

MTS Upgrades Blue Line Trolleys

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MTS in San Diego has launched new Siemens trolleys as part of the trolley renewal program underway in the system.

The Jan. 27 introduction of new low-floor Trolley cars on the Blue Line will provide more than 50,000 weekday passengers with faster trips, easier boarding and more comfortable rides. Running from the U.S.-Mexico border through Downtown San Diego, the Blue Line is the busiest transit line in the San Diego region, providing more than 15 million passenger trips in FY 2014.

To mark the start of low-floor service on the Blue Line, the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) along with local dignitaries, community members and contractors held a celebration at the 8th Street Station in National City.

“This is a significant milestone for our region’s Trolley network,” said MTS Board Chairman Harry Mathis. “The low-floor design will make our entire transit system more efficient. Additionally, upgrades at Blue Line stations – such as 8th Street and 24th Street – will vastly improve bus and Trolley connections.”

The launch of low-floor service on the Blue Line is part of a \$660 million effort to modernize the entire Trolley system. Trolley Renewal is funded primarily by California Proposition 1B bond funds and TransNet, the regional

half-cent sales tax for transportation administered by SANDAG. In addition to low-floor cars, Trolley Renewal included new station platforms, next-arrival electronic signs, signaling systems, overhead catenary wires, larger shelters and track replacement.

“In the San Diego region, we are making historic investments to keep our transit system in a state of good repair, as well as to expand transit services,” SANDAG Chair and Santee Councilmember Jack Dale said. “Expanding transit ridership is one of our top priorities, and it’s a key strategy for our region to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.”

The 8th Street Station, where the celebration was held, underwent significant improvements that benefit both Trolley and bus riders. Six new bus bays greatly enhance the ability for passengers to easily transfer between the two modes. Bus service has been relocated from the street to a large area parallel to the Trolley platform, transforming the station into a major transit center. Station expansion was made possible by a partnership between the Navy and MTS in which the Navy granted a 25-year easement for 2.2 acres of Navy property. The Navy authorized the use of its property without monetary compensation – as the station benefits many of its employees. The nearby Naval Base San Diego has approximately 10,000 daytime personnel, and as many as 30,000 when all the locally based ships are in port.

The new low-floor Trolleys will improve operational efficiency by eliminating steps and mechanical lifts for people with disabilities. Trolley platforms are now nearly level with the floor of the Trolley, making boarding and deboarding much easier for all passengers. An integrated access ramp for people with mobility devices also deploys easily. This new feature eliminates the need for mechanical lifts that slowed boarding and caused delays. Other amenities include larger windows, higher ceilings, improved lighting, dedicated seating access for special needs passengers, and more room for standing passengers. MTS now operates 76 low-floor trolley cars throughout the entire system and up to 28 will be dedicated to operations on the Blue Line daily. The cars were manufactured in Sacramento by [Siemens](#).

Trolley Renewal began in fall 2010. All the station improvements are on track to be completed this spring. Additional track and signal work is expected to be finished later this year.