



## **METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) MEETING AGENDA**

**OCTOBER 21, 2020 – 6:00 PM**

**DUE TO COVID-19, THE OCTOBER 21, 2020 METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED AS A TELECONFERENCE PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS N-25-20 AND N-29-20, WHICH SUSPEND CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS OF THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT.**

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY NOT ATTEND THIS MEETING IN PERSON.**

Staff and the public may participate remotely via the Zoom website at this [link](#) or by calling 1-669-900-9128, Meeting ID 891 7448 1648.

Public comment may be submitted via email to [mac@scmtd.com](mailto:mac@scmtd.com). Please indicate in your email the agenda item to which your comment applies. Comments submitted before the meeting will be provided to the staff before or during the meeting. Comments submitted after the meeting is called to order will be included in the correspondence that is posted online at the meeting packet link.

The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) Meeting Agenda Packet can be found online at [www.scmtd.com](http://www.scmtd.com).

Committee recommendations are subject to action and/or change by the Board of Directors.

### **COMMITTEE ROSTER**

**Veronica Elsea, Chair**  
**Joseph Martinez, Vice Chair**  
**Jessica de Wit**  
**Michael Pisano**  
**Becky Taylor**  
**James Von Hendy**

### **NOTICE TO PUBLIC**

At each meeting, every effort will be made to conclude MAC business by 8:00 PM. If there is concern that an item may not be adequately addressed in the time allowed, Committee members may choose to table the item until the next meeting, move the item earlier in the agenda or to extend the meeting if necessary.

**MEETING TIME: 6:00 PM**

NOTE: THE COMMITTEE CHAIR MAY TAKE ITEMS OUT OF ORDER

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
- 4. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2020**  
Veronica Elsea, Chair
- 5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
  - 5.1 August 19, 2020 Letter from MAC Regarding Bus Operators' Commendation
- 6. COVID-19 UPDATE**  
Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager
- 7. UPDATE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS (ITS)**  
Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director
- 8. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE**  
John Urgo, Planning & Development Director
  - a. Quarterly Ridership Report
  - b. Stops
    - i. Pasatiempo Bus Stop
  - c. Other Projects
    - i. Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis
    - ii. Capitola Mall
    - iii. ParaCruz and On-Demand Microtransit Trips
    - iv. Mobile Ticketing App
  - d. METRO Planning and Development Annual Status Report as Presented to the Board of Directors on September 25, 2020
  - e. Safety Tips Brochure
- 9. ESTABLISH AND APPROVE THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2021 MEETING SCHEDULE**  
Veronica Elsea, Chair
- 10. ELECT THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2021 TERM**  
Veronica Elsea, Chair
- 11. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO**
- 12. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
- 13. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA**

**14. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS - WILL BE MAILED ON OCTOBER 22, 2020**

Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

**Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities**

This document has been created with accessibility in mind. With the exception of certain 3rd party and other attachments, it passes the Adobe Acrobat XI Accessibility Full Check. If you have any questions about the accessibility of this document, please email your inquiry to [accessibility@scmtd.com](mailto:accessibility@scmtd.com). Upon request, Santa Cruz METRO will provide for written agenda materials in appropriate alternative formats, or disability-related modification or accommodation, including auxiliary aids or services, to enable individuals with disabilities to participate in and provide comments at/related to public meetings. Please submit a request, including your name, phone number and/or email address, and a description of the modification, accommodation, auxiliary aid, service or alternative format requested at least two days before the meeting. Requests should be emailed to [mac@scmtd.com](mailto:mac@scmtd.com) or submitted by phone to the Administrative Specialist at 831.426.6080. Requests made by mail (sent to the Administrative Specialist, Santa Cruz METRO, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060) must be received at least two days before the meeting. Requests will be granted whenever possible and resolved in favor of accessibility.

**Public Comment**

If you wish to address the Committee, please follow the directions at the top of the agenda. If you have anything that you wish distributed to the Committee and included for the official record, please include it in your email. Comments that require a response may be deferred for staff reply.

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# MINUTES\*

MAC MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2020



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, August 19, 2020. The meeting was held via teleconference. \*Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes.

**1. CALL TO ORDER** at 6:02 PM.

**2. ROLL CALL** - The following MAC Members were present via teleconference, representing a quorum:

Veronica Elsea, Chair	Becky Taylor
Joseph Martinez, Vice Chair	James Von Hendy
Michael Pisano	

Jessica de Wit was an excused absence.

Additional METRO staff and presenters:

Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager	John Urgo, Planning & Development Director
Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer	Rina Solorio, Interim Asst. Operations Manager
Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director	Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator
Danielle Glagola, Marketing, Communications, & Customer Service Director	Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist

**3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mr. Pisano thanked METRO for helping San Lorenzo Valley residents evacuate from the CZU Lightning Complex Fire. Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager, mentioned that Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator, was one of the drivers who helped with the evacuations. The Committee thanked Mr. Freeman for his dedication.

Mr. Pisano attended an Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) meeting and asked Caltrans to improve the benches at the Pasatiempo Bus Stop. Caltrans indicated that this is not within their jurisdiction and referred him to METRO. Chair Elsea suggested this item be added to the next MAC agenda to give METRO’s staff an opportunity to review the situation. CEO Clifford suggested that John Urgo, Planning and Development Director, look into this and present his findings at the next meeting.

Chair Elsea encouraged everyone to fill out their census form, reminding all that being counted has a major effect on the money METRO receives for transportation from the federal government.

Vice Chair Martinez mentioned the COVID-19 case at METRO. He expressed concern that the painter who did a mural for METRO was now circulating this story on Facebook. He suggested that METRO reach out to the painter if deemed appropriate.

**3.a – Resignation Letter of Jason Lopez**

Chair Elsea thanked Jason for his service.

**3.b – Veronica Elsea Email & METRO Response**

Chair Elsea thanked Rina Solorio, Interim Assistant Operations Manager, for responding so quickly to her email and said the turnaround was impressive.

**4. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF JUNE 17, 2020**

**MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF JUNE 17, 2020**

**MOTION: VON HENDY**

**SECOND: TAYLOR**

**MOTION PASSED WITH 5 AYES: Elsea, Martinez, Pisano, Taylor, and Von Hendy. de Wit was absent.**

**5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)**

Chair Elsea reported she attended the June 26, 2020 Board of Directors (Board) meeting and bragged to the Board about MAC's attendance and participation within the group. She pointed out that the only time MAC Committee Members leave is when they move out of town.

She highlighted items MAC has been working on (e.g., thanking the Bus Operators for their efforts in the COVID-19 environment; being brought up-to-date on the CARES Act money METRO received; seeking updates on the transit centers' food vendors, public restrooms, service changes; addressing capacity on METRO buses to avoid pass ups; thanking Finance for developing their budget models; receiving a demonstration on the mobile ticketing app; receiving an explanation as to why the website couldn't automatically be made adaptable to mobile devices; and discussing alternative fuels and future buses). MAC is appreciative for the introduction of the new METRO directors.

