

# CommuteSmart News

January/February 2014

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

## Mark Your Calendars

Get in on the many exciting rideshare events coming up for 2014!

[Full story»](#)



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Metro AVR briefing, Jan. 15
- ACT membership meeting, Jan. 23
- Kings/Ducks express bus, Jan. 25

[More Events »](#)

## Freebies & Fun Stuff for Your Ridesharers



There's more than one way to get solo drivers out of their cars—and sometimes focusing on "fun" instead of getting to work is just the way to do it.

[Full story»](#)

**NEWS FOR EMPLOYEES**  
Get news geared to commuters that you can forward to employees or incorporate into your own rideshare newsletter.

[Download now](#)

## TIPS AND IDEAS

Don't have enough time for your rideshare program?



## In Brief

- Important tax information for your commuters
- New carpool lanes open on the I-10
- The new number to call for roadside assistance is...
- Orange County to add lanes, not tolls, to I-405
- How many hot dogs fit in a Metrolink car?



## SPOTLIGHT ON...

...a short, lively Rideshare Thursday video to enjoy, forward to employees or share at staff meetings, orientations or other staff outreach.

**Rideshare Thursday**  
Drive less. Smile more.



## Mark Your Calendars

Get in on the many exciting rideshare events coming up for 2014!\* (Info on some events may not be available online until closer to actual date.)



### JANUARY

**Jan. 15**—Metro Average Vehicle Ridership (AVR) briefing, which helps ETCs better navigate the surveying process; click here for [2014 Briefings schedule](#)

**Jan. 23**—Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) Southern California general membership meeting, [socialact.org](#)

### MARCH

**March 2-8**—Telecommuter Appreciation Week, sponsored by the American Telecommuting Association, 1.800.ATA4YOU, [yourata.com](#)

**March 19**—ACT bike event/workshop, [socialact.org](#)

**March 26**—OCTA marketing workshop, RSVP at [sharetheride@octa.net](#)

#### Also in March:

- Inland Empire Commuter Services (IECS) rideshare marketing certificate class, 1.866.IECS4HELP

### APRIL

**Earthquake Preparedness Month**, get your employees ready for commuting in crisis conditions; contact [oes.ca.gov](#) or your local Red Cross office

**April 22**—Earth Day, [earthday.org](#)

**April 23**—Administrative Professionals' Day, give a coworker a ride to work, [iaap-hq.org](#)

#### Also in April:

- Omnitrans will unveil sbX, the Inland Empire's first bus rapid transit, [estreet-sbx.com](#)
- Metro will host a marketing certificate workshop, contact [garciama@metro.net](#)

### MAY

**Clean Air Month**, sponsored by the American Lung Association, 1.800.LUNG.USA, [californialung.org](#)

**National Employee Health and Fitness Month**, a chance to extol the benefits of biking/walking to work, [physicalfitness.org](#)

**May 11-17**—National Transportation Week, highlighting careers in transportation, [dot.gov](#)

**May 15**—Bike to Work Day, sponsored by local agencies and part of Bike Commute Week May 12-16

#### Also in May:

- Rideshare Diamond Awards, celebrating outstanding programs in Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura counties
- OCTA Bike Rally, with contests and prizes leading up to the rally, [octa.net/share-the-ride/bike](#)

### JUNE

**June 5**—World Environment Day, started by the United Nations to raise awareness of environmental issues worldwide, [unep.org/wed](#)

**June 12**—ACT Swap & Share, exchange ideas with fellow rideshare pros, [socialact.org](#)

#### Also in June:

- Dump the Pump Day, sponsored by American Public Transportation Association, get free marketing materials at [apta.com](#)
- IECS rideshare marketing certificate class, 1.866.IECS4HELP

### JULY

**July 30-Aug. 10**—Visit Ventura County Transportation Authority at the Ventura County fair, [goventura.org](#)

### AUGUST

**Aug. 2-6**—ACT International Conference in San Francisco, CA where you can network with roughly 400 ETCs from Southern California and nationwide and learn from industry leaders, [actweb.org](#)

