

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

June 18, 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 1:01 p.m. A roll call sheet listing ASAC member attendance is attached as Attachment A.

2. Public Comments

Patrick Macintosh – provided a verbal statement to the committee during the meeting. Patrick commented on fare increases, stating that it was fair when compared to other transit agencies and the price of gas in California.

3. Approval of Minutes

Committee Member David Merino moved to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2026, MTS ASAC meeting. Committee Member Rene Rodriguez seconded the motion, and the vote was 10 to 0 in favor with Marianela Camarillo, Kacie Rodvill, Tarrence Lewis, Irene Santiesteban, and Letty Zuno absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Support Services Overview and Results (Amanda Denham)

Amanda Denham, MTS Director of Support Services, presented on San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Support Services Overview and Results. She presented on: Overview of support services, MTS customer service, MTS information & trip planning, PRONTO support center, MTS transit store, passenger support team, ride check program, data driven collaboration, system wide collaboration, 2025 KPI summary, dedicated team and customer experience focused.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Prem inquired regarding awareness of alternatives to MTS Access, specifically asking how staff assist riders that are outside of the service area and how they would be connected to alternative options such as Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT). Ms. Denham explained that all teams would be able to answer basic questions regarding MTS Access alternatives, the MTS Access certification process, and other resources throughout San Diego County. She stated for questions that could not be answered, customer service staff would provide further details. She continued that for more specific questions, staff would connect riders directly to reservations at Access or connect them to other resources such as FACT. Ms. Denham noted that staff have a robust list of alternative resources. Committee Member Prem acknowledged the referrals FACT receives from MTS for riders who are unfamiliar with the system.

Committee Member Merino thanked staff for their hard work and noted the importance of sharing department phone numbers so that they can be utilized by all riders.

Committee Member Rodriguez asked if staff has received data from the customer service team regarding Padres games. Ms. Denham responded that there was an increase in calls and ridership during Padres games as it is the peak season. She explained that the passenger support team experiences the highest influx due to their physical presence at the stations, with teams strategically placed throughout the service area to assist riders in and out of Petco Park. Committee member Rodriguez commented on the upcoming concert and Comic-Con. Ms. Denham responded that the passenger support team is made up of 35 to 45 employees, and staff is strategic about where the team is deployed during big events. She highlighted the packed special event calendar, emphasizing that the summer peak season is welcomed by the department.

Committee Member Marshall sought clarification on whether the list of MTS Access alternatives and resources is available by calling MTS or if it is posted online. Ms. Denham noted she would confirm where the information is stored and offered to provide this information to the Committee. Committee Member Marshall suggested that publishing these resources online would benefit the community rather than having to contact customer service.

Committee Member Marshall requested further explanation on the PRONTO support center and partners processing reduced fare applications. Ms. Denham explained that the PRONTO Partners program allows MTS to contract with businesses, schools, and organizations. She stated that this program originated from prior programs called Employer Commuter Option (ECO) and PRONTO Partners Plus (PPP), which allowed individual sites to administer PRONTO passes on behalf of their employees or clients. She stated that the framework has evolved to include online verification through the institutional partner website without minimum purchasing requirements. She also stated that this program primarily supports age-based certifications. She added that MTS could modify contracts for sites whose eligibility criteria aligned with MTS and would allow those sites to use social security award letters or Medicare as verification. Ms. Denham highlighted the San Diego Regional Center (SDRC) as an approved verifier with an institutional portal which allows them to certify client photos, date of birth, and eligibility without the client having to go through the long form process. She stated there are about 150 current institutional partners through the program and that it continues to grow.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

5. Service Animal Day (Ariel Kroll)

Ariel Kroll, MTS Community Engagement Specialist, presented on Service Animal Day. She presented on: What is service animal day, topics covered, accessibility on access, accessibility on trolley, and presented several images from the event.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Chair Fernandez thanked staff for hosting the event and providing the opportunity for the passengers.

Committee Member Marshall asked if MTS would be hosting the event in the future. Ms. Kroll answered yes and noted that the event could possibly occur annually. She noted there were

only three participants but is optimistic about higher attendance as word spreads and additional events are held. Committee Member Marshall asked how the event was advertised. Ms. Kroll explained that staff reached out to organizations that work with the disabled community as well as MTS Access riders known to utilize service animals. She added that the event was not necessarily open to the general public.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

6. San Diego Accessible Rider Coalition (SDARC) Update (Kate Pecora)

Kate Pecora, Founder and past Chair of SDARC, presented on the background and future updates of SDARC. She provided an overview on: What is the San Diego Accessible Rider Coalition, November 2025 first meeting, goals, monthly meetings, collaborators in attendance, and how to get involved.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Vazquez reiterated Caltrans' support for the group and stated that Caltrans was excited to have hosted SDARC in November. She expressed her commitment to the group to help them elevate to the statewide level. Committee Member Vasquez added how happy she was to have been part of the recent election process and thanked Ms. Pecora for the presentation.

