

CommuteSmart News

November/December 2011

A SERVICE OF COMMUTESMART.INFO AND YOUR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES

Have You Heard the Latest Transit News...?

A train where you aren't allowed to talk...ridesharing at the movies...new rules for bringing bikes on board rail...we've got the latest on what's happening in transit. [Full story »](#)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



- Metrolink Holiday Train
- OCTA food "drive"
- Spark of Love toy collection events

[More Events »](#)

TIPS AND IDEAS

Great ideas from fellow ETCs for getting employees mingling and talking about ridesharing at the office holiday party. [Full story »](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON...

How congested is traffic in your city? Check out the latest data from the [Urban Mobility Report](#).



NEWS FOR EMPLOYEES

Get news geared to commuters that you can forward to employees or incorporate into your own rideshare newsletter. [Full Story »](#)

5 Ridematching Upgrades You Need to Know About

We've been hard at work upgrading the Southern California ridematching system—RideMatch.info—and over the next few months, we'll be letting you know about new features that will make your job easier and ridematching efforts more effective. Here are five available now: [Full story »](#)



In Brief



- Guess who's talking about ridesharing?
- Take the Metro ExpressLanes ETC challenge to win an iPad 2
- How you can help save transit/vanpool tax benefits
- See if your employees won Rideshare Week prizes.



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Have You Heard the Latest Transit News...?

Shhh.... Metrolink riders who want to relax or get work done without distractions can now leave the earplugs at home. Metrolink has designated the second passenger car of every train as a Quiet Car. The basic rules: no talking (although whispering is okay); no using cell phones, laptops, handheld games, etc. with the audio on; and no listening to that iPod cranked up so high that the sound leaking from your headphones allows the person next to you to sing along. For details, go to metrolinktrains.com or call 1.800.371.LINK.



If you're not in the Quiet Car...check out [Catch a Ride on Metrolink](#)—a short music video featuring lively graphics and a catchy tune that promotes riding Metrolink in Orange County.

Speaking of videos...[Metro's Transit Flicks](#) — a contest that invited people to make short videos on why they love transit – has a winner! You can

see it – along with the other amazingly creative semi-finalists – at metro.net/about/transit-flicks. Then pass your favorites along to employees.



If you've got employees that could use a tutorial on how to plan a trip on transit using Google Maps or how to load a bike on a bus, Riverside Transit has posted short helpful videos on its web site at riversidetransit.com



Good news for bike commuters: Bikes are now allowed on board Metro Rail at any time, although on some lines they must specifically use cars designated with a bicycle icon. Specific rules are at metro.net



Need bus info? There's an app for that. Now Ventura County transit customers can get real-time updates on their iPhones when they download the free Smart Ride app (previously available for Metro in Los Angeles County). Smart Ride is a GPS-based system that tracks each bus in real-time and allows users to obtain bus arrival and/or delay updates, stop locations, and route information.

Supported transit systems include VISTA, Camarillo Area Transit, Gold Coast Transit, Moorpark Transit, Simi Valley Transit and Thousand Oaks Transit.

Download at the [Apple App Store](#). For more information, visit goventura.org or call 1.800.438.1112.

Omnitrans is now on Google +, so you can get the latest news, including updates on sbX buses—the first CNG 5-door articulated buses in North America—at <https://plus.google.com/s/Omnitrans#104079063798702978416/posts>



OCTA introduces Jingle Pass, a special holiday bus pass that is valid Nov. 15-Dec. 31 for just \$39.99—a discount of more than 50%. Supplies are limited; visit octa.net/jingle.



Also for the holidays, transit agencies are sponsoring food and toy "drives" for needy families—see [Calendar](#).



If a picture is worth a thousand words, this photo that is making the rounds on the Internet—showing how much space 60 people fill driving alone in cars vs. bus or bicycle—says a mouthful:

<http://thesource.metro.net/2011/10/11/space-required-to-transport-60-people/>

5 Ridematching Upgrades You Need to Know About

We've been hard at work upgrading the Southern California ridematching system—RideMatch.info—and over the next few months, we'll be letting you know about new features that will make your job easier and ridematching efforts more effective. Here are five available now:



1. Online surveys in Spanish

By popular demand, the online transportation survey form is now available in Spanish (for work sites in the South Coast air basin).

2. Access to progress during survey

As an ETC, when you log onto your RideMatch.info account during the survey process to view how many forms employees have turned in, you can now get a "Survey Collection List" that shows specifically which employees have submitted them. (Previously, this information was only available by calling your rideshare agency.)

"Instead of sending reminders scattershot to all employees, ETCs can use this report to target only those who still need to complete the survey," says Brian Cunanan with Riverside County Transportation Commission. "ETCs can spend less time to be more effective in attaining their survey collection goals."



