



San Diego 6: Partnership, Home Depot Offer Free DIY Clinic to Impress Your Sweetheart on Valentine's Day

<http://www.cw6sandiego.com/video/impress-your-sweetheart/>

## Impress your sweetheart with DIY projects

February 2, 2016 by CW6 News Team



Learn more about a free do-it-yourself Valentine's clinic at Home Depot.



## San Diego Union-Tribune: Homeless count reveals hardship in San Diego

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/jan/29/homeless-survey-annual-count/>

**SAN DIEGO** — More than 1,700 volunteers from throughout the county were up before dawn Friday to participate in an annual ritual that could help bring more federal dollars to help San Diego’s homeless while also creating a clearer picture of people living on the street.

“Our census is so big, but our dollars are so small,” San Diego City Councilman Todd Gloria said to volunteers who gathered at 4 a.m. downtown in Golden Hall to participate in the annual WeAllCount survey of homeless people.

Based on last year’s count, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ranked San Diego’s homeless population of 8,742 the fourth highest in the nation, behind Seattle, Los Angeles and New York City.

The formula HUD uses for funding, however, placed San Diego at 23rd in the nation for dollars to help the homeless, with \$16.2 million received in 2014.

During a visit to San Diego last October, HUD Secretary Julián Castro said he would re-examine the formula this year, giving this year’s count a greater significance.

“Your presence here this morning is going to make sure that we make the strongest case possible for changing that formula to match more to the needs,” said Gloria, chair of the Regional Continuum of Care Council. “Your efforts here this morning will literally result in millions of dollars coming back to our community.”

The annual census is conducted in the winter, when more homeless people are likely to be in shelters. Last year's count found 4,586 people in shelters and 4,156 unsheltered.

Tracking down the unsheltered requires teams of people who hit the streets with maps, clipboards and flashlights to search for anyone sleeping in doorways, sidewalks, canyons and other outdoor locations. While the bulk of the count is done by volunteers working out of 60 deployment centers throughout the county, the Regional Task Force on the Homeless holds a "VIP" event for elected officials, civic leaders and political candidates at Golden Hall.

Unlike the simple headcount conducted out of the other deployment centers, volunteers at Golden Hall hit the street with a 30-question survey to give to any early risers they met downtown.

"Every one of them has a different story about how they got here," said San Diego County Supervisor Greg Cox, who was participating in what he thinks was his fifth WeAllCount survey Friday. "Last year we interviewed a couple of veterans, and they just had some hard times. They weren't getting the services that they needed. I tend to think that if we had intervened at the right point in the process, we could have got them stabilized and maybe they wouldn't have become homeless."

Armed with a bag filled with hygiene kits and \$10 Subway gift cards to give to anyone willing to take the survey, Cox walked up to a man putting away his tent on the corner of A and Union streets. Many of the downtown homeless who took the survey said they had done time in jail or prison, had been on the street for years and had a disability or a mental condition. Some admitted to smoking Spice, a synthetic cannabis popular on the street.

"Where did you sleep on Thursday night/Friday morning?" Cox said, reading from the questionnaire after the man consented to take the survey.

"Right here," he said while folding a blanket into a pushcart decorated with small, stuffed toys.

The man, 50, gave mostly one-word answers and couldn't remember if he had been homeless since 2000 or 2002. Living with arthritis and lung cancer, he said his health was going downhill and he was suicidal.

Across the street, a youthful looking 63-year old man with wavy blond hair seemed in a much better mood as he hurriedly took down his tent.

“This is my morning routine,” he said, explaining that he always breaks down his tent by 5 a.m. to avoid confrontations with the police. “I get up, and get coffee at Burger King.”

Responding to the questionnaire, the man blamed most of his recent troubles, including jail time and homelessness, on the tumultuous relationship he had with his ex-girlfriend.

Downtown San Diego Partnership CEO Kris Michell, who also was at Golden Hall, said conducting surveys with homeless people had helped her see them as more than just a number.

“Once you sit down with someone, you begin to see through their eyes,” she said.

The surveys can take about 10 minutes to complete, but Michell recalled spending about an hour and a half talking with a man one year as she tried to get him to open up.

Finally, she heard his story. He was a military veteran and once a chef, but like many people on the street, his life unraveled after a traumatic incident.

