



COMPASS CARD FAQ

What is a Compass Card?

The Compass Card is an innovative, plastic “smart card” designed to streamline and expedite fare collection. The embedded smart card technology allows riders to have their trip validated by touching the card flat on a specially designed validator or farebox. Compass Cards are replacing all paper monthly passes in the San Diego region to make boarding buses and trains faster and easier. Compass Cards will speed transaction times and allow buses and trains to keep better schedules.

How do I get a Compass Card?

Compass Cards are sold at the MTS Transit Store, NCTD Transit Centers, Vons stores, select check-cashing stores, and other locations. For a current list of participating locations visit www.511sd.com/compass. Adult, full fare Compass Cards also are sold at Ticket Vending Machines at all rail platforms, online at www.511sd.com/compass, and over the phone; call 511 and say “Compass.”

How do I get a Compass Card if I qualify for a discounted transit pass?

Compass Cards loaded with discounted Senior, Medicare, Youth, and Disabled transit passes are available at the MTS Transit Store, NCTD Transit Centers, Vons stores, select check-cashing stores, and other locations. For a current list of participating locations visit www.511sd.com/compass. When getting a discount transit pass on Compass Card for the first time, you must present your I.D. If buying discount passes for people not present, you must show appropriate identification for each person. Once you have purchased a discounted transit pass on Compass Card, you have many reload options (see next paragraph).

How do I put a new pass or fare on a Compass Card?

As a Compass Card user, you will have several options to add a new pass or fare to your card. Both full fare and discounted passes can be reloaded once you have your Compass Card. Your pass can be immediately reloaded and available for use at Ticket Vending Machines, the MTS Transit Store, NCTD Oceanside, Vista, and Escondido Transit Centers, Vons stores, select check-cashing stores, and other locations. For a current list of participating locations visit www.511sd.com/compass. Compass Cards also may be reloaded online at www.511sd.com/compass or by calling 511 and saying “Compass.” Online and phone reloads may take up to three business days to be activated on your card. The Compass Card can be tied to a credit or debit card for automatic reloading so your pass does not expire.

When can I add a new pass or fare on my Compass Card?

Calendar monthly passes can be reloaded on your Compass Card starting on the 20th of each month for the following month. For example, if you want your February monthly pass, you can purchase it starting on January 20. This means you can avoid the rush by reloading early! 30-Day and 14-Day passes can be reloaded at any time.

How do I use the Compass Card?

The Compass Card is easy to use. Simply tap your card flat on the target on the platform validator at Trolley or rail stations, or on the farebox on buses. Tapping your card on a validator lets the system know that you have a valid transit pass loaded on your Compass Card.

Do I have to tap on a validator every time I ride?

Visualize the Compass Card as the transit system's "virtual" fare gate or an invisible turnstile. You must tap your card flat on the farebox validator every time you board a bus, and on the platform validator before you board the COASTER, SPRINTER, or TROLLEY. Tapping your Compass Card will validate your trip, keep your pass current, and prevent you from getting a citation.

What are the benefits of using the Compass Card?

The Compass Card benefits riders in a number of ways. It simplifies taking transit by creating a seamless, universal way to pay fares. Riders don't need to worry about carrying cash, or searching for tokens. Just Tap & Ride™! Compass Cards will expedite passenger boarding.

The Compass Card is plastic and similar in size to a credit card. It is easy to use and easy to reload. The Compass Card can be automatically reloaded with your debit or credit card so your pass does not expire. And, you can register your Compass Card, so if it is lost, stolen, or damaged, the remaining balance can be transferred to a new card.

What is a smart card?

A smart card allows products and cash value to be stored on an embedded computer chip. It resembles a credit card in size and shape. "Smart card" is a general term that refers to any card employing this type of embedded technology. The Compass Card is the San Diego region's specific brand of transit smart card.

Will the Compass Card replace cash?

No, cash can still be used to purchase single-trip tickets and one-day passes.

What types of fares are stored on the Compass Card?

Currently, Compass Cards store calendar monthly, 30-Day, and 14-Day passes. The passes on the Compass Card are used on the same public transit services as the corresponding paper passes. All monthly passes are now available on the Compass Card. These passes are the same price as the corresponding paper passes. In the future, customers will be able to load cash/stored value onto the card to pay for a day pass or a one-way fare on any service.

What is the difference between a monthly pass and a 30-Day Pass?

A monthly pass is good from the first day to the last day of the month. You can load your current month's pass through the 15th of the month. You can load your next month's pass beginning on the 20th of the month.

