

## 'Low-Floor' Trolleys Now Travel The Blue Line In San Diego

Tuesday, January 27, 2015

By [Tom Fudge](#)



Metropolitan Transit District officials and employees are shown unveiling the low-floor trolley on Jan. 27, 2015.

SAN DIEGO — The San Diego trolley system's oldest and most heavily used line can now accommodate low-floor trolley cars. The CEO of the [Metropolitan Transit System](#) said this week's development the culmination of a \$660 million trolley improvement plan.

"Low-floor" trolley cars open so the floor is even with the platform. They provide a way to safely and quickly accommodate transit users in wheelchairs. But the new cars couldn't be used on the [Blue Line](#) until all of its station platforms were re-engineered.

The other lines of the San Diego trolleys system had already been fitted for the low-floor cars. Older trolley cars require users to mount three or four steps to enter the cars. Disabled people had to use a cumbersome lift that delayed stalled the train's progress.

Paul Jablonski, CEO of the transit system, said low-floor cars aren't just for the disabled.



CREDIT: METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

People are shown walking into a low-floor trolley on Jan. 27, 2015.

"Certainly it's people in wheelchairs. It's elderly people," he said. "But I can tell you, it's also a lot of mothers with strollers. It's even people with bicycles who can get on without having to carry the bike up four stairs."

The Blue Line runs from downtown to the Mexican border. It is the oldest of all San Diego's trolley lines. It was built in 1981 "on the cheap" as Jablonski put it — which made the task of bringing it up to modern standards a challenge. The Blue Line is also the most frequently used, providing about 15 million passenger trips in fiscal 2014, about half of all local trolley trips.

The trolley system still uses some of the old cars, requiring steps to board them, which won't be phased out until they've run their useful lives.

The next development on the horizon is the construction of the San Diego trolley's new [Mid-Coast Line](#), from Old Town to La Jolla. Jablonski said the transit system is expecting to see funding for the line in President Obama's budget, which may be unveiled as early as next week.

"We are keeping our fingers crossed that in the budget, is going to be a recommendation that the Mid-Coast Line receive a full-funding grant agreement," Jablonski said.

He said a federal funding commitment will allow San Diego to begin building the Mid-Coast Line this fall. The line should be open for use in 2018.