In his case, the man was driving under the influence when he was in a crash that killed his wife. He had been on the street for 10 years when Michell interviewed him, and she was able to refer him to services that might help.

“At that point, I thought we had a shot at him,” she said.

In Hillcrest, Gloria and Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins had found people to interview near 4th and Robinson avenues.

“I’ve heard the gamut tonight,” Gloria said as the sun began to rise. “The first gentleman, his wife of 29 years died. It sounded like he fell into alcoholism and has been homeless for quite a while now.”

Just minutes earlier, Gloria had sat on a curb next to an 18-year-old man who told him he had lost his job as a janitor, and was homeless because he couldn’t find work.

“He’s a great kid,” Gloria said. “It sounds like he’s relatively new in this most recent episode, but he’s been homeless on and off since he was 13.”

Gloria said the surveys are meant to create a greater understanding of needs in the area.

“From the surveys I’ve conducted this morning, I don’t know if I have any necessary conclusions,” he said. “I would say Spice has come up quite a bit as an issue. I’m not sure what to be done with that, but it gives you a sense of where we need to focus our time and resources.”

Minutes later, Gloria was distracted by a sudden ruckus at a bus stop just steps away. A man with a 1,000-yard stare was yelling incoherently and punching the air. Members from the Alpha Team, a nonprofit that helps the homeless, tried to hold him up as his legs gave out beneath him.

He was the “great kid” Gloria had just interviewed,

Paramedics arrived, lifted him onto a stretcher and strapped down his flailing limbs before driving him off.

“Spice,” said Brandon Smith of the Alpha Project. “We’ve got to get this off the street. In Hillcrest and East Village, it’s really bad. That’s what has homeless people passing out.”

Shortly before the incident, Atkins had conducted a survey with a 22-year-old man across the street. As he sat up under a blanket, Atkins knelt beside him to hear how he had left home to escape the sexual abuse from his older brother.

“He was talking to us and he started to cry,” she said. “He doesn’t have a job. I said, ‘How do you eat? He said, ‘I try to ask people for food as they’re going into the 7-Eleven, but I’d never steal. I’m not a thief. But people ignore you and they look at you like you’re bad. But I’m not a bad. I’m not a thief.’”

Most of the surveys completed Friday were not done on the street, but by volunteers at libraries and social service agencies such as the Crisis House in El Cajon, where Assistant Director Jack Micklos said 70 questionnaires were filled out over two days last year.

Christina Lamar, one of two volunteers interviewing people Friday morning, said she wanted to help to gain a greater understanding of what homeless people experience.

One woman, Krista, was 30 and said she had been homeless for the past two years. She has cerebral palsy and depression, and hasn't worked since 2011. She first became homeless after her mother died, then again after her son was taken away, she said.

Lamar also interviewed Russell, 52, who had slept on the sidewalk Thursday night. As he drank from a thermos, he described being homeless off and on for 34 years. Without elaborating, he said he spent five years in prison.

When Lamar came to the question about his mental condition, Russell had a quick answer.

"If you live on the street, you always feel depressed," he said. "It's common sense."

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## Tech Sector Onboard With Efforts to Keep Graduates in Town

<http://www.sdbj.com/news/2016/jan/28/tech-sector-onboard-efforts-keep-graduates-town/?page=2>

WORKFORCE: Bus Tour Shows Students Extent Of Opportunities Downtown By Emmet Pierce Originally published January 28, 2016 at 1:05 p.m., updated January 28, 2016 at 1:05 p.m.

Photo courtesy of San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. The Link2Downtown bus tour included a stop at the SweetLabs office in downtown before concluding with a mixer at Stella Public House.

San Diego — The dynamic has confounded local tech companies for years: The University of California, San Diego has almost 9,000 engineering students, and one of the largest and most successful computer science programs in the country, yet many suitable local high-tech job openings go unfilled.



It has led to the creation of Link2Downtown, an initiative organized by the Downtown San Diego Partnership in collaboration with the San Diego

Regional Economic Development Corp. In October about 35 computer science and engineering students from UCSD took part in a bus tour of four downtown startup tech companies, according to Ashley Swartout, manager of economic development for the EDC.

The tour included visits to business incubator EvoNexus and tech companies Classy, Sweetlabs and Underground Elephant. It ended with a networking event in the East Village.