**6. INTRODUCTION OF DANIELLE GLAGOLA, MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & CUSTOMER SERVICE DIRECTOR**

CEO Clifford introduced Director Glagola as the new Marketing, Communications and Customer Service Director. She gave a synopsis of her background and current projects she is working on at METRO.

Chair Elsea briefly described MAC's involvement in the marketing process/outreach for the Code of Conduct Policy METRO has developed. She invited Director Glagola to come back to MAC with some marketing ideas after reviewing the policy.

Chair Elsea inquired if Director Glagola will train the Customer Service Representatives. Director Glagola responded that Manager Solorio has been helping with the training of the Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) while she has dedicated her time to marketing projects.

**7. COVID-19 UPDATE**

CEO Clifford gave a list of COVID-19 preparations taken and presented to the Board in June and will address the Board on August 28, 2020 with additional steps taken (e.g., deploying handwashing stations to both Watsonville and Scotts Valley Transit Centers; installing hand sanitizer dispensers on the buses; installing plastic sneeze barriers in between seat rows on the buses; refining the COVID-19 messaging; imposing capacity limits on the buses; hiring temporary employees to disinfect the high-touch surfaces on the buses when they arrive at the transit centers; deploying electrostatic disinfectant foggers each night when the buses come into the yard; installing windows at METRO Center and Watsonville Transit Center to service customers on the outside while the stations are closed; and working with HVAC technicians to increase the exchange of air in all METRO buildings).

James Von Hendy thanked CEO Clifford for the all-encompassing report.

Chair Elsea asked where the hand sanitizers will be installed on the buses. CEO Clifford said they are located right by the fare box on the forward bulkhead or just to the left after you board by the front door.

Chair Elsea expressed concern about the installation of the sneeze barriers and getting her guide dog in by her since the side-facing seats in the front are not available. Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, responded that the barriers are supported on the back of the seats and do not go to the floor, allowing space for her guide dog.

## **7a. Customer Service Update**

Manager Solorio reminded the Committee that both the METRO and Watsonville Transit Centers are currently closed and will remain so until further notice. She addressed the concern regarding public restrooms and informed the group that Director Glagola is creating flyers to let customers know where public restrooms are located. These flyers will be posted at all of METRO's transit centers. In addition, Customer Service has extended its service hours at the METRO Center and the phone system has been updated to reflect this change.

We are installing an exterior window for the Customer Service Booth at the Watsonville Transit Center. We have relocated our TVM machines at the METRO and Watsonville Transit Centers to the outside of the buildings and they are available 24 hours. All CSRs are required to wear masks at all times, especially when they are dealing with the public. We've provided gloves and hand sanitizer for cash handling. We have also installed sneeze barriers between cubicles to provide separation.

Chair Elsea asked if she and other visually impaired riders could approach the Customer Service window for guidance once the list of public restrooms is released. Manager Solorio responded yes.

Vice Chair Martinez inquired if the Santa Cruz store inside the METRO Center was closed. Manager Solorio confirmed that it is.

Ms. Taylor inquired about John Daugherty, Accessible Services Coordinator, having his position relocated to the ParaCruz office. CEO Clifford responded that METRO does not publicly discuss personnel matters.

## **8. UPDATE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS (ITS)**

Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, informed the members that the ITS install is almost complete. Director Holly thanked Mr. Freeman for his assistance in troubleshooting technical issues.

The vendor just released the Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI) app. Director Holly asked Chair Elsea and Mr. Pisano if they have had a chance to download the beta version for testing. Both acknowledged they have been interacting with it and sending feedback reports. Director Holly said the other element of RTPI is the station signage to display arrival/departure information.

Chair Elsea said that CEO Clifford mentioned the accelerated rollout for the mobile ticketing app. Director Holly said he is acting in a supporting role for that and Pete Rasmussen, Transportation Planner II, has been spearheading the project.

Mr. Pisano asked about passenger counting on the bus and if that is part of this project. Director Holly replied that it was not part of the original scope of the project but we do have the ability to exercise that option within the contract. Mr. Pisano asked if it would be possible to include bicycle counting as well. Director Holly said he can explore that with the vendor.

## **9. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE**

### **a. Quarterly Ridership Report**

John Urgo, Planning & Development Director, said ridership is about 80% down from this time last year. He expects that number to rise in September and October due to remote learning at Cabrillo College and USCS.

#### **a.i. COVID-19 Rider Survey Results**

Director Urgo said he will bring a full rider survey report to the Board on August 28, 2020. The results indicate over 75% of customers do plan to return to METRO once the shelter-in-place order ends or is relaxed further. Two-thirds of riders also plan to ride the same

as pre-COVID-19. The survey showed most riders want METRO to restore service to pre-COVID-19 levels, keep the vehicles clean, and require passengers to wear personal protective equipment (PPE). Riders who plan to ride less say they are unlikely to come back until a vaccine is developed or there is a decrease in local levels of COVID-19 cases. These factors are not within METRO's control, so staff is focusing on the first group of riders.

This Fall we are restoring nearly 100% of local service with the exception of the Hwy. 17 route having a modified, enhanced weekend schedule.

Mr. Von Hendy asked if METRO is developing a message for its ridership about the steps it has already taken to protect passengers and drivers. Director Urgo said METRO has been and will continue to work to convey this message to the ridership.

Chair Elsea asked if METRO has considered making a video showing the safety measures that METRO has taken. Director Glagola said we are considering making a video; but for now, the next Headways is a special COVID-19 edition. We have many pictures of safety measures taken along with a specialized COVID-19 FAQ section in the printed Headways and on the website. We are in the process of getting some quotes for advertising on all of our buses showing images of our Bus Operators wearing a mask, the buses being fogged and the hand straps being wiped clean, with focus on sanitizing and disinfecting.

Director Glagola said METRO has also been in the Santa Cruz Sentinel and on KSCO with interviews promoting our cleaning efforts.

**b. Stops – No updates**

**c. Other Projects**

**c.i. Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis**

Director Urgo said the project team is bringing their final recommendations to the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) in September.

**c.ii. Capitola Mall**

No movement with the developers since the last meeting.

**c.iii. ParaCruz Trips and On-Demand Microtransit Trips**

We are exploring the use of our ParaCruz Operators and vehicles as general public on-demand. ParaCruz trips would still be booked as they are now—24 hours in advance and those trips are guaranteed. On the day of the booked rides, we would open up the schedule where a customer could book an on-demand trip within a specified zone, although not countywide. We think there is capacity and it may help ridership return. The idea is to connect to the transit centers and other METRO services.