3. Increased confidentiality on RideGuides

RideGuide commute planners—which provide ridematching information for employees who request it when filling out surveys—will no longer list an employee's street name or cross streets. Instead, it will only show the city and zip code in which a prospective carpool match lives. (The transportation survey will still collect this information to ensure the best matches, but it will not appear on any one else's RideGuide.)

Matches will still appear in order of proximity (closest are listed first), so employees can tell which are their "best" ones. As before, all matches are within three miles of the home address and one mile from work.

4. New "Worksite Activity Summary"

This new report, available when you log onto your RideMatch.info account, provides a summary of ridematching activity for a variable amount of time. It includes more than two dozen statistics in categories including:

- Total number of commuters in data base
- Carpool participants
- Commuters riding transit
- Average home-work distance
- Records added or deleted, by staff and via the Web
- Match transactions, such as number of carpool matches attempted and vanpool queries that received at least one match.



5. Ridematch notifications for users

People who sign up for ridematching help on the web at RideMatch.info can now opt to receive email notifications when they have additional matches, such as new vanpools or carpool partners that meet their criteria. They can ask for the system to search for these updates and notify them as often as every day.

For more information on any of these upgrades, contact your [county rideshare representative](#).

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In Brief



Guess who's talking about ridesharing?

Southern California's on-air traffic reporters do more than talk about traffic tie-ups—they also often mention carpool lanes, Rideshare Thursday and bus/rail options to help people avoid the freeway mess altogether. To say "thanks," the Rideshare Week agencies recently held the Golden Pylon Awards to honor outstanding rideshare reporting.

Six reporters took home the coveted award for their role in reducing drive-alone traffic. They are (from Left): Sean Murphy (NBC4 Today in L.A.), Dianna Olea standing in for winner Ryan Duggan (KRLA), Larry Barajas (KNX and KRTH), Scott Burt (KNX, KFVB, KOLA), Kajon Cermak (KCRW), and CHP Officer Luis Mendoza.

Take the Metro ExpressLanes ETC Carpool Challenge to win an iPad 2

Late next year, carpool lanes on the I-110 and I-10 freeways in Los Angeles County will be converted to ExpressLanes, which charge a toll for solo drivers and provide toll-free access for carpools—provided they have a FasTrak® Transponder in their vehicle. Metro needs your help to spread the word to employees, which is why they've launched the ExpressLanes ETC Carpool Challenge.

"We know ETCs are a key communication channel for carpools," says Metro's Stephanie Wiggins. The goal of the challenge, which is open to ETCs in Los Angeles County, is to get employees to complete and submit the online [Transponder Interest Form](#), where they'll be the first to know about the availability of the Transponder and get regular updates. The winner—who will receive an Apple iPad 2—will be selected based on the percentage of carpools at their work site that complete the form by March 25, 2012. For Challenge details and complete rules, contact Megan Nangle at nanglem@metro.net or call 213.922.6541.



How you can help save transit/vanpool tax benefits

The Tax Extension Package adopted by Congress in 2010 temporarily kept the cap on transit and vanpool tax benefits at \$230 per month, the same as parking—but it is due to expire. "Unless Congress acts, the transit and vanpool portion of the benefit will drop to \$125 a month on Dec. 31," says Jason Pavluchuk with Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT). "(This) would be the equivalent of placing a tax on employers who provide this benefit and workers who utilize public transit."

ACT has set up a web site to educate employers on how they can get involved in urging their Congress members to make permanent the parity between transit/vanpool and parking tax benefits. By going to CommuterBenefitsWorkforUs.com, you can find out more about tax laws and send an on-line letter to your member of Congress.

For further information, contact Pavluchuk at 202.285.6414.

See if your employees won Rideshare Week prizes

County agencies are in the process of notifying Rideshare Week prize winners. Here's how:

Los Angeles County—Metro will email winners directly and mail prizes to the address listed on the pledge form.

Orange County—Orange County Transportation Authority will notify winners via email, copying the ETC. They also post a list of winners on octa.net, as well as Facebook and Twitter.

Inland Empire—Inland Empire Commuter Services calls both the winner and ETC to give them the good news, and then all prizes are mailed to the ETC to distribute.

Ventura County—Ventura County Transportation Commission calls both the winner and ETC, and then all prizes are mailed to the ETC to distribute—except the grand prizes, which is delivered in person.



Tips & Ideas—Great ideas from fellow ETCs for getting employees mingling and talking about ridesharing at the office holiday party

Have employees wear pins or nametags noting how they travel to work (vanpool, transit, etc.) so others who might have questions can easily see whom to ask.

—Devon Deming, Los Angeles World Airports

Make or buy transportation-themed Christmas ornaments (buses, cars, truck, bikes, etc). Put rideshare words of wisdom on each.

