Learning the Metro Bus System / For Cowell Students

This guide summarizes the main bus routes between downtown Santa Cruz and the UCSC campus. It’ll help you get to and from the off-campus destinations you want to explore.

When to choose the campus shuttle system and when to use the Metro bus system

Choose TAPS Transit buses (shuttles) to get from one place to another ON CAMPUS when walking isn’t an option. This makes good use of your Student Transit Fee dollars and saves space on crowded Metro buses for students headed off-campus. No need to show your student ID on campus shuttles.

Choose Metro (SCMTD) buses to go to OFF-CAMPUS destinations. Have your student ID card with a current validation sticker (or Temporary Bus Pass) ready to show the driver (or pay a $2 fare if no ID). Note: Metro policy prevents drivers from allowing items over 5 feet in length (including surfboards).

Metro Buses Travel Bi-Directionally Through Campus

Even-numbered routes – 10, 16, and 20 – enter campus through the main (east) entrance, pass by the east colleges first (including Cowell!), traveling across campus in the counterclockwise direction.

Odd-numbered routes – 15 and 19 – enter campus through the west gate and pass by the west colleges first, traveling across campus in the clockwise direction.

Where To Catch Metro Buses Near Cowell College

Note: Campus bus stop names are posted on signs attached to the top front of each campus bus shelter.

Even-numbered routes – 10-UCSC via High, 16-UCSC via Laurel East, and 20-UCSC via Westside – arrive at the “Bookstore” bus stop on the east side (Cowell side) of Hagar Drive; this metro stop is at the bottom of the Prescott stairs. NOTE: this bus stop is temporarily relocated due to construction. It is adjacent to the intersection.

Odd-numbered routes – 15-UCSC via Laurel West and 19-UCSC via Lower Bay – arrive at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” bus stop on the west side of Hagar Drive; the bus stop is down the road across the street from Apartment Building 2.

Summary of Metro “University” Bus Routes

Use the following Metro route descriptions when you want to leave campus to explore Santa Cruz, go to the beach, or go to downtown where there are a variety of restaurants, clothing/retail/grocery/thrift stores, and movie theaters.

Route 10 – UCSC via High

Route 10 is the fastest, most direct route to downtown Santa Cruz. Catch Route 10 buses at the “Bookstore” stop on the Cowell side of Hagar Drive. Route 10 travels to downtown using High Street, Mission Street, and Front Street.

Destinations along Route 10 include: 7/11 market (High St. & Cardiff Terrace), many local churches, The Abbey Lounge, Trader Joe’s (Front Street), CVS (Front Street store), and all downtown businesses

Monday through Friday hours: 6:50 am to 8:00 pm
Arrives at the “Bookstore” stop at (approximately) 6:05 and 6:35 past the hour, from 7:05 am to 7:35 pm. Departs the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) at :20 and :50 past the hour.
Saturday and Sunday hours: 8:50 am to 6:35 pm
Arrives at the “Bookstore” stop at (approximately) 9:05 past the hour, from 9:05 am to 6:05 pm. Departs the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) at :50 past the hour.

Route 15 – UCSC via Laurel West

If you want to go to destinations on Mission St. (near Bay St.) or to downtown on weekdays, Route 15 will get you there too. Catch Route 15 buses at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” bus stop on the west side of Hagar Drive (on the bookstore side of Hagar, below Steinhart Way). Route 15 travels to downtown using Bay Street, Mission Street, and Laurel Street.
Destinations along Route 15 include: many restaurants near Mission and Bay Metro stop (burgers, breakfast, Greek, Thai, Mexican, sushi, pizza, frozen yogurt, ice cream), CVS (at Mission and Olive), Food Bin/Herb Room, bakery, bike shops, plus all downtown businesses.

Monday through Friday hours: 6:40 am to 9:35 pm
Arrives frequently at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” stop. Frequent departures from the downtown Pacific Street Station (Metro Center); schedule is posted at the station.

Route 16 – UCSC via Laurel East
For destinations along Mission St. (near Bay St.) or to go to downtown Santa Cruz. Catch Route 16 buses at the “Bookstore” bus stop (Cowell side of Hagar Drive). Because Route 16 buses have to travel across campus after leaving Cowell, this route takes longer than Route 15 to reach Mission Street or downtown Santa Cruz. Route 16 travels to downtown using Bay Street, Mission Street, and Laurel Street.

