



For Immediate Release

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**THE BUS SUSPENDS FARES AND IMPLEMENTS NEW PRACTICES AS PART OF
RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EMERGENCY**

MERCED – The Bus is suspending collection of fares on all fixed-route and paratransit service effective April 10, 2020 and is implementing additional safety measures aimed at protecting passengers and bus drivers during the COVID-19 emergency. In addition to daily disinfecting and social distancing measures already implemented on vehicles, plastic coverings will be added to the front of buses to separate the area between passengers and drivers. Passengers are strongly encouraged to wear a mask while on The Bus and may only use the service to provide or receive essential services in accordance with the order announced by the Merced County Public Health Officer on April 8, 2020. Bus drivers will be required to wear masks as supplies are available.

“The fare suspension is critical to protecting the drivers operating this essential service for our community,” said Christine Chavez, Transit Manager for The Bus. “By temporarily discontinuing the collection of bus fares, drivers will not have to come into close physical contact with each passenger boarding the bus or handle any cash transactions which is another potential source of exposure.”

There are currently 52 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Merced County; three individuals have died from the virus. Passengers are also encouraged to wash their hands often, cover all coughs and sneezes, stay home when sick, and avoid direct contact with sick individuals. For more information about COVID-19, please visit the Merced County website: www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.

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). All bus schedules and hours of operation can be found at www.mercedthebus.com or by calling The Bus at (209) 723-3100. Real-time information regarding bus locations, services and arrival times can be found at www.thebuslive.com or by downloading ‘The Bus Live’ app on your smart phone for free. All buses are equipped with bike racks and are wheelchair accessible.

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