A 30-Day pass is good for 30 consecutive days of riding, starting with the date of purchase. It can be reloaded at any time.



How do I convert from a monthly pass to a 30-Day pass?

To get more information on how to convert from a monthly pass to a 30-Day pass, or vice versa, call 511 and say "Compass" to speak to a customer service center representative. This conversion can only be done through a Compass Card customer service center representative.

What is a 14-Day pass?

A 14-Day pass is good for 14 consecutive days of riding, starting with the date of purchase. It can be reloaded at any time. You may purchase a 14-Day Regional pass for \$43, which is good for unlimited rides on MTS bus and TROLLEY and NCTD SPRINTER and BREEZE services. A 14-Day Premium pass is \$60 and is good for unlimited rides on all MTS bus, Premium Express, and TROLLEY and NCTD SPRINTER and BREEZE services. 14-Day passes are only offered on Adult rider class Compass Cards. (A monthly or 30-Day Senior, Disabled, Medicare, or Youth pass costs less than a 14-Day pass.)

Can the Compass Card be used by riders who don't purchase a monthly pass or ride regularly?

In the future, a stored value option will be available on the Compass Card. When a Compass Card loaded with stored value is tapped, the price of a day pass appropriate for the service will be deducted from the balance of the card. Stored value will be used on all bus and rail service within the San Diego region.

HOW DOES COMPASS WORK?

How much does a Compass Card cost?

As of May 1, 2010, customers pay a \$2 administration fee per card (non-refundable). Once you have a card you can reload it as often as you want. If your Compass Card is registered, your first replacement card is free. Additional cards in the same 12-month period will cost \$5. Your registration will still protect the pass balance.

How and where can I use my Compass Card?

Compass Cards are accepted on all Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD) fixed route buses, TROLLEY, COASTER, and SPRINTER. On a bus, simply tap the card flat on the validator on the farebox when you board the bus and you are ready to enjoy your ride. Before boarding the TROLLEY, COASTER, or SPRINTER, tap your Compass Card flat on the platform validator designated for the service you will be using.

How do I board the bus using a Compass Card?

Riding the bus with Compass Card is easy. A validator is located either on your right as you board the bus, or on the farebox next to the driver – look for the Compass Card logo. Simply tap your Compass Card flat on the validator. There is a beep to indicate the pass has been accepted. The display also will advise you of the expiration date of the pass.



How do I use the Compass Card on the TROLLEY, SPRINTER, and COASTER if I have a monthly pass?

Validators are located at convenient spots on all rail platforms. Just tap the Compass Card flat on the validator designated for the service you will be using prior to boarding.

When I tap my Compass Card, does it matter which way the card is facing?

No. Either side of the card will work as long as the card is flat. The sensor in the card reader just needs to be about one inch from the card. It can even be read through a wallet or plastic holder.

When I tap the card on the validator, how do I know that my card is accepted?

The smart card technology allows you to have your trip validated by simply touching the Compass Card flat on the specially designed card validator. On rail validators a green light will flash, a tone will sound and a "Thank You" message will be displayed.

On buses, a single beep sound will indicate your card is accepted. Some bus fare boxes and all rail platform validators have lights. A yellow light or two beeps means that your pass is about to expire or your balance is low. A red light and three beeps mean that the pass is not valid or has expired.

How do fare inspectors or conductors know I tapped my card to validate my trip?

Conductors and fare enforcement personnel have handheld units to conduct fare inspections. These units can verify if your card is valid and if you tapped before boarding.

What will fare inspectors or conductors do if they discover that I did not tap my card before I boarded the train or Trolley?

Fare inspectors may deliver a warning or issue a citation if you do not tap before boarding. A citation also may be issued for an invalid pass or improper use of the Compass Card.

How can I set up automatic reloads to my Compass Card?

Your Compass Card can be set up to automatically reload new passes each month with a credit or debit card. It's the fastest, easiest way to make sure your card is ready to use when you need it. Simply call 511 and say "Compass" and a customer service center representative will assist you. If it is a monthly pass, the card will be activated five days prior to the end of the month. Just tap to download your pass—a monthly pass will be ready to use on the 1st of the month and a 30-Day pass instantly. Your credit or debit card will be charged 24 to 48 hours after the pass is loaded. Automatic reload will remain active until the customer requests the service be discontinued.

How can I add a pass to my Compass Card at a Ticket Vending Machine?

