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METRO Celebrates Launch of 'One Ride at a Time' with Special Public Event
Santa Cruz Mayor, Environmental Leaders, Transit CEOs to Speak

Santa Cruz, Calif. (March 22, 2023): Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) invites the public to a special event to celebrate the launch of One Ride at a Time, an exciting program that gives everyone in Santa Cruz County an opportunity to protect the region's extraordinary environmental resources just by riding the bus.

"This year METRO made a big commitment to protecting the environment. With the launch of One Ride at a Time in January, every ride on a METRO bus donates to our partners, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and Bay of Life Fund," said Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, METRO Board Chair. "This event is a way for us to share our commitment with the community and inspire residents to get involved."

The event will take place at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center, located at 35 Pacific Ave in Santa Cruz, from 2-4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29.

"The City of Santa Cruz is pleased to be the epicenter of One Ride at a Time," said Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley. "We're proud to be the kind of place where residents, artists, nonprofits and government agencies work hand in hand to protect what is precious to all of us: our beautiful Monterey Bay."

A public reception and open house will begin at 2 p.m. followed by a keynote address and speeches at 3:30 p.m. An exciting lineup of community and environmental leaders will speak, including Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent Lisa Wooninck, Ph.D., Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Chapter Director Ginaia Kelly, Bay of Life Project Photographer and Writer duo Frans Lanting and Christine Eckstrom, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Executive Director Guy Preston, METRO Board Chair Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, and METRO CEO/General Manager Michael Tree.

One Ride at a Time is made possible by a partnership between METRO, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), local environmental non-profit organizations, and renowned photographer-writer team Frans Lanting and Chris Eckstrom.

To promote the campaign, METRO is releasing 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. Six buses are currently in circulation with more coming later in the spring.

"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. "We encourage the community to come out and see the stunning new bus wraps in person at the event."

“The Exploration Center is the perfect place to celebrate the launch of One Ride at a Time,” said Ginaia Kelly, Chapter Director of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. “The Center and the campaign share common goals: to educate the community about our unique and fascinating local ecosystem, to foster a personal connection between our residents and the environment, and to inspire people to protect and care for our Monterey Bay.”

To learn more on METRO’s One Ride at a Time campaign and join METRO in protecting our local Monterey Bay visit, scmttd.com/onerideatatime.

About Us

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)

Established in 1968, METRO’S mission is to provide easy-to-use, convenient transportation for residents while protecting the environment and building better communities. 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 scmttd.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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 SCCRTC'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 SCCRTC 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.