

For Immediate Release
Date: May 26, 2022
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New Santa Cruz METRO CEO Michael Tree and Congressman Jimmy Panetta Discuss Zero Emission Buses and Affordable Housing

Santa Cruz, CA (Thursday, May 26, 2022) – New Santa Cruz METRO CEO Michael Tree recently sat down with California’s 20th Congressional District Representative Jimmy Panetta to discuss potential upcoming federal funding opportunities, including a near-future \$42.5 million METRO grant application to accelerate implementation of the transit agency’s zero-emission bus plans. Additionally, Representative Panetta discussed his work towards more affordable housing in the County and enjoyed a conversation with CEO Tree on how Santa Cruz METRO is working with partner agencies on the near future construction of a seven-story, 94-unit affordable housing project at METRO’s Pacific Station in downtown Santa Cruz.

“Santa Cruz METRO plays a vital role in fostering the economic, social, and cultural growth of the City of Santa Cruz and its surrounding communities,” **said Rep. Jimmy Panetta.** “It was a pleasure to meet with new METRO CEO Michael Tree to discuss our shared priorities of securing more zero-emission buses and affordable housing transit centers. This partnership will provide future opportunities to direct more federal funding to the region and build a resilient, climate-friendly transit system here on the Central Coast.”

“I’m happy to have had the opportunity to meet with Representative Panetta to discuss METRO’s plans for transitioning into a more sustainable zero-emission agency. Representative Panetta has accomplished a lot for METRO and Santa Cruz County and we are excited to continue working with him on accelerating the growth of our zero emission bus fleet.” – **Michael Tree, METRO CEO/General Manager**

Santa Cruz METRO plans to convert its mostly compressed natural gas fleet of buses to zero emission battery electric and hydrogen buses before 2040 to meet California’s Innovative Clean Transit (ITC) goals. It currently operates four zero emission battery electric buses and anticipates taking delivery of an additional five battery electric buses in 2023. The near-future \$42.5 million grant application will provide funding sufficient for the purchase of 20 zero-emission hydrogen buses, a hydrogen fueling station and upgrades to METRO’s maintenance facility to accommodate hydrogen technology.

New Santa Cruz Metro CEO Tree also expressed gratitude to Representative Panetta for his support in providing the transit agency federal funding through COVID-19 Economic Relief Programs such as the CARES Act, CRRSAA Act, and ARPA as well as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Most recently, Congressman Panetta introduced the Green Bus Tax Credit Act (H.R.583) that if passed would allow manufacturers to claim a 10% credit for zero-emission buses. This important legislation will help spawn more interest from manufacturers in producing and ultimately lowering the cost of zero-emission buses.

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About Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District:

Established in 1968, Santa Cruz METRO provides directly operated fixed-route and Highway 17 commuter service throughout Santa Cruz County, with limited service connecting to Monterey Salinas Transit at our Watsonville Transit Center and Santa Clara County, transporting more than 5 million* passenger trips a year. METRO also directly operates ParaCruz paratransit service to Santa Cruz County, providing about 73,500* trips per year. METRO’s operating budget in FY21 is almost \$55 million and is funded through a combination of farebox revenue, sales tax, and state and federal

sources. Today METRO operates a fleet of 94 buses on at least 24 fixed-routes and 32 paratransit vehicles. For more information, visit www.scmtd.com. Like METRO on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SantaCruzMETRO or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/SantaCruzMETRO.

*Reflect pre-pandemic ridership numbers