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MTS Bus Operator Rescues Blind Pedestrian Walking in Street

San Diego, CA – The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) board of directors honored veteran bus operator Vernie Ellison with a Distinguished Service Award Dec. 12, for aiding a blind woman who was inadvertently walking in the middle of a four-lane road.

On Nov. 7, Ellison, a 25-year MTS employee, was driving Route 105 on Clairemont Drive when he spotted a woman walking in the middle of the road. He quickly realized that she was blind and immediately stopped his bus, positioning it to protect her from traffic, secured the vehicle, and ran to help her.

As he escorted her to the safety of the sidewalk, she told him that a short time earlier, she had maneuvered around a car that was stopped in a driveway, blocking the sidewalk. After making her way around the car, she thought she was back on the sidewalk, not the middle of the road.

When Ellison returned to the bus maintenance facility in Kearny Mesa after his shift, he didn't mention his good deed to anyone, considering it all in a day's work. It was a passerby who took note and called the MTS customer service line that alerted MTS about Ellison's heroic actions. Video footage from surveillance cameras attached to the bus exterior confirmed the eyewitness account.

"Safety is something we take very seriously at MTS, and that includes the safety of pedestrians in our community," says Paul Jablonski, MTS chief executive officer. "Because of Vernie's quick thinking and commitment to the safety of his passengers and pedestrians, he prevented a simple mistake from turning into a tragedy. We are proud to have exemplary employees like Vernie who are willing to go the extra mile to help people in need.

MTS operates more than 90 bus routes and three Trolley lines on 53 miles of double-tracked railway. Every day more than 275,000 passenger trips are taken on MTS services. For more information on how you can use public transportation and save money, go to www.sdmts.com.

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