—Robert Hafner, Cardinal Health

Hold a carpool/vanpool caroling competition in which your vanpoolers (or larger carpools) make videos of themselves singing carols. Award prizes to the best, and show them at the holiday party.

—James Camarillo, Caltrans District 8

Create a rideshare matching game by placing magnetic cards with rideshare-themed pictures facedown on a board. Employees need to turn over two matching cards to win a prize.

—Xiomara Palma, Huntington Hospital

Print out pictures of celebrities, and then have each employee tape one to his or her back. Other party guests have to help the person figure out who they are. It gets people mingling—and you can even include a rideshare tag line on the photo (such as a photo of Tom Hanks as Forrest Gump with a tag, "definitely a walker").

—Kristina Valenzuela, Caltech

Post a map showing Southern California, then provide stickers so that employees can point out their home location on it. It's sure to spark conversations about many of them living near each other.

—Annette Groom, Health Net

If you hold a regular prize drawing for ridesharers, consider conducting it at the holiday party.

—Carol Bloch, Red Bull

Host a party where people from the same zip code can meet and enjoy free lunch or snacks.

—Jeanne Handojo, Fuller Theological Seminary



Hold a prize drawing for those employees who say they will rideshare in the future—perhaps even signing on to make it a New Year's resolution.

—Danny Saldana, Woodward HRT

And a fun party mingling idea from Inland Empire Commuter Services...

Hold a rideshare scavenger hunt in which each party guest is given a word containing nine letters, and the goal is to find one item for each letter.

Here's how it works:

- Make game cards on which you print nine-letter rideshare words vertically on a sheet of paper (one word per card) with a space next to it to write. Sample words: rideshare, carpooler, vanpooler, bus riders, Metrolink, ridematch, incentive, commuters, tollroads.
- Give each participant a game card, a pen and a bag to bring back items.
- Set them off to find items that match each letter, whether in their purse, wallets, or anywhere in the room. Encourage creativity! For example, if they have the letter "S" they could pick up a "Splenda packet" or bring back a "Small piece of paper." Yes, adjectives are allowed.
- Anyone who finds all nine items gets placed into a prize drawing.

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Calendar of Events

EVENTS

Toy and food "drives" roll into gear:

• Orange County Transportation Authority is collecting non-perishable food for needy families Nov. 4 at MainPlace Mall in Santa Ana, Nov. 5 at Laguna Hills Mall, Nov. 6 at Westminster Mall and Nov. 7 at Brea Mall. Anyone that donates has a chance to win a "Jingle Pass," OCTA's new bus pass for the holidays; visit octa.net/jingle.



• Metrolink Holiday Train—decorated with lights and once again bringing Santa along with a stage show—pulls in to a station near you starting Nov. 18 - Dec. 18. Bring a new toy to donate,

1.800.371.LINK, metrolinktrains.com.

• OCTA and other transit companies will invite people to help "Stuff a Bus" with toys as part of the annual Firefighters' Spark of Love Toy Drive; for dates and locations, visit abc7.com/community.



Save the date! Orange County Transportation Authority is hosting an Employer Transportation Symposium on Dec. 6, from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. at the Newport Beach Marriott Hotel. For details, contact Judy Leon at 714.560.5358, email jleon@octa.net.

NETWORK MEETINGS

Coachella Valley ETC Network meets bi-annually; call 1.866.IECS4HELP.

Glendale TMA meets regularly; call 818.543.7641.

NETWORK MEETINGS (cont.)

Orange County Network meets regularly; call 714.560.5358 or email sharetheride@octa.net

Pasadena TMA meets every other month; call John Miranda at 818.354.7433 or Judi Masuda at 626.744.4111.

Riverside County ETC Network meets tri-annually; call 1.866.IECS4HELP.

San Bernardino County ETC Network meets tri-annually; call 1.866.IECS4HELP.

Santa Monica ETC Network meets regularly; call 310.458.8956.

South Bay/Westside TMA meets monthly; contact Christina Corrales at 310.642.0066, email christina_corrales@equityoffice.com

Torrance Transportation Network meets regularly; call Kim Fuentes at 310.784.7902.

Warner Center TMO meets monthly; call 818.716.5520.



TRAINING

Metro Commute Services

upcoming briefings—where Los Angeles area employers can learn about the transportation survey process and services Metro has to offer—are Nov. 9, 9:30 –11:30 a.m. and Jan. 11, 9:30-11:30 a.m. There is no briefing in December. For more information or to reserve a space, email garciam@metro.net.

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD)

offers one-day ETC training for \$156.98. Upcoming sessions are Nov. 9 in Riverside and Nov. 16 and Dec. 8 at AQMD offices in Diamond Bar. Contact the AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit the AQMD at aqmd.gov.

COMMUTESMART NEWS

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