



# 2021 Accomplishments

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California Integrated Travel Project  
January 2022



# Introduction

The California Integrated Travel Project ([Cal-ITP](#)) is an initiative of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to bring global standards for fare payment and real-time data to California transit agencies, along with seamless verification of eligibility for transit discounts. Cal-ITP centers its work on the principles of sustainability, equity, and optimizing the rider experience. Practically speaking, Cal-ITP's approach is to build and foster interoperable systems for payment and data sharing that give transit agencies control over their information and systems.



The program launched in earnest with a [Market Sounding](#) (October 2019) to identify barriers to seamless trip planning and fare payment followed by a [Feasibility Study](#) (April 2020) to quantify the economic benefits of the recommended initiatives. In 2020, Cal-ITP conducted more targeted feasibility studies on [Real-Time Transit Vehicle Occupancy](#) (October 2020) and [Payment Issuance for California Transit](#) (December 2020), laying the groundwork for the breakthrough successes of this past year. In 2021, the program accomplished new partnerships and live-tested solutions, advancing our vision across the three primary program areas of mobility service data, payment acceptance, and eligibility verification for discounts and benefits.

## Contactless Payment Acceptance



Cal-ITP believes that paying for transit should be as easy as paying for a cup of coffee. Transit riders should have confidence that no matter where they travel, they can instantly pay by tapping a contactless bank card or digital wallet. 2021 marked a major milestone in advancing this vision, as Cal-ITP successfully supported five transportation providers with launching contactless payment demonstrations over the course of the year: Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT), Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD), the Santa Barbara Clean Air Express through the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), and the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) FlyAway Bus. These demonstrations helped the program learn valuable lessons on customer behavior, marketing and awareness campaigns, and integration and contracting with multiple vendors.

# Contactless Payment Demonstrations

## Monterey-Salinas Transit

Cal-ITP's first contactless payment demonstration launched in May 2021 with Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST). Every fixed-route bus in MST's fleet has a contactless payment acceptance device (PAD, or fare validator) that allows riders to pay their fare by tapping their debit/credit card or their smartphone, watch, or fitness tracker.

With a focus on equity and a desire to enable as many residents to ride on transit as possible, MST implemented both distance-based contactless fares and daily/weekly/monthly contactless fare caps—allowing riders to pay as they go until they hit the price of a discounted bulk-ride fare product (such as a monthly pass) simply by tapping on and off the pole-mounted PAD each time they ride.

MST is also the first public transportation agency in the U.S. to enable its riders to verify their eligibility for discount transit fares online and to instantly add that discount benefit to a contactless open-loop debit or credit card. Now older adults (65+) with a California DMV-issued ID are able to access MST's reduced fares without the hassle of paperwork via the Cal-ITP Benefits web application.



## Sacramento Regional Transit



In the state capital, Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT) worked with Cal-ITP to roll out a #Taptoride contactless payment demo across all its light rail vehicles—that's California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Director Toks Omishakin tapping to pay for a ride on SacRT's Green Line, one of several that run near the capitol and other state government buildings.

To celebrate its summer 2021 launch of contactless fare payment, SacRT introduced a promotional \$1 fare when tapping to pay with a contactless debit/credit card or mobile wallet.

And thanks to a special loyalty program, riders with a Visa Cash App Card (a free debit card with no balance minimum or account maintenance fee) receive an additional \$1 off each SacRT ride when they tap to ride after activating their Cash App Boost, a rewards program from Square/Block.

SacRT offers a pay-as-you-go daily fare cap, guaranteeing that its customers won't be charged more than \$7—the same amount as a daily fare pass—no matter how many times a customer rides on light rail in one 24-hour period when they tap with the same card or mobile wallet throughout the day.

## Santa Barbara

On the Central Coast, Cal-ITP launched two contactless payment demonstrations at the same time in July 2021: One with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), whose Clean Air Express commuter coaches connect Northern Santa Barbara County residents to South County's Goleta and Santa Barbara; and the other with Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD), whose buses share stops with the Clean Air Express.



These intersecting demos allow transferring riders to use the same open-loop debit/credit card or mobile wallet on both transportation providers—which means instant interoperability and no need for closed-loop fare cards or equipment to be shared between the adjoining agencies.

SBCAG elected to implement pay-as-you-go daily and monthly fare capping and has been experimenting with Cal-ITP and local companies that typically buy physical fare passes to enact monthly fare caps when their employees tap their bank card or mobile wallet to pay for their ride on the Clean Air Express.