Chair Elsea asked how many people are allowed to ride on a ParaCruz vehicle at a time. Vice Chair Martinez said it is now two. Director Ross added now is a good time to test this out and see what METRO can handle.

**c.iv. Mobile Ticketing App**

METRO is expanding the pilot program of the mobile ticketing app from the Hwy. 17 route to system wide. You'll be able to board a METRO bus with a Splash Pass mobile ticket purchased on your phone. The whole idea is to expand contactless payment, protect



Operators from unnecessary exposure and speed up the boarding process. Besides the app, we will be accepting cash again at the TVMs.

Chair Elsea asked how riders will know when this app is available. Director Urgo said there will be a soft launch. It will be mentioned in the Headways and on the website. Once we are comfortable that it is working, we will do more active marketing at the transit centers and with car cards.

#### **10. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO**

Hearing none, Chair Elsea moved to the next item.

#### **11. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Ms. Taylor suggested sending a letter in support of the Bus Operators who are going above and beyond to help with the fire evacuations. The rest of the MAC members thought this was a great suggestion and Chair Elsea said she would write a letter on behalf of MAC.

A roll call vote was taken and there were 5 Ayes: Elsea, Martinez, Pisano, Taylor and Von Hendy with de Wit absent.

#### **12. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA**

- METRO COVID-19 General Update
- Pasatiempo Bus Stop
- Marketing of the Code of Conduct
- Information Technology Systems Update
- Service Planning Update

#### **13. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS**

Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist, will mail out the vouchers to all members on Thursday, August 20, 2020.

#### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

The next MAC meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2020 at 6:00 PM. Please check the SCMTD website for venue updates, as METRO remains dependent upon the public health orders in place at this time.

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer  
Administrative Specialist

Pursuant to Section 54954.2(a)(1) of the Government Code of the State of California, this agenda was posted at least 72 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting at a public place freely accessible to the public 24 hours a day. The agenda packet and materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the Santa Cruz METRO Administrative Office (110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz) during normal business hours. Such documents are also available on the Santa Cruz METRO website at [www.scmttd.com](http://www.scmttd.com) subject to staff's ability to post the document before the meeting.

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Santa Cruz METRO  
Attn: Executive Assistant  
110 Vernon Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Metro Advisory Committee  
Veronica Elsea, Chair  
1306 Laurel ST  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060-3519  
[veronica@laurelcreekmusic.com](mailto:veronica@laurelcreekmusic.com)

August 19, 2020

re: Commendation of bus operators during fire evacuations

Dear members of the Metro board,

At its meeting on August 19, 2020, the Metro Advisory Committee learned of the efforts by Metro bus operators, bringing busses up into the mountains to assist in evacuating residents during the expansion of the SCZ complex fires. The committee wishes to express its gratitude to the operators for going the extra mile and incurring the extra risk in order to assist the community. The committee is also grateful to Santa Cruz Metro for providing the busses to assist in this vital and life-saving process. While acknowledging that Santa Cruz Metro is in the business of transportation, the effort and flexibility required to serve the community during emergencies with little to no warning is truly appreciated. Thank you again, bus operators and Metro staff for demonstrating your commitment to truly serve and care for the residents of Santa Cruz County.

Sincerely,

Metro Advisory Committee

Veronica Elsea, Chair

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**DATE:** September 25, 2020

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** John Urgo, Planning & Development Director

**SUBJECT: METRO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL STATUS REPORT**

**I. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

**That the Board of Directors accept and file the METRO Planning Development annual status report**

**II. SUMMARY**

- It has been one year since the last Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) Planning Department Annual update.
- In the four years since the major service reduction in fall of 2016, METRO generally maintained its ridership level, in spite of the national trend of shrinking public transit use.
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, METRO ridership had increased in fiscal year 2019-2020 (FY20). Growing UCSC ridership had offset losses in Highway 17 Express, while other local service use had remained flat.
- Following the outbreak, ridership declined over 90% and ended the year 30% less than FY19, commensurate with national trends.
- The CZU Lightning Complex fire caused further ridership declines in August and September.
- Prior to COVID-19, there were a small number of poor performing routes that continued to be monitored for opportunities to improve. Post COVID-19, all routes are performing below industry accepted ridership productivity standards.
- The primary service related initiative during FY21 will be COVID-19 service recovery planning. METRO recently completed a COVID-19 rider survey, the results of which will be used to inform future service planning efforts during the pandemic.
- The Planning Department is also implementing a contactless fare payment pilot, which includes the recent launch of mobile ticketing on all METRO fixed route service and the reactivation of cash acceptance at all Ticket Vending

Machines. Off-board fare payment will reduce the risk of infection between operators and customers, speed up boarding and increase access to fare products.

- The Planning Department is planning to launch an on-demand transit pilot in late fall that will allow customers to book trips curb-to-curb within certain service zones, increasing access to transit and other destinations.
- The Planning Department, in conjunction with the Marketing, IT, and Facilities Departments, is working to refresh METRO's bus stop signage in order to strengthen METRO's brand identity and improve the customer experience.
- The Planning Department is also planning for the introduction of the Watsonville Circulator in 2021, a service intended to enhance mobility using a zero emission electric bus.
- The Planning Department is executing a number of other significant initiatives during the next fiscal year, described in more detail later in this report.
- The Planning Department has also identified priorities for additional service when, or if, additional recurring operating funds were to become available.
- Staff requests the Board of Directors (Board) accept and file this Service Planning Update.

### **III. DISCUSSION/BACKGROUND**

The Planning Department began providing this annual report following the completion of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) service reduction in the fall of 2016. Prior to the COA, annual fixed route ridership was approximately 5.5 million. In the first year following this service reduction, ridership dropped approximately 8% to a little over 5 million annual fixed-route boardings. Since that time, and prior to COVID-19, METRO ridership had settled at approximately 5 million riders per year. See Graph 1 in Attachment A.

FY20 is a tale of two years: pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, METRO ridership was showing signs of growth, and significant projects were nearing completion, including a new Watsonville Circulator route, the acquisition of electric buses and mobile ticketing. The pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to METRO service and planning activities as well as to the community we serve: service was cut 50% in response to Santa Cruz County's shelter in place orders and a number of projects were delayed.

Yet even during a pandemic METRO is indispensable to those who rely on public transit to reach their jobs and access essential services. Staff has been working

to restore service strategically and to restart projects that were put on hold, as described in more detail below.

### FY20 System Performance

Prior to COVID-19, FY20 ridership trends looked strong, with ridership up 2.5% overall through the first seven months of the fiscal year (See Graph 2 in Attachment A). Passenger productivity (measured as passengers per revenue service hour) was also increasing year over year, suggesting stronger utilization of METRO service. In the months following the outbreak, however, ridership declined over 90%, and ended the year 30% less than FY19.

