



Transit Watch: Public Transit in Crisis



April 27, 2020

Friends,

Significant ridership and fare revenue declines due to the coronavirus pandemic, as most Californians responsibly shelter in place, threaten the viability and availability of transit services in the near- and long-term.

We intend *Transit Watch* to provide key stakeholders with up-to-date information about COVID-19 and its impact on public transit services and our communities that rely on transit:

Check [this page on our website](#) frequently for the latest information about COVID-19 impacts on public transit in your community.

- The site includes updated figures from our survey of public transit agencies showing ridership and revenue declines by agency, as well as other local information.
- We maintain a running, real-time summary list of the latest impacts to local agencies, culled from each day's headlines and agency press releases, by region, [located here](#).

Urban Management Scholars: Can Public Transit Survive a Pandemic?

- Alon Levy and Eric Goldwyn, scholars at NYU's Marron Institute of Urban Management, wrote in CityLab about public transit's ability to recover from the pandemic's impacts.
- They caution that traditional cost-saving measures transit agencies have utilized in the past, like deferred maintenance, reduced services, and canceled expansions, may actually cripple them in the long term.
- As an alternative, they suggest that agencies use the quarantine to hire more staff to improve sanitation, use reduced traffic to complete expansion projects, and revert short-term service cuts to ensure there is adequate service available for when riders return.
- Read more of their recommendations on how transit agencies can survive and plan for the future: [Can Public Transit Survive a Pandemic?](#)

Study finds more than 16,000 essential workers in San Diego region rely on transit

- According to San Diego nonprofit Circulate San Diego, nearly 25% of the region's essential workers rely on the region's public transit agencies to access work.
- "These figures show just how vital the Metropolitan Transit System and North County Transit District are for getting us through this pandemic," a Circulate San Diego statement reads.
- Read more in KPBS about the study: [Report Finds 16,000 Essential Workers Use Mass Transit Daily](#)
- To read the study in its entirety, visit Circulate San Diego's Website here: [Circulate San Diego – Essential Transit](#).

BART's financial outlook remains gloomy, even after stay at home orders lifted

- BART reports financial losses of \$40 million, even after factoring the relief from the Federal CARES package.
- The long-term forecast is also dim, as ridership may not recover quickly due to high unemployment and telecommuting.
- Read more from NBC San Francisco: [BART Outlook Gloomy, Even Beyond Coronavirus Fallout](#)

LA Metro anticipating major financial losses

- Ridership on LA Metro, California's largest transit system, has fallen drastically during the coronavirus outbreak.
- Bus ridership is down 65%, and trains are down 75%.
- In response, Metro has closed stations, and reduced services to Sunday schedules.
- Metro anticipates losses in local and state sales tax revenue of \$700 million, \$11 million a month in lost fare revenue, and millions more in additional cleaning costs.
- Read more from the *LA Times* on the impacts to Metro: [Coronavirus forces deep cuts to L.A. Metro bus and rail service](#)

SamTrans Reduces Service in Response to Pandemic

- SamTrans will be implementing a modified schedule beginning Sunday, April 26, with service reductions on 31 routes.
- SamTrans' significantly reduced ridership since the shelter-in-place order took effect in March, with a drop of 65-70% across most routes
- Read more from the San Mateo County Transit District: [SamTrans Reduces Service in Response to Pandemic, Face Coverings Now Required Onboard](#)

Tri Delta Transit Running Temporary Service Reduction Due to COVID-19

- Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority (Tri Delta Transit) implemented a 30% reduction in service effective April 19.
- Instead of cutting routes, they reduced the frequency of their regular schedule with most routes operating every hour.
- By continuing to operate 70% of services, Tri Delta Transit will effectively offer reliable service, ensure social distancing, and allow the community to use transit for essential services and functions.
- Read more: [Tri Delta Transit Running Temporary Service Reduction Due to COVID-19](#)

North County Transit District sees more losses from pandemic

- Riders on trains and buses are down more than 80 percent across the North County Transit District (San Diego), with a potential loss of \$1.1 million monthly in fare revenue for as long as the pandemic shutdown continues.
- Under the most optimistic predictions, NCTD forecasts a loss of \$10 million for the district. The worst-case scenario would mean a loss of \$55 million.
- The local sales tax revenue upon which the district relies has also plunged due to the pandemic.
- As they continue providing services, it may become necessary for NCTD to make tough decisions that NCTD Executive Director Matt Tucker calls "painful."
- Read more from the San Diego Union Tribune: [Transit district looks at losses from pandemic](#)

For more information, please contact the California Transit Association at COVID-19@caltransit.org.