

What Are You Doing for the Holidays?

Shopping...parties...vacations...With so much going on, it's easy for your rideshare message to get lost in the bustle of the holiday season—but it doesn't have to. Here, we feature ETCs who've found ways to ring in the holidays in rideshare style. [Full story](#)



CALENDAR of EVENTS

- Toy and canned food "drives"
- Orange County ETC breakfast, Dec. 2
- Network meetings

[More Events](#)



TIPS & IDEAS

Sneaky strategies that work to get employees to rideshare. [Full story](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Find an **instant bus/rail itinerary** on any of more than 40 Southern California transit providers with [CommuteSmart.info's Bus/Rail Trip Planner](#).



CommuteSmart News for Employees

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



10 Blogs, Tweets & More

Looking for some online resources that can help you better manage your employees' commutes—and even your own? We've got 10...[Full story](#)

In Brief

- Metro opens Gold Line Eastside Extension with 50,000 riders
- Global warming pollution up 10% in California
- Metrolink postpones decision to raise fares
- Woman breaks up with gas pump, wins video contest
- Transit providers offer free rides on holidays



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A Party With Purpose

Delia Zaraspe with Piedmont Office Reality Trust not only promotes ridesharing during the chaos of the holidays—she actually conducts her annual transportation survey. She makes both a success by holding a holiday luncheon. The rideshare department serves gourmet sandwiches and cappuccinos—but the only way people can get a lunch is by filling out and turning in a survey. "No survey, no lunch," laughs Zaraspe, who also raffles off prizes (this year it will be an iPod, \$100 cash prize and gift cards).



The Stockings Were Hung by the Chimney With Share

At Hansens in Corona, this year the rideshare bulletin board will be decorated to look like a fireplace, and anyone who participated in the rideshare program for the entire year will receive a personalized stocking to hang by the chimney. Says ETC Tammy Collier, "On Dec. 24, the stockings will be filled with goodies and delivered to employees"...a great way to both recognize and reward ridesharers.

And the Award Goes To...?

In the tradition of *Time* magazine with its annual "Person of the Year" issue, Stacia Boone at CB Richard Ellis Asset Services in Pasadena awards a *Rideshare* Person of the year each December. In the past the company chose the employee based on who shared the ride the



Stacia Boone with 2008's Rideshare Person of the Year

most, but as their program has expanded, they now enter all rideshare participants' names into a drawing. The winner not only gets the title of Rideshare Person of the Year and a photo posted on a rideshare information board, he or she also receives \$100.

A Gift that Keeps on Giving

Don't have the budget for gifts this year? Anna Espinosa, the ETC for White Memorial Medical Center, is giving a gift that employees can really use...and it doesn't cost her anything. She ordered Metro Gold Line Coupon Booklets that offer discounts at shops and eateries near the stations and "encourage our rideshare participants to explore the local community and all the undiscovered destinations near the Gold Line extension," says Espinosa. Many Southern California agencies offer similar coupon books and discounts to people that rideshare (contact the [rideshare representative in your county](#) for more information).

Timing Is Everything

It's often easy to let rideshare fall by the wayside during the holidays, but Cal State University in Los Angeles' rideshare department schedules quarterly breakfasts to ensure that one of their events will fall at a time where it can do double-duty as a rideshare holiday breakfast. According to Carmen Gachupin, who runs the rideshare program, they'll serve a continental breakfast and hold raffles to celebrate the holidays *and* their ridesharers.

10 Blogs, Tweets & More

- The Source.** Get the latest in transportation news in the greater Los Angeles area at Metro's new blog—The Source at thesource.metro.net—including information on service changes, funding and policy issues and the local rideshare hot topics everybody's talking about.
- Clever Commute.** This is a free information network where subscribers receive alerts on traffic and transit conditions thanks to commuters who text in updates about trains, buses and traffic, clevercommute.com
- ACT on Facebook.** Join your fellow rideshare pros on facebook in the [Association for Commuter Transportation Southern California Chapter group](#). You can get updates on workshops and events, whether or not you're a member of ACT.
- Rideshare Plus.** If you have employees that rideshare and live in Riverside or San Bernardino counties (regardless of where their work site is located), they may qualify for discounts at hundreds of Inland Empire stores, restaurants and entertainment venues when they sign on for Rideshare Plus. See a listing of participating businesses at rideshareplus.info



