



Customer Service
Contact:
(831) 425-8600

CUSTOMER ALERT

UPDATED APRIL 23, 2020

Santa Cruz METRO Announces COVID-19 Service Changes & Other Updated Changes

NOTE: Please read this Alert through to the end. All changes reflected on all pages are in effect today.

In response to the state's declaration of a State of Emergency because of the threat of COVID-19, and other recent federal, state and county guidance, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) is announcing sweeping changes, effective Monday, March 23, 2020.

On March 16, 2020, the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency directed all individuals living in the county to shelter at their place of residence except that they may leave to provide or receive certain essential services or engage in certain essential activities and work for essential businesses and government services until midnight on April 7, 2020. (Extended on March 31, 2020 through May 3, 2020).

<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/Shelter%20in%20Place%20Order%20March%2016%202020.pdf?ver=20200318>

<https://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/PHO Order Extending SIP 20200331.pdf>

On March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom ordered individuals living in the State of California to stay home or at their place of residence (shelter in place) except as needed to maintain continuity of operations of the federal critical infrastructure sectors. Included in the Governor's 16 critical infrastructure sectors is the Transportation Systems Sector – Mass Transit and Passenger Rail. This order goes into effect immediately and shall stay in effect until further notice.

<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/Governor%27s%20Executive%20Order%20N-33-20.pdf>

Mass transit is identified as an essential service or critical infrastructure in the State of California. Therefore, METRO will endeavor to provide fixed-route and paratransit service for as long as possible during this health pandemic.

<https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19>

EFFECTIVE APRIL 24, 2020 – ADDITIONAL SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Mandatory Face Coverings:** By Order of the Santa Cruz County Health Officer, effective 11:59pm on Friday, April 24th, all customers of the METRO system are required to wear a face covering when waiting for a bus at the bus stop and when riding the bus. This includes METRO's ParaCruz paratransit service.

“5. As used in this Order, a "Face Covering" means a covering made of cloth, fabric or permeable materials, without holes, that covers only the nose and mouth and surrounding areas of the lower face. A covering that hides or obscures the wearer's eyes or forehead is not a Face Covering. Examples of Face Coverings include a scarf or bandana; a neck gaiter; a homemade covering made from a t-shirt, sweatshirt, or towel, held on with rubber bands or otherwise; or a mask (which need not be medical grade). A Face Covering may be factory-made or may be handmade from ordinary household materials.”

<https://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/PHO%20Order%20Face%20Coverings%20April%2024.pdf?version=042320>

METRO will deny service to anyone not complying with the County Health Officer's Order

- **Memorial Day/Highway 17 Service:** METRO is further notifying customers that because of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the resulting low ridership on the Highway 17 service, METRO does not plan to run the Highway 17 service on Memorial Day, May 25, 2020.
- **Various Customer Complaints:** We are receiving a number of pass-up complaints. Please understand that if you are trying to ride METRO to a legitimate essential service or work (essential travel), we are doing everything possible to provide you service. If our bus operator passes you by, they are only doing so because their bus has reached its social distancing capacity.

All METRO buses are now limited to a maximum of 5 - 8 customers in order to provide both the bus operator and the riding public the proper social distancing while aboard a METRO bus. If our bus passes you up, please assume that the bus is at its rated capacity. We will not stop and notify you of this fact for obvious reasons.

We have also received numerous complaints about "joy riders" taking up the limited space that should be reserved for those needing legitimate essential travel. We are aware of this fact and have implemented a number of rules in an effort to discourage "joy riders." These rules can only go so far and METRO must apply these rules in a fair way.

Finally, please do not get upset at the bus operator or security personnel when they inquire about the nature of your travel. This is the only way for them to try and determine if your travel is essential travel. Given limited seating, the bus operator and security personnel will give priority seating to those passengers who can provide proof of essential travel to work and medical appointments.

We respectfully request that you please do everything possible to limit your rides on METRO to essential travel and please do not get upset at our bus operators when they have to pass you up at a bus stop or enforce the temporary rules.

We all look forward to the end of the COVID crisis and the return of normal METRO service. Please hang in there.

EFFECTIVE APRIL 9, 2020 – ADDITIONAL SERVICE CHANGES

- Highway 17 commuter service will be further reduced from its current weekend schedule to a new modified weekend schedule

<https://www.scmtd.com/en/routes/schedule/20203/17> (also see METRO website at www.scmtd.com or call Customer Service at: (831) 425-8600)

- In an effort to ensure social distance for all customers, all buses will be capacity restricted, offering between 5 – 12 seats maximum (ambulatory – Plus two ADA wheelchair) depending on the size of the bus. Capacity limitations will be enforced by the bus operator and security personnel. For the protection of METRO customers, numerous seats within the bus will be blocked and no standees will be allowed.
- Effective immediately, and in concert with recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, all customers boarding a METRO bus are **strongly encouraged** to cover their face with a face mask/cloth, bandana or other CDC recommended covering.

