to purchase fares, sign-up for discounted passes, acquire transit maps, brochures and collectibles. The store is also a hub for lost items – receiving about 175 lost items a week. That's 8,400 lost items per year! About 70% of the things turned into Lost & Found are never claimed. But don't lose hope. Other riders, MTS security personnel, operators, and other staff may have turned your lost item into The Transit Store.

## **What should you do if you lose an item on board?**

If you discover that you have lost something on board one of our buses or Trolleys, our staff recommends that your best option is to call Lost & Found (619-233-3004) the next day after you've lost an item, after 12 p.m.

"We always tell the customer to check back in the next day or two because it sometimes doesn't get turned in right away. We encourage people to check back because we hold items for 14 days," explained Brie Graham, the MTS Transit Store Supervisor. "Some people try to call the day (they lose something and) then they give up. Call the next day because someone could walk it in, and it gives us that time to process it. Sometimes you may have reported a black phone but it was recorded as a blue phone so descriptions may not always be entered correctly the first time. It's always good to check back in a day or two."

While the Transit Store serves as the main hub, and if you lose something in South Bay or East County, MTS also has access to the other areas in our system.

"We (The Transit Store) have access to all the other Lost & Finds at South Bay, East County, Copley, so everybody can check with us. We're kind of like a one stop shop for checking (for your lost items)," says Monica Valencia, Senior Transit Store Clerk.

Our team will make every effort to return an item to its owner. They will call multiple dispatches, other locations, and other Lost & Finds, and if they find an item, they can retrieve it for a rider so they can claim it.

"We want (riders) to have their items just as much as we do. It doesn't do us any good to hold on to it or to donate it. We would love to get your item back to you!" remarked Valencia.

Alternatively, if you happen to find an item while riding on board, please turn in found items to the Transit Store at 12<sup>th</sup> & Imperial Transit Center or to a member of MTS Security.



## The Process for Lost Items

Operators or facilities will go through vehicles to check for items. It may take extra time to find

things that could be wedged in between seats or hidden in inconspicuous places. These lost items are brought to the Transit Store for processing. Transit Store personnel will check through every item before digging deeper to identify the owners. They will look for contact information on a laptop or cell phone. Staff are not allowed to look at emails, texts, or photos for privacy but will try to look for emergency contact information. For lost wallets, they search for contacts, such as a business card, driver's license, or other identifying material. Staff become detectives, trying to figure out who owns an item and do everything they can to get things returned safely.



Robinaire Ruiz, Assistant Transit Store Supervisor, with a plushie that was turned into Lost & Found.

## Regularly Lost and Unique Items

A common remark among MTS staff is that "every day is different". That phrase extends to the lost and found program. Staff have been perplexed by some of the more *unique* items left behind. These include a kitchen sink, fish tank, brand new air fryer, rims, set of 5 tires, a giant plush cat, prosthetics, wheelchairs, canes, a big screen TV, a leaf blower, a large portable speaker, display phones, and even ashes.



What is the most regularly lost item? Cell phones.

"The amount of phones that never get claimed... we only get a handful that actually get claimed," explained Graham. "A lot of people assume that someone took their phone, but a lot of them get turned in. We also get a lot of wallets with cash and credit cards still in them."

Other items often lost include wallets, keys, IDs, backpacks, glasses, airpods and cases, umbrellas, luggage, bikes, and laptops. Another regularly lost item? **PRONTO cards.**

PRONTO cards with stored value could be easily returned - but only if you register your PRONTO card! Many PRONTO cards with stored value get destroyed because of no contact information on the account. The best way to avoid this is to create a PRONTO account and register your card. Once registered, you can manage your account online and have balance protection. If you lose your card, you can log in to your account and block access to the card, and then transfer the balance to a new PRONTO card. See this video on how to get started with PRONTO. It explains how to create an account online. If you do not have an email address, visit the Transit Store or call the PRONTO Support Team at 619-595-5636.



*Corrina Guyton, Transit Store Clerk, helps display one of the canes turned in to Lost & Found.*

## **What happens to unclaimed items?**

Items are kept in Lost & Found for up to 14 days. Then they are either donated or discarded. An item will be given to the police department if its resale value exceeds \$100. Here is what happens with other specific valuables.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phones are wiped of all previous information and donated to the Lions Club. The Lions Club works with a program where donated phones are loaded with minutes and given to domestic violence victims. In return for the phones, the Lions Club receives phone cards for overseas military to call their families while on deployment.

### **Prescription Glasses**

Prescription glasses are also donated to the Lions Club as well. Glasses are sent to third-world countries and are matched with patients in need as a part of the [Lions Recycle For Sight Program](#)

### **Luggage**

After 14 days, unclaimed luggage is handed over to MTS Security. The luggage is used for training with the [MTS K-9 team](#). These training sessions help the K-9 team to maintain proficiency. The luggage is disposed of after training.

### **Other Items**

Other items in good condition are donated to [Disabled American Veterans](#).

## **Don't Give Up Hope**

There is always a chance to recover lost items. Don't give up hope right away! Remember that items may not be found immediately and could take some time to get turned in. They also need to be processed by our staff. We recommend that you regularly check in for your lost items for at least 3 days (or more). There is a chance that your item will get turned in and we hold items for 14 days. But do not wait until the 14th day - items are discarded or donated on the 14th day.

"If you know an item is at the Transit Store and you are unable to make it in, you can call the Transit Store and we can hold it longer, within a reasonable amount of time," said Valencia.

Another thing to note is that there is a strict policy about who can claim a lost item. No one else can claim items for you - you must be the one to pick up your items. This ensures we are getting things back to the correct owner.



While riding our system, if you happen to find any items while on board, please turn them into the Transit Store or a member of our security staff.

Our staff does its very best to get things returned to owners - so remember if you lose something on board always check in with Lost & Found at 619-233-3004.

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