#### Also in August:

- OCTA Rideshare Week kickoff and marketing certificate workshop, RSVP at [sharetheride@octa.net](#)

### SEPTEMBER

**Sept. 19**—PARK(ing) Day, transform land for autos into a place for people for a day, [http://parkingday.org](#)

**Sept. 22**—International Car-Free Day, [worldcarfree.net](#)

#### Also in September:

- IECS Rideshare Week kickoff and marketing certificate workshop, contact 1.866.IECS4HELP
- Traffic Reporters' Luncheon & Golden Pylon Awards honoring excellence in rideshare reporting

### OCTOBER

**Oct. 6-10**—California Rideshare Week, promoting alternatives to driving alone; contact [your local rideshare agency](#) and watch for future issues of *CommuteSmart News*

**Oct. 21**—ACT professional development workshop (topics tba) [socialact.org](#)

#### Also in October:

- Metro rideshare marketing certificate workshop, contact [garciama@metro.net](#)

### NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

**Nov. 19 or 20** (tbd) ACT multi-chapter webinar on public policy updates, [socialact.org](#)

#### Also in Nov/Dec:

- Metro, OCTA and Omnitrans "Stuff a Bus" in coordination with Spark of Love Toy Drive, [metro.net](#), [octa.net](#), [omnitrans.org](#), [abclocal.go.com/kabc](#).

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## Freebies & Fun Stuff for Your Ridesharers

### Metro Rewards offers discount coupon booklet—now with mobile app

Metro in Los Angeles County is bringing back its Metro Rewards booklet, which gives new ridesharers discounts at local restaurants, entertainment venues and more. Now, in addition to booklet format, participants can access discounts online and via mobile app.

To earn discounts, employees must be new to ridesharing and share the ride for three months. To sign your company up for the program, or for more information, contact [garciana@metro.net](mailto:garciana@metro.net).

### For Inland Empire residents...

There's Rideshare Plus Rewards, a booklet that gives ridesharers great discounts after they've been ridesharing at least three months—with extra discounts via the Online Savers Guide and mobile app. Visit [rideshareplus.info](http://rideshareplus.info) to sign up and start saving at more than 135,000 participating merchants.



### Be a safety superhero and win a 30-day OCTA pass

Watch a snappy, 60-second safety video for your chance to win a free 30-day Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) bus pass. OCTA is awarding one pass per week through January—watch all four videos to increase your chances of winning. View the videos at [octa.net](http://octa.net).

### Calling all Kings and Ducks hockey fans...

The Dodger Stadium Express will make a special run to take fans from Union Station to the LA Kings vs. Anaheim Ducks NHL Series game on Jan. 25. For details go to [metro.net](http://metro.net).

### Click for a chance to win with Metrolink's photo contest

Submit your photo of Metrolink and it could be featured on the cover of the next All Lines Timetable, with 250,000 copies distributed through the six counties where Metrolink operates. Contest ends Jan. 31. Details are at [metrolinktrains.com](http://metrolinktrains.com).

### Having a contest or event? Ask Omnitrans for a free prize bus tickets donation

Omnitrans—the public transit agency serving the San Bernardino Valley—may donate a small number of passes and/or promotional items for your rideshare raffle. Contact [Nicole.Ramos@omnitrans.org](mailto:Nicole.Ramos@omnitrans.org).

### Discover art on Metro Rail

Docent-led tours meet the first weekend of each month to introduce riders to the Red Line and the artwork at the stations, 10 a.m. – Noon on Saturdays at Hollywood/Highland Metro Rail station and Sundays at Union Station, [metro.net/about/art/](http://metro.net/about/art/).