The tour was designed to show UCSD’s computer and engineering students that they don’t have to relocate to Silicon Valley — the home of many high-profile tech companies — to find good jobs in their fields of study.

“I think a lot of them got to see what is actually happening in San Diego, that there is a tech startup scene,” Swartout said. “A lot of students are not aware that we have the opportunities in San Diego. A lot of them said, ‘Wow, I didn’t know this existed.’”

“It is important for us to retain the talent that is educated here, to showcase the career opportunities we have in the region. A significant number of graduates end up leaving the region.”

The bus tour arose from the EDC's Link2 program, which exposes students to career opportunities throughout the San Diego region.

### **More Tours Planned**

Kris Michell, CEO of the downtown partnership group, said she hopes to organize a similar tour each quarter for college students. Future tours will include other schools in the region.

While many students on the recent tour were aware of the nightlife downtown, they were less familiar with the tech companies that have located there in recent years.

"We took them out of the campus environment and brought them into downtown," Michell said. "What was most interesting was that most of the students had not been to downtown except at night. Most of the students didn't realize the depth and breadth of companies we had."

Word of the tour got around campus and a group of about 20 students who missed it took the initiative to contact the downtown partnership to arrange a tour of their own, Michell said.

Jarrold Russell, director of public affairs at Underground Elephant, a digital marketing firm, serves as co-chair of the downtown partnership's Tech-Startup Committee. He's also a UCSD grad who once considered leaving the region to find work. Too many computer science and engineering graduates don't look past Silicon Valley for a place to begin their careers, he said.

"With many other tech centers so saturated, I would argue that San Diego is one of the top cities ripe for deep innovation and socio-economic transformation," Russell said in a prepared statement. "And who will do a lot of that work? Millennials. The good news is that millennials are mission driven, so I would say this is a perfect fit."

"San Diego has and will continue to solve major problems for the world, and we'll get even better at it if we retain the talent we train."

Michell said millennials are looking for more than well-paying jobs when they choose an employer.

"They want to work for companies that behave ethically, that have a social mission and are committed to improving society," Michell said. "They want to work for a company that shares their values."

Mary Walshok, dean of the UCSD Extension program, said introducing students to local career opportunities fits in with the university's efforts to contribute to the success of the community.

"I think USCD has a deep commitment to become an integral part of the prosperity of the San Diego region," Walshok said. "A big piece of that is the demand for technical engineering and computer skills. We interact with agencies that are focusing on talent and the role it plays in San Diego's economy. We have the largest enrollment in computer science of any university in California."

### **Finding Ways to Do More**

Both businesses and educators can do more to make students in various academic disciplines more aware of local job opportunities, she said.

"We haven't worked with employers to build bridges to these opportunities," said Walshok. "These employers are so busy just getting product out. They don't have big HR and recruitment arms."



The EDC is addressing the issue. The Link2 program is meant to expose students to career opportunities within various industry clusters throughout the San Diego region, Swartout explained. Students seeking degrees from engineering to business and marketing are asked to take part.

The EDC currently is collaborating with local universities to bring panels of business leaders to campuses to talk about career opportunities. The Link2 funding has been a collaboration between the EDC and industry partners. Space for presentations has been provided by universities.

