

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

March 19, 2026

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and Committee member comments are paraphrased. The full comment can be heard by reviewing the recording at the [MTS website](#).]

1. **Roll Call**

Chair Fernandez called the Accessible Services Advisory Committee (ASAC) meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. A roll call sheet listing ASAC member attendance is attached as Attachment A.

2. **Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member David Marino moved to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2025, MTS ASAC meeting. Committee Member Rene Rodriguez seconded the motion, and the vote was 10 to 0 in favor with Debbie Marshall, Tarrence Lewis, Irene Santiesteban, and Letty Zuno absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. **Fare Change Study Update (Mark Olson and Leanne Powell)**

Mark Olson, MTS Director of Marketing and Communications, and Leanne Powell, Fare Systems Administrator, presented on the Fare Change Study Update. They presented on: Fare change study background, strategy for filling the budget gap, what does \$23M mean. Phase I Outreach recap, package development, drafting fare change proposals, fare change proposals: high level, Package A, Package B. Phase II Engagement goals, Phase II Outreach, Phase II online survey results, and fare change study timeline.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Lordson asked how paratransit riders feel about the Senior Disabled Medicare (SDM) fares increase of \$6 to \$7. Mr. Olsen responded that staff is also eager to obtain those results from the public and staff would report back with the results.

Committee Member Marino asked when and how the MTS Access survey would be distributed. Mr. Olsen explained the survey would be distributed in the next couple of days and it would continue until March 31st. and it will be distributed through email, and seat drops. Mr. Marino, thanked staff for their efforts on the study as he knows it does take a lot of extra work. He added that he believes the public understands that fares need to slightly increase.

Committee Member Ball asked how these rates would impact individuals that receive disability discounts. Mr. Olsen answered he did not believe the fare increase would have a direct impact on any other discounts that they currently receive from outside sources.

Committee Member Marino added that the previous question may have been to clarify if the discounts would change or be discontinued.

Committee Member Rodriguez asked if in the future a survey could be conducted for clients at the Reginal Center. Mr. Olsen repeated Mr. Rodriguez questions for clarification and added that at the moment they will not be holding any additional surveys as staff does not believe it will change the results of the two fare increase packages. He added that in case the fare increase does move forward staff will conduct another round of outreach to the public.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

5. Fixed Route and Trolley Update (Keith Vann and Aaron Pitt)

Keith Vann, MTS Manager of Service Operations, and Aaron Pitt, Manager of Special Operations presented on Fixed Route and Trolley Updates. They outlined: fixed route overview, December Nights, service change, Rock N Roll Marathon. Santa Fe Depot construction, rider quality enhancements, 2026 special event services: upcoming sports seasons and special events. Construction projects; Orange Line Improvement Project, grade crossing replacements, and Blue Line tie replacement & Beyer slope.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Ball asked what visual alert systems or safety alerts could be implemented for people with hearing impairments or those who are deaf and if captions were being displayed on the trains. Mr. Pitt responded that there are digital signs on the trains that provide information and that audio messages were recently implemented and is now available for riders with visual impairments.

Committee Member Gembler asked if the December nights travel time was a one-way trip from start point in downtown to the park drop off or if it was a roundtrip. Mr. Vann clarified that it was a round trip from City College to Balboa Park and back to City College.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

6. EZ-Wallet Overview (Vassilena Hycz)

Vassilena Hycz, MTS Manager of Paratransit and Minibus presented on an overview of EZ-Wallet Overview. What EZ-Wallet, one stop shop, freedom to travel, rider experience, 24/7 Account Management, flexibility, secure transaction and reduced risk.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Marino asked if a trip is booked over the phone would the customer still be able to use EZ Wallet. Ms. Hycz explained that EZ Wallet would be available for over the phone reservations. She added that the rider could also opt to pay with a pre-paid ticket or cash at the time of the reservation, and the type of payment will be noted on the account for the driver to see at the time of pickup. Mr. Marino asked when making a telephone reservation, would the payment have to be made online or on the bus. Ms. Hycz stated that payment could be made at

the time of the phone reservation, she also stated that the EZ Wallet could not be used at the time of pickup.

