

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SunLine Transit Agency
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SUNLINE REFUELED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MOVES FORWARD

The plan will transition services back to pre-COVID levels and provide faster, more convenient services for current riders, including those in hard-to-reach areas

(Thousand Palms) – SunLine Transit Agency moves forward with SunLine Refueled, a multi-tiered initiative outlining new services and restructuring all bus routes to fundamentally reinvent, reimagine and improve SunLine’s transit system.

The plan introduces three new services: a commuter service – the 10 Commuter Link; microtransit known as SunRide; and Route 1X the first east-to-west express line. In addition, SunLine will be consolidating the existing 15 local routes into 9 streamlined routes. SunLine Refueled supports the local economy, better meets the transportation needs of the Coachella Valley, will attract new riders, and aids in the recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SunLine Refueled has been in the works for over three years, but with the onset of COVID-19, it had to be adapted to address new challenges. With a phased implementation, under this new plan, beginning on January 3, 2021 – SunLine will be transitioning back to regular weekday and weekend service at pre-COVID-19 levels of service.

Prior to COVID-19, SunLine experienced an increase in ridership – contrary to the national trend of falling bus ridership. However, with the pandemic came a nearly 67% decrease in daily ridership. SunLine Refueled is an intentional move to better serve existing riders, extend market share and directly respond to rider survey results which indicated that 71% of participants rank “faster, more direct bus service” as the top priority.

SunLine Refueled is also a response to the fact that the Agency’s bus fleet was a mobility lifeline to many essential workers during shelter-at-home orders. It remains essential for members of the community who may also have limited transportation options.

“This is the largest service overhaul in SunLine’s 42 years. This much-needed reimagining of what SunLine looks like will create new connections and opportunities for the countless essential workers and residents of the Coachella Valley who showed us over these last nine

months that high quality transit service is vital for a functioning economy and a healthy region," said Lauren Skiver, CEO/General Manager of SunLine Transit Agency."

What riders need to know:

- SunLine is introducing a new user-friendly route numbering system along with weekday and weekend services on January 3, 2021, as part of the *Consolidated Fixed Route Network*.
- On Monday, January 4, 2021, the Route *10 Commuter Link* will begin with weekday services between Indio and San Bernardino. This will introduce new service outside of the Coachella Valley with transit connects to Los Angeles County, Orange County and the Inland Empire. It will provide faster transportation with fewer stops.
- A new microtransit program known as *SunRide* – a microtransit service that will be available in four Coachella Valley zones to connect riders to the fixed route network. Riders use this service with a smartphone app, which will call for a SunRide vehicle to pick them up at a destination within the designated zones and/or bus stops.
- The *Route 1X* will serve Indio and Palm Springs with bus stops in Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Cathedral City and Palm Springs. This service will begin on Monday, May 3, 2021.
- Based on public input and staff recommendations, four innovative changes were made to the plan impacting less than 20% of the total route miles, hours or passengers. Eight public hearings and 97 community outreach events were held in both English and Spanish for the public and staff, following social distancing guidelines.

SunLine looks forward to implementing these new initiatives and better serving the community while upholding the health, safety, and satisfaction of riders.

For more information, call 760-343-3456 or e-mail refueled@sunline.org.

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About SunLine Transit Agency

SunLine provides public transit services in California's Coachella Valley spanning 1,120 mile-service area and carrying approximately 4.2 million riders. It has pioneered zero-emission bus deployments, particularly for hydrogen fuel cell electric buses (FCEB). In 1993, SunLine's Board adopted a voluntary policy of pursuing alternative fuel solutions that provide the lowest possible emissions, which led to SunLine becoming the first transit agency in the state to convert its entire fleet to compressed natural gas (CNG). SunLine is committed to transitioning its entire bus fleet to zero-emission by 2035. SunLine Refueled is a multi-tiered initiative that will bring exciting new transportation alternatives to the Coachella Valley and regional service to San Bernardino. SunLine Refueled will be delivered to the community in four phases; it will include a Consolidated Fixed Route Network, 10 Commuter Link, SunRide, and Route 111X. To learn more, please visit www.sunlinerefueled.org.