

[Redacted]

From: Daniel Henderson <[Redacted]>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2026 10:19 PM
To: Public Comment; Clerk of the Board
Subject: Public Comment: Agenda Item 12 (Operating and Capital Budget FY27-31)

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Dear NCTD Board,

I am writing as a resident of Escondido and regular SPRINTER rider. I'd like to encourage the board to focus on addressing current difficulties surrounding fare evasion and high fuel costs. The time to act on these difficulties is now.

SPRINTER depends on fares, and the fact that about 1/2 of SPRINTER riders don't pay their fare is a serious problems. Notwithstanding difficulties in putting up fare gates given the current platforms, I have heard from others and observed as a rider that conductors no longer seem to walk the train checking for paid fares. Given that the conductor is already paid personnel, I see no reason for them not to check fares, even if it is "Inform, not enforce." Even if this has a small impact, this is essentially a free lunch, and every dollar counts in this fiscal environment.

Secondly, we need to start planning now for improvements that will lower our operating costs and reduce our dependence on expensive, volatile diesel and hydrogen. Both of these have been heavily impacted by the conflict in Iran, and hydrogen was already so expensive before the conflict that we could only run 7 of our 35 hydrogen buses at a time due to high operating costs. Overhead electrification, or alternatively, battery-electric train sets, are a sensible up-front investment that will lower our operating costs and dependence on diesel and hydrogen going forward, ultimately making our railroad more resilient and preserving service even in hard times. The people of Escondido and North County deserve to have service that is not subject to the whims of geopolitics.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Daniel Henderson

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

From: Christopher Roberts <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2026 1:12 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: NCTD Board Meeting 5/21/2026 public comment, Agenda Item 12

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External Sender - From: (Christopher Roberts
<[REDACTED]>)

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[NCTD Board meeting 5/21/2026](#)

Public Comment:

Agenda item 12: Proposed FY27 Operating budget and Cap Improvement Program

Chris Roberts

Good afternoon Board Members and CEO Donaghy. My name is Chris Roberts, I'm a resident of Carmel Valley and I'm a volunteer with SanDiego350.

My first comment is on the proposed FY27 budget. Clearly, NCTD is facing a budget crisis, with diesel and hydrogen fuel costs exploding. Also, due to the budget woes, there are no plans to expand NCTD service through 2021. This is precisely why NCTD needs to more aggressively be planning to electrify the Sprinter and Coaster lines using whatever strategy makes the most sense. As is well documented by Californians for Electric Rail, the upsides for electrification are very significant. Electrifying will enable increasing train frequency in the coming years, encouraging more folks to take the train, and thus growing ridership. Electrification is the future of rail transport in California!

Secondly, NCTD needs to get serious about taking on fare evasion. CEO Donaghy was quoted on KPBS a few months ago that the reasons for >30% and >50% fare evaders on Coaster and Sprinter lines, respectively, is because of an erosion of the public trust. Actually, the problem is that people generally are stretched very thin financially, and so if there's an opportunity to skip paying the fare, they will take it. The conductor no longer enforces paying the fare; instead, just informs the fare evader that they should remember to pay next time. MTS has gotten more serious about taking on fare evasion (even ticketing folks who don't pay), and the security personnel that ride the trains and check that fares were paid are paying off (people feel more secure when the fare checkers are on the train). Getting more serious about checking that fares are paid will actually help grow ridership. Also, like MTS, NCTD needs to get serious about building the infrastructure so that the trains are gated, forcing riders to pay. It's a cop out to say that the stations aren't built correctly for gated entry. This is not an overly complicated problem. Deal with fare evaders, get more revenue (before asking to increase fares), and grow the ridership on Sprinter and Coaster!

Thank you!
Best regards,
Chris Roberts
SanDiego350 Transportation Team Lead

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Chris Roberts (he/him)
[Transportation Team](#) co-lead
[SanDiego350](#)



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