Committee Member Lordson asked if EZ Wallet would be available for agencies that pre-purchase tickets and mail them to riders. Ms. Hycz answered that this would be a possibility and staff would continue to discuss and figure out the logistics further.

Chair Fernandez commented that he looked forward to getting a demo and seeing what the user experience would look like.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. Same Day Paratransit Report (Britany Bardales)

Britnay Bardales, Transdev Assistant General Manager, presented on Same Day Service. She presented on general information, highlights, breakdown of statistics, and same day vs regular ridership.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Merino thanked staff for implementing the same day service as he has used the service himself. He asked if there had been noticeable difference in slack time since the implementation of same-day service. Ms. Bardales confirmed they have noticed a difference and is happy to hear the service is working.

Committee Member Gembler asked if there were plans to also have access to book same day service online and asked if the cost is a \$10 flat fare. Ms. Bardales responded that online booking has not been discussed as they are still in the pilot phase, she also confirmed that the fare is a flat fee of \$10.

Ms. Bardales introduced Damon Dash, General Manager for Paratransit and Minibus. Mr. Dash mentioned he is new to San Diego and was grateful how welcoming MTS and the team has been and expressed his excitement to be at MTS and do wonderful things for the community.

8. Certification Eligibility Process (Herberto Gaytan)

Herberto Gaytan, MTM Project Manager, presented on Certification Eligibility Process. He presented on MTS Access Services, MTS Access eligibility process, functional assessments, applications, MTS Access contact.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

There were no Committee Member Comments.

9. San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Access Update and Medical Transportation Management (MTM) Report (Vassilena Hycz)

Vassilena Hycz, MTS Manager of Paratransit and Minibus, presented on San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Access Update and Medical Transportation Management

(MTM) Report. She Presented on: MTS Access overview, access/subcontractor OTP, access/subcontractor combined ridership, access/subcontractor complaints, and access eligibility total assessments.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Rodriguez asked whether ridership was higher during the weekday or weekends and if the increase in ridership was due to riders traveling to jobs, medical appointments and school. Ms. Hycz responded that ridership is higher during the weekday. She also offered to provide a report to pinpoint what days and times during the week ridership is higher.

Committee Member Marino asked if there was a decrease in bus drivers as he recalled there being approximately 200+ drivers and the report states only 125 drivers. Ms. Hycz explained that the report accounts for the active drivers as some drivers could be out on leave. She stated that the driver pool has been consistent at 125 to 135. Mr. Marino asked about the pending strike and if there was a contingency plan. Mike Wygant, Chief Operating Officer, responded that Transdev was currently in contract negotiations as the minibus contract was scheduled to expire at the end of March and added that MTS is not part of the contract negotiations. He stated that MTS had a contingency plan in place and expressed hope that there would be minimal to no impact to riders. Committee Member thanked Mr. Wygant for his response on the matter and stated that he would continue to monitor the strike, noting the impact in service could have a detrimental impact on riders who rely on transportation for medical, school and other appointments.

Chair Fernandez asked how complaints were being tracked and if there were any categories such as by theme or topic. Ms. Hycz responded that each complaint is tracked by description, what was reported or what the outcome was. Chair Fernandez requested to see themes and topics during the next report.

Committee Member Marino asked for clarification on the process to leave a customer complaint, asking if there was a designated phone line to call and leave a voicemail to a supervisor. Ms. Hycz explained the complaint could be submitted through MTS Customer Service by phone or online. She added that complaints received directly by her or Transdev were forwarded to MTS Customer Service as they are responsible to forward them to the appropriate department, tracking them and ensuring follow up. Mr. Marino asked if a customer called to make a complaint and they were transferred to the leave a message for the supervisor, would that then be the wrong process to follow. He also asked where the MTS Customer Service Line could be found. Ms. Hycz responded that the preferred process is to call MTS Customer Service, as staff could forward the complaint to the appropriate department for review and follow up. She added that MTS Customer Service could also access and review available resources, such as video footage and phone recordings, to assist in resolving any complaints. Ms. Hycz mentioned that ASAC Clerk, Diana Hernandez, would send out MTS Customer Service contact information.

