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Santa Cruz METRO Announces Participation in Nationwide Public Transportation Industry “Health and Safety Commitments” Program

METRO joins over 100 public transit agencies across the country in signing on to the program

Santa Cruz, CA (September 25, 2020) – METRO announced Friday that it has joined the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) “Health and Safety Commitments Program,” the public transportation industry’s overarching pledge to passengers that public transit systems are taking all the necessary measures to operate safely as the nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The health and safety of passengers and operators is the most important priority for METRO. Since the beginning of the pandemic, METRO has worked tirelessly to keep riders safe from infection from the coronavirus. By signing on to the APTA Health and Safety Commitments Program with more than 100 public transit systems, METRO and the public transit industry are actively working to instill confidence in riders by committing to protecting their health and safety.

The Program was developed after asking transit users from across the country what measures would make them feel more confident riding public transportation amid concerns about COVID-19.

Additionally, METRO conducted a customer survey of our riders and identified four key areas to address to earn riders’ confidence:

- Following public health guidelines from official sources such as CDC, State, and local guidance whenever possible
- Cleaning and disinfecting transit vehicles frequently and requiring face coverings and other protections
- Keeping passengers informed and providing resources to support safe travel
- Putting health first by requiring riders and employees to avoid public transit if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or feel ill and installing additional safety measures

METRO has pledged to meet these commitments by enforcing specific policies that are effective for our system, our riders, and our community. A key component of the Health and Safety Commitments Program is the shared responsibility of our system *and* our riders to follow these guidelines. Riders rely on us to follow these commitments, and METRO relies on riders to protect themselves and other customers.

“METRO is serious about the safety of our employees and our customers. On March 3, 2020 METRO began initiating new safety measures to address COVID-19 and we continue to do so. This includes following official guidelines, protecting each other with face coverings and healthy behavior, and giving you the information to make smart choices. We’re putting health first – yours and our employees.” – Alex Clifford, METRO CEO/General Manager

METRO is committed to continually addressing and implementing prevention measures. Current prevention measures include:

- Self-imposed bus capacity limits on our buses to provide a measure of physical distance; current capacity limits are set at 25% of regular bus capacity
- Blocked off seats to allow for a measure of physical distance
- Deeper cleaning of our buses and ParaCruz vehicles by cleaning all high-touch surfaces with disinfectant including seats, handrails, stanchions, hand straps, and bus operator's compartment
- Installation of between row sneeze barriers on all fixed-route buses to provide an added level of protection from someone seated in the row immediately behind or in front of you
- Installation of hand sanitizer dispensers on all of our buses
- Nightly use of an electrostatic fogger to disinfect the interior bus surfaces
- Deeper and more frequent cleaning of the transit centers, including the addition of hand washing stations and hand sanitizer dispensers
- Posted official guidance from CDC and County Health Agency regarding prevention tips and other safety measures, including physical distancing in our buses and at our transit centers
- Closed our Santa Cruz and Watsonville Transit Center lobbies and moved ticket vending machines (TVMs) to the outside of the building to avoid creating crowded spaces
- Installed a Customer Service "On-Demand" Calling Kiosk at both Santa Cruz and Watsonville Transit Centers so that customers can virtually connect with a Customer Service Representative while physically distance
- Installed ground markers at our transit centers to denote where to stand while boarding in order to maintain physical distance
- Launched our new Splash Pass App, METRO's new mobile ticketing app, allowing for contactless payment of fares. Visit www.scmttd.com/apps for more detail
- Launching a new fleet of advertisements on our buses to promote and gain confidence from our community on all of METRO's added safety measures

APTA's Health and Safety Commitments Program is the public transportation industry's pledge to encourage sensible policies and practices established to keep customers and employees safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and METRO is proud to join our fellow leading transit agencies in this mission. METRO's number one priority has always been to keep our customers, community, and employees safe and through these additional measures, we will fulfill our pledge to you.

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