- How We Drive.** Tom Vanderbilt, author of the bestselling book *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do and What It Says About Us*, pens an entertaining and informative blog on traffic issues and safety at howwedrive.com
- Another Interesting Blog: Streetsblog.** For some food for thought on local transportation issues, go to la.streetsblog.org, where you can also get a list of more than 30 other Southern California blogs devoted to transportation issues.
- Updates on OCTA Service Changes.** Will changes in service on Orange County Transportation Authority buses affect your employees' commutes? Get details on specific changes and cuts, which are due to go into effect in March, at octa.net/marchchange
- Rule 2202 Plan Maker.** Metro's award-winning [Plan Maker CD](#)—which features dozens of tools and resources for employers submitting rideshare plans under the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Rule 2202—is now available online at metro.net, go to the "carpool/vanpool" section from the home page.

- Twitter.** Sign up for "tweets"—short messages via the social networking site, Twitter—from these organizations:
 - **Caltrans**, twitter.com/caltrans, **Los Angeles/Orange/Ventura counties**, twitter.com/caltransdist7
 - **Department of Motor Vehicles**, twitter.com/ca_dmv
 - **Metro**, twitter.com/metrolosangeles
 - **Metrolink**, twitter.com/metrolink
 - **OCTA**, twitter.com/octabusupdates
- PublicTransportation.org.** A commuter-friendly site from the American Public Transportation Association offers transit facts, news and reports, as well as links to local transit agencies. Go to publictransportation.org



In Brief

•Metro opens Gold Line Eastside Extension with 50,000 riders

Free rides for a day drew huge crowds to the public opening of the six-mile Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension that links East Los Angeles with downtown LA and Pasadena, as well as other Metro Rail, Metrolink and bus service. "This caps a 20-year battle to bring rail back to East LA, one of the most transit dependent communities in Los Angeles," said Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The Eastside Extension has eight new stations, two of them underground (at Soto and Mariachi Plaza). The opening brings the Metro Rail system to a total of 79 miles of rail. For a destination guide, a list of restaurants near Eastside Extension stations and route and schedule information, go to metro.net.



•Global warming pollution up 10% in California

Global warming pollution increased 10% from 1990 to 2007, according to a recent study by Environment California, which ranks California as the second highest state in the nation for global warming pollution levels. Transportation was behind 58% percent of emissions generated statewide in 2007, the study showed. For more information, go to environmentcalifornia.org



•Metrolink postpones decision to raise fares

Metrolink's board last month postponed a decision on a proposed 6% fare increase, which would have come three months after the last rate hike. The agency's board will consider other ways to deal with a budgetary shortfall at its Dec. 11 meeting, including service cuts, fare increases and deferring capital projects to provide more operating funds. For more information, go to metrolinktrains.com or call 1.800.371.LINK.

•Woman breaks up with gas pump, wins video contest

A 1-minute, 16-second video called "Romance" took top honors in the American Public Transportation Association's 2009 Dump the Pump video contest. The video parodies a romantic break-up, with a woman severing her relationship with a gasoline pump. "You were such a major item in my life, but I think we should spend some time apart," she says. You can see it at youtube.com... and if you like it, forward the link to employees.



•Transit providers offer free rides on holidays

Rides on Metro Rail and buses will be free Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. (Dec. 25), and New Year's Eve, Dec. 31 from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. (Jan. 1). Other transit agencies may provide free holiday rides as well; check with your local provider for details.



Tips & Ideas— Sneaky strategies that work to get employees to rideshare

When Kristina Valenzuela, ETC for Caltech, wanted to start a vanpool, she didn't set up a vanpool formation meeting. Instead, she identified a group of employees that lived in the same area and simply invited them to a lunch meeting—not explaining until they arrived that the "business" they were discussing was vanpooling. Her idea worked. She had enough interested riders to form a vanpool on the spot, and she's formed several more since.

The fact is, while promoting your program is important, a direct rideshare message doesn't work with every employee.