EFFECTIVE MARCH 30, 2020 – ADDITIONAL SERVICE CHANGES

METRO, in compliance with METRO's interpretation of the March 16, 2020 and March 31, 2020 County Health Services Agency Order:

BY ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, ALL INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ARE TO CONTINUE SHELTERING AT THEIR PLACE OF RESIDENCE THROUGH MAY 3, 2020.

<https://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/PHO Order Extending SIP 20200331.pdf>

7. Except for the purpose of Essential Travel, as defined below in Section 12.h, all travel is prohibited, including but not limited to, travel on foot, bicycle, scooter, motorcycle, automobile, or **public transit**. People may use public transit only for purposes of performing Essential Activities or to travel to and from work to operate Essential Businesses, maintain Essential Governmental Functions, or to perform Minimum Basic Operations at non-essential businesses. Transit agencies and people riding on public transit should comply with Social Distancing Requirements, as defined in Section 12.j, to the greatest extent feasible. This Order allows travel into or out of the County to perform Essential Activities, operate Essential Businesses, maintain Essential Governmental Functions, or perform Minimum Basic Operations at nonessential businesses.

12h. For the purposes of this Order, “Essential Travel” means travel for any of the following purposes:

- i. Travel related to the provision of or access to Essential Activities, Essential Governmental Functions, Essential Businesses, or Minimum Basic Operations.
- ii. Travel to care for any elderly, minors, dependents, or persons with disabilities.
- iii. Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for remote learning, for receiving meals, and any other related services.
- iv. Travel to return to a place of residence from outside the County.
- v. Travel required by law enforcement or court order.
- vi. Travel required for non-residents to return to their place of residence outside the County.
- vii. Travel to manage after-death arrangements and burial.
- viii. Travel to arrange for shelter or avoid homelessness.
- ix. Travel to avoid domestic violence or child abuse.
- x. Travel for parental custody arrangements.
- xi. Travel to a place to temporarily reside in a residence or other facility to avoid potentially exposing others to COVID-19, such as a hotel or other facility provided by a governmental authority for such purposes.

12j. For purposes of this Order, “Social Distancing Requirements,” means:

- i. Maintaining at least six-foot social distancing from individuals who are not part of the same household or living unit (except to the limited extent necessary to provide care, including childcare, adult or senior care, care to individuals with special needs, and patient care);
- ii. Frequently washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using hand sanitizer that is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as effective in combatting COVID-19;
- iii. Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or fabric or, if not possible, into the sleeve or elbow (but not into hands); and
- iv. Avoiding all social interaction outside the household when sick with a fever or cough.

PASSENGERS ENGAGED IN TRAVEL FOR ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES MAY ONLY BOARD THE BUS WITH EQUIPMENT, BAGS, BACKPACKS, ETC. THAT ARE NECESSARY TO THAT ACTIVITY, AND THAT CAN BE HELD ON THEIR LAP. NO ITEMS WILL BE ALLOWED TO BE PLACED ON ANOTHER SEAT, THE AISLES OR ON THE WHEEL WELL.

BAGS OR BELONGINGS NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE ESSENTIAL ACTIVITY OR THAT CANNOT BE CARRIED ON ONE'S LAP ARE NOT PERMITTED ON THE BUS.

PASSENGERS WAITING TO BOARD THE BUS MUST BE SIX FEET BEHIND OR AWAY FROM OTHER PASSENGERS. SIX FEET OF SOCIAL DISTANCING MUST BE MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES, BOTH ON THE BUS AND OFF THE BUS.

TRAVEL FOR NON-ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES IS A VIOLATION OF THE COUNTY SHELTER-IN-PLACE ORDER AND MAY BE REPORTED TO THE SHERIFF OR LOCAL POLICE.

PER THE COUNTY ORDER: "Violation of or failure to comply with this Order is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. (California Health and Safety Code § 120295, et seq.; Cal. Penal Code §§ 69, 148(a)(1))"

EFFECTIVE MARCH 30, 2020 – ADDITIONAL SERVICE CHANGES

Customers **will not** be allowed to re-board the same bus route they arrived on at the end of the route. All customer must leave the bus at the end of the route.

