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[Home](#) > Rapid Arrives in South Bay

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The momentum continues to build for MTS' network of Rapid – the high-frequency, limited-stop bus network we began operating in 2014.

The initial segment will run between East Palomar Transit Station at I-805 and Downtown San Diego. Service will operate along Interstate 805 every 15-30 minutes northbound during the morning peak and southbound during the afternoon peak.

According to Mike Daney, MTS Manager of Contract Operations and Passenger Facilities, early operator training helped. "We started early and the training will go in phases. Our first goal was to get all 450 operators familiar with driving the articulated buses."

South Bay Maintenance & Operations Facility just received its first articulated buses last year, so drivers had no behind-the-wheel experience with a 60-foot articulated bus. It was important to get all operators acclimated to the bigger buses. The second phase of route training happened after operators picked their quarterly route assignments in August.

"Once they were assigned, we then did behind-the-wheel training with those who will regularly drive South Bay Rapid," added Daney. "We had them drive the route, which is essentially a commuter express route from East Palomar to Downtown."

Once the full 26-mile route opens in early 2019, things will get really interesting for operators.

One-Lane Guideway

MTS bus operators will pioneer driving a unique one-lane bridge that allows travel in both directions. According to Beverly Neff, MTS Senior Transportation Planner, "the single-lane bridge option was necessary because space was tight and it cuts right through a major housing development. It's a new concept and we think it will work well."

So how is MTS going to manage the flow of buses? "It's going to be a check-in and check-out process – similar to a red light and green light system," she added.

Bus on Shoulder (BOS)

For the first time since 2006, Bus on Shoulder lanes will be used by MTS bus operators.

BOS lanes on the I-805 and SR-94 freeways will allow MTS buses to drive on the shoulders during peak traffic periods to save time and reach destinations faster. When MTS participated in the 2006 BOS pilot project on a different segment of I-805/SR-52, buses achieved a 99 percent on-time performance, 86 percent of bus operators thought the use of shoulders was a good idea, and 90 percent of passengers felt safe with buses driving on the shoulder.

The Otay Mesa Transit Center

"Super unique," is how the new Otay Mesa Transit Center is described by J.P. Garcia, MTS Assistant Transit Operations Specialist. The new \$9 million transit center will provide two separate entrances for buses – one for South Bay Rapid and one for local buses. "The transit

center will have a dedicated entrance, exit for our buses. Interaction with private autos will be minimal. Other features include a bathroom facility exclusively for MTS operators and designated parking spots for relief vehicles,” added Garcia.

It’s a popular service with passengers. South Bay Rapid is sure to build on the success of our existing Rapid network that has been thriving since it first launched in 2014.

Rapid 215, 235 and 201/202 logged 5.8 million passenger trips in FY 2017, or 11.6% of the entire fixed-route bus system.

Photo: MTS Staff and elected officials attended the first morning of service for South Bay Rapid to ensure a successful launch (from left to right): MTS Manager of Public Relations Mark Olson, Manager of Contract Operations & Passenger Facilities Mike Daney, Marketing Specialist Marcial Gutierrez, Supervisor of Passenger Facilities Clarke Peters, Senior Transportation Planner Beverly Neff, Transdev General Manager Bill Lewis, MTS Board Member and Mayor of Chula Vista Mary Salas, MTS Director of Planning Denis Desmond, Transit Services Data Analyst Neomi Woods, MTS Bus COO Bill Spraul, Transdev Director of Transportation Rene Alvarez, Lead Scheduler Cresencio Ortega, MTS Associate Transportation Planner Peter Casellini, Transdev Operator Rigoberto Mejia, Operations Manager Juan Silva, and Safety Supervisor Victor Ontiveros.

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