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Wednesday, November 13, 2024



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*Travelers and commuters asked to remain vigilant and choose the safest travel option*

**San Diego** – The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and the San Diego County District Attorney (DA) – in partnership with elected officials, and several law enforcement and government agencies – today launched a strategic educational campaign and stepped-up law enforcement presence to combat wildcatting at MTS transit centers at the San Ysidro Land Port

of Entry and Otay Mesa Land Port of Entry.

Wildcatters are unregulated and unpermitted ride-sharing services who can be aggressive with their tactics to secure rides. Oftentimes, wildcatters harass taxicab drivers, vandalize public property and do not undergo safety screenings.

“It is important to acknowledge and address this ongoing problem,” said Stephen Whitburn, MTS Board Chair and San Diego City Councilmember, District 3. “Wildcatting is unregulated. It’s illegal. And it hurts the taxicab small business owners. We urge travelers and commuters to stay away from wildcatters and choose a safe travel option, such as a taxicab or public transit.”

Without proper oversight, unregulated transportation services may not carry enough insurance to protect passengers in case of an accident. Wildcatters do not undergo criminal background checks, do not receive safety training, and do not perform vehicle safety inspections. This lack of oversight can result in unsafe rides, price gouging and limited protection for riders in the case of an accident.

“Accepting rides from un-permitted drivers who operate illegally and are not vetted can put people at risk of becoming the victim of crimes like recruitment for human trafficking, fraud and overcharging,” said San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan. “Protecting the safety of San Diego County residents, commuters and others who cross the border falls squarely in our mission of preventing crime. We are also working closely with our law enforcement and transportation partners to hold those who are not authorized to offer this type of service accountable for their crimes.”

Wildcatters have been present in San Ysidro for decades, but they are now increasing in the Otay Mesa area and outside the new PedWest pedestrian crossing in San Ysidro due to cross-border passenger demand and the increase of new employers.

“Taxicab drivers work hard and depend on the income they earn to feed their families, keep a roof over their heads, and achieve their life goals,” said Sean Elo-Rivera, MTS Board Member and San Diego City Council President, District 9. “Wildcatting activity is threatening their livelihood and the safety of travelers. That’s why all of our partners want to provide a sustainable and effective response to wildcatter activity in and around the border.”

While there are many transportation options once people enter the U.S. from the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa border crossings, it’s important for travelers to know which ones are safe and which ones are illegal, and potentially dangerous.

The first step in this partnership between MTS and the DA’s office is increasing awareness with travelers about the dangers and illegal activity of wildcatting. The agencies are increasing signage in and around the transit centers. Additionally, MTS is working with local law enforcement to improve visibility and strengthen their presence with heightened patrols near the border. The agencies will also post notices at San Ysidro and Otay Mesa pedestrian crossings in cooperation with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

“The San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Ports of Entry are two of the busiest border crossings in the

nation. Addressing the issue of wildcatting, also known as ‘raiteros,’ is essential for the safety and well-being of our border community,” said Vivian Moreno, MTS Board Member and San Diego City Councilmember, District 8. “I am committed to ensuring that the thousands of residents and commuters that cross the border have a safe and reliable experience.”

To ensure passengers have safe, reliable and reasonable travel accommodations, MTS’s For-Hire Vehicle Administration licenses and oversees taxicabs, non-emergency medical transports, charter vehicles, etc.

Pedestrians crossing the border can choose from MTS buses and Trolleys, and other legitimate transportation options including taxicabs, and privatized charter buses.

Those crossing the border can find a quick list and schedules of [MTS bus routes](#) and [Trolley lines](#) in San Diego or use the [MTS Trip Planner](#) to find the best route or call Information and Trip Planning for help planning a trip at [619-233-3004](tel:619-233-3004). [Dispatch services for taxi reservations](#) are also available for travelers and commuters.

Passengers can learn more about wildcatting and how to remain safe by visiting [sdmts.com/wildcatting](http://sdmts.com/wildcatting).

## **About MTS**

The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) operates 92 bus routes and four 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 238,000 passenger trips are taken throughout the MTS system taking people to work, school, health appointments and other essential trips. In FY 2024, MTS served more than 75 million riders. For service schedule updates, news, alerts and more information on how you can use public transportation, go to [www.sdmts.com](http://www.sdmts.com).

## **About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office**

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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