



## For Immediate Release

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### **The Bus welcomes First Transit as new operator for countywide transit services**

MERCED – On May 1, 2020, First Transit, Inc. (First Transit) became the new operations and maintenance provider for The Bus as part of a 5-year, \$51 million contract with the Transit Joint Powers Authority for Merced County (TJPA). Through this contract, First Transit will maintain TJPA’s fleet of 76 vehicles and will employ the drivers and staff necessary to provide paratransit, demand response, and fixed route transit services for The Bus.

Fares, routes, and the buses themselves will not change, although passengers may notice bus drivers wearing new uniforms as well as new ‘First Transit’ stickers affixed to buses. Passengers will still be able to utilize the same phone numbers, website, and social media sites for information regarding bus service and how to purchase passes. “This change should not be felt by passengers in any immediate way, but we look forward to systemwide improvements that will come with the high quality customer service and employee training that First Transit is bringing to the Merced County region,” said Christine Chavez, Transit Manager for the Merced County Association of Governments, the agency responsible for the administration of TJPA.

“We are excited about this new partnership with First Transit,” said Stacie Guzman, Executive Director of Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) and TJPA. “We are an agency that places passenger safety and service reliability at a premium and First Transit is a company that has demonstrated the ability to deliver both.”

First Transit provides nearly six decades of experience and professional skills to put to work for transit operations and maintenance. They have operated fixed route systems in cities across North America and around the world. Their goal is to provide the safest, most efficient passenger transportation service possible, so bus patrons enjoy a safe, comfortable ride with an operator who is courteous and understanding of their needs.

TJPA’s contract with First Transit represents 100 jobs in Merced County and provides the opportunity to work with a proven industry leader in the electrification of bus fleets in the industry just as The Bus embarks on the process of shifting its own fleet to zero-emission vehicles.

All bus schedules and hours of operation can be found at [www.mercedthebus.com](http://www.mercedthebus.com) or by calling (209) 723-3100. Real-time information regarding bus locations, services and arrival times can be found at [www.thebuslive.com](http://www.thebuslive.com) or by downloading ‘The Bus Live’ app on your smart phone for free. All fares are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 emergency. Passengers are asked to only use The Bus to provide or receive essential services and to wear a mask while on board as well as comply with social distancing requirements. All buses are equipped with bike racks and are wheelchair accessible.

The Bus is the single public transportation service provider for all of Merced County and is administered by the Transit Joint Powers Authority for Merced County and managed by the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG). For more information, please visit [www.mercedthebus.com](http://www.mercedthebus.com) and [www.mcagov.org](http://www.mcagov.org).

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