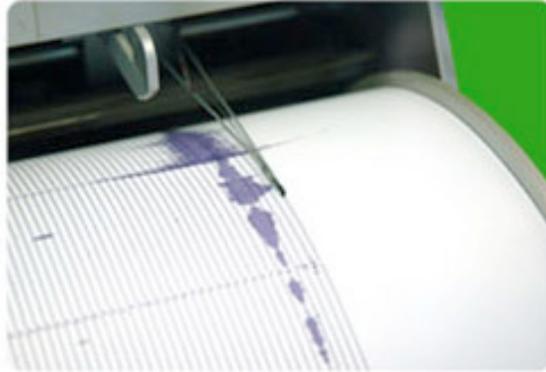


Ready for "The Big One?"

The frequency of earthquakes is up, and some experts say we're due for a major tremor. Although we can't know for sure it will happen, one thing is certain: It's smart to be prepared. [Full story](#)



When the Going Gets Tough



It's not always easy getting commuters to rideshare. We asked employee transportation coordinators, "**What's your biggest rideshare challenge and what do you do to deal with it?**" Here's what they had to say:

[Full story](#)

CALENDAR of EVENTS

- Telecommuter Appreciation Week
- Rule 2202 informational session
- Bike to Work Day workshop

[More Events](#)

TIPS & IDEAS

Commuter management strategies that work without breaking the bank.

[Full story](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON...

...the 2009 ACT conference, April 2-3—get great ideas for going green with your rideshare program.



[Full story](#)

CommuteSmart News for Employees

- Get news geared to commuters that you can forward to employees or incorporate into your own rideshare newsletter.

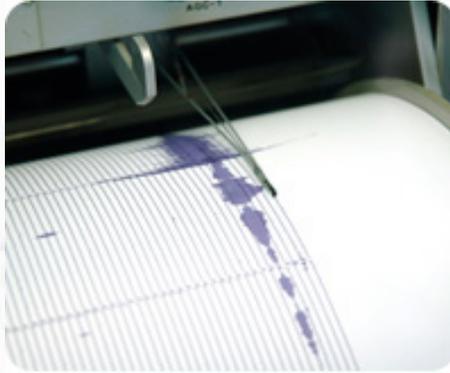


In Brief

- Even with lower gas prices, transit users save big
- For the latest in transit updates and alerts, try Twittering
- Go car-free the last Friday of each month
- President Obama increases transit/vanpool tax benefit to \$230 per month
- OCTA launches eBusbook



Ready for "The Big One?"



Southern California last year experienced the highest number of earthquakes since 1999, according to data from Caltech and the US Geological Survey. There were 267 quakes of at least a magnitude 3.0 in 2008—more than twice that of the year before. If that's not enough, a new study by UC Irvine warned that, based on patterns of quake frequency, we might soon be due for "the big one." Although we can't know for sure it will happen, one thing is certain: It's smart to be prepared.

"Downed freeways and blocked roads can stymie commutes," says Brian Cunanan with Riverside County Transportation Commission. "Putting a few strategies in place now can help your employees cope with the days and weeks after a quake."

Here, the experts at CommuteSmart.info offer some tips for establishing a crisis commuting program:

What You Can Do Now:

- **Distribute RideGuides as a back-up plan.** When you hand out RideGuides to employees (which they get free when they complete their annual transportation survey), suggest they keep them on hand for an emergency—even if they're not currently interested in ridesharing.
- **Keep a print-out with employee commute data,** including home cities, how they currently commute and contact information. If Internet service is disrupted and you need to match employees, you'll have what you need to do it the "old fashioned way."
- **Train employees now for crisis telecommuting.** Set the rules for working off site—even if it is an option only available as a backup. Employees will need to know how to set up an at-home work station, how to effectively communicate with the home office, and methods for tracking performance while off site.



