

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SYVT Ridership on the Rise

Solvang, California – Santa Ynez Valley Transit (SYVT) experienced an increase in ridership during April 2021, with more than three thousand passengers riding the fixed-route and Dial-A-Ride services. This ridership mark is significant given SYVT has not seen ridership at that level since February 2020, prior to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Public transportation is an essential service. It is often the only way individuals can access many important day-to-day services throughout the Valley,” noted Matt van der Linden, Public Works Director for the City of Solvang. “SYVT has continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are happy to see many Valley residents are able to travel safely and more often this spring.”

In March 2020, SYVT reduced its service to a general public Dial-A-Ride (DAR) in response to the state-wide “stay at home” order. After certain restrictions were lifted, SYVT returned to full service (including resumption of the fixed-route service). Now that further restrictions have been rescinded, the Santa Ynez Valley community seems to be returning to its safe and affordable public transportation system in greater numbers.

Throughout the pandemic, SYVT has taken steps to protect both its customers and employees while providing quality transportation. SYVT staff continues to monitor and enforce guidelines and procedures set forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Even with the anticipated lifting of many restrictions, and upcoming California “re-opening” plans set for mid-June, the SYVT COVID-19 safety procedures will continue to include:

- Blocking off alternating seats on all vehicles to support social distancing.
- Cleaning all vehicles with hospital-grade disinfectant daily.
- Conducting cleaning throughout the day to wipe down high-touch surfaces (such as handrails and fareboxes).
- Requiring masks or facial coverings for all riders and drivers.
- Encouraging riders to utilize recommended handwashing procedures, maintain social distancing at bus stops, and to remain at home if they are sick or feel unwell.

“Santa Barbara County is currently under Tier Three, which rates coronavirus transmission as moderate in our area,” observed van der Linden. “As such, we plan to stay on course with precautions to ensure we continue to head in the right direction.”

Prior to steep ridership declines in Spring 2020, the Valley’s public bus service had been experiencing a surge in ridership. In the fall of 2019, ridership increased by 54 percent over the previous year even in the face of statewide and national declines in public transportation usage. “We are hoping the April 2021 ridership numbers are a positive indication that SYVT will again beat the odds,” included van der Linden.

To continue welcoming back riders, SYVT launched its Summer Youth Pass this month which offers riders 6 to 20 years of age reduced \$20 monthly pass during May, June, July, and August. The pass was not offered last year due to coronavirus restrictions and van der Linden is happy to see its return. “This is a great value for Valley youth and students during the summer months when school is out, and families need extra assistance with scheduling travel to keep youth mobile and engaged in community activities.” The passes are available for purchase at the SYVT office located at 431 Second Street, Suite 9 in Solvang.

For free trip planning or information regarding the Summer Youth Pass, call (805) 688-5452.

SYVT is funded through a Memorandum of Understanding between the cities of Buellton and Solvang and Santa Barbara County. For information about SYVT, visit www.syvt.com or call (805) 688-5452.

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