Committee Member Merino acknowledged Ms. Pecora for her hard work and dedication to setting the foundation and providing structure for him as the incoming Chair. He stated it was an exciting organization primarily comprised of riders who collaborate with partners across the county. Committee Member Merino reiterated the invitation to join via Google form to receive SDARC meeting updates. He added that the next meeting is scheduled for August 6th at 3pm via Zoom.

Committee Member Prem thanked Ms. Pecora for the presentation and acknowledged Mr. Merino for leading the coalition.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. Fixed Route and Trolley Updates (Vassilena Hycz and Aaron Pitt)

Vassilena Hycz, MTS Manager of Paratransit and Minibus, and Aaron Pitt, Manager of Special Operations presented on Fixed Route and Trolley Updates. They outlined: fixed route overview, service change, Santa Fe Depot construction, UCSD Triton Center project, Pride parade, Trolley overview, rider quality enhancements, 2026 special event services: Comic-Con, sporting events, concerts, constructions projects: Orange Line improvement project, passenger outreach, grade crossing replacements, Blue Line tie replacements and Beyer slope.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Gembler asked about accommodations for individuals with disabilities during closures. Mr. Pitt responded that Passenger Service Representatives (PSR) are stationed at turnaround points and affected stations to prevent confusion and direct riders to where buses are located. PSRs are also able to provide riders with additional information regarding the closures. He added that closure information is made available on the MTS website to ensure riders are prepared. Committee Member Gembler asked for clarification on trolley schedules during special events and if schedules are based on time frequency or capacity. Mr. Pitt clarified that trolley schedules generally adhered to a 15-minute headway with an additional one to three trolleys depending on the event size to assist with crowd control. He added that these trolleys might remain at stations until they reach capacity, at which point on-site staff monitoring the station would signal the operator to depart. Mr. Pitt explained that during post-events, additional trolleys are dispatched as trolleys at these stations reach capacity. He mentioned that pre-event arrivals typically stagger naturally and do not experience capacity constraints and added that during weekdays, additional trolleys are put in service to reduce delays and improve overall service reliability.

8. 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: Transdev strike, MTS Access overview, Access/subcontractor On Time Performance (OTP), Access/subcontractor combined ridership, Access/subcontractor complaints, Access eligibility total assessments, and Coronado free summer shuttle.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Merino commended staff for managing the recent strike and that it was much smoother than previous ones. Committee Member Merino added that he was impressed with the contractor, America West, and how they operated their shuttle service during the strike. He stated that America West was uniformed, had clean vans, performed connections correctly, treated the riders well, and overall were great contractors. He asked if Access would utilize America West in the future. Ms. Hycz clarified that Transdev would have to make that determination based on service demands. Committee Member Merino responded that America West was great, he thanked all the contractors and Ms. Hycz for navigating the strike, and he was glad it was over.

Committee Member Prem thanked Ms. Hycz for the presentation and inquired whether the Access service is free in Coronado year-round or exclusively during the Coronado Free Summer Shuttle period. Ms. Hycz clarified that the service is only free from June 7 through September 7.

Committee Member Rodriguez asked where riders could board the shuttle to go to NASCAR. Ms. Hycz explained that the shuttle would not service the NASCAR event and that the route operates from City Hall to the Coronado Marriott. She further explained that routes 901 and 904 would not be servicing NASCAR despite it taking place in Coronado.

Chair Fernandez noted that between 2025 and 2026, late pickups nearly doubled, while late drop-offs remained steady and that riders should possibly book their trips based on a drop-off time. He then asked if there were any staffing or operational challenges that led to this. Ms.

Hycz responded that there were staffing challenges in September and October and that Transdev brought in subcontractors to assist with trips. She added that performance began to improve shortly thereafter. Chair Fernandez mentioned that the presentation advertised the Coronado Free Summer Shuttle and asked if the two free shuttle lines in Chula Vista were also advertised to this committee. Ms. Hycz said that they were not advertised. Chair Fernandez announced that the Chula Vista shuttles travel from the Gaylord Resort and Convention Center to the E Street and H Street trolley stations and Third Avenue. He added that the shuttles are free, ADA compliant, and air-conditioned.

