



## COMPASS CARD FAQs

### 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 to 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 will be sold at Ticket Vending Machines at all rail platforms, the MTS Transit Store, and NCTD Transit Centers. You may order a Compass Card over the phone by calling 511 and saying “Compass” or visit [www.511sd.com/compass](http://www.511sd.com/compass) to purchase or reload online.

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

As a monthly pass user, you will have several options to add a new pass or fare and ensure that your card is valid. The monthly pass can be reloaded at Ticket Vending Machines, the MTS Transit Store, NCTD Oceanside, Vista, and Escondido Transit Centers; online at [www.511sd.com/compass](http://www.511sd.com/compass) or by calling 511 and saying “Compass.” The Compass Card also can be tied to a credit or debit card for automatic reloading.

### How do I use the Compass Card?

The Compass Card is simple to use; simply tap your card on the target with the Compass Card logo. To validate your trip, tap your card on the target on the platform validator at Trolley or rail stations, or the farebox on buses. Tap the Compass Card target on the Ticket Vending Machines at the stations to check your card balance, to purchase or add passes, and to load stored value (the stored value feature will be added later this year). Tapping the Ticket Vending Machine target will not validate your trip.

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

Yes. Visualize the Compass Card as the transit system’s “virtual” fare gate or an invisible turnstile. You must tap your card every time you board a bus, before you board the COASTER, SPRINTER or Trolley and when transferring from one service to another. By tapping your Compass Card, your trip will be valid, your pass will stay current, and it will prevent you from getting a citation.

### How does stored value work?

Stored value allows you to add cash to the Compass Card. This feature will be launched later this year after all the monthly passes have been converted to Compass Card. When a Compass Card loaded with stored value is tapped, the amount of a day pass, appropriate for the service, will be deducted from the balance of the card. Stored value can be used on all bus and rail service within the San Diego region. If you want a one-way fare, tell the bus driver before tapping or use stored value to buy the appropriate fare from a Ticket Vending Machine.

## **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, easy to load, and easy to replace. You can register your Compass Card, so if it is lost, stolen, or damaged, the remaining balance can be transferred to a new card.

## **When can riders begin using the Compass Card?**

The Compass Card system is being rolled out over the next several months. It first will be available on MTS Premium Express bus routes and COASTER commuter trains for May 2009 monthly passes. All COASTER and Premium Express monthly pass holders will need to convert to Compass Card by May 1, 2009.

SPRINTER/BREEZE monthly pass holders, and MTS Trolley and bus riders who purchase the Regional Pass, will convert to Compass Card beginning this summer. The complete rollout of monthly, 30-day, and Regional Passes on Compass Card will conclude by fall 2009.

## **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 will be stored on the Compass Card?**

All monthly and select day passes will be stored on the Compass Card. And, later this year, customers will be able to load cash value onto the smart card to pay as they go for a day pass or one-way fare on any service.

## **HOW DOES COMPASS WORK?**

### **How much does a Compass Card cost?**

Great news! For a limited time, the Compass Card is free! After that, customers will pay an administration fee, currently \$2 per card (non-refundable). Once you have a card you can reload it as often as you want.

### **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 on



the validator on the farebox when you board the bus and you are ready to enjoy your ride. For Trolley, COASTER or SPRINTER look for platform validators and then tap your Compass Card before boarding.

### **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 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 on the validator prior to boarding the train. Passengers must tap to validate their trip each time they ride a train or transfer to other MTS or NCTD buses and trains.

### **How do I use the Compass Card on the Trolley, SPRINTER and COASTER if I have stored value?**

The stored value feature will be deployed later this year after all monthly passes have been rolled out. If you have stored value, tap on the validator and a regional pass is loaded on your Compass Card when riding the Trolley or SPRINTER which is good for an entire day on all transit services except for COASTER, MTS Premium Express bus and Rural. A Region Plus pass is loaded when riding the COASTER which is good for an entire day on all services except Two-Zone Rural. 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.

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

No. The sensor in the card reader just needs to be about one inch from the card.

### **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 to 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 fareboxes and all rail platform validators have lights. A yellow light, or two (2) beeps means that your pass is about to expire or your balance is low. A red light and three (3) beeps means 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?**

Initially fare inspectors will deliver a warning. However, in the future, citations will 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 reload 5 days prior to the end of the month and charge the credit or debit card once the pass is loaded. If the reload is for stored value, the appropriate amount will load to the Compass Card and the credit or debit card will be charged after the load has completed. You must tap your Compass Card on the validator for the automatic reload to take place. The auto 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 and follow the instructions on the screen to add a pass to your card.

## **How do I register my Compass Card?**

Call 511 and say "Compass". Although the MTS Transit Store or NCTD Customer Service Centers do not have the ability to register Compass Cards, you can fill out a registration form that will be forwarded to SANDAG, or you can fax 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](http://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.

## **What should I do if my card 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 Compass Card is damaged, however, you are responsible for the fees associated with a replacement card and restoration of your balance.



**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.

**What should I do if my money is not added to my card?**

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.

**What 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.

**What 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.

**DISCOUNTED PASSES**

**Are there different types of Compass Cards?**

Yes. There are three different types of Compass Cards: Adult, Senior/ Disabled/Medicare, and Youth. A discounted college pass will become available in the future.

**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 discount passes and Youth passes. Riders who receive the discounted Senior/Disabled/Medicare fare can choose to have their picture included on their Compass Card at the MTS Transit Store or one of the NCTD Transit Centers. There's no need to carry both a discounted monthly pass AND a separate form of picture identification!

**Can my Reduced Fare Identification card change to Compass?**

Yes. All passengers who qualify for discounted passes can incorporate photo identification on the Compass Card. These cards can be obtained at the MTS Transit Store in downtown San Diego at First Street & Broadway; at NCTD Transit Center Customer Service windows in Escondido, Vista, and Oceanside during normal business hours Monday - Friday.

**I have a Senior/Disabled/Medicare regional monthly pass. Will I need to get a Compass Card?**

Yes. As the monthly paper passes are eliminated you will need to convert to a Compass Card.

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

No. In the future, you will need a Compass Card. Information will be forthcoming.

**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), traveling with reduced fare ID cardholders with specially marked cards reading "PCA-yes" to ride free. 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 say "transit" followed by the name of your local transit agency.

**COMMUTER BENEFITS PROGRAMS**

**Will Compass Card work with employee transit benefit programs?**

The Compass Card works with Commuter Check<sup>®</sup>, WageWorks<sup>®</sup> 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 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 our customer service center representative by calling 511 and say "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 they offer such pre-tax benefits 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, they don't 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.

**What about my personal information, will it 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 Policy on [www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) regarding the way personal information is handled.

**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 will not be reactivated once reported lost or stolen.

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

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. 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.

**How do I order a Compass Card online?**

To order online, visit [www.511sd.com/compass](http://www.511sd.com/compass) and go to the Transit eStore.

**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," visit [www.511sd.com/compass](http://www.511sd.com/compass) or e-mail: [compasscard@sandag.org](mailto:compasscard@sandag.org)