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Contact: Danielle Glagola  
(831) 420-2550  
[dglagola@scmtd.com](mailto:dglagola@scmtd.com)



**METRO Launches ‘One Ride at a Time’ to Grow Ridership, Protect Environment**  
*Buses Wrapped in Wildlife Photos by Frans Lanting to Be Unveiled Jan. 21*

Santa Cruz, CA (Jan. 13, 2023): Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) is delighted to launch One Ride at a Time, an innovative campaign to showcase the environmental benefits of transit, encourage bus ridership and protect Santa Cruz County’s extraordinary natural resources.

Beginning in January, every ride on a METRO bus donates to our partners in protecting the environment, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the Bay of Life Fund.

“METRO’s mission is to provide environmentally sustainable transportation to Santa Cruz County,” said Larry Pageler, METRO Board Chair. “With One Ride at a Time, we aim to increase ridership and solidify METRO as the region’s environmentally smart transportation choice while supporting organizations making a difference in our community.”

One Ride at a Time is made possible by a partnership between METRO, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Bay of Life Fund, and renowned photographer-writer team Frans Lanting and Chris Eckstrom.

To promote the campaign, METRO will release pairs of buses wrapped with Lanting’s iconic images of the Monterey Bay from the Bay of Life Project. By the end of 2024, about 30 wrapped buses will be traveling throughout Santa Cruz County and featuring inspiring images of whales, sea otters, mountain lions, redwoods and more.

The first pair of bus wraps will be unveiled Jan. 21, coinciding with the opening weekend of Lanting and Eckstrom’s Bay of Life Exhibition at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History. (Information about the exhibit is available at [santacruzmah.org/exhibitions/bay-of-life](http://santacruzmah.org/exhibitions/bay-of-life).)

“We are delighted to collaborate with METRO and to put our images from *Bay of Life* to work protecting our precious Monterey Bay environment one ride at a time,” Lanting and Eckstrom said.

To participate, bus riders must create an account on the online ridesharing portal administered by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)’s GO Santa Cruz County program ([scmtd.org/gosantacruz](http://scmtd.org/gosantacruz)), or through the Commute Tracker app ([scmtd.org/ctsetup](http://scmtd.org/ctsetup)). Once enrolled, riders will use the portal to log their bus trips, earning 10 points for each trip with a maximum of two rides per day that count towards point accruals. When a rider reaches 250 points, or 25 rides, they can use the portal to select one of our nonprofit partners to receive a \$10 donation. Riders can also see the greenhouse gas emissions reductions they’ve made by riding public transit and compete against each other to see who can make the biggest impact.

To heighten the campaign and emphasize the importance of protecting the Monterey Bay, METRO will inform the community about the conservation and education efforts of the Monterey Bay National

Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the Bay of Life Fund are making to promote protection of the species and landscapes pictured on the buses. Transit center displays, interior bus signage and interactive content on its website will teach riders about the programs their donations support.

"Everyone who lives, works, and plays in this region is a steward to one of the planet's treasures of biodiversity," said Ginaia Kelly, chapter director of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. "We are honored to team up with METRO on One Ride at a Time because this campaign gives people an opportunity to protect our Monterey Bay with their everyday transportation choices."

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the local non-profit partner and chief advocate for NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and is the local chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. Its mission is to leave a thriving sanctuary to future generations by protecting wildlife and habitats, raising sanctuary visibility, and inspiring the public to be its stewards.

Secretary Leon Panetta, who serves as the Co-Chairperson of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, states "the Foundation's goal is to recruit the entire central coast community to support essential sanctuary activities. Threats like climate change, coastal development, threats to fisheries and wetlands, and pollution and energy needs require the community to continue fighting for our sanctuary. Each of us has a special responsibility to be good stewards of the natural treasure we all have inherited, so we can leave the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary as a living tribute and legacy for future generations."

"This project has been a labor of love for METRO and our partners, and we are excited to unveil it to our community," said METRO Marketing & Communications Director Danielle Glagola. "Our goal is to increase environmental awareness and remind the public that using public transit over personal vehicles, even one ride at a time, reduces emissions. Now, through this program and with our partners' help, riders can also donate to our local environmental nonprofits, doubling their impact, with one simple action of riding METRO."

