

Helping Commuters Cope with Gas Prices

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How Green Are You?

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In Brief

- Americans are changing how they commute to save on gas
- Start a vanpool in LA County and get a \$300 gas allowance
- Could you still pass a driving test?
- LAX FlyAway buses now accepting EZ transit passes
- Inland employers "star" in rideshare campaign



CALENDAR of EVENTS

- ACT International Conference – Aug. 24-27
- Rideshare Week – Oct. 6-10

More Events

TIPS & IDEAS



Stuck for ideas for your rideshare program? **Hold a brainstorming session** and watch the creativity fly. [Full story](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON...

The **new online Vanpool Seat Finder**, where you can find open seats on any of more than 1,000 Southland vanpools. [Full story](#)



CommuteSmart News for Employees

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



Helping Commuters Cope with Gas Prices

We asked employee transportation coordinators (ETCs), "What are you doing to help employees cope with high gas prices?" This is what they had to say:

"We are increasing the daily reimbursement from \$2 to \$3 a day and transit subsidy from \$75 to \$100."—**Claudia Jones, Scripps College**

"I start a conversation about how expensive gas prices are and suggest to them about carpooling with a friend."—**Babette Ray, Hilton LAX**

"We have distributed a flyer to staff informing them of reasons why they may want to consider changing their mode of transportation."—**M. Angelica Loftin, Los Angeles Department of Justice**

"We began a "Take a Vacation from the Gas Pump" transit promotion, targeting staff and faculty who have a solo parking permit and live within a quarter-mile of a transit line. Those who give up their parking permit for the summer receive a free transit pass good all summer long. We've got about 200 people who've already signed up."—**Charles Carter, UCLA Transportation**

"I emailed everyone the link to CommuteSmart.info to calculate how much it costs them to drive alone."—**Lillian Huerta, Angelus Sanitary Can Machine Co.**

"I have a couple of lists put together with locations where carpoolers can meet and then park and ride. I think just being available for employees to bounce ideas off of is a big help."—**Melissa Villasenor, City of Downey**

"I wrote an article for our newsletter urging them to join Rideshare and save gas."—**L. Sue Clemons, Ikea**

"We are offering employees preferential parking as an incentive to carpool."—**Tabetha Johnson, ESRI**

"Some are working from home one or two days out of the week – others are ridesharing and coming in at different times."—**Virginia Curtis, IHOP**

"We are stepping up on the advertising and will be starting a new eight-passenger vanpool."—**Lucia Meraz, Long Beach VA Healthcare Systems**

"We are providing carpoolers with gas coupons."—**Megan Scalia, Maguire Properties – Plaza Las Fuentes**

"I'm overwhelmed with the number of employees who are calling, emailing and stopping by the office. I've registered over 80 new transit riders in the last few weeks, the vanpools are totally full... the phones are ringing off the hook. Next week I'm taking my show on the road and doing some tabletop events in the various lobbies of Raytheon buildings as a form of outreach."—**Rosemarie Bennett, Raytheon**

"We've offered a buyout for employees – all who rideshare and are not utilizing their parking spaces (can get) \$25 on their paychecks."—**Denise Ruiz, Rusnak Auto Group**

"I am currently reaching out to neighboring businesses to determine if there are matches for carpooling and vanpooling."—**Steve Delmar, Avery Dennison**

"We recently gave those without Internet access the availability of going onto metrolinktrains.com and metro.net so everyone can plan a trip."—**Derek Anthony, State Compensation Insurance Fund**



How Green Are You?

Of course your rideshare program helps the environment – but just how much?

Here, as presented by Jeff Weir with the California Air Resources Board at the recent ACT conference, is a simple calculation that will let you see how many tons of greenhouse gas emissions your rideshare program eliminates each year. It will come in handy for when you need to quantify your success – whether to management, to employees, or as part of your corporate outreach to show your commitment to green practices.



1. Calculate your vehicles miles traveled (VMT) reduction.

To start, determine daily round trips reduced:

Formula: (Number of employees x baseline AVR) – (Number of employees x current AVR) = daily round trips reduced

Example: If you have 200 employees, a baseline AVR of 1.2 and a current AVR of 1.5:

$(200 \times 1.2) - (200 \times 1.5) = 34$ roundtrips reduced per day

Next, to calculate VMT reduced:

Formula: (number of roundtrips/day) x (2 trips/day) x (average trip length) x (number of work days/year)

Example: $(34 \text{ trips/day}) \times 2 \times 19$ (average commute trip length in Southern California) $\times 260 = 335,920$ driving miles reduced per year

2. Calculate greenhouse gas emissions reduced

Formula: (VMT reduced) x 0.919 pounds per mile (the approximate amount of CO₂ eliminated per mile not driven)

Example: $335,920 \times 0.919 = 308,710$ pounds of greenhouse gas reduced

To convert to tons reduced:

$308,710 \div 2,000$ (pounds per ton) = *154 tons of greenhouse gas emissions reduced in one year*

3. Spread the word!

How many tons of CO₂ did you help reduce? Don't just tuck the number away in your files – make it part of your outreach to demonstrate how a small change like ridesharing can have a big impact on our environment.