Key features/components of ridership include:

- UCSC: Prior to COVID-19, UCSC ridership had increased 6.1% compared to FY19. Post COVID-19, as result of campus closures and a move to remote learning, ridership fell more than 99% and ended the year 35% less than FY19. See Graph 3 in Attachment B.
- Cabrillo College: Cabrillo College student ridership was less robust, declining 2.5% through the first seven months of the year, and 29% overall compared to FY20. Ridership is currently down over 95%. See Graph 4 in Attachment B.
- Hwy 17 Express: This commuter service has seen a continued decrease in ridership over the last few years and FY20 was no exception. Ridership decreased 1.5% during the first seven months of the year and 30% overall compared to FY19. A rise in telecommuting, a trend greatly accelerated by the pandemic, is partly to explain. Worsening traffic on Highway 17 has also made commuting by bus less attractive in the absence of transit supportive infrastructure. Ridership decreased 95% following the outbreak of COVID-19 and has remained at 90% below FY19 levels. See Graph 1 in Attachment B.
- Local ridership was also strong during the first seven months of the fiscal year, increasing 2.7% before ending the year 30% down. Ridership on local routes (excluding student ridership and Highway 17) has remained the strongest throughout the pandemic, with over 25% of customers still riding. These are most likely essential workers and customers traveling to access essential services. See Graph 2 in Attachment B.
- As ridership was beginning to recover slightly, the CZU Lightning Complex Fire caused ridership to dip in August and September as travel was restricted and service was cancelled to UCSC, Bonny Doon, Davenport, Scotts Valley and the San Lorenzo Valley for multiple days following dangerous conditions and evacuation orders.

### National Trends

Prior to COVID-19, national transit ridership was flat, while METRO ridership had increased 2.5%. The pandemic depressed ridership among all transit agencies nationwide and the experience of METRO in FY20 is in line with national trends. However, the relative dependence on university student ridership has made the impact greater: nationally, bus ridership was down 25% in FY20 compared to FY19, while METRO ridership decreased 30%. See Graph 2 in Attachment A.

### Current Route Performance

The Planning Department provides the Board with a quarterly ridership report, including an analysis of route performance as expressed by the average boardings per trip on each route. In the transit industry, a rule of thumb is that there needs to be an average of 10-15 boardings per revenue service hour for a service to be considered effective, depending on the type of service (e.g., rural, local, regional, intercity) or whether the service has a goal of ridership or coverage. The goal for ridership oriented service is typically 15 passengers per revenue service hour or greater while coverage oriented service has a goal of 10-15 passengers per hour. Prior to COVID-19, most METRO routes performed within the coverage metric, suggesting that the level of service was correct relative to demand and financial capacity to provide service.

METRO had a small number of routes that consistently did not achieve these transit industry standards. Among these were:

- Route 3, which has historically been a poor performer, owing to its very low frequency. This route has long been considered for modifications in conjunction with other Westside Santa Cruz and UCSC oriented services.
- Route 79, also a historically poor performer, was modified in June 2018 to eliminate the Pajaro loop and add service in central Watsonville. Ridership on this route continues to remain low and further modifications are planned in conjunction with the introduction of the Watsonville Circulator in 2021.
- Rural routes 40, 41 and 42 also performed below this metric due to their limited span of service and the rural nature of the Bonny Doon and Davenport service areas.

Post COVID-19, all METRO routes are performing below 10 passengers per revenue hour, with the system-wide average hovering around six. The strongest performers are METRO's most frequent routes: the 69A/W and 71, followed by routes 66 and 91X.



The COVID-19 rider survey, discussed later in this report, indicates the County's shelter in place order, school closures, increased telecommuting and concerns related to safety while riding the bus are all factors that continue to depress ridership and may do so well into next year. This suggests: 1) a need to re-evaluate performance based metrics around factors other than ridership, such as equity and access; and, 2) a need to consider network changes that focus METRO's limited resources into areas of higher utilization (e.g., the Watsonville/Soquel/Highway 1 corridor and Capitola to Santa Cruz). Staff is currently developing service change plans to present to the Board and public in the coming months should ridership fail to materialize.

### Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Service Planning Activities

#### COVID-19 Rider Survey

In June 2020, staff distributed a survey to METRO email subscribers and through social media to gather feedback on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on riding habits. Key findings include:

- The majority of respondents (75%) plan to ride METRO once the Shelter In Place orders are lifted. While this is encouraging, it also suggests long term ridership could remain 25% below average as customers telecommute more often and concerns remain about vehicle cleanliness and physical distancing.
- Ridership could remain 50% below normal into next year as customers wait for schools and the economy to fully reopen, a significant decrease in new cases and the development of a vaccine.
- The effectiveness of strategies to encourage customers to return to METRO or ride more often in the future differs by customer type:
  - Frequent riders (those riding five or more days per week, comprising 45% of the sample size) were more influenced by vehicle cleanliness and sanitization, the restoration of service to pre-COVID levels and requiring customers to wear personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - Riders planning to ride less (17% of respondents) were most influenced by the existence of a treatment or vaccine, PPE, enhanced cleaning and seeing a decrease in new cases.

Riders unlikely to ride (25% of respondents) were most influenced by the existence of a treatment or vaccine, followed by a significant decrease in new cases and enhanced cleaning measures.

Staff is using the survey results to inform the development of a COVID-19 Service Recovery Plan, as discussed more below.

### COVID-19 Service Recovery Planning

In response to Santa Cruz County's Shelter in Place order and the greater than 90% decrease in ridership that followed, METRO cut service by 50% in March and service levels remained at that level throughout the summer. Beginning with the Fall Bid, service was restored to pre-COVID levels on all routes with the exception of School Term Service, Highway 17 and a few trips on Routes 3 and 55. Ridership, however, remains at around 90% below FY19 levels.

Should ridership fail to materialize, staff is working to reimagine METRO service in the post-COVID world to ensure METRO makes the best use of its limited resources while providing equitable access for all. The biggest challenges related to future planning are the unknowns around the timing and phasing of relaxations of the shelter in place order, County guidance related to vehicle capacity constraints and the reopening of in-person classes at schools and universities.

Given this uncertainty, staff recommends focusing the first phase of recovery planning on retaining frequent riders, employing strategies identified as effective in the COVID-19 rider survey. Frequent riders comprise a larger share of overall ridership compared to other rider segments, and the majority of their concerns about riding METRO again or more often in the future concern measures within METRO's control: restoring service to previous levels while ensuring a safer customer experience through enhanced cleaning and requiring that all customers wear PPE. METRO has implemented all of these measures.

