The San Diego Union-Tribune

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Target sales associate Liza Idiart in North Park fills an online order during Black Friday holiday sales on Friday. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates 36% of consumers plan to use AI for holiday shopping this year. **NELVIN C. CEPEDA / U-T PHOTOS**

More shoppers tapping AI for their Black Friday hunts

Die-hards still up before dawn to snatch bargains, but tech shapes search

By Rob Nikolewski
UNION-TRIBUNE

Although a bit bleary-eyed, smart and hardy Black Friday shoppers lined up before daybreak at some of the major retail stores in and around San Diego to get a head start on their holiday gift-giving lists.

Michelle Nguyen of Kearny Mesa was one of 138 customers who shuffled through the doors when the Best Buy in Mission Valley opened at 6 a.m.

She came armed with a carefully thought-out strategy to buy one of this year's hottest items for her niece and nephew — the Nex Playground, a compact gaming cube designed to get kids and families moving in front of a TV without handheld controllers.



Gabrielle Fuentes, 14, shops Black Friday sales for a pair of Meta sunglasses at Best Buy in Mission Valley. One forecast anticipates holiday spending will rise about 5.4%, compared with last year.

"I just went to every website," the 35-year-old said. "I've been looking at it for the last three days."

Nguyen compared what similar retailers offered to get the best bang for her buck.

"Best Buy has it for $90 off, but then if I do the promo gift card I save an additional $40," she said. "And I'm a Best Buy member so then I get 6% back in rewards."

It's common for shoppers to scour the web to track down bargains, but a growing number are using artificial intelligence to get an edge this season.

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BUSINESS

Local lab market may be starting to see a rebound

San Diego's life sciences real estate market may be showing signs of a turnaround. A recent third-quarter real estate report stated the market was signaling stronger new demand, with a few key tenants negotiating large leases. Some experts say the market may have "reached an inflection point." **A8**



The annual Santa Surf and Toy Drive at Shipwreck's Beach in Coronado. **U-T FILE**

LOCAL

Check out our guide to region's holiday festivities

From concerts and festivals to seasonal markets and home tours, holiday events are ramping up as December approaches. Check out a Union-Tribune guide to events happening around the county to help ring in the season. Many of the festivities are free to attend. **B1**

The White House budget office has pushed more than $5 billion in funds appropriated by Congress for transit projects into fiscal year 2028. **KIM RAFF / NYT FILE**

Trump administration looks to tighten rules on transit funds

Critics warn step might undermine investment in rail, bus service

By Emily Badger
THE NEW YORK TIMES

The first Trump administration tried, unsuccessfully, to eliminate a major grant program that funds public transit infrastructure around the country. Nearly two years into a second term, transit officials and advocates fear the administration is squeezing the program instead.

Since returning to office, the administration has awarded just one grant from the multibillion-dollar program, called Capital Investment Grants, which helps local communities build costly rail and bus projects that expand transit service.

The White House budget office has pushed more than $5 billion in funds appropriated by Congress for the program into fiscal year 2028, locking away money that could be spent today. And in a proposal released this fall, the administration wants to significantly overhaul the program's rules in ways that could make it harder for communities to secure grants and, ultimately, to take on complex construction projects they can't afford on their own.

The Federal Transit Administration says it wants to

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New details emerge in San Diego mosque shootings

Documents lay out alleged messages among local teens, North Carolina girl

By Teri Figueroa
UNION-TRIBUNE

A half-hour before two teens ambushed a San Diego mosque and killed three congregants, they were in a parking structure communicating with a North Carolina girl, talking about the planned attack, according to newly filed court documents.

Prosecutors say the girl, Sarah Lindsay Santiago, was recording as one of the teens, Caleb Vazquez, mounted his cellphone on a tactical helmet in order to livestream what they were about to do.

That moment is one of several communications between the youths, as laid out in a Nov. 18 filing from North Carolina prosecutors, who have charged Santiago, 17, with conspiracy and murder for her alleged role in the deadly May 18 attack at the Islamic Center of San Diego.

The girl is accused of disseminating online a livestream of the attack and a hate-filled manifesto penned by the two. Santiago, of Winston-Salem, N.C., was arrested in late August and charged as an adult in Forsyth County, N.C., where Winston-Salem is located. She has pleaded not guilty.

The new filing, called a "bill of particulars," discloses to the defense the nature of the evidence gathered in the case. It provides new detail into what the teens were allegedly discussing in electronic communications, including that Vazquez was aware that he was on the radar of federal agents, who'd reached out to his mother regarding

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California paid $190B more in U.S. taxes than it got back

That's equivalent to $5K per resident of the biggest donor state in America

By Laurence Darmiento
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Once again, California led the nation in a dubious distinction: sending the federal government far more money than it receives back — to the tune of $190 billion in the last fiscal year.

That's the equivalent of almost a $5,000 donation per Californian.

The latest USAFacts study released this week showed that the Golden State easily outdistanced New York at $91 billion and Texas at $69 billion as the country's largest so-called donor state. That's a figure arrived at by finding the difference between the taxes and other revenues sent to the Treasury and funding such as Social Security and Medicare received back.

California's status as the leading donor state has been trumpeted by Gov. Gavin Newsom in his political fight with the Trump administration over policy disputes and right-wing figures who claim the Golden State is failing.

Last year, when President Donald Trump threatened to cut all federal funding to the state, Newsom suggested California might want to withhold all the federal taxes its residents and businesses pay — though nothing came of it.

"Every year when folks sit down to file their federal taxes, there's a real sense of frustration — and I feel it too — knowing just how much California sends to Washington and how little we get back," Newsom said in an April 15 tax day statement titled "California pays Trump's bills."

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