

CommuteSmart news

A Service of CommuteSmart.info and Your Southern California Transportation Agencies

May 2009



Get in Gear— Bike to Work Day Is Here

Bike to Work Day is Thursday, May 14—part of California Bike Commute Week and a chance for your employees to discover getting to work on two wheels. **Full story**



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- Metro to offer Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension pre-opening tours
- OCTA to hold community meetings to discuss major service reductions
- EPA says greenhouse gases endanger public health
- Subscribe and never miss an issue of *CommuteSmart News*

CALENDAR of EVENTS

- May is **Clean Air Month**
- **National Transportation Week** is May 10-16



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CommuteSmart News for Employees

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



Get in Gear – Bike to Work Day Is Here

Bike to Work Day is Thursday, May 14—part of California Bike Commute Week and a chance for your employees to discover getting to work on two wheels.

Bicycling to work isn't just for people who live close to the office. Now that most buses are equipped with racks, and trains allow bikes on board during off-peak hours, more people than ever are discovering the benefits of bicycle commuting.

That can make a big difference for your rideshare program. According to a survey of riders, roughly 30% continued biking to work after the event.

Getting Ready...

The California Bicycle Coalition and your Southern California rideshare agencies offer help so you can promote Bike to Work Day at your work site.

Download free posters and flyers and provide employees with a link where they can register to win a bicycle and other prizes at californiabikecommute.com or for Los Angeles work sites, go to metro.net/biketowork

Also, in addition to letting employees know about "pit stops" and other events (detailed on next page) consider hosting a Bike to Work Day event of your own. Greet cyclists as they arrive at your work site with bagels and beverages, pair up "bike buddies" for the ride or hold a contest to see which department can get the most people to bike to work.

Metro will host a kickoff event on Monday, May 11, 8:30 a.m. at Olvera Street in Los Angeles.



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Top photo of female cyclist ©Farmers Ins Group/Filet

Bicycling Resources

- **Los Angeles County bike map**, which includes bike, bus and rail routes, metro.net
- **Los Angeles/Orange bike paths map**, a guide to bicycle paths around Los Angeles and Northern Orange County, labikepaths.com
- **Ventura County bike maps**, goventura.org
- **Orange County bike maps** are being updated, go to octa.net
- **Online bike routing** with 3-D and satellite views, mapmyride.com
- **Bikes on board transit information**—consult your local transit agency, for a list of Southern California transit agencies, go to the Bus/Rail Planner at CommuteSmart.info
- **Bike safety**—The California Bicycle Coalition offers regular bike training sessions to teach bike commuters how to ride safely in traffic. See schedule and fees or contact the them about coming to your work site to train employees: in Los Angeles, 213.629.2142, la-bike.org; in Orange County, ocbike.org; in Ventura County, vcbike.org; statewide, 916.446.7558,
- **B-iCycle application for your iPhone**, which gives helpful information like trip distance, average speed, calories burned, and more, along with the GPS feature, b-icycle.com, or go to apple.com and search the iPhone section for bicycle applications

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On May 14...

Pit Stops/Energy Stations

Stop at any of 40 Bike to Work Day Pit Stops/Energy Stations from 6 to 9 a.m. where you can take a break, connect with other riders, and enjoy snacks and giveaways including patch kits, water bottles and Clif Bars. Pit stops will be located at several Metro Rail stations and at convenient sites throughout Los Angeles County – go to metro.net/biketowork for a complete list of pit stop locations.

In Ventura County, pit stops will be at the City of Ventura (corner of Santa Clara and California), County of Ventura Government Center and Thousand Oaks City Hall.



Prizes

Pledge to bike to work and you could win great prizes.

- **In Los Angeles County:** Pledge online at metro.net, or employers can download pledge forms to distribute to employees; prizes include an electric bike from Currie Technologies, a two night stay at the Red Mountain Resort and Spa in St. George, UT, gift certificates and more.
- **Throughout Southern California:** Pledge at californiabikecommute.com

Free Rides on Bus/Rail

If you're combining transit with bicycling, ride free on May 14 with your bike or by showing your bike helmet (if leaving your bike in a locker).

Participating agencies are:

- Beach Cities Transit
- Commerce Municipal Bus Lines
- Culver City Bus
- Gardena Municipal Bus Lines
- Glendale Beeline
- Santa Clarita Transit
- Los Angeles Commuter Express and DASH buses
- Metro
- Montebello Bus Lines
- Norwalk Transit
- Pasadena ARTS Bus
- Torrance Transit

To ride free with your bike on VISTA, download a free ride coupon at vcapcd.org, good May 11-17.