Second tier strategies should focus on responding to changes in demand stemming from the resumption of in-person classes at schools and universities and/or a relaxation of the shelter in place order. Because there will likely be a lag between the timing of these changes and METRO's quarterly service change schedule, staff will need to continue to build excess capacity into the service schedule by employing a larger than normal "extra board" Operators to cover back up trips needed to handle excess loads on capacity constrained buses. This may require service modifications on some routes in order to maintain the frequency and availability of Operators needed on higher ridership routes.

Third tier planning efforts should focus on strategies important to riders planning to ride less or not at all. Compared to frequent riders, these riders are less concerned about factors intrinsic to METRO service and are more likely to be influenced by issues beyond METRO's control, such as the development of a COVID-19 vaccine or a decrease in new cases. Many of these customers have indicated they may not return to METRO until next year or beyond, and may telecommute more often for the foreseeable future, so encouraging their return will take time.

### Cashless/Contactless Fare Payment

As a result of the physical distancing requirements mandated by local governments in response to COVID-19, most major transit agencies, including METRO, moved away from onboard fare payment to reduce the risk of infection between Operators and customers at the fare box area. As agencies resumed fare collection, many looked toward contactless onboard fare payment as the new normal. Besides reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19, these programs have the additional benefits of:

- Reducing the cost of cash collection, which includes collecting, processing and counting cash; providing security; and purchasing and servicing fare boxes and ticket vending machines.
- Speeding up the boarding process. The time to put exact change into a fare box can be two to three times higher than tapping a smart card or using visual inspection. This translates to slower travel speeds and productivity loss on the transit system as a whole.

Improving convenience and expanding access. Cash based fare payment systems lack the convenience of contactless systems where customers do not need to purchase separate fare media or tickets in advance. They also can expand the reach of retail locations to anyone with a smartphone or internet access, as well as offer expanded physical retail locations through account based ticketing with stored value accounts.

Staff has identified three phases for the rollout of contactless fare payment:

1. On September 3rd, METRO launched a mobile ticket splash pass, which lets customers purchase any METRO fare product using a smartphone. At the same time, cash acceptance was reactivated at all Ticket Vending Machines, expanding off board fare payment options for all riders.
2. In late fall, METRO will begin installing mobile validators onboard all buses, starting with Highway 17 service. Besides providing validation of the mobile ticket, mobile validators will allow for contactless credit and smart card transactions to happen with the tap of a card.
3. The final phase will involve the rollout of a new smart card and account based ticketing system using stored value accounts. Value will be stored in a customer's account, not on a card, enabling transactions both online and through an expanded retail network throughout Santa Cruz County. Account-based ticketing using stored value will allow riders to exchange cash for credit, enabling customers without a bank account to tap and ride.

### Cruz-On-Demand

Staff is developing a pilot program that will allow customers to book on-demand trips from any address to any address within specified zones. The service area will be the same as METRO's ParaCruz service area –  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from any fixed route service – but trips would be contained within one of several zones (tentatively, the Watsonville area, Aptos/La Selva Beach, Capitola, Live Oak, Westside, Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley). The service would take advantage of available capacity in METRO's ParaCruz operation, allowing additional on demand trips to be booked into the system after priority is given to ParaCruz trips, which must be booked 24 hours in advance. Customers will be able to make reservations through METRO's new Eco Pass mobile app, as well as by phone through METRO's customer service call center. Additionally, customers will be able to board without a reservation according to a published schedule at METRO transit centers. The launch date is expected in late fall.

### Bus Stop Signage Update

METRO's current bus stop signs can be confusing to the customer, difficult to read and are expensive and time consuming to maintain. Staff is currently working on a bus stop signage update that would bring METRO's 798 active bus stop signs in line with industry best practices, better guide customers through METRO's service and informational systems, and reduce maintenance costs associated with updating schedules and maps at all active stops. The proposed design features double sided stop ID and route decal stickers visible from a distance with color coding according to service type (e.g., local, express, rural). As transit ridership declines in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this effort aims to strengthen METRO's brand identity as a safe, reliable transportation option and improve the customer experience, both of which are critical for retaining existing customers and drawing new riders into the system.

### Watsonville Circulator

Planning is underway for the introduction of new zero-emission bus circulator service to the Watsonville area in early 2021. The service was initially set to launch in fall 2020 but the pandemic delayed both the delivery of vehicles and the start of community outreach. As the project gets back on track, staff is looking forward to introducing a new circulator that will allow METRO to grow the local bus network and expand mobility options for the Watsonville community by connecting local origins and destinations.

### Other Initiatives

The Planning Department is developing a number of other significant planning initiatives which are generally attempting to either attract new riders and/or enhance the rider experience through improved customer service features, including technology and communication enhancements.

- **City of Santa Cruz Downtown Bus Pass** – Starting in fall 2019, METRO and the City of Santa Cruz launched a one-year pilot that offered a free “Eco-Pass” to all 4,000+ downtown Santa Cruz employees. The project aimed to increase METRO ridership while reducing the demand for parking in downtown Santa Cruz. In April 2020, the City of Santa Cruz decided to terminate the pilot after the first six months and reprogram the remaining funds owed to METRO. At the time, City staff had distributed just over 300 of the 4,054 passes and ridership was growing. METRO and City staff are currently negotiating a future agreement.
- **AVL** – METRO is currently installing automatic vehicle locators (AVL) on its fleet. As of late this year, this will allow the public to track real-time bus locations from a smartphone application. The project faced significant delays due to the shutdown of onsite work in March.
- **Non-Rider Survey** – METRO is planning to conduct a non-rider survey in the community in an effort to gain insight into how the agency could improve service and attract those who do not currently utilize public transit. This follows the on-board survey of METRO riders in spring 2019 and the COVID-19 survey in summer 2020. Both have given METRO insights to rider priorities, travel patterns, use of communications and fare payment technology which the Planning and Marketing/Customer Service departments will use to meet riders’ needs.
- **Alternatives Analysis** – Since fall 2019, METRO and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) have been conducting a transportation mode alternatives analysis for the county’s central rail corridor, which is expected to be completed in early 2021. This analysis will provide guidance for planning for the long-term use of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line corridor.
- **Pacific Station** – METRO and the City of Santa Cruz will continue planning to determine the feasibility of a redevelopment of Pacific Station in conjunction with additional residential, commercial and retail space on a footprint including the existing Pacific Station and adjacent City property. The goal is for the two agencies together to pursue grant applications for funding this redevelopment; one application to the federal Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program and one to the State of California Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program.
- **Fare Restructure** – In FY21, staff will restart discussions with the Board related to opportunities to improve the fare structure. Then staff will work with the Board Finance, Budget and Audit Standing Committee to make fare restructuring recommendations. Discussions will include the financial effects of proposed state legislation that would provide free or reduced fares to specific groups, such as youth and/or college students. Staff will also explore

ways to make fares more equitable and accessible to low-income customers by evaluating offering free transfers and/or fare-capping, also known as “best fares.” Certain fare policy adjustments would require a near full replacement of METRO’s fare equipment – an effort which has begun in fall 2020 with the launch of mobile ticketing, the first step toward a full account-based ticketing system.

