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**San Diego, Calif.** – The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) secured an \$18,054,003 competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to purchase new buses for East County operations. It was the second largest grant awarded in the nation for the department’s “Ladders of Opportunity” initiative.

“This was a very competitive grant process and we were able to secure nearly 20 percent of the entire grant funding available for the entire United States,” said Paul Jablonski, chief executive officer of MTS. “This is a big win for MTS and our riders. It keeps us on pace to retire the last of our diesel buses from our fleet,” added Jablonski.

The \$100 million “Ladders of Opportunity” competitive grants were given to applicants who directly enhanced access to work, offered transit access to educational and training opportunities and access to basic services for veterans, seniors, youths and other disadvantaged populations.

DOT received 446 proposals from 282 applicants requesting a total of \$1.4 billion. Of those, only 24 agencies in 19 states received a portion of the \$100 million available. The City of Detroit received the largest grant award at \$25.9 million followed by MTS at \$18 million and the Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority at \$9.4 million.

MTS will use the grant funds to purchase 45 Gillig buses powered by compressed natural gas, replacing older models that have reached the end of their useful life due to age and mileage. Gillig is a California-based company. The new buses will be manufactured in California, include on-board video surveillance inside and outside the vehicle, new wheelchair restraint systems, disk brakes, compressed natural gas tanks with 20-year lifespans and enhanced cooling systems.

The buses will operate out of the East County Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility. MTS is also investing \$31 million to expand and modernize that facility to include a new 34,000-square-foot high-bay maintenance building, a 10,275-square-foot mezzanine and second floor office areas. The facility will accommodate 120 buses serving East County and is expected to be complete by June 2016. The prime contractor is Clark Construction and funding was secured through state and federal grant programs.

MTS operates 93 bus routes and three Trolley lines on 53 miles of double-tracked railway. Every day there are about 300,000 passenger trips taken on MTS bus and Trolley services. For more information on how to use public transportation and save money, visit [www.sdmts.com](http://www.sdmts.com).

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