Ways to Get Involved

- Download Bike to Work Day materials at californiabikecommute.com
- Publicize pit stops and provide registration forms
- Host an event on May 14. Greet employees as they arrive at the work site with beverages, snacks and—if possible—cheering coworkers.
- Help employees identify a route using pike paths or with less traffic and fewer hills.
- Promote the benefits of bicycling, such as getting in shape, contributing to clean air efforts and saving money.
- Establish a place for employees to change and shower. If you don't have facilities at your own work site, you may be able to make arrangements with a neighboring company or gym.
- Help employees find a safe place to store their bikes, whether in a bike locker at a Park & Ride lot facility, transit station or once they get to the office.
- Set up bike pools. Pair people to ride together on Bike to Work Day—it's often safer and a lot more fun.

In Brief

•Metrolink proposes fare increase and changes in transfer policies

Metrolink is considering a fare increase of 3.5% to 5.5% to offset anticipated increases in costs to operate the commuter train service. If approved, the new fares would go into effect on July 1, 2009. In addition, Metrolink is proposing that it no longer subsidize the entire cost of transfers that riders make to connecting transit in Los Angeles County, including Metro bus and rail as well as on transit providers participating in the EZ transit pass program. For more information, contact Metrolink at 1.800.371.LINK or visit metrolinktrains.com



•Metro to offer Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension pre-opening tours

Metro will conduct pre-opening tours in May for the six-mile Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension to Los Angeles, which is expected to open this summer. The tours showcase the new line and educate pedestrians on how to be safe around the trains. Each session will include a presentation of a virtual Gold Line video, information about Metro's rider program and a question and answer session. Residents or organizations that need to request information on how to get safety training should contact Metro at 213.922.4050 or email pattersond@metro.net

•OCTA to hold community meetings to discuss major service reductions

Orange County Transportation Authority will hold a series of community meetings this month to discuss proposed reductions in bus service due to state budget cuts. OCTA will lose \$17 million through June and \$100 million over the next five years. Service changes will be effective starting September 2009. Community meetings are 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. on May 12 in Anaheim, May 13 in Orange and May 14 in Laguna Hills, plus there will be public hearing May 22. For more information, visit OCTA at octa.net



•EPA says greenhouse gases endanger public health

The Environmental Protection Agency announced last month that greenhouse gases linked to climate change "endanger public health and welfare." This marks the first step toward imposing limits on pollution because of climate change, which would mean tighter rules for cars and power plants. The EPA concluded that the scientific evidence is "compelling and overwhelming" that man-made pollution is a cause of global warming. It also said tailpipe emissions from motor vehicles are a contributor. The EPA action was prompted by a Supreme Court ruling two years ago that said greenhouse gases are pollutants under the Clean Air Act and must be regulated if found to be a danger to human health or public welfare.

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Tips & Ideas—Sell the idea of fitness and ridesharing by touting "active transportation" to your employees

Want to lose a few pounds? Get fit? Get healthy? Experts are saying that a great way to do it is to get out of your car and try "active transportation" like walking, bicycling or taking transit.

That's a great message to pass along to your employees and a big motivator for them to stop driving alone.

"Commuters in Southern California spend on average an hour and 20 minutes every day in their cars, and many of them complain they don't have time to take care of themselves," says Erik Knutsen, bicycling advocate and co-author of *The Urban Homestead*. "Imagine the health benefits if that time were spent pedaling a bike or strolling to a bus stop instead of just sitting in traffic."

Researchers at the University of Tennessee and Rutgers University recently found a strong link between active transportation and obesity rates. Countries where more people opt for walking, bicycling and transit have lower rates of obesity.

"To put it simply, by avoiding cars, people can burn more calories," adds Knutsen.

About one in 10 commuters use active transportation: Less than 1% each walk or bike and 8% ride transit. More than 25% of Americans are obese.

Can Changing How You Get to Work Make a Difference in Your Health?

In a word: Yes. While calories burned varies based on gender, weight and intensity, on average a person briskly walking or biking will burn about three times the calories of someone sitting in a car.

A study in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* found that every additional 30 minutes a person spends in a car translates into a 3% greater chance of obesity. Conversely, each mile walked per day brings a roughly 4% reduction.

Burning calories isn't the only health benefit.

"Stress can really take a toll on a person's health. People who rideshare get to work and home more relaxed than their counterparts who drive alone," says Ventura County Transportation Commission's Alan Holmes. "Even if you don't have any weight to lose, just about everybody could enjoy a little less stress in their lives."