- **Hwy 1 Bus On Shoulders** – METRO is coordinating with the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) and Caltrans to implement this project in conjunction with the RTC Highway 1 Multimodal Improvements project. METRO has contributed funding for environmental and design phases for the Soquel Drive to 41<sup>st</sup> Ave segment of this project. The first phase of the project now extends from Soquel Drive to the Bay Ave/Porter St intersection. The RTC has applied for state grant funding. If successful, the first phase of the project is projected to go to construction in the fall of 2021 and could be operational by the summer of 2023. The next segment, Bay Ave/Porter St. to State Park Dr., would start construction in 2023. The third phase, State Park Dr. to Freedom Blvd, is yet to be scheduled.
- **Ongoing Coordination with UCSC and Cabrillo** – With campus closures and remote learning due to COVID-19, the future of university oriented service continues to be uncertain. METRO and UCSC entered into a new shorter term six-month contract through the end of 2020, and will evaluate the agreement and service levels at the end of the year. METRO and Cabrillo have executed a three-year (2018-19 through 2020-21 school year) contract (plus an option for two additional years). Cabrillo suspended the contract over the summer after the College stopped collecting student transportation fees but reinstated the program in the fall after identifying new funding. METRO will continue to coordinate with Cabrillo to provide bus service to meet student needs.
- **Capitola Mall** – METRO is working with developer Merlone Geier and the City of Capitola as they establish a new retail and residential property on the current footprint of the Capitola Mall. Their designs will create a new transit center space for METRO use. Staff met with Merlone Geier in November 2019 and is awaiting Merlone Geier’s readiness to continue discussions. Staff will offer updates as the project progresses.
- **Bus Replacement Plan** – Planning will monitor the METRO fleet for progress towards reducing the number of buses beyond their useful life. This program allows the Grants and Finance departments to make the most efficient use of limited capital budget and maximize the likelihood for METRO to receive grant funding for future bus replacements. In FY20 METRO received six new CNG buses and refurbished four others. These actions reduced the number of obsolete buses in METRO’s fleet to 27. In FY21, METRO expects to receive

10 additional buses, including four zero-emission electric buses. In addition, the four articulated buses in the fleet will reach the end of their useful life. With this, it is expected that METRO's fleet will have 21 obsolete buses at the start of FY22.

- **Level 2 Solar EV Charging Infrastructure for Light-Duty Electric Fleet Vehicles** – To help reduce the use of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions, METRO is planning to install Level 2 electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure for its non-revenue EVs at Judy K. Souza Operations (JKS) facility. The Monterey Bay Air Resources District's (MBARD) AB923 Plug-In Monterey Bay EV Infrastructure Program (PIMB) will fund the implementation of up to 10 EV charging ports and solar energy array. The goal of the project is to supply on-site rooftop solar PV to energize the EV fleet and avoid expensive electrical infrastructure upgrades, reduce costly demand and energy charges, and reduce GHG emissions. METRO currently has 45 light-duty and support vehicles.
- **Zero Emission Bus Analysis and Rollout Plan** – The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has mandated that all transit agencies in California operate 100% zero-emission transit buses by 2040. METRO has already taken steps to electrify its fleet with battery electric zero emission buses (ZEBs); however, this mandate requires transit agencies provide CARB with a formal rollout plan. METRO has designated 10 bays at its JKS facility for ZEB charging and is in the final design phase of this project. METRO partnered with the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) for the development of a Master Plan meeting the CARB mandate for transitioning to a fully electric bus fleet by 2040, to include both vehicles and facility requirements. CTE will also research and analyze renewable power generation and stationary storage options in order to reduce draw from the PG&E power grid and provide charging during periods where the grid is down.
- **Installation of Automated Passenger Counter (APC) Systems** – In response to physical distancing concerns related to COVID-19, METRO plans to install new Automated Passenger Counters (APCs) which will help monitor passenger levels in real time. The APC module will also give passengers the opportunity to make informed decisions on which vehicle they feel comfortable riding. APCs will provide the Planning Department with a rich dataset for future route and service planning, including boarding and alighting information at the level of individual bus stops for all trips. Currently that information is only available on an extremely limited basis through manually-conducted surveys.

### Mid-to-Long-Term Priorities for Fixed-Route Service Expansion

Given METRO budget limitations, opportunities for service enhancements are limited.

As is standard transit industry practice, the Planning Department maintains a prioritized list of service needs, sometimes referred to as “unmet needs”, so that if at any time there is additional recurrent operating funds available for the introduction of additional effective service, the priorities are clear. Currently, the Planning Department sees the following needs as the most important:

- Route 35/35A evening frequency – As this San Lorenzo Valley (SLV) route alternately serves two legs beyond Boulder Creek, the limited evening frequency makes for extremely poor level of service on these legs.
- Areas of the County that have population densities and demographics that suggest additional span of service and frequency could generate additional ridership. The Live Oak corridor between Capitola and downtown Santa Cruz is seen as a key opportunity for service improvements, including:
  - Frequency – Hourly service during the peak demand and 90 minutes off peak times do not allow the public to use these services spontaneously.
  - Span of Service - Routes for which service starts too late in the morning or ends too early in the evening, both weekdays and weekends, do not meet work trip needs, particularly for those in the service industry. Nor do these limited spans meet the general mobility needs of County residents.
- Rural routes with limited daily trips.

#### **IV. STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES ALIGNMENT**

This report aligns with METRO’s Service Quality and Delivery strategic priority.

#### **V. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS/IMPACT**

There is no financial impact related to this status report.

#### **VI. CHANGES FROM COMMITTEE**

N/A.

#### **VII. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

There are no alternatives to consider.