EFFECTIVE MARCH 27, 2020 – ADDITIONAL SERVICE CHANGES

In an effort to continue to serve the County Emeline Complex, on March 27, 2020 METRO reestablished the Route 4 on a modified schedule.

https://www.scmtd.com/media/bkg/20203/sched/rte_04.pdf

EFFECTIVE MARCH 23, 2020 – ADDITIONAL SERVICE CHANGES

In an effort to further protect METRO employees and the public during the COVID-19 health pandemic, the following changes took place on Monday, March 23, 2020:

- In an effort to respond to the severe decrease in ridership, and in an attempt to reduce METRO bus operators' exposure, all service provided by METRO Monday – Sunday (seven days/week) **will run daily on the Saturday - Sunday schedule** until further notice.

This change will result in fewer buses running; less frequency of service; later start times and earlier end times.

For further schedule/timetable information, customers should consult the METRO Headways Bus Riders Guide or the METRO website: www.scmtd.com or call Customer Service at: (831) 425-8600

- In an effort to provide METRO bus operators with social distancing, METRO reduced/eliminated the interface with customers at the farebox by **suspending the collection of fares** on buses and ParaCruz paratransit services until further notice.
- In an effort to provide bus operators with social distancing, all customers, with the following exceptions, will **enter and exit through the rear door** of the bus until further notice:
 - This applies to buses with two or more doors and is limited to buses in which the bus operator can actuate the rear door (newer buses). In all other cases, customers will continue to board at the front door and will not pay a fare.
 - Buses that will allow customers to enter at the rear door will have a sign on the front door directing them to do so.
 - Any customer who wishes to continue boarding and exiting through the front door for ADA purposes will be allowed to continue doing so.
- In an effort to provide bus operators with social distancing, **flip seats at the front of the bus in the mobility securement area are restricted to ADA customers using mobility devices only** – no ambulatory or general seating. This applies on all fixed-route buses, including Highway 17 commuter buses.
- To provide operators with social distancing, customers are restricted from standing in the restricted securement area and will be required to sit in available seating toward the middle or rear of the bus, keeping at least six feet of separation from other customers.
- Effective immediately, and until further notice, the METRO Customer Service window and private vendor food and mini-mart services, including restroom facilities, at both Pacific Station and the Watsonville Transit Center have been suspended and the transit center lobbies are closed. **However, bus operations will continue at these facilities.**
- Customer Service will continue to receive calls at: **(831) 425-8600.**
- METRO Administration is closed to the public until further notice.

EFFECTIVE MARCH 18, 2020 –SERVICE CHANGES

All School Term Service (ST) was suspended on March 18, 2020 until further notice.

EFFECTIVE MARCH 17, 2020 –SERVICE CHANGES

In an effort to provide social distancing for drivers and customers on ParaCruz services, on March 17, 2020 ParaCruz paratransit services started prioritizing customers requiring service to/from essential services such as doctor's appointments and dialysis. All other trips will continue to be served, but not necessarily on the schedule requested by the customer.

How can customers help?

- Don't ride METRO if you are sick
- Always wear a face mask/cloth, bandana or other CDC recommended face-wear
- Do not stand while the bus is in motion
- Please do not get upset at the bus operator if he/she has to pass you by due to temporary capacity restrictions. This temporary policy is in place for your safety and the safety of the bus operator.
- Board AND exit through the rear door whenever possible
- Do not attempt to engage the bus operator in conversation and never dwell near the front of the bus when boarding or exiting the bus
- If you do not qualify for "Essential Travel," as defined above, please stay home. We need to preserve our limited capacity on the buses and ParaCruz for people who must travel for Essential Activities.
- While onboard a bus, always observe "social distancing" (at least 6' between people). If there are too many people on the bus, consider taking the next bus.
- Never try to sit in a blocked seat.
- Do not stand near the bus operator or in the restricted ADA securement area
- Do not consume food or beverages while onboard the bus
- Consider adjusting your Essential Travel trips to off-peak periods (non-commute periods)
- Limit carry-on items. No personal items are allowed in the aisle, restricted areas, on the wheel well or empty seats, and all carry-on items must be carried on one's lap.
- Be considerate and courteous to other riders and the bus operator
- Following the CDC COVID-19 Prevention tips posted on the buses and the CDC website
- Consider that on March 10, 2020, the California Department of Public Health stated in part, that high-risk individuals should "Avoid crowds, mass gatherings or large events, and public transit, and stay home as much as possible."

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/>

<http://santacruzhealth.org/>