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For Immediate Release

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Attempted Murder Charge for Man Who Attacked MTS Bus Driver

Data Shows Uptick in Assaults on Public Transportation

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that premeditated attempted murder and attempted robbery charges have been filed against a 50-year-old man, who attacked an MTS bus driver in Escondido this week by viciously stabbing the victim multiple times with a large knife, causing great bodily injury. Defendant Mario Felix pleaded not guilty in Vista Superior Court this afternoon. He is facing 65 years to life in prison if convicted and is being held on no bail.

On Wednesday, Felix boarded an MTS bus at the Escondido Sprinter Station and demanded a free ride from the driver. When the driver told Felix he had to pay, he became enraged and demanded the victim's wallet and threatened to kill him before using a knife to stab the driver in the torso, stomach, shoulder and back. The victim managed to push Felix out of the bus while he was being stabbed, but Felix immediately jumped back on the bus and delivered a final stab before walking away.

Witnesses followed Felix and they directed police to the defendant's hiding spot behind a dumpster, where he was apprehended.

"Bus drivers and transit workers have been increasingly subjected to violence as they perform their important and essential jobs," DA Stephan said. "This case is a horrific example of an escalating threat that makes the already-difficult job of transit workers more dangerous."

The stabbing comes amid an uptick in violent crime and other criminal acts across San Diego County public transportation. The District Attorney's Office looked at criminal case data for a 17-month period between January 2022 through April 2024 and found the following trends:

- More than 1,200 cases issued by the DA's Office involved a transit element, such as a passenger, worker, vehicle or transit facility such as MTS or NCTD.
- 35% of cases issued involve a violent crime charge.

- Beginning in the summer of 2023, there was a 65% increase in the monthly average number of issued cases involving the transit system, increasing from 35 to 58 per month.
- Of the cases issued, 33% of them involve passengers whereas 13% of them involve crimes against a transit worker, with 6% involving drivers.

“This disturbing trend of crime involving our transportation systems has also impacted passengers,” DA Stephan said. “Everyone deserves to be safe and our team at the DA’s office will work in partnership with Escondido Police Department to bring justice in this case to the innocent victim, who was simply doing his job. Working with our law enforcement partners and MTS, we are committed to preventing crimes like this from being committed on public transit. My office has gathered this data to help guide strategic actions to improve the public’s safety.”

Felix will next be in court on August 20. Deputy District Attorney Keith Watanabe is prosecuting this case.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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