Some people do want to hear about how ridesharing can save them money and time on their commute.

Many, however, tune you out the moment they hear the word rideshare.

"That's when you have to try something different," says Donna Blanchard with Metro. "Direct advertising isn't the only way to get a message across. Most major marketing campaigns include a mix of direct strategies and what they call 'side door' approaches...that is, pitching your product in such a way that by the time people realize you're selling them something, they already have their wallets in their hands."

Here, we outline a few sneaky ways to promote ridesharing at your work site:

- **"You don't have to buy; we only want you to try."**

Employees often balk at the commitment of ridesharing, so don't mention long-term. Instead, get them to just give it a try.

This approach worked for Huntington Hospital's rideshare department, which leased a van and offered a free trial each month to a targeted group of employees. After road-testing vanpooling, many of the groups were eager to lease a van on their own and continue. Many of them would have never considered ridesharing without the trial.

- **Focus on fun.**

UCLA hosted a walking event in which participants—who signed on for the fitness fun—stopped by various rideshare-related booths along the way to get a card stamped that qualified them for prizes.

Another popular idea that takes a stealth approach to ridesharing: Organizing a group lunch or other outing...and making it a point to go there by group via bus or rail.

- **Piggyback on something more popular.**

While rideshare fairs are a great way to disseminate information about alternatives to driving alone, it's often hard to get people to show up. How about having a rideshare presence at a health fair, focusing on how ridesharing reduces stress? Or set up a game or contest at the employee holiday party, company picnic or other event that already packs 'em in...so you don't have to.

Of course, there are times when it's best to be direct with your rideshare message...but for those other times, try the side door because, in the words of one marketing expert, "the side door is almost always open."



Calendar of Events

EVENTS

Toy and canned food "drives" roll into gear, including:

- Antelope Valley "Stuff a Bus," 661.945.9445, avta.com

- Metrolink Holiday Train, 1.800.371.LINK, metrolinktrains.com

- Norwalk Transit "Stuff a Bus," 562.929.5550, ci.norwalk.ca.us

- Omnitrans Spark of Love Toy Drive, omnitrans.org



Orange County Transportation Authority will host a **"Share the Ride Commuter Challenge" breakfast** at Dave & Busters in Orange, Dec. 2, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. The event will serve as a Rideshare Week wrap-up. For more information or to RSVP, contact Judy Leon at OCTA at jleon@octa.net, 714.560.5358.



Metro will host a workshop on the **TAP (Transit Access Pass) program** Jan. 12 at Metro offices in downtown Los Angeles. For time and to RSVP, contact Donna Blanchard at blanchardd@metro.net

Association for Commuter Transportation Southern California Chapter will hold a membership meeting Jan. 21, for time and location information, go to act-southernca.org or contact Kristina Valenzuela at Kristina.Valenzuela@caltech.edu

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 briefings are Jan. 13 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Feb. 10 from 1-3 p.m. For more information or to reserve a space, email blanchardd@metro.net. Please note: It is no longer a requirement to attend a briefing when surveying with Metro (unless you are surveying electronically for the first time).

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) offers one-day ETC training for \$154.81. Upcoming sessions are Dec. 3 and Jan. 13 at AQMD offices in Diamond Bar and Jan. 27 in Pasadena. Contact the AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit the AQMD at aqmd.gov

COMMUTESMART NEWS

Editor/Writer: Jill Smolinski
Art Director: Harlan West

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

Metro Commute Services
One Gateway Plaza
MS 99-19-05
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952
Business: 213.922.2811

OCTA's Commuter Solutions
550 S. Main St.,
Orange, CA 92868
Mailing address:
PO Box 14184
Orange, CA 92863
Business: 714.560.5358

Ventura County Transportation Commission
950 County Square Dr.,
Ste. 207,
Ventura, CA 93003
Business: 805.642.1591,
ext. 119

Inland Empire Commuter Services
Office location:
7355 Magnolia Ave.
Riverside, CA 92504
Mailing address:
PO Box 51540
Riverside, CA 92517-2540
Business: 1.866.IECS4HELP
(1.866.432.7443)

Commuter Information
1.800.COMMUTE (266.6883)
commutesmart.info

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