Ways to Get Involved

- Emphasize the health and weight loss benefits of active transportation in your marketing efforts.
- Participate in sponsored events such as Bike to Work Day on May 14 (see cover story) and Employee Health and Fitness Day on May 20 (physicalfitness.org).
- Download free campaign materials and get advice on how to promote healthy benefits at work. Some helpful web sites are italladdsup.gov, where you can get free posters, flyers and more in the theme "burn calories, not rubber," and americanonthemove.org, which offers health tips and promotional ideas.
- Start a walking/biking group or fitness club at your work site. Pair up people to get to work together using active transportation. If you can, bring in a personal trainer or fitness expert to help people set fitness goals.
- Offer incentives/rewards for commuters who walk, bike or take transit to work—your employees may qualify for free incentives through your county rideshare agency (go to [Employer Services at CommuteSmart.info](http://EmployerServicesatCommuterSmart.info)).
- Look for other links to health benefits, such as how using the carpool lane can give you more time to work out after work or how saving money by not driving alone can give you enough cash to join a gym.

Spotlight On... Tales of the Fast Lane

What's your rideshare story? That's what commuters were asked as part of the "Tales of the Fast Lane" contest, hosted by PBS's Huell Howser and the Southern California rideshare agencies. Says Howser, who presented the winners with awards at a ceremony at the Gene Autry Museum, "Their tales were moving, they were funny, and they made me understand how ridesharing can really change a person's life." Here are some highlights from the winners' entries:

Raquel Sandoval works for the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center, and wrote: "Carpooling is a way of life for us...We help those who need to study for tests, we pray the rosary when things get tough, we debrief about the work day and vent if we have to, we sing, share stories and jokes, complain about our husbands or kids and, best of all, support each other in any way we can."

Greg Ulrich rides a Segway to work 16 miles each way at least once a week instead of driving. Although he doesn't have to deal with traffic, he has encountered skunks, raccoons and even a coyote on his early morning commute.

To get to his job in Carson from where he lives in Pasadena, **Terry McGlynn** rides his bike to the Metro Gold Line station, then catches the train to downtown, hops on an express bus that goes down the center carpool lane of the Harbor Freeway, and then switches to a local bus. Amazingly, he says it takes him no longer than it would to drive.

Cindy Cordova has so many great stories to tell about riding in a UCLA vanpool – which she's nicknamed the United Nations because it's such a diverse group of people – she blogs about it for her friends to read.

For many people, opportunity knocks...for **Jocelyn Lundquist**, it waved. That's how she started carpooling. She was driving alone as she always did to her job at Kaiser Permanente when she noticed a former coworker waving at her from another car. After this happened several more times, the two women decided as long as they were clearly taking the same route at the same time, why not do it together?

Laura Miller's carpool has formed a book club. She says that one day they were reading a book in the car that was so sad they realized they were all sitting in traffic in the middle of the freeway, "crying their eyes out."

It meant so much to **Ray Tanner** to ride his bike to the office that he actually changed jobs so he could work closer to home.

Jim Harris says his company's rideshare program is "out of this world" – which makes sense since he works for The Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex.

Back in 1969, **Philip Aker** got his first job out of college with the City of LA and started biking because he didn't have a car – he said he only intended to do it until the weather got cold, but he's still biking regularly four decades later.



Raquel Sandoval
and Huell Howser



Christine and Greg Ulrich



Laura Miller



Marie Massey, Jim Harris, Chele Boyd

Calendar of Events

EVENTS

The American Lung Association will issue its Clean Air Report on May 1 to launch Clean Air Month; see the report at californialung.org

National Transportation Week, celebrating careers in transportation, is May 10-16, 703.235.0519, ntweek.org

Blessing of the Bikes is May 12, 8-9:30 a.m. at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. Call 213.977.2911 or go to goodsam.org

Bike to Work Day is May 14, californiabikecommute.com

Rideshare Diamond Awards luncheon is May 19, recognizing outstanding rideshare programs in Los Angeles and Ventura counties, blanchardd@metro.net



Employee Health and Fitness Day is May 20 and extols the health benefits of walking or biking to work, 317.237,5630, physicalfitness.org

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 June 10, 1-3 p.m. and July 8, 9:30-11:30 a.m. For more information or to reserve a space, email blanchardd@metro.net

Inland Empire Commuter Services rideshare marketing workshop on "Innovative Marketing Strategies" is May 14 at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario, 8:30 a.m., 1.866.IECS4HELP. This is a marketing certificate workshop, and breakfast will be served.

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) offers one-day ETC training for \$64.23. Upcoming sessions are May 7 and June 4 at AQMD offices in Diamond Bar, May 14 in Orange and June 11 at LAX Flight Plan Museum. Contact Lisa Van Sornsen, vansornsen@aqmd.gov or the AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit the AQMD aqmd.gov

COMMUTESMART NEWS

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