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[Home](#) > MTS Ridership Jumped by 10 Percent in Fiscal Year 2024

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Ridership approaching pre-pandemic levels

San Diego – The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) today announced that ridership increased more than 10% over the past year as more and more residents opt to use the transit system to get around. During the last fiscal year (July 2023 – June 2024), the transit agency logged 75,663,343 passenger trips, a 10.4% increase over Fiscal Year 2023 (68,511,363).

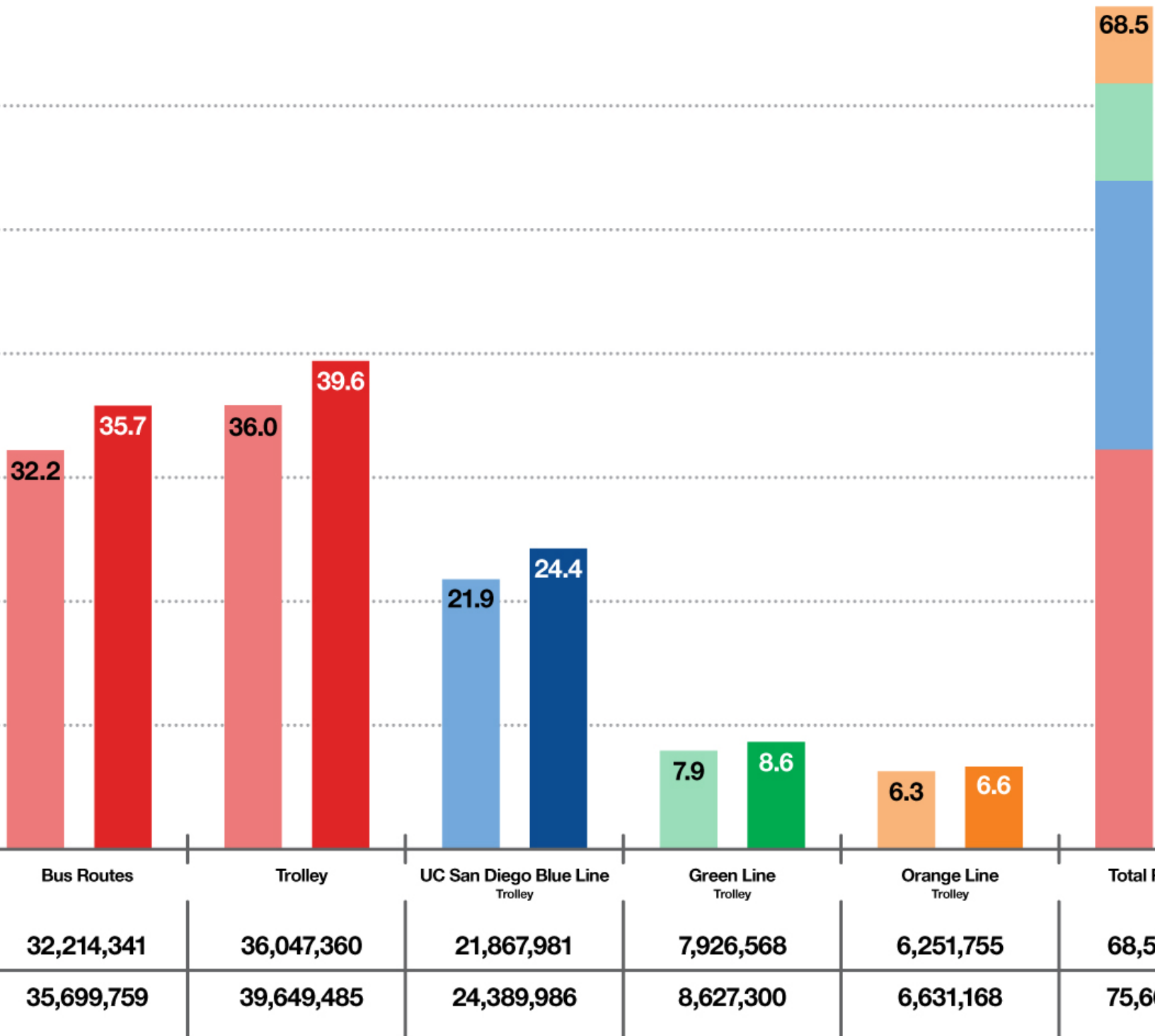
“The recent ridership increase has put MTS on a path to welcome even more passengers in the coming years,” said Stephen Whitburn, MTS Board Chair and San Diego City Councilmember, District 3. “This success is a testament to the partnership between riders and the dedicated MTS staff and Board of Directors to improve transit for our region. MTS is committed to delivering comprehensive transit experience to meet the needs of all our riders.”

“We believe the increase in ridership is due to a number of factors,” said Sharon Cooney, MTS chief executive officer. “People are working from home less often or not at all, MTS provides a reliable alternative to driving a car, and taking transit is much more affordable than driving. With inflation, rising costs of housing, and strained pocketbooks, residents are looking for any way they can to save money. Taking transit is a great way to do that.”



Bus & Trolley Ridership

Fiscal Years 2023 & 2024



(MTS ridership totals for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, broken down by bus service and Trolley service. MTS Access [paratransit] totals are not broken down in the chart above but are included in the total ridership column. Paratransit ridership is 249,662 for 2023 and 314,099 for 2024, a 25.8% increase.)

Other ridership milestones for MTS include:

- Youth ridership increased by 22.7% over the previous year, logging 6,839,876 passenger trips from its more than 113,000 youth riders who use a Youth Opportunity Pass.
- Thirteen (13) bus routes experienced increases of 20% or higher (Routes 14, 25, 83, 833, 851, 854, 872, 891, 906, 907, 946, 964, 985).
- Eight (8) bus routes surpassed the million-trip mark (Routes 7, 13, 215, 929, 201, 202, 30 and 235).
- The highest ridership month in Fiscal Year 2024 was October 2023, with 6,929,191 passenger trips.

The agency also shared that in May it experienced a week with an average of 271,000 passengers per day, the highest week on record since the onset of the pandemic. During the pandemic, MTS experienced a steep decline in ridership as hundreds of thousands of San Diegans stayed home. Due to the loss in ridership, and because approximately 25% of MTS's system operation is supported by fare revenue, the agency is experiencing a multi-million-dollar structural budget deficit.

But now, the public transit agency is experiencing an upswing in its ridership, consistently reaching 85% to 90% of pre-pandemic ridership, thanks to agency-wide efforts to attract more riders. These efforts include an increase in security presence system-wide and a new Bus Rapid Network route connecting Imperial Beach and Otay Mesa. Other factors that contribute to growing ridership are workers returning to the office, students returning to school, housing density, special events and more.

The agency also plans to continue implementing improvements in the coming years to make transit more reliable and accessible. These improvements include an overnight express bus service between the border and downtown San Diego, increased bus and Trolley frequencies, infrastructure rehabilitation on the Orange Line Trolley, and charging infrastructure for the zero-emissions transition. These improvements will be funded in part by state funding secured by Senate Bill 125 and implemented once the funds are delivered to MTS.

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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