Destinations along Route 16 are the same as listed for Route 15.
Monday through Friday hours: 6:25 am to 12:40 am
Arrives frequently at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” stop. Frequent departures from the downtown Pacific Street Station (Metro Center); schedule is posted at the station.
Saturday and Sunday hours: 7:00 am to 11:40 am
Arrives at the “Bookstore” stop at approximately 7:10 am, 8:15 am, 10:20 am, and 11:23 am, two times per hour from noon to 11:00 pm Departs the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) once per hour from 7:00 am to 11:00 am, two times per hour from noon to 8:40 pm, and at 9pm., 9:20pm, 9:40pm, 10pm, 10:30pm, and 11pm.

Route 19 – UCSC via Lower Bay
Route 19 buses travel clockwise through campus, entering campus at the west gate. Catch Route 19 buses at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” stop. Route 19 takes longer to reach downtown than Routes 10, 15 and 16. After leaving campus, Route 19 buses travel down Bay Street all the way to West Cliff Drive (they do not turn onto Mission St. from Bay Street). After passing the wharf, beach and Boardwalk area, this route continues on to downtown Santa Cruz.

Destinations along Route 19 include a music store, West Cliff Drive Scenic Walking/Bike Path, Santa Cruz Wharf, Cowell Beach, Santa Cruz Beach/Boardwalk

Monday through Friday hours: 7:30 am to 12:14 pm
Arrives at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” stop at :21 and :51 past the hour. Departs from the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) at :30 past the hour and on the hour (:00).
Saturday and Sunday hours: 10 am to 7:50 pm
Arrives at the “Cowell College/Bookstore” stop at (approximately) :23 and :53 past the hour. Departs the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) twice per hour from 10am to 7pm.

Route 20 – UCSC via Westside
Catch Route 20 buses at the “Bookstore” bus stop (Cowell side of Hagar Drive). Route 20/20D buses primary purpose is to transport students who live along Western Drive and in westside neighborhoods to and from campus. It is the only route that serves those areas and gets really crowded. As a courtesy to commuting students, don’t board Route 20 buses during peak commute hours just to get across campus or go downtown.
*IMPORTANT: Never take a 20D bus from campus to get to downtown Santa Cruz; 20D buses turnaround at Bay & Delaware and don’t continue to downtown. Even Route 20 buses are not ideal for downtown as they take longer.

Destinations along Route 20 include: Western Drive, Natural Bridges State Beach, Long Marine Lab and Seymour Center (0.3 mile walk from Delaware Ave/Natural Bridges stop), 2300 Delaware (a UCSC facility)

Monday through Friday hours: 7:20 am to 9:15 pm
Arrives at the “Bookstore” stop at (approximately) :45 past the hour, and at (approximately) 9:15 am and 5:10 pm Departs the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) at :20 past the hour and once at 8:50 am
Saturday and Sunday hours: 8:20 am to 9:15 pm
Arrives at the “Bookstore” stop at (approximately) :45 past the hour. Departs the downtown Pacific Station (Metro Center) at :20 past the hour.

The preceding information describes the Santa Cruz Metro bus system. UCSC also has a campus transit system that provides on-campus shuttles, and late-night buses between campus and downtown Santa Cruz. Here is a little info about the Campus Transit system (operated by TAPS - UCSC Transportation and Parking Services).
• Campus Transit operates two daytime shuttle routes (The Loop and Upper Campus) and three nighttime routes (The Loop, East Night Core, and West Night Core).
• Night Owl, the late-night bus service between campus and downtown Santa Cruz, is exclusively for UCSC students. A current UCSC Student ID card must be presented to ride. Night Owl buses pick up and drop off passengers at all on-campus Loop bus stops, at off-campus Metro bus stops (along the routes they travel on), and at the corner of Cathcart Street and Pacific Avenue, across from University Town Center in downtown Santa Cruz.
• Campus Transit also provides the UCSC Bike Shuttles and Disability Van Service. The Student Transit Fee supports these services; no fare is required to ride. Learn more at http://taps.ucsc.edu/campustransit.html