Every ride on a METRO bus takes cars off the road and significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, METRO is converting its entire bus fleet to zero-emissions buses (ZEBs). By the end of 2023, METRO will have 9 ZEBs deployed in the county with more coming every year. Starting in 2022, METRO has pledged that all new bus purchases will be ZEBs.

To read more about METRO's strides toward increasing bus ridership and transitioning to a zero-emissions fleet, visit [scmtd.com](http://scmtd.com). For more information on this campaign visit [scmtd.com/onerideatatime](http://scmtd.com/onerideatatime).

## About Us

### **Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)**

Established in 1968, METRO'S mission is to provide environmentally sustainable transportation to Santa Cruz County. METRO directly operates county-wide, fixed-route and Highway 17 commuter service, with connections to Santa Clara County and Monterey Salinas Transit at our Watsonville Transit Center. The agency also operates ParaCruz paratransit service. Today METRO operates a fleet of 94 buses on at least 24 fixed routes and 32 paratransit vehicles.

Every ride on a METRO bus takes cars off the road, significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and supports economic opportunity and quality of life in our community. Moving into the future, METRO strives to meet the following goals:

- Increase transit ridership to 7 million trips annually within the next five years
- Transition to a zero-emissions fleet with a mix of hydrogen and electric vehicles
- Increase affordable housing at METRO-owned transit centers to 175 units in the next 10 years.

For more information, visit [scmtd.com](http://scmtd.com).

### **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation**

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the local non-profit partner and chief advocate for NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and is the local chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. Its mission is to leave a thriving sanctuary to future generations by protecting wildlife and habitats, raising sanctuary visibility, and inspiring the public to be its stewards.

The Foundation's vision is a healthy Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary recognized as a national treasure for its unique and abundant biodiversity and widespread community support. Investments support wildlife protection programs like rescuing whales entangled in fishing gear; endangered black abalone rescue and recovery; protecting kelp habitats; marine debris cleanup efforts; and fishing gear innovations. The Foundation also seeks to inspire the public to learn about the sanctuary through K-12 programming and college internships to show why the sanctuary is vital to our region's economy, way of life, and health of the planet.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is part of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary System, a network of nationally significant marine protected areas comprised of 15 national marine sanctuaries and 2 marine national monuments that span more than 620,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters.

For more information, visit [montereybayfoundation.org](http://montereybayfoundation.org).

### **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Board of Directors**

The Foundation is led by Co-Chairperson Secretary Leon Panetta who has had a fifty-year career in public service at the highest levels of Government. He served in the Obama Administration first as CIA Director and then as Secretary of Defense from 2009-2013. He also served in the Clinton Administration as director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and later was appointed White House chief of staff. Elected to Congress in 1976, Secretary Panetta represented the California Central Coast district for 16 years and led in the creation of NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in 1992.

Secretary Panetta is joined by three other individuals who have been working to protect the Monterey Bay for the past 40 years: Former US Congressman Sam Farr, Community Activist Dan Haifley and Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley were all involved in the fight to ban offshore oil in the Monterey Bay in the 1980's.

The illustrious and dedicated board also includes Co-Chairperson: Hilary Bryant, Ted Balestreri, Yvette Lopez Brooks, Nova Covington, Gordon Eubanks, Christina Sandera, Martine Watkins, and Dr. Lisa Wooninck (ex officio).

For more information, visit [montereybayfoundation.org](http://montereybayfoundation.org).

### **Bay of Life Fund**

The Bay of Life Fund supports nonprofit environmental organizations with their educational and conservation programs in the Monterey Bay region, in the context of the Bay of Life Project launched by Frans Lanting and Christine Eckstrom. Initial partners include the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, the Seymour Marine Discovery Center, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the Elkhorn Slough Foundation, the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, the Sempervirens Fund, and others.

### **Bay of Life Project**

The Bay of Life Project connects land and sea and people with nature to promote a unified view of the Monterey Bay region through publications, exhibitions, events, and partnerships. The Project aims to stimulate engagement that contributes to a sustainable future for the Bay of Life.

