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August 13, 2019

Honorable Peter C. Deddeh
Presiding Judge
San Diego Superior Court
1100 Union Street
San Diego, CA 92101

Rose Orcino Madruga
Foreperson
2018/2019 San Diego County Grand Jury
550 West C Street, Suite 860
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Grand Jury Report "MTS and NCTD-Make Something Good Even Better"

Dear Presiding Judge Deddeh and Ms. Madruga,

San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) is in receipt of the above-entitled Grand Jury report dated May 16, 2019. MTS has reviewed the report and has the following responses pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05:

FINDINGS

Finding 01: The MTS and NCTD, working in conjunction with SANDAG, provide the County (its citizens and visitors) with satisfactory, balanced mass transportation services at a fair value.

MTS Response: MTS agrees with this finding. However, MTS is always evaluating the transportation services our agency provides and looking for opportunities to improve service and value.

Finding 02: The current Compass card fare system has some confusing elements.

MTS Response: MTS agrees with this finding. The Compass Card fare system was first procured in 2005 and is now at the end of its useful life. MTS began the process for replacing the fare system with an extensive due diligence period in 2016, followed by a formal procurement in 2017-2018. A contract for a new fare system was awarded on December 13, 2018. The new fare system is currently in development and deployment is anticipated in Summer or Fall 2021. One of the intended results of the new fare system is to make it user friendly and easy to navigate.

Finding 03: Three key potential user groups – seniors, disabled patrons and foreign visitors – are not well served by the current fare machines, transit websites and signage.

MTS Response: MTS agrees in part with this finding. MTS is replacing its fare machines as part of its new fare collection system. Additionally, beginning September 1, it will be far easier for youth and seniors to buy ½-price Day Passes (new product) on the mobile phone app Compass Cloud. In conjunction with the new fare collection system, MTS will develop and implement a new website that allows riders to easily manage transit accounts in real time. Communicating how the entire transit system works for all riders and in all languages is extremely difficult. MTS is always evaluating its



signage and adopting best practices. The most-often used feature of the website and mobile apps is trip planning. The Google solution, widely used around the world, is fully integrated into MTS travel tools.

Finding 04: San Diego mass transit providers do not have multi-day passes that provide seamless travel region-wide.

MTS Response: MTS agrees with this finding. Until recently, MTS had multi-day passes for its services, but utilization of these passes was very low. These passes are no longer offered. With the new fare collection system, riders will pay for individual trips that accumulate and are "capped" so that riders are always assessed the best fare. Multi-day passes, however, will not be available; only daily and monthly passes.

Finding 05: The tap readers generate frequent errors that suggest a valid card is not valid.

MTS Response: MTS disagrees with the assessment. While not infallible, the system records successfully more than 300,000 transactions per day with very few errors.

Finding 06: The current fare system is not instantaneous; time delays between online payment and posting to a Compass card are often several days.

MTS Response: MTS agrees in part with this finding. The current card-based fare system requires time to process the payment in the "back office" before this information is then pushed out to the individual Compass Card. This often takes 24-72 hours. However, fares purchased on the Compass Cloud smartphone application are available instantly. The next generation fare system currently under development will eliminate this issue; online transactions will also be available instantaneously as the system switches from "card-based" to "account-based."

Finding 07: The MTS and NCTD websites are aging and require updates.

MTS Response: MTS partially agrees with this assessment. MTS completely rebuilt its website in November 2015. It plans another rebuild to coincide with the new fare collection system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 19-15: Increase efforts to reduce confusion and user anxiety, particularly for new users, seniors, disabled patrons, and non-English speakers, both local residents as well as tourists, as noted in the report.

MTS Response: There are many ways that MTS is working to reduce anxiety for all riders: New fare collection system to eliminate or reduce many of the traditional barriers to riding, a ten-fold increase in the number of retail outlets where fare media will be available, new real-time web functionality to add value to fare media, a continuing commitment to produce helpful materials in multiple languages, a continuing and increased commitment to produce visual "how-to" videos that are compatible with web, digital ads and streaming services, a new fare-oriented website that will span both MTS and NCTD, and a continuing commitment to work with tourism groups locally and abroad.

Recommendation 19-16: Consider means to update the MTS and NCTD websites, ticket machines and apps to address the needs of tourists as well as residents. Offer information and trip planning advice in more languages and in as many media as necessary.

MTS Response: MTS is redeveloping its website to implement in 2021 and coincide with the launch of the new fare collection system.

Recommendation 19-17: Evaluate the possibility of introducing seamless, multi-day passes to anywhere in the County's public transportation.

MTS Response: The new fare collection system will include "best fare" technology between both transit systems. Riders will never be charged more than a day pass or a monthly pass based on the number of trips they take during any day and month. No multiple day passes will be offered.

Recommendation 19-18: Consider updating both the MTS and NCTD websites, not only communicating new routes, fares, and details of using the new (2021) fare collecting system but also to simplify communication, reduce duplication of information, and make it easier for seniors, disabled persons and tourists to use.

MTS Response: MTS is redeveloping its website to implement in 2021 and coincide with the launch of the new fare collection system.

Recommendation 19-19: Consider integrating or linking the two (MTS and NCTD) websites to have the same "touch and feel."

MTS Response: The two agencies will maintain separate websites, but the fare-purchasing site will be common to both agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Grand Jury's report. If you have any questions for MTS, please call me directly at (619) 557-4512 or email me at karen.landiers@sdmts.com.

Sincerely,



Karen Landers
General Counsel

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