Did you know...?

- Roughly a pound of CO₂ emissions are avoided for each mile not driven.
- A single vanpool prevents on average 30 tons of CO₂ emissions per year.
- Based on the national average of an 81% drive-alone rate, the commute carbon footprint at US companies per 1,000 employees is 2,072 tons – or on average more than a ton per employee.

In Brief

• Americans are changing how they commute to save on gas

Gasoline prices around \$4 per gallon are causing more Americans to change their commute habits. In a new survey by Robert Half International, Inc., 44% of respondents said gas prices have affected how or when they get to work – up from 34% a year ago (when gas was about \$2.89 a gallon). The most common changes include ridesharing, driving a more fuel-efficient car, telecommuting and looking for a job closer to home.



• Start a vanpool in LA County and get a \$300 gas allowance

The Metro Vanpool Program offers subsidies of \$400 per month toward the cost of a public van's lease, and now the first 100 new start-up vanpools that enroll in the Metro Vanpool Program between August 1 and Sept. 30 can also earn a \$300 gas allowance. To qualify for the gas allowance, each newly enrolled Metro Vanpool must be in operation for at least one month and lease from a Metro participating vendor. For more information, contact a qualifying vanpool leasing agency (listed at metro.net/vanpool).

• Could you still pass a driving test?

More than 16% of drivers on the road – amounting to roughly 33 million licensed Americans – would not pass a written drivers test exam if taken today, according to a survey conducted by GMAC Insurance. The survey tested driver knowledge by administering 20 actual questions taken from state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) exams. Kansas drivers ranked first in the nation, with an average test score of 84%; New Jersey drivers ranked last, with an average score of 69.9%. California drivers ranked 33rd. How would you stack up? Take the test at gmacinsurance.com



• LAX FlyAway buses now accepting EZ transit passes

LAX FlyAway buses (which offer service from downtown Los Angeles, Westwood or Van Nuys to LAX) now accept EZ transit passes with a "zone 6 premium sticker" as fare. In addition, all EZ transit pass holders (regardless of zone) can pay the price difference in cash to board a FlyAway bus. EZ transit passes allow riders to utilize all Metro buses and trains as well as 23 other public transit carriers in Los Angeles County. For more information on FlyAway service, go to lawa.org; for EZ transit pass, go to metro.net

• Inland employers "star" in rideshare campaign

Inland Empire employers recently starred in an ad campaign featured in San Bernardino newspapers in May and June. The ads, which read, "Stretch your dollars – rideshare" and included the tagline, "gas is cheap if you don't buy any," stressed the cash-saving benefits of ridesharing. Shown are: Donna Rucker and Mark Piniol, County of Riverside; Kendra Lakkees, County of San Bernardino; Tabettha Johnson, ESRI; Ken Miller, Lowes Regional Distribution Center; Paul Pitman, March Air Reserve Base; Natalie Gomez, Riverside Transit Agency; LaVerne Williams, Roadway Express and Candace Garcia and Michelle Martinez, Inland Transportation Services.



Tips & Ideas— Stuck for ideas for your rideshare program? Hold a brainstorming session and watch the creativity fly.

Ridesharing is all about people getting together to get where they need to go. Why not take advantage of that same concept when coming up with ideas for your rideshare program? Conducting a brainstorming session often inspires you to take your program in directions that you might never have thought of otherwise. It can be an effective tool for new ideas (e.g., marketing campaigns, rideshare fairs, contests) as well as for problem solving ("how can we help people take bus or rail when there isn't a stop near the office?").

Here, the marketing experts at *CommuteSmart News* offer ways to make the most of a brainstorming session:



The Set-Up

- **Select a topic.** Decide what you want to cover in a session, and be ready to pose it as a question or a series of questions. Be specific. "How do we make our rideshare program better?" is probably too broad. More appropriate topics might be ways to attract more people to your rideshare fair or developing a rideshare program slogan.
- **Do your own brainstorming first.** Many experts say that the best brainstorming comes from a mix of individual and group input. Brainstorming alone by sitting down and thinking things through before your meeting will help you keep the group on track and productive. Brainstorming afterwards lets you take the hodgepodge of ideas and consider them in light of your role as the rideshare expert.
- **Select participants.** "Don't just pick friends and neighbors," advises Metro's Donna Blanchard. "Invite people from different departments and levels of seniority. Ask ridesharers as well as people that currently drive alone." If people are reluctant to participate, remind them they they'll also benefit from any programs you come up with as a group. Or if that doesn't work, "serve food," says Blanchard.
- **Be visual.** On a large presentation board, write down ideas as people say them. This helps you collect the ideas and also serves as a prompt to keep things flowing.