Once a Crisis Occurs:

- **Implement an emergency schedule** to keep commuters off the road during peak periods. Stagger arrival or departure times, or schedule to work longer hours fewer days per week.
- **Sell transit passes** at your work site, or provide phone numbers for transit organizations.
- **Enact a temporary business travel policy:**
 - Conduct conferences by phone instead of in person
 - Restrict sales and service calls to non-peak hours
 - Redefine sales territories close to employees' homes
 - Allow employees to work at home or at satellite work offices near their homes (often employees themselves can suggest a location with proper facilities).
- **Stock a kiosk** with transit and express bus schedules, rail information, route recommendations, etc.
- **Meet with companies** in your neighborhood to create an emergency plan. Share parking facilities, shuttle costs and workspace. Use your meeting time to plan ahead—and don't forget to collect home phone numbers in the event that coordinators cannot be reached at their offices.
- **Provide ridematching help** by urging employees to go to CommuteSmart.info or call 1.800.COMMUTE.



When the Going Gets Tough

It's not always easy getting commuters to rideshare. We asked employee transportation coordinators, "What's your biggest rideshare challenge and what do you do to deal with it?" Here's what they had to say:

Trish Casella, Advanced Bionics

CHALLENGE: Finding time to explain the rideshare program to each employee who requests it

SOLUTION: Prepare a Powerpoint presentation that explains program benefits

Lillian Huerta, Angelus Sanitary Can Machine Co.

CHALLENGE: Rideshare budget goes toward monthly raffle so none is left for marketing

SOLUTION: Post pictures of raffle winners on bulletin boards and monitors throughout the company for no-cost publicity

Devon Deming, Los Angeles World Airports

CHALLENGE: Getting management to understand what the rideshare department does and how it fits in the bigger picture of running a successful business

SOLUTION: Helping out in times of challenge—i.e., when the company needed to relocate employees from the Ontario airport to LAX, the rideshare department deployed two vanpools to ease the transition

Karen White, Memorial Hospital of Gardena

CHALLENGE: Finding the right incentive to encourage employees to participate

SOLUTION: During an "employee sign-up day," they ask employees for suggestions on what incentives they want and award \$5 gift cards per suggestion



Sonia Reading, Verdugo Hills Hospital

CHALLENGE: Employees not always reading the rideshare flyers

SOLUTION: Reach employees through a variety of ways—Internet, flyers, mailers, pay check stuffers, bulletin boards and quarterly announcements—to increase the chances at least one will get noticed

Colette Romero, Co-opportunity

CHALLENGE: Competition for employees' attention makes it hard to get the rideshare message noticed

SOLUTION: Position the ballot box for their rideshare drawing—as well as posters and program updates—on the break room door where people are sure to see it



Penny Menton, UCLA Transportation Services

CHALLENGE: Negative attitudes and the "I can't mentality"

SOLUTION: To deal with it, Menton says: "I take a deep breath, dig in my heels and become very determined to change their minds. I also never give up until I at least get them to try an alternative mode on a trial basis."

Mary Williams, The Art Institute of California

CHALLENGE: Convincing employees who have to drop off and pick up children at daycare along that they can still carpool

SOLUTION: Match them with other parents who may have a similar schedule and who want to leave the air cleaner for *all* kids

Paula Stewart, Daily News of Los Angeles

CHALLENGE: Finding the time to deal with rideshare paperwork

SOLUTION: Convert manual recordkeeping to electronic and make employees more responsible for filling out their own paperwork to earn rideshare benefits

George Gray, Teradyne

CHALLENGE: Helping employees understand the rideshare program

SOLUTION: Get employees that participate in the plan to explain the benefits to potential participants

Rocio Nakandakari, Ricon

CHALLENGE: Find enough employees to form a vanpool

SOLUTION: Coordinate with other ETCs to form vanpools among neighboring companies

Bonnie J. Oakleaf, Automobile Club of Southern California

CHALLENGE: Getting discouraged when people won't rideshare

SOLUTION: Accept that some people will never rideshare, and focus on those who *do* rideshare or may try it

Trisha Akaba, Verizon

CHALLENGE: Unscheduled overtime, which is a daily occurrence

SOLUTION: *Guarantee* that carpoolers will get off work on time

Betina Cervantes, Cal State Los Angeles

CHALLENGE: Coming up with new ideas

SOLUTION: Attend trainings to learn and get ideas from other ETCs



In Brief

• Even with lower gas prices, transit users save big

Even though the price of gas is nowhere near what it was last summer, people who ride transit still save on average \$8,368 per year based on today's gas prices, according to an American Public Transportation Association report. It also showed that riding transit could save the average household almost a third more than their entire food bill for a year. For details, go to apta.com



twitter



Hey there! Metrolink is

Twitter is a free service that lets you through the exchange of quick, frequent question: What are you doing? Join to Metrolink's updates