## **VIII. ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A:** Annual METRO and National Bus Ridership  
**Attachment B:** Annual METRO Ridership Breakdown

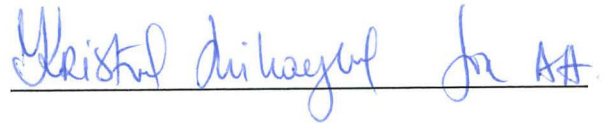
Prepared by: John Urgo, Planning and Development Director  
Cayla Hill, Planning Data Analyst  
Mathew Marquez, Transportation Planner I  
Pete Rasmussen, Transportation Planner II

**IX. APPROVALS**

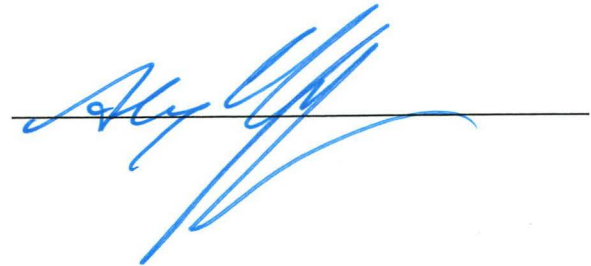
John Uργο,  
Planning and Development Director



Approved as to fiscal impact:  
Angela Aitken, CFO



Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager

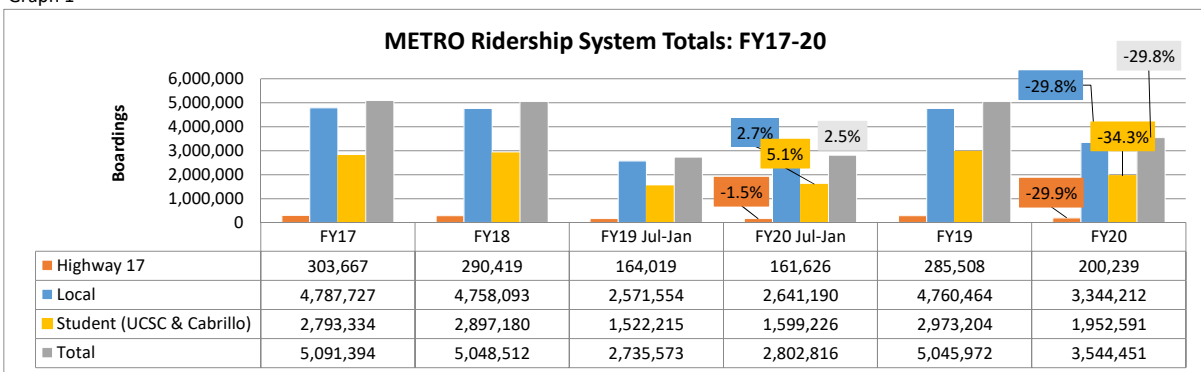


# Attachment A

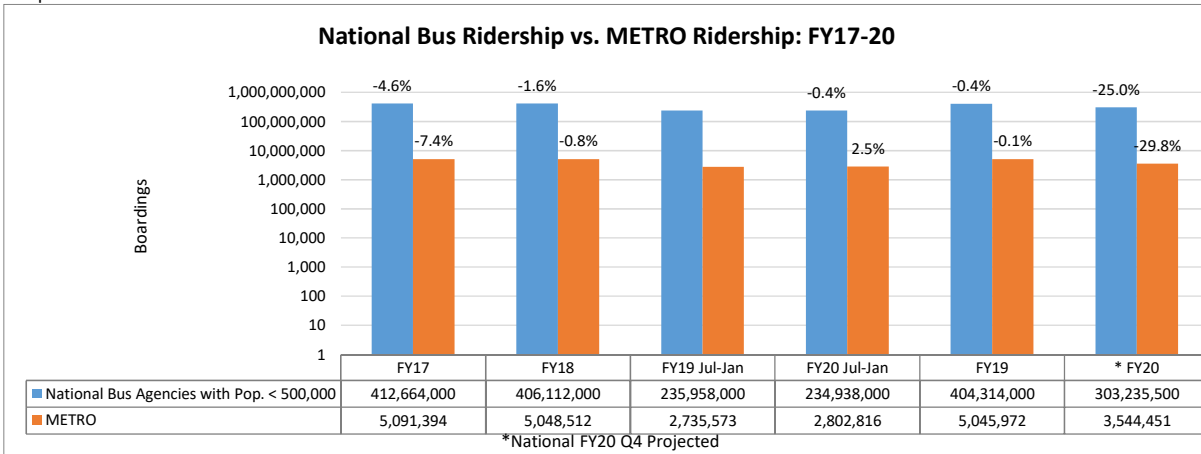
## Annual METRO and National Bus Ridership

