

Horse-Drawn Carriage to Greet Capistrano Visitors Saturday

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A horse-drawn carriage traveled around downtown San Juan Capistrano on Saturday, June 8 when the historic area overflowed with visitors because of a special Metrolink promotion urging riders to “Make it Your Mission to Experience San Juan.”

More than 300 Metrolink riders enjoyed a day in San Juan Capistrano, boosting business at restaurants, gift shops, even the local movie theater.

The Metrolink promotion started with a kick-off party at the Santa Ana station at 8:30 a.m., where riders were greeted by Tustin Mayor Al Murray, who is also an OCTA Director, San Juan Capistrano Mayor John Taylor and Mayor Pro-tem Sam Allevalo. After music, free food and raffles, visitors boarded the Metrolink train for San Juan Capistrano, arriving just after 10:30 a.m. They were greeted at the Capistrano station by members of the Spurs & Satin western re-enactment group.

The “Make it Your Mission” campaign evolved out of a partnership between the City, San Juan Capistrano merchants, the Orange County Transportation Authority and Supervisor Patricia Bates’ office. The City’s Economic Preservation Committee is a group of city leaders, business owners and volunteers working to draw visitors to town during the Ortega Interchange reconstruction.

The \$86-million Caltrans project at the primary entrance to downtown San Juan Capistrano will last two years. Merchants voiced concern about the potential financial impacts of the work on their business. That spurred then-Mayor Larry Kramer to create the Economic Preservation Committee, led by former Councilwoman Laura Freese.

The committee, working with the Orange County Transportation Authority, has designed and ordered new signs to help visitors find their way around town from various routes. The committee also pushed recently passed rules making it easier to put up banners and hold events in town.

Volunteers – including Ross Pollard from McDonalds, Steve DeNault from DeNault’s True Value Hardware and others – chipped in money to pay for the horse-drawn carriage Saturday. The carriage took visitors around the downtown for free, said Mission Grill owner John Gillotti, who is a member of the committee. More than two dozen San Juan businesses offer discounts to customers who show their Metrolink ticket stub, too.

Another special Metrolink promotion is planned September 21, when Capistrano will host its first Greek festival.

Weekend Metrolink riders can take advantage of a \$10 pass that allows unlimited riding throughout the weekend. For more information on the Metrolink discounts in San Juan Capistrano, see www.octa.net/sanjuancapistrano.