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Copper Line expected to begin service this fall

San Diego – The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board of Directors today unanimously approved plans to move forward with implementing a new Trolley Line segment called the Copper Line in East County. With today’s approval, service on the Copper Line - East County Connector is expected to begin as early as fall.

The Copper Line will serve four stations between El Cajon Transit Center and Santee Trolley Station every 15 minutes every day for most of the day. The new segment is set to replace the existing Green and Orange Line Trolley service north of El Cajon Transit Center. The Copper Line will improve the reliability of Trolley service, not just in East County, but throughout the system.

“Reliability of service and on-time performance are two key components of a dependable transit system, and the Copper Line is a great example of this,” said Stephen Whitburn, MTS Board Chair and San Diego City Councilmember, District 3. “As San Diego’s premier transit agency, MTS is always identifying solutions to make our system stronger for the next generation of riders. Many of the positive changes that are happening now will benefit future riders, help reduce air pollution, decrease traffic congestion, and stimulate economic activity near public transit.”

“Continuing to improve MTS’s reliability in East County is essential for riders who depend on timely service to get to work, school, health appointments and more,” said Steve Goble, MTS Board Vice Chair and City of El Cajon Councilmember. “The Copper Line is a great example of an efficient and effective solution that will bring long-term benefits to East County communities and beyond. In addition to the improved reliability, it is important to boost rider experience across the entire system by enhancing security and passenger safety.”

Earlier this year, MTS launched a new security initiative to boost the number of Code Compliance Inspectors patrolling the system, increase security officer visibility, and enhance the agency’s 24/7 security hotline. As part of the Copper Line implementation, MTS will add safety measures at El Cajon Transit Center – which will be the new terminus for the Green and Orange Lines – including more support staff, security personnel, and signage to help ensure safe crossing of tracks for transferring passengers.

“The Copper Line will provide better Trolley service reliability for Santee residents, and it will save MTS approximately \$1 million in operational costs,” said Ronn Hall, MTS Board Member and City of Santee Councilmember. “In a time when the agency will need to address a significant budget deficit in the coming years, the Copper Line is a solution that balances cost savings with

effectively realigning operational resources.”

A primary purpose of the Copper Line is to run dedicated Trolleys on the new line segment. In turn, this will improve service reliability between El Cajon and Santee. Delays that may occur on the rest of the system will no longer impact service between the two cities.

When the new service plan goes into effect, Green Line service will terminate at El Cajon Transit Center, allowing Trolleys to avoid the single-track segment between Gillespie Field and Santee stations. This segment has had a history of creating a ripple effect of delays for trains and missed transfers for riders coming in and out of Santee as only one train consist can enter or exit this segment at a time. Turning trains around at El Cajon Transit Center rather than Santee alleviates the system from this bottleneck.

MTS anticipates Green Line on-time performance will improve, meaning riders have more reliable transfer times, and fewer delays. Furthermore, Green Line Trolley service will be extended later at night, and all Sunday service will continue to El Cajon Transit Center, instead of alternating trains stopping short at the SDSU Transit Center. Operating with shorter trains, the Copper Line will reduce the wait times and lessen traffic at Santee intersections along Cuyamaca Street.

It is estimated that approximately 8% of passenger trips on the Orange and Green Lines are expected to make a transfer to or from the Copper Line once the Trolley Line reconfiguration in East County is implemented this fall. Approximately 92% of passenger trips will not be impacted by this service change.

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.

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