To add a pass, your transaction begins and ends with a touch of the Compass Card to the circular target on the Ticket Vending Machine. Simply tap the card flat and follow the instructions on the screen to add a pass to your card.

How do I register my Compass Card?

To register your Compass Card by phone, call 511 and say "Compass." Or you can fill out a registration form and submit it to SANDAG. Forms are available at the MTS Transit Store and NCTD Customer Service Centers, or can be downloaded from www.511sd.com/compass. Then, fax, e-mail, or mail the completed form to SANDAG. In the future, riders will be able to register their Compass Cards online at www.511sd.com/compass. Check back for updates.

What if my card is lost, stolen, or damaged?

If you have registered your Compass Card in advance, and it is lost, stolen, or damaged, call 511 and say "Compass" Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Once you notify 511 that your Compass Card is lost, stolen, or damaged, your registered card will be turned off immediately. Once it is turned off, it cannot be reactivated or used again. If you have registered your Compass Card, a replacement card, with your remaining balance at the time you notified the Customer Service Center, will be sent to you via mail. If your Compass Card is registered, your first replacement card is free. Additional cards in the same 12-month period will cost \$5.

What should I do if my card is defective or stops working?

If your Compass Card stops working, call 511 and say "Compass" and a customer service center representative will assist you in getting a replacement. Your card may be either damaged or defective. Your card also may be blocked if it is being used fraudulently or if we have problems reloading your pass with your credit or debit card.

If your Compass Card is defective, through no fault of your own, and you have had it for less than a year, we will replace the defective card and restore your balance free of charge. If your registered Compass Card is damaged, however, and you have already received a replacement card in the last 12-months, you are responsible for the \$5 fee associated with a replacement card.

What happens if the validator or farebox does not read my Compass Card or gives an error message?

Please call 511 and say "Compass" during regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.) and a customer service center representative will help. If you need to travel, you may have to purchase a cash fare. Save your receipts and ask the representative about possible reimbursement.

If I keep my Compass Card in my wallet next to a credit card, will it demagnetize?

Compass Cards contain no magnetic material and therefore cannot be demagnetized.

If I carry another smart card in my wallet next to the Compass Card, will it still work?

Often, if there are two or more smart cards next to one another, neither one can be read. You may need to keep the smart cards separate from one another for both to function properly.



How will I use the Compass Card on the TROLLEY, SPRINTER, and COASTER once stored value is available?

When the stored value feature is implemented, you will load cash value on the Compass Card. Once you load your Compass Card with stored value, simply tap the card flat on the validator and a regional day pass will be loaded on your Compass Card when riding the TROLLEY or SPRINTER. The regional day pass is good for an entire day on all transit services except for COASTER, MTS Premium Express bus and Rural routes. A Region Plus pass will be loaded when riding the COASTER, which is good for an entire day on all services except Two-Zone Rural. If you want a one-way fare, you will tell the bus driver before tapping, or use stored value to buy the appropriate fare from a Ticket Vending Machine. If you are making a one-way or return trip with no transfers, it may be advantageous to purchase a paper, single trip ticket from a Ticket Vending Machine.

DISCOUNTED PASSES

Are there different types of Compass Cards?

Yes. There are five different rider classes available on three types of Compass Cards: a full fare Adult card, a discounted Senior, Disabled, Medicare card, and a discounted Youth card.

Can riders who use discounted passes use the Compass Card?

Yes. The Compass Card will conveniently serve as the fare medium for Senior, Disabled, Medicare, and Youth discount passes. In the coming months, riders who receive the discounted Senior, Disabled, Medicare fare may choose to have their picture included on their Compass Card. These cards will be offered at the MTS Transit Store or one of the NCTD Transit Centers. Once you add your photo to your Compass Card, there's no need to carry both a discounted monthly pass and a separate form of picture identification!

I have a discounted college monthly pass. Will I need to get a Compass Card?

No. Please continue to purchase your discounted pass at your college or university.

What happens when I turn 18 if I have a Youth pass?

Youth cards are valid until the end of your 18th year. When you turn 19 years old, you will need to purchase a regular Adult pass. If you are enrolled in a local college offering a discount pass program, you may purchase that pass at the college or university (some restrictions apply, see your local school for details).

I have a Compass Card, and a personal care attendant travels with me. How does that work?