FY17-FY20

Graph 1

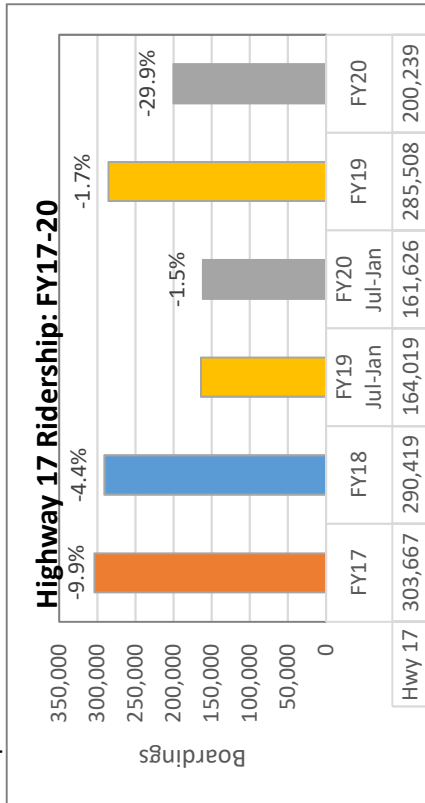


Graph 2

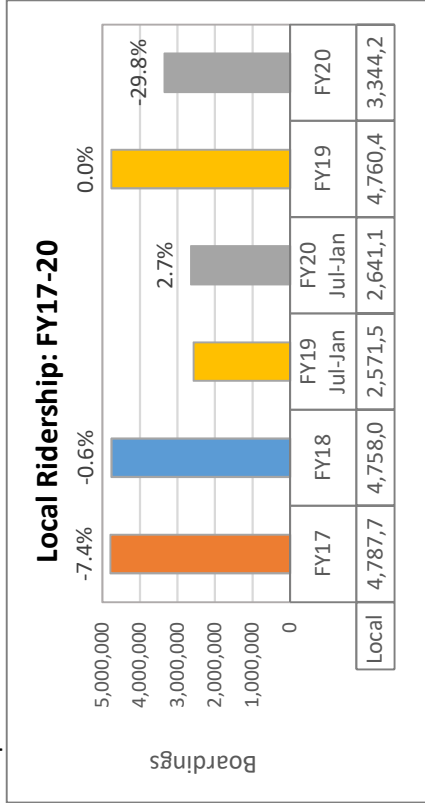


# Annual METRO Ridership by Service Type FY17-FY20

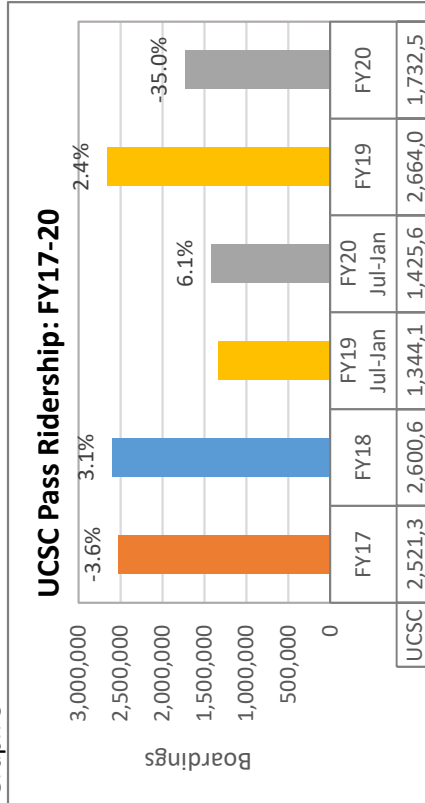
Graph 1



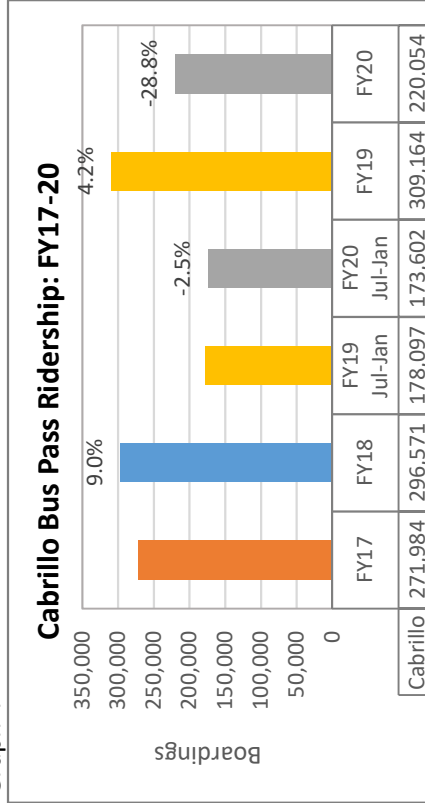
Graph 2



Graph 3



Graph 4



# Your health and safety, as well as that of our employees, is our top priority.

In an effort to keep everyone healthy and safe, METRO has increased our safety measures in our buses and transit centers. This includes reduced bus capacity, blocking off seats to assist with physical distancing, and requiring mandatory face coverings at all times.

Additionally, METRO has installed clear curtain protective barriers at the operator compartment and have started to install clear sneeze barriers between rows of seating on all fixed-route buses to mitigate the risk of passing the virus.

To assist with physical distancing METRO has also added ground markers at transit centers denoting where to stand while lining up for a bus.

Additional cleaning staff have also been hired and stationed at all of our transit centers to clean high-touch surfaces on each bus that goes through the center and all METRO buses are fogged with disinfectant nightly.

METRO has also added hand-washing stations and hand sanitizer dispensers to our Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and Scotts Valley Transit Centers and we have installed hand sanitizer dispensers on all buses.

Additionally, METRO has just launched a new mobile ticketing app to allow for contactless payment of fares. Simply download the METRO Splash Pass app from the App Store or Google Play and you are ready to go. Additional details can be found at [scmttd.com/apps](https://scmttd.com/apps).

Through these measures and your efforts to follow our safety guidelines, we can provide the best bus riding experience for all.

## Buy your ticket anywhere, anytime.

Download the new METRO Splash Pass app now



[scmttd.com/connect](https://scmttd.com/connect)

### Schedule By Stop

View today's schedule via web or text message.

### Subscribe to Route Alerts

Choose email or text alerts, or both!



### Customer Service

920 Pacific Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 425-8600  
Mon-Fri 7am-6pm

### Administrative Offices



110 Vernon Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 426-6080  
Mon-Fri 8am-5pm

### Accessible Services

**Coordinator**  
(831) 423-3868

### METRO ParaCruz

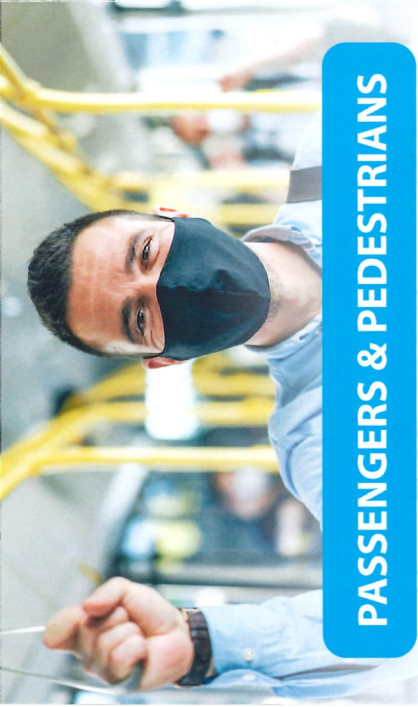
2880 Research Park Dr.  
Suite 160  
Soquel, CA 95073  
(831) 425-4664  
Daily 8am-5pm

[scmttd.com](https://scmttd.com)  



# SAFETY TIPS

## for Passengers, Pedestrians and Cyclists



## PASSENGERS & PEDESTRIANS

- Never run after or next to a moving bus.
- Don't play near buses; pushing and shoving can cause accidents.
- Wait on the sidewalk away from the curb, not in or near the street.
- Never touch a moving bus while it is approaching a bus stop.
- Wait for the bus to stop before approaching.
- Hold on to your child when a bus approaches.
- Wait for exiting passengers to leave and then board.
- Watch carefully while boarding and use handrails, if available.
- Take a seat if available; use handrails/handholds.
- Do not disturb bus operator while on the bus.
- No eating, drinking, smoking or vaping while on the bus. Spilling drinks on the floor can create slippery conditions on the bus.
- Do not sleep in a bus especially when seated in side facing seats.
- Keep all parts of your body inside the bus.
- Be ready to exit when you arrive at your stop.
- Exit through the rear doors whenever possible.
- Watch your step, especially at night or in wet weather.
- Step away after exiting bus.
- If you drop something on the ground when exiting, leave it on the ground until the bus drives away.



## CYCLISTS

- Most METRO buses are equipped with bike racks that hold two bikes. If the rack is full, please wait for the next bus.
- Get your bike ready for loading on the bike rack by removing water bottles, pumps, and any loose items that might fall off.
- Tandem bikes or bikes with motors, solid wheels, large racks, child seats, or other attachments are not allowed.
- You are responsible for loading, securing, and unloading your bike from the rack.
- Be careful of the curbside bus mirror for head clearance while using the bike rack.
- Never step into traffic while loading or unloading your bike.
- Never cross the street in front of the bus. Passing traffic cannot see you coming around the bus.
- If an object rolls under the bus, never try to retrieve it. Tell the operator and wait for the bus to pull away.



## COVID-19 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Stay home if sick or with COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- Wear a face covering when in line, boarding, or while riding a bus.
- Maintain physical separation with other passengers while waiting at a bus stop/terminal or while riding a bus.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Refrain from talking, singing, or yelling on a bus.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, or vape on a bus.