

Letter to the Community



Public transit plays an essential social and economic role in our community by providing access to opportunity, making commutes more affordable, and stimulating economic activity. As an example, MTD's capital infrastructure investments have had a direct impact on jobs and economic growth. This year's Report to the Community features many of the agency's state of good repair projects that help further economic activity today, while the completed projects will result in cleaner air and a more livable community.

These investments allow MTD to continue to enhance the quality of life for many of our community's seniors and people with disabilities, who make up 15% of our annual ridership, by supporting independent living. The projects also benefit local families by providing safe, reliable transportation for our youth. Last year, our youth (K-12) accounted for over 9% of MTD's ridership across all services. Of course, our student bus pass agreements with SBCC and UCSB students also provide a meaningful benefit to riders and reduce impacts on neighborhoods by making public transit easily accessible.

From Carpinteria to Goleta, MTD's fixed-route buses and now, on-demand service with The Wave, reduce traffic and contribute every day to making our community a safer, cleaner place to call home. We at MTD are proud to help keep our community moving.

Jerry Estrada
MTD General Manager

Board of Directors

Dave Davis, Chair
David Tabor, Vice Chair
Jen Lemberger, Secretary

Arjun Sarkar
Monica Solorzano
Paula Perotte
Alberto Lapuz



The Mission of MTD

is to enhance the mobility of South Coast residents, commuters, and visitors by offering safe, appealing, equitable, environmentally responsible, and fiscally sound transit service.

Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District
550 Olive Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
805.963.3364 | www.sbmtd.gov



@santabararamtd

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

January 2026



Shuttle Returns, Serving Demand Efficiently



The all-electric Downtown–Waterfront Shuttle returned for Shuttle Summer for a second consecutive year, responding to strong ridership demand and continued community interest, boasting a 13% increase in ridership over 2024. Operating as a circulator route, the shuttle connected Downtown, the Harbor, Stearns Wharf, and the Santa Barbara Zoo—providing a convenient, car-free way to enjoy some of the city's most popular destinations.

Service was provided on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from May 30 through September 2, 2025. By focusing service during peak visitor periods and utilizing zero-emission vehicles, MTD was able to maximize rider benefit while using public resources efficiently and responsibly.

Fare Update & Tap2Ride Enhancements

After 16 years without a fare change, rising operating costs made it necessary for MTD to update its fare structure. At the beginning of 2025, MTD carefully reviewed the existing fare system, gathered community input, and conducted a fare equity analysis before adjusting the base fare from \$1.75 to \$2.50, and increasing the price of 10-ride and 30-day passes.

To support long-term financial sustainability while keeping transit affordable, MTD continues to offer discounted fares for seniors ages 65+, people with disabilities, and Medicare card holders, now available through Tap2Ride contactless payment. Eligible riders can enroll and will automatically receive the discounted fare, with fare capping in place to ensure they never pay more than the cost of a discounted day pass or discounted 30-day pass within a 30-day period.



Haley Canopy Project: Keeping District Infrastructure in a State of Good Repair

The Haley Canopy Project represents a strategic investment in MTD's operations and maintenance infrastructure, designed to support the continued transition to a more efficient, zero-emission fleet. The project includes the removal of four existing BYD bus chargers and the installation of 14 heavy-duty bus charge ports and three Level 2 charge ports, along with electrical infrastructure upgrades to support expanded charging capacity.

Additional improvements include new lighting, repainting of existing structures, and the installation of new gutters and downspouts to enhance durability and site functionality. The fuel island has already been refreshed with a new coat of paint and significantly brighter LED lighting, improving visibility and safety. Together, these upgrades ensure that public funds are invested in infrastructure that delivers long-term operational efficiency, reliability, and value for the community.