OTHER ITEMS

10. Committee Member Communications

Committee Member Rodville announced the upcoming events for National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): May 2nd 12:30pm – 5:30pm, 12th annual Mental Health and Wellness

Celebration, at Liberty Station, March 25th telling your story training, and March 27th 3:00pm – 4:30p public comment feedback regarding BHSA.

Committee Member Lordson announced that San Diego Regional Center (SDRC) entered into a contract with Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT). As part of the contract, FACT would provide transportation services to SDRC clients who ride requests could not be accommodated by SDRC. He also announced his retirement and thanked staff for the years and mentioned he has been part of ASAC for the past 20 years. Chair Fernandez thanked Committee Member Lordson for his years of service with ASAC.

Committee Member Rodriguez asked if MTS was hiring minibus drivers during the strike and contract negotiations. Mr. Wygant responded that the minibus and paratransit drivers were under the same collective bargaining agreement and the strike would have an impact on both groups of drivers. He added that he is optimistic that both parties could find a reasonable solution. Mr. Rodriguez asked if more drivers were going to be hired. Mr. Wygant responded that there are some limitations with CBA, but the contingency plan could include subcontractors.

Committee Member Hernandez announced that the RideFACT NOW program was in effect and prioritizes on demand, same day wheelchair accessible services. He stated that the program had a slow start but was gradually picking up and was in full service. He added that they still offered the preschedule service and that FACT was available to assist MTS with their services.

Committee Member Ahn announced that Senate Bill (SB) 960, Caltrans has been committed to establishing a California Transit Advisory Committee (CALTAC). She said the committee's primary objective was to support the development of transit related initiatives, promote equity and accessibility, offer informed policy recommendations, and enhance community engagement efforts. She explained that the members represent partner agencies, staff and professional advocates in the state of California with experience in planning, designing, maintaining, evaluating and delivering public transit programs and facilities for transit users. She announced that anyone interested in submitting an application, should do so by April 30th through the Caltrans' CALTAC website.

11. Next Meeting Date

The next ASAC meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2026, at 1:00PM.

12. Adjournment

Chair Fernandez adjourned the meeting at 2:13pm.

/S/ Cesar Fernandez
Chairperson, ASAC
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/ Diana Hernandez
Committee Clerk
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: A. Roll Call Sheet

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC) MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): March 19, 2026

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:00PM

ADJOURN: 2:13PM

COMMITTEE MEMBER		ALTERNATE		ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Voting Committee Members						
Cesar Fernandez (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	ASAC Chair	1:00PM	2:13PM
Letty Zuno	<input type="checkbox"/>	VACANT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Access to Independence	ABSENT	ABSENT
Christian Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arun Prem	<input type="checkbox"/>	FACT (CTSA)	1:00PM	2:13PM
Debbie Marshall	<input type="checkbox"/>	VACANT	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	ABSENT	ABSENT
Todd Lordson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Shane Hughes	<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Regional Center	1:00PM	2:13PM
Marianela Camarillo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kimberly Taylor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Center for the Blind	1:00PM	2:13PM
Tim Garrett	<input type="checkbox"/>	Benjamin Gemler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SANDAG	1:00PM	2:13PM
Alyssa Ahn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniela Turner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caltrans	1:00PM	2:13PM
Melissa Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jacob Carson	<input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego AIS	1:00PM	2:13PM
Irene Santiesteban	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christine Moore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
David Marino	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eugenia Kainz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer	1:00PM	2:13PM
Rose Napoleon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rene Rodriguez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer	1:00PM	2:13PM
Terrence Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walter Castillo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
Monique Ball	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wendy Merritt	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deaf Community Services	1:00PM	2:13PM
Kacie Rodvill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Betsy Knight	<input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services	1:00PM	2:13PM

COMMITTEE CLERK: /s/ Diana Hernandez