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## Trolley and Bus ridership climbs by almost 1 million in first three months of fiscal year

San Diego – Ridership on the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Trolley and bus network has climbed by nearly 1 million extra passenger trips in the first three months of Fiscal Year 2020, which began on July 1, 2019. The spike has been led by the Trolley, which has posted six straight months of year-over-year gains, including a 9% jump in September.

“This is great news for the region, for transit and for our environment,” said Nathan Fletcher, MTS Board Chair and San Diego County Supervisor. “Transit is part of a better connected future for San Diego and we need to continue the momentum. People want more transportation options and our efforts to re-build and re-imagine an accessible transit system are working.”

“These ridership gains are highly encouraging,” said Paul Jablonski, MTS chief executive officer. “We’ve done many things internally with our operations to turn it around, such as streamlining service and adding to the frequency of key bus routes.”

- On the rail side, ridership increased by 621,063 passenger trips in the first quarter. Notable is that Trolley ridership was 9.1% higher in September 2019 compared to the same month in 2018. This is the Trolley’s largest ridership increase month-over-month since October 2014.
- On the bus side, ridership increased by 323,481 passenger trips in the first quarter. Notable to this increase is that MTS buses had a 5% ridership spike in July, the largest year-over-year increase since October 2014.
- And these positive gains were being experienced prior the first quarter. In the past six months (April – September) bus and Trolley ridership combined has grown by 1.2 million compared to the same months in 2018. Going back even further, Trolley ridership has improved in 11 of the past 13 months compared to the same months last year.

There are many factors that can lead to ridership gains.

- MTS conducted a large ridership campaign last year culminating with its first Free Ride Day. That day saw a 17% increase in ridership from the same day a year before and ridership continued to climb for the entire month of October 2018. MTS just held its second annual Free Ride Day (Oct. 2), and results were even better – a 30% spike in ridership.
- Gas prices in San Diego have risen 85 cents/gallon since January.
- MTS completed its Transit Optimization Plan – a \$2 million plan that streamlined and added frequency to many of its routes.

While Trolley ridership has led the resurgence, bus ridership has held steady and two major developments have helped it into the plus column.

- The South Bay Rapid opened and average weekday ridership on that line is about 1,800 and climbing. The addition of this service from Otay Mesa to downtown, as well as the opening of a modern transit center just north of the Otay Mesa Border Crossing, has caused other routes serving the area to increase as well.
- Additionally, MTS increased Rapid Superloop service at the end of January. These routes, serving the University City area and UC San Diego, are showing weekday ridership gains of more than 3,000 trips per day.

MTS operates 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines on 53 miles of double-tracked railway. Every weekday 300,000 passenger trips are taken on MTS bus and Trolley services in 10 cities and unincorporated areas of the county. In FY 2019, MTS served more than 85.3 million riders. For more information on how you can use public transportation and save money, go to [www.sdmts.com](http://www.sdmts.com).

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