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Reimagine METRO Service Changes Begin Dec. 21
METRO to offer free fares on all buses from Dec. 21-Jan. 4

Santa Cruz, CA (Dec. 14, 2023): Waves of change are coming to the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO). Beginning Thursday, Dec. 21, METRO will implement major bus service improvements as part of Reimagine METRO, a systemwide service restructuring effort whose goals are to increase service, adapt to post-Covid travel patterns, and create a more useful and attractive transit network.

“We are thrilled to roll out our first big wave of bus system improvements,” said METRO Board Chair, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson. “From expanding our service coverage to offering free transfers, the goal of Reimagine METRO is transform public transit in Santa Cruz County to better meet the needs of our community.”

The changes scheduled for December encompass several key improvements, such as increasing service coverage, providing higher frequency in areas with substantial transit demand, and establishing more straightforward and direct routes, particularly in Watsonville. Other changes include improved transfer options resulting in shorter wait times, modifications to route numbers and names, and adjustments to bus stop locations and street coverage for bus service.

To help riders get accustomed to the new Reimagine METRO network, **METRO will offer free fares** countywide on all services, including fixed-route, Highway 17, and ParaCruz, **from Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023-Thursday, Jan.4, 2024.**

Specific service changes coming Dec. 21 include:

- Higher frequency service between Watsonville and Santa Cruz:
 - A bus every 15 minutes between Santa Cruz and Watsonville
 - A bus every 10-20 minutes at Cabrillo College
 - A bus every 30 minutes (or better) on all of Soquel Drive
- The return of an express route between Watsonville and Santa Cruz during peak commute times
- Continued 15-minute service on Routes 18 and 19
- A new route connecting the UCSC campus to Live Oak and Capitola Mall

A Reimagine METRO Phase 1 system map can be viewed [here](#).

In addition, METRO will make changes to its fare and pass offerings. Beginning Dec. 21, METRO will offer **free transfers** for riders on all routes, including Highway 17. Transfers will be issued only after a request from a rider and will be effective for 2 hours. Transfers from a local to a Highway 17 bus will require

payment of an “upgrade fare” equal to the difference between a local and Highway 17 fare. Ticket vending machines (**TVMs**) **will be retired on Dec. 20**, coinciding with the start of the two-week free-fare period. After Jan. 4, tickets and passes can be purchased online at scmetro.org or via METRO’s Splash Pass app, available for download on Google Play or the Apple App Store or at one of METRO’s Customer Service Windows located at Pacific Station and the Watsonville Transit Center.

“In the months leading up to this change, we conducted extensive community outreach to understand the priorities and challenges of our riders and stakeholders,” said METRO Vice Chair and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Chair Elect, Kristen Brown. “We listened to feedback about our current system, and these changes are the best options that METRO can provide with current funding and even more changes will be coming in the next wave in 2024.”

In the coming months, Reimagine METRO with *WAVE SERVICE*, the second phase of bus service changes will also roll out that includes a planned free fare pilot starting Fall 2024 through December 2026 across all services. More details will be coming 2024.

For more information on Reimagine METRO visit scmetro.org/reimagine or to view METRO’s Winter Schedule visit <https://scmtd.com/en/routes/schedule/202420>.

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 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 scmetro.org.