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Santa Cruz METRO to Host Public Meetings and Hearing on Free Fare Program

Santa Cruz, CA, Sept. 2, 2019 – Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District is now accepting public comment on its proposal to offer free fares to individuals who are legally blind.

The program is meant to address concerns raised regarding the operation of Santa Cruz METRO Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) for customers with visual impairments. The program would remain in place until the TVMs can be replaced with improved equipment.

Customers interested in providing public comment on the program, may e-mail comments, attend an open house and provide comments in person or in writing, attend the public hearing to provide comments, or leave comments by voicemail.

Open House

METRO Center
Wednesday, Sept. 18
8 – 9 a.m. & 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
920 Pacific Ave.
Santa Cruz

Public Hearing

Santa Cruz City Hall
Friday, September 27
9 a.m. (or as soon as the Board reaches this agenda item)
809 Center Street
Council Chambers
Santa Cruz

Program Details

METRO is proposing a free fare program for customers who can provide medical certification that they are “legally blind.” The program would be discontinued once METRO has the funding to replace its existing TVMs or substitute other new technologies (e.g., mobile ticketing applications) in their place.

Legal blindness is a designation used by government agencies when evaluating who is eligible for certain disability and other benefits. Customers meeting this designation will be able to apply for a special pass that indicates to the bus operator that they may ride for free. These passes will be available to qualifying customers, whether they are local to the Santa Cruz and the Bay Area, or visitors from other areas. No customer with a qualifying visual impairment is required to apply for the special pass to use METRO's transit service, as they may continue to purchase tickets from customer service representatives or use other available methods if they choose to pay for transit services on METRO.

Customers wishing to qualify would need to provide appropriate documentation to receive a special identification card indicating their eligibility to ride for free.

Comments may be providing by leaving a voicemail at (831) 420-2550 or by e-mailing outreach@scmtd.com.

About Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Established in 1968, Santa Cruz METRO provides 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 operates Paracruz paratransit service to Santa Cruz County service, providing about 72,000 trips per year. METRO's operating budget in FY19 is \$52 million and is funded through a combination of farebox revenues, sales tax and state and federal sources. Today it operates a fleet of 98 buses on 26 fixed routes. For more information, visit www.scmtd.com.