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Contact: Danielle Glagola
(831) 420-2550
dglagola@scmttd.com
scmttd.com



METRO Encourages Prioritization of Public Transportation Workers in the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

Santa Cruz, CA (Tuesday, January 5, 2021) - The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) encourages the California Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Vaccine Drafting Guidelines Workgroup to include essential public transit workers to be included in the Phase 1B- Tier 2 vaccine distribution plan, making vaccines available to essential public transit workers as soon as January 2021.

METRO is requesting that public transit workers be included in Phase 1B- Tier 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan, consistent with the interim recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

Throughout the pandemic, California's public transportation agencies have played a critical role in transporting essential workers to their jobs in health care, education, food service and hospitality. Additionally, public transportation agencies have continued to provide critical services to elderly and disabled people throughout California, often serving as a lifeline. Public transit workers have supported these Californians directly by operating bus and ParaCruz services that get them to their destinations safely by sanitizing transit facilities and vehicles to limit the spread of the virus, consistent with federal, state and local guidance, as well as installing additional onboard safety measures, and enforcing additional prevention measures.

Given the clear societal, economic and equity benefits of the services public transit workers provide, METRO believes it would be a significant mistake for the state to fail to include public transit workers in Phase 1B – Tier 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Much like health care professionals, emergency service workers and food and agricultural workers, public transit workers provide an essential service, cannot work from home, and must interact with the public in the course of their duties.

As the pandemic subsides, public transit service will be vital to a balanced recovery and the continued health of our public transit workers must be a top priority for the state. Please join METRO in advocating for the health & safety of all public transit workers in California and encouraging the California Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Vaccine Drafting Guidelines Workgroup to include public transit workers in Phase 1B – Tier 2 of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan in their next public meeting being held January 6, 2021 at 3PM PST by emailing covid19vaccineoutreach@cdph.ca.gov.

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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, 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 it operates a fleet of 102 buses on 26 fixed-routes. For more information, visit www.scmttd.com.