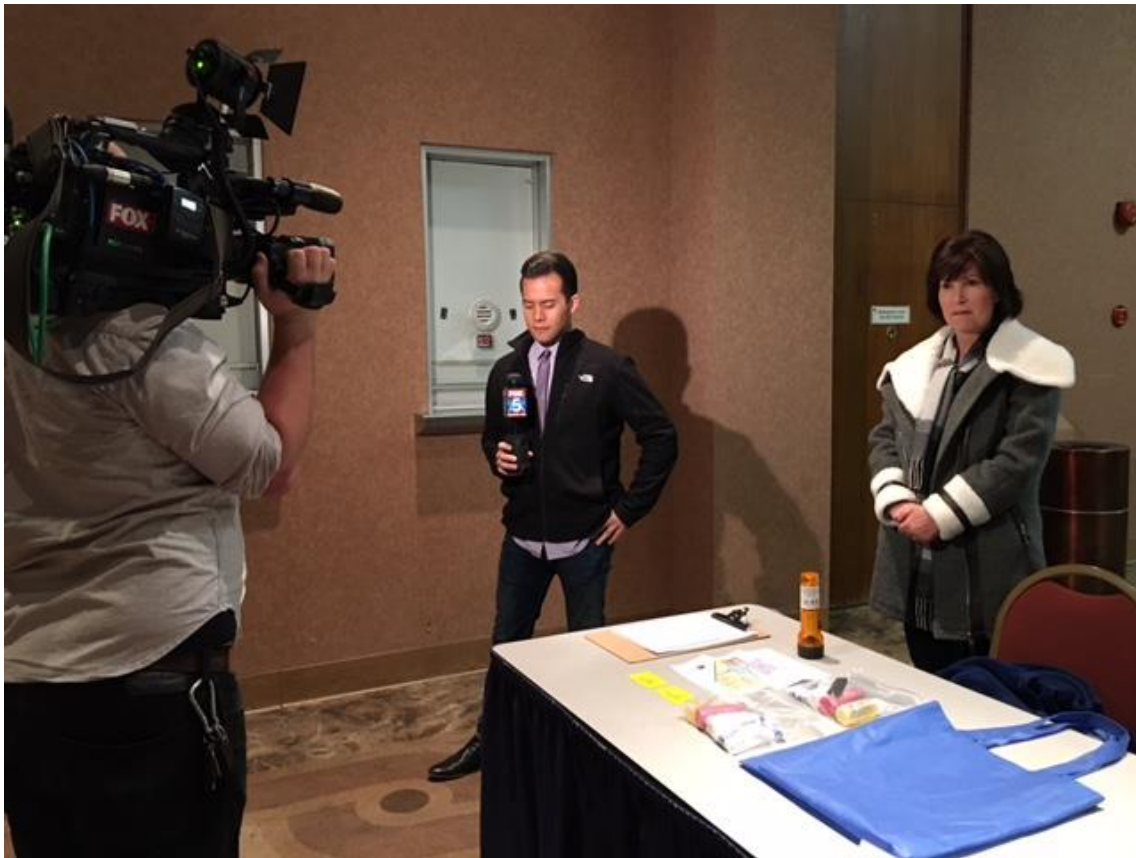
Swartout said since 2013 the EDC has held forums to discuss job opportunities in such fields as life sciences, cyber security, and the sports and active lifestyle cluster.

She said a visit to the California State University, San Marcos is being planned in conjunction with a student tour of businesses in North County.

“One of the things we’re looking to do is host a bus tour along the (Highway) 78 corridor to expose them to the different industries and opportunities available in North County,” she said.



**Downtown Partnership's Clean & Safe Hosts VIP Meet-Up for  
2016 Homeless Census**





### **Voice of San Diego: Homelessness Downtown Has Spiked Dramatically**

<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/government/homelessness-downtown-has-spiked-dramatically/>

Dozens more homeless San Diegans settled on downtown streets last year than in the previous three years, according to a prominent business group's monthly count.

In December, the Downtown San Diego Partnership discovered a nearly 60 percent spike in unsheltered homeless compared with December 2014.

In East Village alone, the group reported an 86 percent rise in homeless on the streets. Three other downtown neighborhoods – Core Columbia, Cortez and Marina – also saw increases.

The Downtown Partnership also reported a higher annual monthly average in unsheltered homeless downtown for all of 2015 than in the previous year.

These statistics could foreshadow the results of the annual Regional Task Force on the Homeless count set for early Friday.

The two counts are different. Volunteers for the Regional Task Force on the Homeless [descend countywide once a year](#) to count the number of people they see sleeping in tents, cars and makeshift structures, and on streets and sidewalks. Then they add in the number of people the region's shelters reported were sleeping there on the same night. The total they report is the one most commonly cited regionally and helps drive decision-making about the resources thrown at local homelessness.

The Downtown Partnership count, however, is conducted in the early morning hours of the [last Thursday of every month](#). It simply focuses on unsheltered homeless residents found in five downtown neighborhoods. The numbers fluctuate each month based on the time of year, available services and scores of other variables.

The increase in homelessness for all downtown neighborhoods from January 2014 to January 2015 was 20 percent in the Downtown Partnership count. Last year's regional homeless count revealed a [26 percent surge](#) in people living on downtown streets during roughly the same period, though the two groups don't necessarily use the same boundaries for downtown neighborhoods.

Dolores Diaz, executive director of the Regional Task Force on the Homeless, cautions the Downtown Partnership numbers offer just a snapshot of a complex regional challenge.