At Santa Barbara MTD, contactless fare payment was initially introduced along two key express bus lines: the 12X and the 24X, which serves the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB). MTD then expanded the Cal-ITP contactless payment demo to two other key bus lines: the 15X, an express bus that connects Santa Barbara City College and UCSB; and the 16, which acts as a City College shuttle.

These route selections—coupled with MTD's decision to offer pay-as-you-go daily and monthly fare caps—enabled Cal-ITP to experiment with contactless pre-tax transit benefit debit cards with a group of UCSB employees who ride MTD to campus.

## Los Angeles World Airports

At Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), “tap on phone” contactless debit and credit card payment was introduced on FlyAway’s 22 buses servicing 2 non-stop routes that connect LAX airport travelers to L.A.’s San Fernando Valley and to downtown L.A.’s Union Station—where riders can transfer to Metro subway and light rail lines, Metrolink commuter rail lines, and several Amtrak rail routes.

Prior to launching this demo with Cal-ITP, LAWA required that tickets be bought online or at a ticket booth. Now, boarding is faster and easier for travelers arriving from around the globe, with internationally recognized contactless symbols used in the marketing that has been deployed on FlyAway buses as well as in LAX terminals.

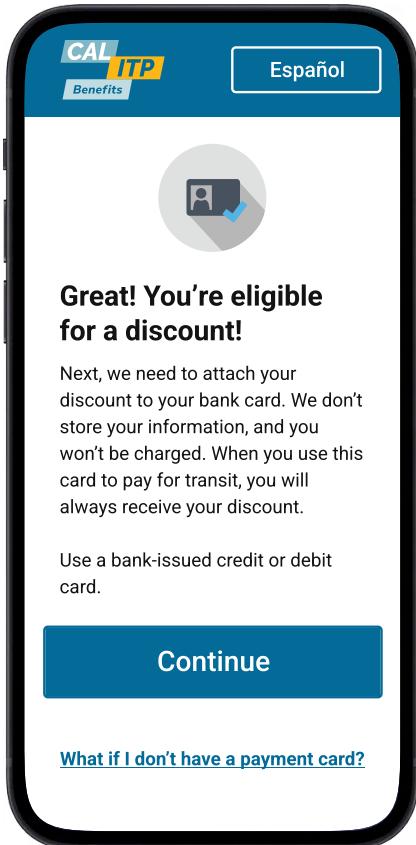


## Mobility Marketplace

Cal-ITP achieved a major milestone in December with the announcement by the California Department of General Services (DGS) of its intent to award Master Services Agreements (MSAs) to a bench of providers of Payment Acceptance Devices and Transit Processing services. These contracts, along with the existing EPAY MSA for payment processing, will allow public transit providers to visit the [Mobility Marketplace](#) to easily procure the hardware and software services needed to stand up a contactless payment acceptance system at affordable rates.

Cal-ITP also worked in 2021 to facilitate a unique partnership among a group of small bus operators in California's northern counties (known as the "Far North Group"), who have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to simplify and align their fare structures in tandem with the launch of a contactless payment pilot with products from the MSAs. In 2022, Cal-ITP will work to support transit providers statewide with the transition to contactless payment acceptance while also pursuing additional demonstration projects on new topics.

## Cal-ITP Benefits Tool



Cal-ITP believes that the process for enrolling and verifying eligibility for transit discounts should be simple for the rider to apply for and easy for transit providers to administer. Fall 2021 marked the official launch of the [Cal-ITP Benefits](#) demonstration tool, which was developed through a partnership with the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST).

The benefits tool demonstration allows older adults in the MST service area to receive their discounted senior fare when they pay using a contactless payment option. Riders need a California DMV-issued driver's license or ID number to verify age and a bank-issued credit or debit card. The benefits application is integrated with the contactless payment acceptance demonstration and allows riders to receive their discounted fare automatically each time they tap to pay on the bus. In 2022, the team will continue working with its partners to streamline and align benefits, and will scale the tool to reach new transit providers and customer groups.

