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Customer appreciation events July 11-14 celebrate a long history of transit in San Diego

San Diego, CA-From horse-drawn carriages to state-of-the-art light rail, San Diego has a rich and diverse public transportation history. In July, MTS celebrates the 125th anniversary of public transit in San Diego, and all are invited to join in!

MTS will host customer appreciation events at transit stations July 11-14 from 4-6 p.m. MTS will have special anniversary totes and postcards for riders to commemorate the historic event. Local radio stations will give away prizes and play music.

July 11 at Old Town Transit Center with Magic 92.5

July 12 at H Street Trolley Station with La Nueva

July 13 at El Cajon Transit Center with 91X

July 14 at Euclid Transit Center with Z90

Over the past 125 years, public transportation in San Diego has helped build dynamic new communities, support professional sports and special events, and reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

On July 3, 1886, public transportation began in San Diego with a horse-drawn carriage carrying people through downtown San Diego for five cents. Today's familiar San Diego icons like Balboa Park were still decades away. Visionaries in San Diego pictured a robust city connected by public transportation and worked to see that happen. With Elisha S. Babcock, Jr., and Hampton L. Story launching the city's first transit service and John D. Spreckels launching the San Diego Electric Railway, the city's early transit pioneers paved the way for the Metropolitan Transit System.

As San Diego's population boomed during World War I, so did the San Diego Electric Railway. Lines connected communities like North Park, East San Diego and Kensington to the La Jolla and Ocean Beach. Communities that were just developing boomed.

When operating costs skyrocketed after World War II, the Spreckels family sold the streetcar business to the Western Transit Co., which changed the name of local operations to the San Diego Transit System. In 1949, a caravan of 60 new buses followed a lone streetcar along Broadway, and San Diego – one of the first cities in the U.S. to adopt streetcars – became the first city on the West Coast to switch entirely to buses.

San Diego Transit transferred to the City of San Diego's hands as a non-profit corporation in 1967. Placing decisions into the hands of a public agency meant transportation policy could help

promote broader, more regional goals. Bus service continued to expand. In 2011, MTS has over 80 routes that serve over 570 square miles.

Rail transit returned to San Diego on July 26, 1981, as the first new light-rail system in the U.S. since World War II when the San Diego Trolley began regular operations along its 15.9-mile line between downtown San Diego and San Ysidro, just 200 feet from the international border.

In the past 30 years, the San Diego Trolley has grown into three lines of over 53.5 miles with 53 stations, including an underground stop at San Diego State University. The trolley is credited with a share of the success of the San Diego Convention Center, where it has served annual Comic-Cons and the 1996 Republican National Convention. It carried thousands of football fans to Holiday Bowls and Super Bowls XXXII and XXXVII at Qualcomm Stadium, and serves all regular San Diego Chargers and San Diego Padres games.

In 2011, San Diego continues to be a leader in transit, as an award-winning system. Average weekday ridership is more than 91,000 on the Trolley and 173,000 on the bus. Plans for new transit expansion for both bus and light rail will continue to increase MTS service across San Diego. Learn more about MTS' history at <http://www.sdmts.com/anniversary.asp>.

MTS thanks the generosity of sponsors that made the anniversary celebrations possible. For a complete list of sponsors, see <http://www.sdmts.com/anniversary.asp>.

The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System transports more than 80 million riders a year on over 80 bus routes and 53 miles of rail. For further information on fares, routes, and schedules, or to plan a trip, visit www.sdmts.com or call 511.

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