

## [SOUTH COUNTY](#)

# San Diego's bus-on-shoulder pilot project launches Tuesday



From Market Street looking northbound on Interstate 805, a bus rides the shoulder with a CHP escort as part of the new MTS South Bay Rapid bus program in San Diego last year.

(Eduardo Contreras/The San Diego Union-Tribune)

## Project will run along Interstate 805 and State Route 94 between National City and downtown San Diego

BY [TAMMY MURGA](#) REPORTER

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South Bay Rapid buses on Tuesday will start traveling on the shoulders of two major highways using new technology during peak travel times.

Dubbed the Bus on Shoulder program, the pilot project is a joint effort between the San Diego Association of Governments, or SANDAG, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System and Caltrans to provide faster and more reliable transit service.

MTS buses on Route 225 will run northbound on Interstate 805 to the westbound State Route 94 connector in the morning and the eastbound SR-94 and southbound I-805 connector in the evening to bypass slow traffic and stay on schedule. Additional miles along that route are expected to be added later this year.

Buses will travel 35 mph on the shoulder and will only be allowed to run on the shoulder when traffic slows below 35 mph. Law enforcement, emergency responders and incident management cars will still be able to access the shoulders.

While the bus-on-shoulder concept is not new, SANDAG officials said San Diego is the first in the nation to implement the system using vehicle-to-infrastructure technology that allows buses to communicate with freeway ramp meters.

“What is unique about this pilot project is that our buses are now moving computers,” said Sharon Humphreys, SANDAG’s director of Engineering and Construction. “The buses are equipped with the technology to be able to tell if there’s something in the shoulder ahead of (the buses) and it’ll hold back cars that are on-ramp.”

The technology essentially tries to eliminate conflict between the Rapid buses and other vehicles or obstructions along the road via sensors embedded in the buses, which provide audio and visual alerts to drivers regarding lane position. At on-ramps, for example, drivers will see “bus merging” stoplights that give buses up to 15 seconds to pass.

The \$31 million project, which SANDAG approved in 2016, will run for three years. During that time, SANDAG will assess its operations, review on-time performance, travel speeds, feedback from riders and drivers, as well as how the technology has performed.

“We’ll be able to incorporate that data into our next regional plan and I can guarantee that there are people all over the country who are watching what we’re doing in San Diego because it’s so innovative,” said Humphreys.

Construction for the pilot project involved installing the metering technology at freeway ramps and adding striping on lanes to make drivers aware of the bus route, according to SANDAG officials. Bus operators were also trained earlier this year, which included the California Highway Patrol escorting buses during training.