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By Mark Olson, MTS public relations specialist

Back in 2005 a unique and special partnership was created to fill the needs of two organizations – MTS and the ARC of San Diego. MTS must maintain a clean and visually appealing bus fleet for its customers. The ARC of San Diego is responsible for supporting and empowering persons with disabilities to achieve their life goals.

Together, for more than a decade, MTS and the ARC of San Diego have embarked on a successful partnership that provides work for the disabled while simultaneously helping the maintenance program goals at MTS Bus.

Simply put, the ARC of San Diego team provides bus detailing services for MTS.

ARC Patron Robert Sheehy

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ARC Patron Robert Sheehy
ARC Patron Derrick Pennick

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ARC Patron Derrick Pennick

A key contributor to the success of this partnership is MTS Maintenance Analyst Jerry Stafford. He has overseen MTS's bus detailing contract with the ARC of San Diego since 2007. "Keeping our bus fleet clean is a critical part of our maintenance program. Jerry works well with the ARC staff, keeps them motivated, and the results have been very positive," said MTS Bus Chief Operating Officer Bill Spraul.

"The deep-cleaning bus contract is a win-win for MTS riders and for the ARC of San Diego," said Stafford. "MTS riders deserve clean buses. So detailing our vehicles from top to bottom helps maintain a great fleet and it also provides jobs for people who may otherwise not be able to find work."

ARC's contract with MTS calls for 1,560 deep cleans annually, but ARC has consistently achieved more than 2,000 thanks to its team's hard work and dedication. The ARC work crews typically get through four buses per day at both the Imperial Avenue Division and Kearny Mesa Division. It takes two hours for a crew of four to deep-clean the interior of a 40-foot bus.

"Buses are deep-cleaned during each preventative maintenance cycle every 6,000 miles," said Stafford. "The process is similar to detailing a car. And the ARC team does tremendous work."

I've visited other transit systems. Our buses are significantly cleaner. The ARC work crews take a lot of pride in making sure MTS buses are clean," he added.

While MTS buses are vacuumed and wiped down daily after each shift, the deep-cleans and sanitizes areas such as:

- Vehicle ceilings, sidewalls, stanchions, handrails, windows (including tracks), passenger seats, and floors
- Driver area including the driver's seat and seatbelts
- Rear section of the bus (from the rear door back)
- Removal of all gum from the interior especially the floors, walls and seats
- Removal of all graffiti from the walls and seats

The ARC work crews are made up of three detailers and one ARC "coach" to oversee the effort. "The strategy behind the cleaning is simple," said Supervisor Teri Kaluzny, an ARC of San Diego employee and one of the work crew coaches. "We literally clean the buses from top to bottom. We start with the ceilings and work our way to the floors."

While many people may find detailing work redundant and predictable, the ARC crews excel in these work environments. "I think they find comfort and stability in knowing what the job entails day-in and day-out. There's no curveballs thrown in the daily schedule," said Stafford.

When people think of bus maintenance, most think about tires, brake pads, oil changes, and other exterior elements to the vehicles. But another key element in a top-notch maintenance program is interior bus detailing. Clean buses not only provide a sanitary environment, it also produces an image of professionalism and MTS's commitment to being one of the best transit agencies in the country.

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