### Show your employees all the great places transit can take them

Employees who are reluctant to take bus or rail to work may be willing to give it a try for a special event to avoid traffic and high parking prices—by promoting non-commute transit, you may be able to familiarize them enough that they'll give it a try for their ride to work as well. For destination guides:

- Metro: [metro.net/riding/destination-guides/](http://metro.net/riding/destination-guides/)
- Metrolink: <http://metrolinktrains.com/howtoride/destinations.html>
- OCTA bus: [octa.net/bus-destinations.aspx](http://octa.net/bus-destinations.aspx)
- OC Metrolink Fun Guide: [octa.net/mlmap/pop\\_map.html](http://octa.net/mlmap/pop_map.html)
- Omnitrans blog (which regularly features events/destinations): [omnitrans.org/blog/](http://omnitrans.org/blog/)

### Partner discounts

Show your bus/rail pass for discounts at restaurants, museums, shops, local attractions and special events:

- Metro: [metro.net/service/discounts/](http://metro.net/service/discounts/)
- Metrolink: <http://metrolinktrains.com/news/promotions>
- OCTA: [octa.net/Bus-Transit/Partner Discounts/? terms=discounts](http://octa.net/Bus-Transit/Partner%20Discounts/?terms=discounts)



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## In Brief

### Important tax information for your commuters

The maximum amount that your transit and vanpool riders can set aside pre-tax for commuting expenses in 2014 has dropped to \$130\* a month—nearly half of last year's cap of \$245. Car commuters, on the other hand, will be allowed to set aside \$250 a month (up \$5 from 2013) for parking. Transit/vanpool benefits had in previous years been increased to equal the parking benefit, but the parity expired as of Dec. 31, 2013.

Congress could still act to increase the limit and apply the fix retroactively, as it did in 2012 and 2013.

Check with the Internal Revenue Service or your tax consultant for information on how this impacts the transit/vanpool benefits you offer your employees.



### New carpool lanes open on the I-10

Good news for carpoolers: Caltrans has opened a new stretch of carpool lanes along the San Bernardino Freeway (I-10) between I-605 and Puente Ave. in the City of Baldwin Park. Running four lane miles in both directions, the lanes connect to the Metro ExpressLanes but are not toll lanes and do not require a transponder. Vehicles with two or more passengers or clean-air vehicles with the appropriate stickers may use the lanes. For more information, go to [dot.ca.gov/dist07](http://dot.ca.gov/dist07).



### The new number to call for roadside assistance is...

Metro in Los Angeles County is phasing out the #399 roadside non-emergency number—now, to summon roadside assistance from Metro [Freeway Service Patrol](#), dial 511 and choose the "motorist aid" option. You'll be connected to a live operator who will help you get free services including changing a flat tire, jump-starting battery, refilling your radiator, providing a gallon of fuel or towing your vehicle to a safe location.

Freeway Service Patrol was established in 1988 to quickly aid stranded motorists and to avoid traffic tie-ups resulting from blocked lanes or "rubbernecking."

Roadside assistance is also available via 511 in Orange County.



### Orange County to add lanes, not tolls, to I-405

The Orange County Transportation Authority board voted last month to construct one general-purpose lane in each direction between Costa Mesa and the county line in Seal Beach as part of improvements on the I-405.

The vote means that toll lanes, previously under consideration, will not be built in order "to allow the benefits of the project to be delivered more quickly to drivers," according to the OCTA website. Further environmental studies are underway, and anticipated to occur from 2015 to

2020.

The I-405 is the busiest stretch of freeway in the country, carrying more than 370,000 cars a day near the county line. Traffic is expected to increase approximately 35% by 2040.

For more information, visit [octa.net/405improvement](http://octa.net/405improvement).

### How many hot dogs fit in a Metrolink car?

Did you know...?

- The number of people who ride Metrolink each year could fill 122 sold-out NFL football stadiums.
- The amount of CO2 Metrolink riders prevent from being released into the air is equal to planting 2 million trees.
- Metrolink runs its trains 11,200 miles per day—or two round trips between Los Angeles and New York.
- As for the hog dog question? Should you find yourself stuffing hot dogs in a Metrolink car, you could fit 3,094,917 of them.



\*If Congress has not acted to change this after *CommuterSmart News* went to press.

## Tips & Ideas—Don't Have Enough Time for Your Rideshare Program?



One of the top complaints among employee transportation coordinators (ETCs)—right up there with "budget too small"—is that they don't have enough time to do everything they'd like to do to promote ridesharing at the worksite.

In many cases, ETCs struggle to even get the basics done to meet air quality mandates—much less tackle a "wish list" of ideas to stop workers from driving alone.