Frans Lanting and Chris Eckstrom have documented our living planet on assignment for National Geographic for more than 30 years. But the place they know best is California's Monterey Bay, where they have lived for decades. "To us, Monterey Bay is one of Earth's crown jewels," they write. "We know of no other place in the world where land and sea connect in such an extraordinary way."

The book, *Bay of Life: From Wind to Whales*, is the centerpiece of the Bay of Life Project. It is available as a hardcover book and as an oversize, slipcased Collector's Edition. A Spanish-language edition is planned for 2024.

*Bay of Life* chronicles a remarkable recovery, which shows that damaged ecosystems can be restored when people care and take action together. Such stories of hope are needed as we face new challenges of habitat connectivity, climate change, and the need for more inclusive opportunities for our diverse communities.

The BayofLife.net website is the portal to images, stories, videos, and other content from the project along with a calendar of events and links to partner organizations.

For more information, visit [bayoflife.net](http://bayoflife.net).

### **Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County**

Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County is the parent non-profit of the Bay of Life Fund and will distribute donations collected through this program to local environmental nonprofits, as described above. Its mission is to bring together people, ideas, and resources to inspire philanthropy and accomplish great things. Its vision is to make Santa Cruz County thrive for all those who call it home, now and in the future.

The Community Foundation supports effective programs that address community issues and enrich the lives of Santa Cruz County residents. It earns trust through integrity, accountability, discretion, transparency, prudence, and extraordinary service. It leverages its resources toward a future that is just, equitable, and inclusive of a diverse community.

For more information, visit [cfsc.org](http://cfsc.org).

### **Frans Lanting and Chris Eckstrom**

Frans Lanting and Chris Eckstrom are partners in life and work. They promote knowledge and understanding about the Earth through images and stories that convey a sense of wonder and concern about our living planet. Through their work and alliances, they create leverage for conservation efforts ranging from local initiatives to global campaigns. Lanting and Eckstrom have brought their vast experience to the One Ride at a Time Campaign by providing imagery, written content, and partnerships.

#### ***Frans Lanting***

Frans Lanting has been hailed as one of the great photographers of our time. His influential work appears in books, magazines, and exhibitions around the world. Lanting's books include *Into Africa*, *LIFE*, *Jungles*, *Eye to Eye*, *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape*, and *Okavango*. Lanting is an ambassador for the World Wildlife Fund and has received numerous awards for his work, including the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year's first Lifetime Achievement Award. HRH Prince Bernhard inducted him as a Knight in the Royal Order of the Golden Ark, the Netherlands' highest conservation honor.

#### ***Chris Eckstrom***

Chris Eckstrom is a writer, editor, and videographer. She is the author of *Forgotten Edens*, and as a staff writer she contributed to many books published by the National Geographic Society. She earned a Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award for Best Magazine Article on Foreign Travel for her *National Geographic Traveler* story "The Last Real Africa." The editor of Lanting's books, she has also produced stories for the National Geographic Channel.

For more information: [lanting.com](http://lanting.com).

### **Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission**

GO Santa Cruz County is the ridesharing incentive program run by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC). Its online commute management tool, available to all who live or work in Santa Cruz County, is a key part of SCCRCC's ongoing effort to reduce drive-alone trips and greenhouse gas emissions and play an active role in addressing climate change. GO Santa Cruz County is partially funded by voter-approved Measure D, which provides a balanced vision to improve, operate and maintain Santa Cruz County's transportation network.

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) is committed to delivering a full range of safe, convenient, reliable, and efficient transportation choices for the community. With a focus on long-term sustainability, the SCCRCC provides transportation services, planning, and funding for all travel modes.

From projects that improve safety and traffic flow on highways, to pothole and sidewalk repair on local streets; from new and improved bicycle lanes and sidewalks, to support of public transit and paratransit services; from maintaining the existing transportation network to constructing projects that move more people; from help finding a carpool partner, to assisting stranded motorists — the SCCRTC proactively addresses transportation needs in our community.

Working together with transportation partners, the SCCRTC obtains and distributes funding, including voter-approved measure D funds, to maintain the existing transportation network as well as prepare for the transportation needs of the next generation. The SCCRTC keeps residents, business, and visitors moving wherever they want to go and however they choose to get there. For more information, visit [sccrtc.org](http://sccrtc.org).