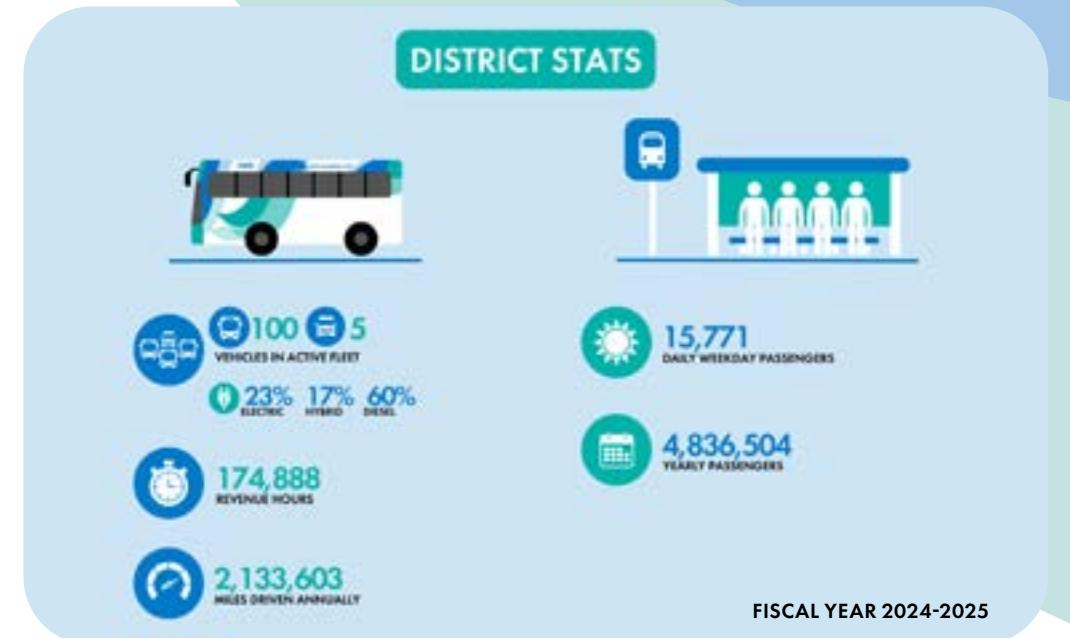


The Wave On-Demand Service Launches in Goleta & Isla Vista

After years of planning, in April 2025 MTD launched its first-ever on-demand microtransit service, known as The Wave in a portion of Goleta and Isla Vista. The Wave offers flexible, curb-to-curb service that operates on-demand when passengers request a ride either by using the TransLoc app or by calling the Transit Center. This pilot is funded with one-time Low-Carbon Transit Operations Program grant monies from the State of California.

Not intended as a replacement for MTD's fixed-route bus service, The Wave fills service gaps in areas that are unserved or by MTD routes or that are otherwise unconnected by direct bus service. Connecting important destinations like the Calle Real commercial corridor, Goleta Train Station, Santa Barbara Airport, UCSB, and both the Isla Vista and Goleta Community Centers, this service has already made a difference in the lives of the residents and visitors in the area. Operated with Ford Transit passenger vans, all Wave service is ADA-accessible and open to riders of all abilities. By the end of December 2025, The Wave had carried over 1,500 riders.

MTD expects to pilot The Wave in the Carpinteria area in 2026.



Terminal 2 Returns to Service, Supporting System Efficiency

In December, MTD began operating a limited amount of service from the newly recommissioned Terminal 2 facility in Goleta, marking a significant milestone in the district's long-term operations plan. While additional improvements are still ahead, returning service to Terminal 2 represents an important step forward in MTD's history and future capacity.

MTD broke ground on Phase 1 construction at Terminal 2 in May 2024 and was able to bring the facility to an interim level of operations in just a year and a half. This phased approach allowed MTD to begin realizing operational benefits while continuing to invest public funds thoughtfully and strategically.

Service will continue to operate out of Terminal 2 until mid-June 2026, when Phase 2 construction—focused on a new building and canopies—is expected to begin. Once fully operational, the rebuilt facility is expected to accommodate approximately 20 buses and support a larger share of MTD's service in the Goleta and Isla Vista areas, improving efficiency, flexibility, and service delivery for the community.



Bus Stop Signage

After years of implementing MTD's updated logo and color scheme on printed materials and bus paint schemes, the item in every neighborhood finally got an upgrade! As of mid-January 2026, all bus stop signs in the system have been replaced with high-quality new signs, built to last for many years to come.

Featuring the bright blue, white, and teal MTD brand colors, and reflective route decals, these signs replaced aging yellow, black, and white signs, some of which have remained in place for over 20 years!