"Fact is, the vast majority of people who run rideshare programs do so as only a portion of their overall jobs—often as little as 10 percent of their total job is spent on rideshare duties," says Tara Pueschel with Inland Empire Commuter Services. "Even if you have the money to, say, put on a rideshare fair, if you don't have the staff hours, it's not going to get done."

If you'd like to do more to promote ridesharing in the coming year but are squeezed for time, follow these tips for making the most of the hours you do have:

- **Attend training/networking.** With limited time, it may seem you should spend it all jumping right in and tackling projects—but a few hours upfront spent networking can save you countless hours later. ETCs can often team up to coordinate events—plus you can swap ideas so you're not starting from scratch every time you set out to do something. For upcoming ETC network meetings and workshops in your area, see [Calendar](#).
- **Think little.** Marketing experts advise that it takes at least five impressions to make a sale. That means you need to hit employees with the rideshare message repeatedly. If time's tight, think little. Spend a few minutes to forward links to rideshare resources, hang a poster, make an announcement, hold a contest, hand out cookies along with rideshare information or man a booth in the lunchroom to provide ridematching. That'll reap more participation than investing all your hours in one big event.
- **Recruit volunteers.** People who love their commute often want to share the joy, and they can be your most convincing advocates and allies. A staff member who cycles may be willing to head-up an employee group ride—your vanpoolers may do the legwork to fill seats to keep their vanpool afloat.
- **Use CommuteSmart News for employees.** Forwarding it via email or photocopying and distributing the 1-page newsletter monthly takes as little as seconds, yet counts as a marketing strategy to fulfill air quality mandates—plus it'll keep your employees up to date on the latest rideshare happenings.
- **Be visible.** It's so much less time-consuming if employees come to you vs. having to lure them in, so let them know where you are—post rideshare posters in your workspace and add rideshare contact information to your email signature.
- **Sign up to let news come to you.** You'll be the first to get updates on transportation news that affects your employees straight to your email in-box or Facebook or Twitter timelines. Some great resources: [Metro's The Source](#), [Orange County's transportation news blog](#), [IE511.org on Twitter](#), [Facebook & YouTube](#) and [Ventura County's On the Move newsletter](#).



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## Calendar of Events

### EVENTS

**Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT)** Southern California general membership meeting is Jan. 23; visit [socalact.org](http://socalact.org).

**The Dodger Stadium Express** will make a special run to take fans from Union Station to the LA Kings vs. Anaheim Ducks NHL Series game on Jan. 25, [metro.net](http://metro.net).



**Telecommuter Appreciation Week** is March 2-8, sponsored by the American Telecommuting Association, 1.800.ATA4YOU, [yourata.com](http://yourata.com)



### NETWORK MEETINGS

**Glendale TMA** meets regularly; call 818.543.7641.

**Inland Empire Commuter Services** offers bi-annual meetings for ETCs in Coachella Valley and Riverside and San Bernardino counties; call 1.866.IECS4HELP.

**Orange County Network** meets regularly; email [sharetheride@octa.net](mailto:sharetheride@octa.net)

**Pasadena TMA** meets every other month; call John Miranda at 818.354.7433.

### NETWORK MEETINGS (cont'd.)

**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](mailto: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 **briefing**—where Los Angeles area employers can learn about the transportation survey process and services Metro has to offer—are Jan. 15, 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Feb. 19, 1-3 p.m. at Metro offices in downtown Los Angeles. To reserve your space, email [garciana@metro.net](mailto:garciana@metro.net).

**South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD)** offers one-day ETC training for \$163.97. Upcoming sessions are Jan. 15, Feb. 20 and March 26 at AQMD offices in Diamond Bar, Feb. 5 in Burbank and March 5 in Irvine. Contact the AQMD's training program at [etctraining@aqmd.gov](mailto:etctraining@aqmd.gov) or visit [aqmd.gov](http://aqmd.gov).

### COMMUTESMART NEWS

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**Ventura County Transportation Commission**  
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**Commuter Information**  
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HWDS-12/13

