



PRESS RELEASE

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Mendocino Transit Authority Offers Service Upgrades for Dial-A-Ride Customers

New Direct Connection to Santa Rosa SMART Train Terminal Also Added

When Kathryn Brooks' eyesight worsened last year, her son asked the retired special needs teacher to stop driving. So in December she hung up the car keys for good and started using the Dial-A-Ride on-demand bus service offered by Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA).

"I've been retired for four years but I find I can't stay away from little kids," said Brooks. "I'm working continually now at Frank Zeek School, subbing five days a week. I call ahead to Dial-A-Ride and they set me up for the whole week."

Under a new service rolled out in mid-August, MTA customers who [reserve a Dial-A-Ride](#) bus up to two weeks in advance and at minimum 24 hours in advance are guaranteed a scheduled ride.



Kathryn Brooks stopped driving last December and had to find another way to get to Frank Zeek School in Ukiah, where she teaches special ed students five days a week. Now she uses the new reservation service offered by MTA's Dial-A-Ride bus.



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In Brooks' case, a Dial-A-Ride bus picks her up at Brookside Retirement Community at 7:10 a.m. each morning, drops her off at Frank Zeek school, then returns to pick her up at 11:45 a.m. for the return trip back home, five days a week.

"The drivers really are wonderful, I'm very happy," said Brooks. "I'm adjusting to not driving and my son is relieved. I'm making it work and Dial-A-Ride is helping me make it work."

The backbone of MTA's new service is RouteMatch software for bus transit companies. The software provides computer-aided dispatching that matches buses to customer reservations for service and streamlines routing. Drivers are equipped with dashboard-mounted tablets that provide GPS-enabled route stops and changes. Brooks said that, under the new service, she noticed the drivers don't have to talk to MTA dispatch nearly as much as before.



"Customers still can call the same day that they want to take a Dial-A-Ride bus, but wait times will vary as they have in the past," said Carla Meyer, MTA's general manager. "The upgraded service is perfect for those who need to be on time for doctor appointments, work and scheduled meetings."

New RouteMatch software helps Mendocino Transit Authority boost the efficiency and productivity of its Dial-A-Ride bus service. Drivers now have dashboard-mounted tablets that show continually updated schedules.

The RouteMatch software cost \$80,000, and Meyer said MTA expects it to pay for itself in efficiency cost savings within two years.



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The upgrade was supported and approved by members of the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) and MTA's board of directors, who cited operational efficiency as a major benefit. RouteMatch reduces mileage and gas on Dial-A-Ride bus routes.

The upgrade also boosts the productivity of Dial-A-Ride drivers and helps MTA deploy fewer buses to meet demand. Ridership on Dial-A-Ride is increasing and in June of 2017, the latest month tallied, reached 1,761 riders, MTA reported.

Dial-A-Ride is an on-demand, door-to-door bus service for those with special needs and is offered Monday through Saturday in Ukiah and Fort Bragg. Each Dial-A-Ride bus is equipped to transport people with disabilities, and senior rates are available for those age 62 years or older.

MTA now stops at the Santa Rosa SMART train terminal

MTA added a new stop on its [Route 65](#) and [Route 95](#) buses to Santa Rosa so that passengers can catch the [Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit](#) (SMART train) south to cities along the Highway 101 corridor, including downtown Petaluma and the Marin Civic Center. The SMART train terminal where MTA stops is a mile east of the Charles M. Schultz Sonoma County Airport on Airport Boulevard in Santa Rosa.

Currently, the connection offers MTA riders a travel route as far south as SMART train's southern terminus in San Rafael, and SMART train's planners said it can save an hour or more of travel time during periods of traffic congestion on highway 101. SMART train announced it will provide train service within the next year to the Larkspur ferry terminal for passenger trips to San Francisco and AT&T stadium.



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“MTA appreciates feedback and suggestions from our customers for improved bus service throughout our service area,” said Meyer.

To comment, visit the MTA Facebook page, [RideMTA](#). Or call MTA at (707) 462-1422.

Mendocino Transit Authority provides safe, environmentally responsible, low-cost and reliable public bus service throughout Mendocino County and south to Santa Rosa. To learn more, visit <http://www.mendocinotransit.org/>

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