



# New Rapid Transit Connects South Bay to Downtown, Free Week of Rides

Rides will be free from September 4 to September 7



A new dedicated bus route will open September 4, the first half of a bigger route to open in January. NBC 7's Joe Little has more. (Published Wednesday, Aug. 29, 2018)

South Bay Rapid 225 opened September 4, making trips to downtown a lot easier for many South Bay residents, and to celebrate MTS made all rides free for its first week.

The new rapid bus system is only half of a larger project to come. And some residents are ready.

Work might be the only reason why Hector Vanegas ever heads downtown and he rarely does. "I take the trolley every day since 13 years ago," he told NBC 7.

Vanegas likes the idea of having another option to get to work. "I can listen to the news, read the news, or if I need to do a report or whatever," he added.

The bus line will carry passengers from the East Palomar Transit Station in Chula Vista directly into downtown San Diego.

Buses will head up I-805 in the HOV lane and arrive in downtown via SR-94.

Out of 85 million passenger trips every year, 30 million are in the South Bay, said MTS spokesperson Mark Olson.

“South Bay residents really embrace transit,” said Olson. “Bringing Rapid to the South Bay is kind of the natural next step. And we think they’re really gonna love it.”

The new rapid transit system is better for the environment, will decrease traffic and should save people time and money, according to SANDAG Senior Transportation Planner Jennifer Williamson. “South County has grown so much and really the only regional transit that we have currently is the trolley,” she added.

“The way to get people out of their cars and out of that mess – that traffic congestion – is to make sure that public transit is convenient and safe,” said Mayor of Chula Vista Mary Casillas.

Chula Vista resident Ramses Constantino said he rides transit every other day and is excited for this new route.

“It’s already hard as it is, taking so much time waiting for the bus, then going to the trolley and waiting for the trolley,” said Constantino. “I couldn’t imagine how fast it’s going to be, just being there in minutes.”

Vanegas says it gives him more time to do what he wants, instead of “wasting time in the car.”

Salas agreed that the new rapid would help save time and some frustration.

“Get ready for your day’s work and not have that stress of driving and arrive at work relaxed and ready to go,” Salas said.

For now, there will be limited service during the week.

Williamson expects up to 4,500 people the bus every day. “Traffic in the South County is really, it’s degraded over time and we’re hoping that the South Bay Rapid service will provide another option.”

The entire South Bay Rapid Transit system be finished next January, which will include a longer route that extends to the border, more buses and more stops.

“It’s a 26-mile route operating out of the Otay Mesa border crossing,” Williamson said.

For a long stretch through eastern Chula Vista, passengers will travel down a dedicated line on East Palomar, reserved only for rapid buses.

One of the stops is right in front of Vanegas’ house. “Knowing that a bus in front of my house can get me to my job right away, that’s great,” he said.

The rapid route from East Palomar to downtown will only be Monday through Friday during the morning and afternoon rush hours until the full loop opens in January.

South Bay Rapid 225 will also be free for commuters on October 2 for [MTS's Free Ride Day](#).

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