The Process

Take a moment to go over the rules with the group. The methods introduced by Alex Osborn in his 1950s classic *Applied Imagination*, which popularized brainstorming, are still valid today. They are:

- **Don't allow criticism.** Nothing stymies the creative process like the fear that your contribution will be called stupid.
- **Encourage wild ideas.** Sure it may seem crazy to suggest that the CEO rideshare to work on a pony to kick off Rideshare Week, but you never know what idea may grow from that seemingly ridiculous one.
- **Go for quantity.** Brainstorming works on the notion of "quantity breeds quality." The more ideas, the better.
- **Combine and/or improve on others' ideas.** After all, if it's just people saying their own ideas, you can collect those via email or in a suggestion box. Instead, encourage people to take each other's thoughts further, expand on them, or add their own twist. That sort of group energy is what brainstorming is all about.



Spotlight On... The Vanpool Seat Finder at CommuteSmart.info

CommuteSmart.info has launched a new service: the online Vanpool Seat Finder. It allows users to quickly find Southern California vanpools that are a potential match and may have open seats.

To use it, just go to CommuteSmart.info, which has data on thousands of commuters, where you'll see a link to the Vanpool Seat Finder.

Then simply enter a home and work zip code to instantly get a list of vanpools that service your commute. Each listing includes:

- Vanpool origin and destination
- What time it leaves and arrives
- Contact information for that vanpool so you can get in touch for information on vacant seats, fares, etc.



You can also view a map that shows the vanpool's route as well as any pick-up or drop-off points along the way.

There's no need to register in the CommuteSmart.info database to get matches using the Vanpool Seat Finder, although users may want to do so to get a complete picture of other rideshare options available to them. For commuters who want to try vanpooling on a temporary basis, check out the [Ride Exchange](#) at Link Ride Exchange where vanpools post short-term seats available due to vacation, leave of absence, etc.

The Vanpool Seat Finder is a service of Metro, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments and Ventura County Transportation Commission.



What Do Vanpoolers Want?

Metro recently surveyed participants in its vanpool program to get insight into what makes vanpoolers tick – and what can get more employees interested in vanpooling. Of those surveyed...

- The #1 reason they started vanpooling? 68% said it was to save money – no surprise there considering gas prices are topping \$4 a gallon and vanpoolers typically have long commutes. Second was "save time" at 22%.
- Nearly half said their biggest obstacle when it came to vanpooling was filling seats. Most rely on word of mouth or help from their employer to find new riders.
- When asked to rate all the factors that drew them to vanpooling, saving money again was said to be "very important," followed by "putting fewer miles on my car." What wasn't a big motivator according to the survey: the social aspects of vanpooling. More than half said that meeting people/socializing was not important to them.

More Ways to Find Vanpool Seats

The Metro Vanpool Program provides \$400 monthly subsidies to participating vanpools that are open to the public, and you'll soon be able to search exclusively for open seats on Los Angeles County Metro Vanpool Program public vanpools at metro.net/vanpool (check future issues of *CommuteSmart News* for details on when this service will be available or just check the Metro web site regularly).

Orange County Transportation Authority also provides a \$400 monthly subsidy to participating vanpools; for information on how to find a seat on an OCTA Vanpool Program vanpool, contact OCTA at vanpool@octa.net, (714)560-5893.

Calendar of Events

EVENTS

The Metro **"Try Transit Field Trip to Disneyland"** is July 15 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Metro will email details to employers or for more information, contact Donna Blanchard at blanchardd@metro.net



Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) International Conference is August 24-27 in Atlanta, GA. According to ACT, this year's program "combines traditional panel sessions and keynoters with a creative 'un-conference' approach bringing attendees and topic experts together in high-energy roundtable discussions." For details and registration information, go to actweb.org



Rideshare Week is Oct. 6-10 - find out about sponsorship opportunities in your county (see inset box, right).

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 July 8; 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 July 9, 9:30-11:30 a.m. and August 13 from 1-3 p.m. For more information or to reserve a space, email blanchardd@metro.net

• **South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD)** offers one-day ETC training for \$61.70. Upcoming sessions are July 23 and August 6 at AQMD offices in Diamond Bar and August 21 in Los Angeles. Contact Lisa Van Sornsen, vansornsen@aqmd.gov or the AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit AQMD at aqmd.gov



COMMUTESMART NEWS

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