Committee Member Vazquez asked for clarification on whether the Coronado Free Summer Shuttle was a pilot program intended for potential future expansion or if it is just a summer program. Ms. Hycz explained that the service is provided every year and has been a successful partnership between the City of Coronado and MTS, expecting it to continue in the future. Ms. Hycz noted that the service started earlier this year in June, rather than its historical start date of July 1.

Committee Member Merino asked how the shuttle was provided at no cost and whether the City of Coronado was offsetting the cost. Ms. Hycz confirmed that MTS provides staff ridership data for reimbursement purposes as part of the collaborative partnership.

OTHER ITEMS

9. Committee Member Communications

Committee Member Gembler gave an update on the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) regional comprehensive fare ordinance. He stated that on June 12, the Transportation Committee held the first reading of the proposed amendments to the regional comprehensive fare ordinance, following a yearlong fare change study conducted in collaboration with MTS and the North County Transit District (NCTD). A second reading and vote to approve the changes were scheduled for the July 17 Transportation Committee meeting. He stated that if approved and ratified, the new fares would go into effect October 1, 2026, and October 1, 2027, for the phase two changes. He noted that additional information regarding the proposed fare changes can be found by visiting sandag.org/fares or by e-mail at fares@sandag.org.

Committee Member Gembler highlighted two upcoming opportunities for organizations supporting older adults and individuals with disabilities to provide input on the Specialized Transportation Grant Program (STGP) Cycle 14 call for projects and the Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA) solicitation. Committee Member Gembler announced SANDAG will be hosting several sessions to gather feedback on regional CTSA needs, program requirements, funding opportunities, and draft evaluation criteria.

Committee Member Gembler provided information on several upcoming events at SANDAG: the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) on June 23, 2026 at 10:00am, a virtual STGP stakeholder workshop on June 24, 2026 at 10:00am, and the Transportation Committee meeting on July 17, 2026 at 9:00am. He added this information is posted on the SANDAG website and for additional information to email grantsdistribution@sandag.org or to reach out to him after the meeting.

Committee Member Vazquez clarified that while her predecessor, Alyssa Ahn, remains on the Caltrans transit team handling transportation planning in District 11, their roles separated as transit has grown significantly in state planning. She noted that she would be overseeing the paratransit, ADA, and microtransit initiatives at the state level and would be increasing her visibility within advocacy partnerships. Committee Member Vazquez shared a personal

milestone being a part of this committee alongside Assistant General Manager at Transdev, Britany Bardales, noting they both began their careers at First Transit and acknowledged their accomplishments within the transportation field.

Committee Member Vazquez provided Caltrans updates, announcing that the district transit plan is moving into phase 2B between July and August, which would focus on engaging transit-adjacent groups such as MTS, FACT, and SDARC. She noted that Alyssa Anh would be leading the outreach for this phase, and to expect communication from herself or Ms. Anh in the coming weeks.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next ASAC meeting is scheduled for September 17, 2026, at 1:00pm.

11. Adjournment

Chair Fernandez adjourned the meeting at 2:23pm.

/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): June 18, 2026

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:01 PM

ADJOURN: 2:24 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBER		ALTERNATE		ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Voting Committee Members						
Cesar Fernandez (Chair)	☒	None	☐	ASAC Chair	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Letty Zuno	☐	VACANT	☐	Access to Independence	ABSENT	ABSENT
Christian Hernandez	☐	Arun Prem	☒	FACT (CTSA)	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Debbie Marshall	☒	VACANT	☐	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Shane Hughes	☒	VACANT	☐	San Diego Regional Center	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Marianela Camarillo	☐	Kimberly Taylor	☐	San Diego Center for the Blind	ABSENT	ABSENT
Tim Garrett	☐	Benjamin Gembler	☒	SANDAG	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Sandra Vazquez	☒	Daniela Turner	☐	Caltrans	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Melissa Hernandez	☒	Jacob Carson	☐	County of San Diego AIS	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Irene Santiesteban	☐	Christine Moore	☐	Paratransit Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
David Marino	☒	Eugenia Kainz	☐	Paratransit Consumer	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Rose Napoleon	☐	Rene Rodriguez	☒	Fixed Route Consumer	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Tarrence Lewis	☐	Walter Castillo	☐	Fixed Route Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
Monique Ball	☒	Wendy Merritt	☐	Deaf Community Services	1:01 PM	2:24 PM
Kacie Rodvill	☐	Betsy Knight	☐	County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services	ABSENT	ABSENT

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/ Diana Hernandez