The homeless can move frequently throughout the year, and while one count may show a significant spike in one downtown neighborhood for a time, an adjacent one could see a drop during the same period or even weeks later. And downtown is just one part of a much larger county.

For example, San Diego County saw a less dramatic increase in homelessness countywide – 3 percent – from 2014 to 2015, according to the Task Force's count.

Yet the rise in downtown homelessness was clear – and the Downtown Partnership numbers point to another likely boost in those numbers this year.

The reasons for the most recent year-over-year rise in downtown homelessness aren't straightforward.

East Village, in particular, has long been a hub for homeless services, and the city is in the midst of a shift in its approach to emergency shelter beds. The winter tents that once housed up to 350 people have been replaced with a year-round interim shelter at St. Vincent de Paul Village, [which adds up to 250 emergency beds when certain weather benchmarks are met](#). More passersby are also donating tents to homeless people in anticipation of [El Niño downpours](#). The reason could also be idiosyncratic. Groups like the Downtown Partnership count each tent as housing two people when they tabulate the number of homeless downtown.

There's also some anecdotal evidence to go with the increases the Downtown Partnership has discovered.

Homeless advocates and those who live on the streets told me they've spotted more tents and tarps dotting downtown streets in recent months, particularly in East Village. There seem to be more tents – and more homeless people overall – gathering downtown.



## **SDGLN.com: Five donation meters coming to Hillcrest**

<http://sdgln.com/news/2016/01/15/five-donation-meters-coming-hillcrest#sthash.71Z9CHDe.dpbs>

Hillcrest will soon have five red meters that will allow people to donate change or make a gift by credit card to help the area's homeless. San Diego has a huge homeless problem, and Hillcrest along with Downtown and the San Diego River corridor are among the most affected areas in the city. The Hillcrest Business Association (HBA) voted Tuesday night to sign an agreement with IPS Group in Pennsylvania to provide the donation meters, which look exactly like parking meters except they are painted red. Ben Nicholls, executive director of the HBA, told his board members that they essentially would be replicating the "Make Change Count" drive in Downtown implemented by the Downtown San Diego Partnership. The only difference, he said, was that the five red meters in Hillcrest would be mobile, so that the HBA could take them to the Hillcrest Farmers Market on Sundays or to festivals and special events that draw large crowds.

See more at: <http://sdgln.com/news/2016/01/15/five-donation-meters-coming-hillcrest#sthash.71Z9CHDe.v2U7IUmP.dpuf>

# San Diego Business Journal: Officials Say Free Ride Program Should Pay Off

SERVICE: Downtown Service Addresses Needs By **LOU HIRSH** Originally published January 7, 2016 at 12:03 p.m., updated January 7, 2016 at 12:03 p.m.

<http://www.sdbj.com/news/2016/jan/07/officials-say-free-ride-program-should-pay/?page=3&>

Photo courtesy of Free Ride San Diego Free Ride San Diego will soon be expanding a downtown circulator program that uses electric vehicles carrying advertising. Recent sponsors have included Swinerton Builders and Fox Sports.



San Diego — For riders who don't mind their transportation served up with "a word from our sponsor," a newly expanded downtown San Diego circulator service will kick off this spring with a price that's right: free.

Civic San Diego, the city's downtown project oversight agency, is finalizing details for a service that will use electric vehicles — big enough for five passengers and a driver — to transport riders among all of downtown's neighborhoods

within the city's designated parking district.

Starting with 20 vehicles — which officials said could be expanded to 50 in coming years — the service by Florida-based The Free Ride makes use of advertising-wrapped vehicles that can be hailed the old-fashioned way from the street, or through a mobile app currently being developed by Free Ride.

While the company generally has seen its highest ridership within the 22-to-40 age group in the markets that it serves, Free Ride co-founder Alex Esposito said the customer base can be much more diverse depending on the location, especially in urban areas.

"We've had tourists ride us, we've had local office workers riding, we've had seniors who live in the area and they're picking up groceries," he said.

## Expanding Service

Esposito started the company in 2011 with co-founder James Mirras with a similar but smaller-scale service in the Hamptons area of New York's Long Island.

The company has since expanded to West Palm Beach, Fla., as well as Santa Monica. The new San Diego offering, expected to start in April or May, is an extension of a service that Free Ride started last summer during Comic-Con International, which still has five to seven vehicles operating downtown depending on demand.