• For the latest in transit updates and alerts, try Twittering

Your employees who use transit can get important updates and alerts (e.g., rail and bus schedule changes, amended service, special discounts, etc.) on Twitter—and now Metro is Twittering in Spanish as well as English. Twitter (at twitter.com) is the free service that lets subscribers exchange brief messages, called tweets, to users who receive message updates on their phones via IM, RSS or on the web. Instructions on how to sign up for Twitter messages are available for Metro at metro.net and Metrolink at metrolinktrains.com

• Go car-free the last Friday of each month

The Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition is asking commuters to go car-free on the last Friday of each month. The "Car-Free Friday" campaign launched in January with a bike ride from the Western Avenue Metro Red Line station to downtown Los Angeles, and Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti joined riders to show his support. For more information, as well as updates on planned group rides, go to la-bike.org



\$230 / Month
Transit Tax Benefits



• President Obama increases transit/vanpool tax benefit to \$230 per month

The Emergency Economic Recovery Act signed into law recently by President Obama includes a provision that will increase the transit and vanpool tax benefit to \$230 per month—up from \$120 per month and now the same value as the parking benefit. This is effective now and will stay in effect until the end of 2010.

• OCTA launches eBusbook

Now riders can "go green" by building their own free, personalized eBusbook, which gives them customized route information simply by selecting routes and other services from a list of categories—all easy and online. Check it out at octa.net/ebusbook



Spotlight On... *...the 2009 ACT conference, April 2-3 —Get great ideas for going green with your rideshare program*

The Association for Commuter Transportation regional conference is going Hollywood, but forget the red carpet. This year, it's all about the green. The theme is "Keeping the Green Spotlight on Commute Programs" and when you attend, you'll get tips on how to tap into the green movement—everything from marketing and legislation to incentives, program ideas, help with meeting mandates and more.

Plus, you'll discover plenty of ways to save some green and make the most of your rideshare efforts no matter what your budget.

Here, we talk to ACT Chair Devon Deming, for a "sneak preview" on what's in store at the conference:

Why the green theme?

"Now more than ever, the environment is a selling point to get employees to rideshare. People want to use less gas. They want to do something to stop global warming. The question is, how do we help them make the connection between that and ridesharing? It may seem obvious to those of us who work in TDM, but commuters need a nudge. At the conference, that's one of the things we're going to explore...how we get employees and management to understand ridesharing's role in the clean air movement."

Who attends?

"It really varies, which I think is one of the most valuable aspects of the conference. You'll have a seasoned pro sitting right next to an ETC who perhaps just completed her certificate—there's an amazing opportunity for exchange of information and ideas at every level. Last year's attendees said they felt so energized after the program, they couldn't wait to get back to the office and input some of the strategies they heard about."

Is this a marketing certificate event?

"Yes, attendees will earn a certificate that they can provide to the South Coast AQMD for their marketing requirement."

What's on the agenda?

"We're keeping it lively and interactive, so people can expect a mix of speakers, panels, hands-on breakout sessions, as well as some fun activities and field trips. We're updating the agenda regularly, so for the latest, go to the ACT Southern California web site at [act-southernca.org](#)."



The 2009 ACT Southern California Conference

Join your fellow transportation professionals April 2-3 at the Hilton in Universal City for the second annual ACT conference. Early bird Registration is \$175 for ACT members, and \$250 for non-members. For more information or to register, go to [act-southernca.org](#)

ACT Southern California Conference Is Seeking Sponsors

Shine a spotlight on your support of commute alternatives by becoming a sponsor of the Association for Commuter Transportation west coast conference, which will be held April 2-3 in Universal City. "With sponsorship levels starting as low as \$500, it's an excellent opportunity for businesses to get great exposure at low cost," says Judy Willens, ACT sponsor chair. Don't have the cash? Be a prize sponsor—donate merchandise to be raffled valued at \$100 - \$500 or donate services in-kind. You can even get up to three complimentary admissions as a sponsor. For more information, contact Willens at 805.645.1424.