# Contactless Payment Accounts

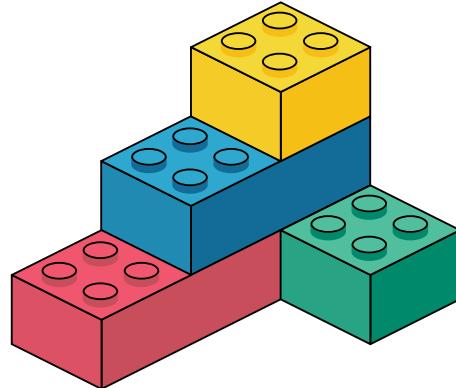
In 2021, Cal-ITP launched a successful demonstration with Square (now Block) to provide a low-cost, easy-access payment account option to transit customers using the Square Cash App and Visa Cash App Debit Card. To better understand the payment preferences of California transit customers, Cal-ITP worked with UC Davis to survey unbanked and underbanked transit riders about their options.

Cal-ITP worked with the various demonstration transit providers to understand, document, and reduce the associated transaction fees for accepting contactless payments. Cal-ITP partnered with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), to conduct a [Market Sounding](#) of key players in the mobility industry on the topic of “mobility accounts” in an effort to develop a coordinated statewide strategy to improve mobility options and outcomes.

# Mobility Service Data

## Data Guidelines and Principles

Cal-ITP believes that transit providers in California should have the most complete and accurate data of their own operations—including information about schedules, fares, accessibility, and vehicle crowding—which they share with their riders in a standardized format. The global data standard for customer-facing transit service information is the [General Transit Feed Specification \(GTFS\)](#). Our theory of change in achieving this vision requires setting clear expectations for transit providers, measuring their performance against those expectations, and assisting the transit providers in meeting expectations through direct support and by investing in an interoperable ecosystem for mobility data hardware and software.



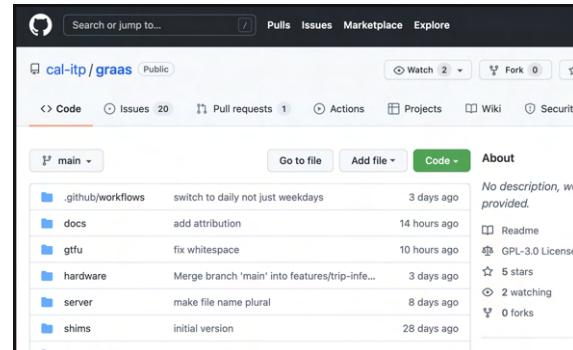
In 2021, the Cal-ITP team made important progress establishing and documenting minimum expectations to ensure that the GTFS data standard is applied correctly and completely, publishing a version 2.0 update to the [California Minimum GTFS Guidelines](#) in August. In October, Cal-ITP along with 12 other public and non-profit organization co-authors released the [Mobility Data Interoperability Principles](#), which promote open standards for data interchanges and make critical connections between transit technology systems and better service, leading to more efficient, cost-effective, and equitable technology deployed on public transit systems.

## Contributions to Mobility Data Standards

Cal-ITP also initiated and contributed toward a set of GTFS [Realtime best practices](#) as well as the [GTFS-Fares 2.0 extension](#), which enables fares to be visible in any trip-planning applications alongside schedules. The team has been deeply engaged in helping transit providers understand how their GTFS data is performing, delivering assessments of compliance and creating actionable plans for improvement, documented on the [California GTFS Quality Dashboard](#).

## GTFS Realtime as a Service

Cal-ITP developed and launched its own mobile application called GTFS Realtime as a Service (GRaaS) to give transit agencies an affordable way to produce GTFS Realtime. GRaaS has ultra-low hardware costs and no software fees, as its code is open source. In 2021, 14 transit providers worked with Cal-ITP to deploy and test the GRaaS product and document the results. Cal-ITP will continue to develop and deploy its GRaaS solution, and will work with transit providers and their vendors to improve mobility service data.



[GRaaS on GitHub](#)

## Grant Application Process

Cal-ITP worked with partners at Caltrans' Division of Rail and Mass Transportation (DRMT) to streamline the application process for transit agencies to apply for federal and state grant funds. The new process will significantly reduce the workload and resources required, helping both transit providers and Caltrans to support projects that are consistent with the state's mobility objectives. Improvements will include a single consolidated application instead of individual applications for each grant program and a 2-year call for projects cycle to allow for longer-term budgeting and planning. These changes improve DRMT's ability to assist agency partners, pursue more complex projects, and develop longer-term plans for achieving transit equity and sustainability goals.

## Conclusion

Cal-ITP saw many achievements in 2021, and the team is excited to see what 2022 has in store! We would like to thank all of our partners and other key stakeholders who were so instrumental to our progress. Stay tuned for more updates soon!

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