NCTD BREEZE buses and SPRINTER trains allow personal care attendants (PCAs) to ride free when they are traveling with reduced fare ID cardholders with specially marked cards reading "PCA-yes." There is no discounted fare for attendants on MTS buses or the Trolley. Attendants traveling alone are not eligible for reduced fares on NCTD transit services.

I still have questions about my discounted fare products. Where can I get help?

If your question is about the reduced fare products, contact your local transit agency by calling 511, and then saying "transit," followed by the name of your local transit agency.

COMMUTER BENEFITS PROGRAMS

Will Compass Cards work with employee transit benefit programs?

The Compass Card works with Commuter Check[®], WageWorks[®], and other transit benefit providers. Please contact your human resources department for more information.

How can the Compass Card be used with an employee transit benefit program?

Whether you receive paper vouchers, commuter debit cards, or redeem your transit benefits online, you can use your benefits to add value to your Compass Card. Currently, Compass Card works with a variety of transit benefit programs.

If your transit benefit provider offers a commuter card (a pre-paid debit card that acts like a credit card), you can use it with the Compass Card even if your specific provider is not listed above. Since the commuter card acts like a credit card, you can use your commuter card to purchase a monthly pass and put it on your Compass Card at any Ticket Vending Machine.

If you don't use a commuter card, or don't see your transit benefit program listed here, please check back later to see what benefit providers have been added. You can also ask your benefits administrator or human resources manager at your workplace about adding the Compass Card to your benefits program.

Can I use my transit benefit debit card to set up automatic reload for my Compass Card?

No. You must use a regular credit or debit card to set up automatic reload for your Compass Card.

My transit benefit program told me they sent you the money. Why isn't it on my Compass Card?

Due to the time required to process the transit benefit orders, there is a gap between the time orders are sent from the various transit benefit companies, and when the Compass Card system loads passes to cards. Your value should be available by the first day of the benefit month, and you must tap your card on a validator on the bus or rail platform in order for it to load the value. If you do not receive your transit benefit value by the first day of the benefit month, please contact a customer service center representative by calling 511 and saying "Compass."

How much can I deduct as pre-tax benefits for using public transportation?

As part of the federal stimulus package approved by Congress in February 2009, the pre-tax benefit has been increased to \$230 a month for transit. Check with your employer to determine if this pre-tax benefit is offered and if you are eligible to participate.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPASS

Does the Compass Card have an expiration date?

Yes. The Compass Card, although durable, will expire five years from the date of issue.

Is the Compass Card transferable?

No. Monthly passes on Compass Card are not transferable. Each rider must have his/her own card.

Do Compass Cards need special care?

Yes. Compass Cards have a tiny computer chip and antenna inside the card. Bending the card, puncturing, or sending it through the washing machine or dryer can damage the card's ability to communicate with the validators. Once you have a card, treat it with care and it will last.

To store the Compass Card, keep it in your wallet or purse like other credit cards. However, unlike traditional credit cards, a Compass Card will not become demagnetized. If you carried your paper pass in a plastic pouch on a lanyard, you can do the same with the Compass Card – it can be read through the plastic.

Will my personal information be shared with marketing companies or other organizations?

No. We will not sell or disclose your personal information without your written consent, unless required to do so by law. Please view the SANDAG Privacy and Security Policy on www.sandag.org regarding the way personal information is handled.

What are the Compass Card Terms & Conditions?

Compass Card Terms & Conditions are detailed in the SANDAG Comprehensive Fare Ordinance found on www.sandag.org/fareordinance.

Do other cities in the country use Compass Cards?

Yes. Atlanta, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC are using similar smart card technology for their transit systems.

If I find my Compass Card after reporting it lost or stolen, can it be reactivated?

A Compass Card cannot be reactivated once reported lost or stolen.

Can people who are sight impaired use Ticket Vending Machines to obtain Compass Cards or add value?

The Ticket Vending Machines are equipped with an audio button and earphone jack, making it easier to purchase or load passes on the Compass Card. Some sight impaired passengers may be entitled to special fares. By visiting the MTS Transit Store or a NCTD Customer Service Center, individuals may apply for a reduced fare ID card. If you already possess a reduced fare ID card, the card can be converted to a Compass Card reduced fare ID.



How do I order a Compass Card online?

To order online, visit www.511sd.com/compass and click on "Purchase or reload online." Allow at least three business days when reloading online for your card to be activated.

I still have questions about my Compass Card. Where can I get help?

Call the Compass Card Customer Service Center at 511 and say "Compass," from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. Or visit www.511sd.com/compass, or e-mail compasscard@sandag.org.