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Passengers just tap to pay and ride away on San Diego's Transit

San Diego – Beginning today, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD) are making transit smarter and easier with a new payment feature that allows passengers to tap and pay directly on a fare validator with a credit card or other mobile payment option.

Contactless Payment is available on MTS buses and Trolleys, and NCTD COASTER, SPRINTER, FLEX and BREEZE services. The new feature launches in time for San Diego Pride Parade & Festival July 20-21, the start of Del Mar's 85th summer race season July 20-Sept. 8, and San Diego Comic-Con July 25-28.

With contactless payment, riders can pay their fare with the direct tap of a debit or credit card or other contactless payment options, such as a smartphone or smartwatch, on fare validators system wide. This means riders can bypass ticket vending machines and bus fareboxes and pay directly on the fare validator.

"Contactless payment is great for riders on the go," said Stephen Whitburn, MTS Board Chair and San Diego City Councilmember, District 3. "It's fast and simple. Being able to just tap a credit card makes taking transit easier. Contactless payment is a great example of how we are making the transit system a more convenient option for residents to get around town."

"This new feature expands payment options for riders to improve the convenience of taking transit," said Jewel Edson, NCTD Board Chair and Solana Beach Deputy Mayor. "We hope folks heading to a Padres game, concert or out to dinner will choose transit and enjoy the simplicity of Contactless Payment."

San Diego attracts millions of visitors annually for events like Comic-Con, vacations, sporting events, and conferences, and the contactless payment option is a great fit for these transit riders. It allows riders to skip ticket vending machines, downloading apps, purchasing a fare card or preloading fares.

"Advocating for a contactless payment option has been a top priority for RideSD for the last two years," said Connor Proctor, Vice President of RideSD. "I'd like to thank the team at RideSD for their advocacy for this solution. Together with our transit operators we are making the transit system more accessible for everyone. Contactless payment will be a great asset for transit riders for many years to come."

“This will benefit all riders of the system, since a familiar payment system reduces confusion and gets everybody on the trolley or the bus faster,” said Will Moore, Policy Counsel for Circulate San Diego.

According to a recent Mastercard Contactless Consumer poll, more than half (51%) of Americans are now using some form of contactless payment. As contactless payment options continue to grow in popularity, they offer an easy way to pay for transit fares on MTS buses and Trolleys, and NCTD services, in no time – processing payments within 500 milliseconds so that riders can board quickly.

Additionally, fares paid through contactless payment methods are eligible for free transfers during the two-hour period on most modes after the first boarding time. Each passenger will be required to pay their fare with a unique payment method, as each method can only be used for one rider at a time. Most debit or credit cards, smartphones, and wearables like Apple Watches, Fitbits, and Samsung Watches are equipped with contactless pay options and can be used on system fare validators to pay. MTS and NCTD partnered with Germany-based INIT for system technology upgrades, Chase Bank for payment processing, and other technology and system developer partners to make contactless payment a reality for San Diego public transit users. For more information about Contactless Payments visit RidePRONTO.com.

About MTS

The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) operates 92 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 250,000 passenger trips are taken throughout the MTS system taking people to work, school, health appointments and other essential trips. In FY 2023, MTS served more than 68 million riders. For service schedule updates, news, alerts and more information on how you can use public transportation, go to www.sdmts.com.

About NCTD

The North County Transit District is a public transportation agency providing critical multi-modal services throughout North San Diego County and into downtown San Diego. NCTD is designated as a rail common carrier by the Surface Transportation Board based on the movement of interstate commerce on the tracks and the Railroad of Record by the Federal Railroad Administration responsible for safety over the entire San Diego portion of the LOSSAN corridor, the nation’s second largest passenger rail network. NCTD’s system includes BREEZE buses (with FLEX service), COASTER commuter trains, SPRINTER hybrid rail trains, LIFT paratransit service, and NCTD+ On-demand and is one of only three public transit agencies in the nation to operate heavy rail, hybrid rail, and bus service. For more information visit: GoNCTD.com.

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