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San Diego – Tens of thousands of new commuters realized the benefits of taking transit the region's first ever Free Ride Day, Oct. 2, as the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) experienced a ridership spike of nearly 47,000 trips.

"Free Ride Day was a great success and showed that San Diegans want public transit," said MTS Board Chair Georgette Gómez. "As we move forward, we need to invest in the things that will make transit an everyday choice."

MTS and the North County Transit District jointly held Free Ride Day and provided free trips on buses, the Trolley, COASTER and SPRINTER.

Cities, universities, the U.S. Navy, business groups, and many other stakeholders came together in support of Free Ride Day as the region strives to meet our climate action goals. Free Ride Day was held in conjunction with the SANDAG iCommute program to promote National Rideshare Week and to educate people about transportation choices available in the San Diego region.

While final totals are still being counted, preliminary ridership counts on MTS buses and Trolleys includes:

Preliminary Ridership Totals - MTS

Bus - Passenger Trips

Same Day 2017

189,265

Free Ride Day

212,069 (+12%)

Trolley - Passenger Trips

Same Day 2017

125,382

Free Ride Day

149,333 (+19%)

Total - Passenger Trips

Same Day 2017

314,647

Free Ride Day

361,402 (+15%)

MTS Bus

MTS reported increases in ridership at all of its bus facilities. The agency's East County Division had the largest increase at 35%, the Imperial Avenue and Kearny Mesa divisions (City of San Diego) accounted for a 13% increase, and the South Bay division increased by 6%. The entire bus system saw a 12% increase in ridership.

MTS Trolley

Trolley ridership on the Sycuan Green Line had the biggest jump, increasing by 37% or 13,000 extra passenger trips over the same day last year. Ridership on the Orange Line spiked by 15% and on the UC San Diego Blue Line by 11%.

MTS operates 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines on 53 miles of double-tracked railway. Every weekday 285,000 passenger trips are taken on MTS bus and Trolley services in 10 cities and the county. In FY 2018, MTS served 86 million riders.

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