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Express Mode enables riders using Apple Pay to pay and ride transit with a simple tap of an iPhone or Apple Watch — no need to wake or even unlock a device

San Diego – Today, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD) announced that Express Mode is available for customers using Apple Pay to pay and ride transit, making it easier and more convenient to travel and explore throughout San Diego County — with just a simple tap of an iPhone or Apple Watch.

“Today marks an exciting step forward in making public transit in San Diego more seamless and convenient,” said Stephen Whitburn, MTS Board Chair and San Diego City Councilmember, District 3. “Whether you’re heading to a Padres game, a concert, or simply commuting to your next destination, paying with Apple Pay empowers riders to hop onboard faster. We appreciate having the close collaboration with Apple to bring this feature to our transit systems.”

With Express Mode enabled for debit or credit cards, riders do not need to wake or unlock their iPhone or Apple Watch, or even open any apps, to pay and ride on MTS buses and Trolleys, and NCTD COASTER, SPRINTER, BREEZE and FLEX services. All users have to do is hold their Apple device near a PRONTO validator to securely pay with Apple Pay.

“NCTD is excited to work with Apple to make taking transit more convenient for residents and visitors,” said NCTD Chief Executive Officer Shawn M. Donaghy. “This expands on the contactless payment feature we launched last year – just tap your phone or smart watch for easy access to the amazing transit services NCTD offers.”

On top of the city’s everyday residents and commuters, San Diego also attracts millions of visitors annually for sporting events, concerts, vacations, and conferences, and Express Mode is also a great fit for these transit riders. Express Mode for Apple Pay launches in time for the San Diego Padres Opening Day, San Diego Wave FC home opener, and the third home match for the San Diego FC. This means riders going to Petco Park or Snapdragon Stadium can bypass ticket vending machines, bus fareboxes, and the PRONTO app and instead pay directly when tapping a device at a PRONTO validator.

Users can change which payment method they’d like to use with Express Mode at any time, and once a user has selected which debit or credit card in Apple Wallet that they’d like to use with Express Mode, they can simply hold their iPhone or Apple Watch near an enabled PRONTO validator to ride.

For added convenience, power reserve on iPhone enables customers to still use their device to

pay and ride transit even if their device needs a charge.

Additionally, fares paid via Apple Pay 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 Apple device, as each device can only be used for one rider at a time.

Security & Privacy

Paying to ride transit with Apple Pay takes full advantage of the privacy and security built into iPhone and Apple Watch. Apple never tracks users' journeys, and when customers add a credit or debit card to Apple Wallet, the card information is encrypted and securely stored in the Secure Element, an industry-standard, certified chip designed to store the information safely on the device. If a user's iPhone or Apple Watch is misplaced, the owner of the device can promptly use the Find My app to lock and help locate the device.

For more information about Express Mode for Apple Pay visit RidePRONTO.com/Apple-Pay.

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.

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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