Tips & Ideas—Commute management strategies that work without breaking the bank

So your company management isn't putting a lot of cash behind a rideshare program? Take heart: There are plenty of ways to offer commute benefits at low cost. Some may even save you money. Here are a few:

- **Stop paying for parking.** One of the most effective incentives is actually instituting this *disincentive*—after all, nothing inspires people to share the ride like having to cough up \$5 or more daily just to house their car. If cutting the parking benefit is too severe a step for your company (and it is for most), consider offering a transit pass or transportation allowance in lieu of parking. A transportation allowance allows an employee to give up his or her parking space and instead receive the cash equivalent to keep or use toward other commuting costs.
- **Stop paying for so much parking.** A solid rideshare program means you can lease fewer spaces. Or if you already own the lot, perhaps all that real estate could be put to better use, like expanding your office space or landscaping for improved morale.
- **Be flexible.** Set up a program that allows employees to flex their work hours—either when they arrive and leave (flex-time), or by working more hours in fewer days (compressed work weeks). This not only lets employees avoid rush-hour traffic, but it also can increase overall ridesharing because people can adjust their work hours to meet bus schedules or connect with other carpoolers.
- **Match employees with rides.** If you don't have the budget to subsidize the cost of transit or other rideshare modes, provide individualized ridematching help. Give employees RideGuides annually when you survey, and provide on-the-spot matches throughout the year using CommuterSmart.info
- **Provide rideshare information.** If budget cuts give you less time for one-on-one time with employees, provide them with information so they can find options on their own. Stock a kiosk with bus route information, maps, promotional materials, etc.
- **Sell transit passes.** Even if you're not contributing toward the cost, the convenience of buying their pass on-site often helps keep transit riders from reverting to driving alone.
- **Offer preferential parking.** Giving employees who carpool or vanpool reserved spaces closest to the building is a low-to no-cost incentive.
- **Send employees home.** Telecommuting counts as a commute alternative, so it can boost your average vehicle ridership rate and, if office space is tight, can save your company money when employees use shared workstations or require less overall parking.
- **Take advantage of tax benefits.** You and your employees who rideshare can save money on taxes through a program through TEA 21 federal tax benefits.



For more information on any of these rideshare program options, contact the rideshare representative at the county transportation agency near you (see [Calendar](#) for contact information).

Calendar of Events

EVENTS

Telecommuter Appreciation Week is March 1-7, sponsored by the American Telecommuting Association, 800.ATA.4YOU, yourata.com

Rule 2202 Informational session, hosted by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, is March 11 from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the AQMD offices in Diamond Bar; for information go to aqmd.gov or call 909.396.3285

Bike to Work Day workshop is March 18, sponsored by the Association for Commuter Transportation and Metro and hosted by the City of Long Beach. This is an AQMD marketing certificate event; contact ddeming@lawa.org



Diamond Award applications are due March 27 for rideshare programs in Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura counties; for more information or a nomination form, email blanchardd@metro.net



Association for Commuter Transportation West Coast Conference is April 2-3 at the Hilton Los Angeles in Universal City. This is an AQMD marketing certificate event; contact ddeming@lawa.org or go to act-southernca.org

Inland Empire Commuter Services rideshare marketing workshop is May 14, at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario, 8:30 a.m. 1.866.IECS4HELP.

NETWORK MEETINGS

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

Glendale TMA meets regularly; call 818.543.7641.

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

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

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 requires employers to attend a briefing 60 days prior to their AQMD submittal date. Upcoming briefings are April 8 from 1-3 p.m. and May 6 from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.. For information or to reserve a space, email blanchardd@metro.net

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) offers one-day ETC training for \$64.23. Upcoming sessions are March 12 and April 9 at AQMD offices in Diamond Bar, March 19 in Irvine, April 15 at Metro offices in downtown Los Angeles and April 30 in Riverside. Contact Lisa Van Sornsen, vansornsen@aqmd.gov or the AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit AQMD.aqmd.gov

COMMUTESMART NEWS

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For subscription information or to change your COMMUTESMART NEWS e-mail address, contact your representative at the rideshare office nearest you.

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commutesmart.info

HWDS1610-2/09