The same company, operating locally as San Diego Free Ride, has previously done event-oriented shuttles using electric vehicles in the Hillcrest neighborhood, and most recently had the cars operating during the San Diego Chargers' 2015 home games, shuttling visitors between their vehicles and stadium gates in the vast

parking lot of Qualcomm Stadium. It has arrangements in place to offer the same services at Torrey Pines to operators of the upcoming Farmers Insurance golf tournament.

### **Mapping Marketing Opportunities**

Esposito said the transportation provider has developed a steady and growing stable of paying advertisers looking to reach target demographics for their products and services. In some cases, advertisers are looking for customer face time in areas with plenty of retail outlets, where riders can eventually purchase products being touted on the wraps, and possibly sampled in the cars.

Photo courtesy of Free Ride San Diego Free Ride San Diego will soon be expanding a downtown circulator program that uses electric vehicles carrying advertising. Recent sponsors have included Swinerton Builders and Fox Sports.

**continued** — “You might get a Vita Coco (coconut water) to drink on the ride, or a bag of Popchips to sample,” Esposito said.



In the San Diego market, sponsors have included Vita Coco, Swinerton Builders, Fox Sports San Diego and the Fuddrucker's restaurant chain. Esposito said the business model has proven effective in all of the cities where Free Ride has operated, though the company does not disclose revenue and other financial data.

Esposito said downtown San Diego marks the company's biggest opportunity to date to serve a high-density, year-round customer base, including a growing contingent of permanent residents and local business workers.

“It's much more efficient than operating big buses that eat up a lot of fuel, and run half-empty a lot of the time,” he said.

Recent research by the Downtown San Diego Partnership and the University of California, San Diego estimated that downtown's residential population is on track to double in the next 30 years, to more than 60,000. That's in addition to the growing number of workers who will be heading downtown as companies increasingly locate there, stemming from millennial-age preferences for living and working in urban areas.

### **Sharing Economy on the Move**

Kris Michell, president and CEO of the nonprofit downtown partnership, said the upcoming expanded circulator is an effective way to respond to several converging trends, including millennials' demands for sustainable, congestion-free transit alternatives for access to urban centers.

“It's going to be more efficient and cost less than having a fixed-route shuttle service,” Michell said. “You also have to get in line with what's happening in the sharing economy.”

Downtown civic and business leaders have long been seeking ways to match vehicle traffic with available parking slots, while cutting down on parking-spot-hunting drivers roaming the downtown as they create pollution and added congestion. Civic San Diego decided in late 2014 to seek proposals for an environmentally friendly circulator.

The Free Ride service was subsequently picked from among seven original proposals received by the agency. Civic San Diego has budgeted \$1 million initially, coming from city parking meter revenue, to cover startup costs of the service, including the purchase of vehicles. The service's scope and the city's investment would rise over time, depending on when it reaches specific ridership benchmarks.

Stephanie Shook, a project director at Civic San Diego who handles matters related to the parking district, said staff research found that a shuttle service using small electric vehicles would be more cost-effective than a fixed-route system using buses or vans. It is also a more flexible option as it can be adjusted to match traffic patterns in different locations at different times, especially during special events. "It's a good scaling option," Shook said.

Contract terms were being finalized at press time. According to Civic San Diego staff reports, San Diego Free Ride will contribute at least five cars that it currently owns, along with associated advertising revenue, to a separate legal entity that will operate the downtown circulator. A required portion of annual net operating income, likely 35 percent, will be set aside for potential reinvestment into the system.

The initial investment by Civic San Diego will support the acquisition of 15 new vehicles and the outfitting of 20 total vehicles, along with needed vehicle charging infrastructure, mobile app development, startup marketing and related launch expenses. The new service will follow advertising rules similar to those enforced by the city's Metropolitan Transit System, with the exception that advertising of alcohol will be permitted as long as a "drink responsibly" message is associated with all campaigns.

Civic San Diego estimates that the 20-car Free Ride will create 25 full-time permanent jobs and 15 part-time jobs within the first year. It is expected to carry 3,000 passengers weekly at launch, with an average wait time of eight minutes per rider. The vehicle count could eventually rise to 50 if weekly ridership reaches 12,000 with the same average wait time, among other conditions.