

The County Commuter



Summer 2007

New Vanpool Incentives

In this issue:

Quarterly Commuter Club Drawing	2
Guaranteed Ride Home Program	2
OCTA's E-Pass Program Saves Money	3
Gas-Saving Myths	3-4
Outreach to Solo Commuters	4

OCTA has launched a new vanpool subsidy program that provides up to \$400 per month for vanpools originating in Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside, San Bernardino or Ventura counties. Participating vanpools must meet monthly ridership and reporting requirements and use a third-party vanpool company that is contracted with OCTA:

- Vanpool groups must commute to a worksite in Orange County
- Vanpool must be open to the general public and not exclusive to one specific employer
- Third-party vanpool service provider must be under contract with OCTA
- Vanpool driver must sign an OCTA Vanpool Program application (available from your vanpool service provider)
- Application must be received by the 15th day of the month to be considered for enrollment in the following month
- Must have at least an 80% occupancy (full-time riders)
- Vanpools commuting from/to Orange County will be given first priority for funding
- OCTA will notify the vanpool groups directly within two weeks if the vanpool group qualifies for the financial incentive
- Upon approval, the vanpool driver must provide OCTA with monthly passenger, mileage, expense, odometer reading reports and occasional surveys as requested
- The vanpool group must also maintain a 60% occupancy rate for three consecutive months
- All incentives are paid to the third party vanpool service provider, thus lowering the monthly fare paid by all vanpool riders

For additional information about this program, call the OCTA Vanpool Program staff at 714/560-5893 or send an e-mail to vanpool@octa.net.

In addition, County of Orange employees are also eligible for the Commuter Choice program. Click [here](#) to sign up for the County's Commuter Choice program and receive your first month's vanpool fare for free! Employees who enroll in the Commuter Choice program to purchase their vanpool "tickets" or vouchers through the convenience of monthly payroll deductions will "take home" more money since their taxable income is reduced by that amount up to \$110 per month.

To get a copy of the County's Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization Form, send an e-mail to rideshare@ocgov.com, call the Message Center at 714/647-1931 or click [here](#) to be linked to the Commuter Assistance Program website.

Park & Ride Lot Closes

The Park & Ride lot in the Sierra Del Oro Promenade at 4300 Green River Rd. in Corona has closed – the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is actively looking for an alternate location in the area. Commuters who use this lot are asked to look for another lot at the CommuterSmart.info website – click [here](#) for a list of lots.

Quarterly Commuter Club Drawing

We're happy to announce the winner's of this quarter's drawing for rideshare participants from the County of Orange Commuter Club members! Each quarter, we draw eight (8) names of current Commuter Club members and they win a \$25 gift certificate! This quarter's winners are:

Henry Filtz, RDMD
Moraima Walkingsitck, Probation
Judy Urbanos, HCA
Erin Smith, OCSD

Gina Everly, SSA
Erica Mejia, CSS
Lucy Hernandez, CSS
Mark Liu, RDMD

Each have won a \$25 gift certificate redeemable through GiftCertificates.com, where they can select items from over 20 merchants!

Do you rideshare at least five days per month? If so, be sure to sign up for the Commuter Club to receive your annual thank you gift, and be eligible for these quarterly drawings. To sign up for the Commuter Club, send an e-mail to rideshare@ocgov.com, call the Message Center at 714/647-1931, or click [here](#) to be linked to the Commuter Assistance Program website, or visit one of our 30 commuter information display racks – click [here](#) for a list of locations.



Guaranteed Ride Home Program

If you rideshare to work, the County offers a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program that provides a free ride home in an emergency – either by taxi or rental car – at no cost to you! Any County employee who carpools, vanpools, rides the bus or Metrolink, bikes or walks to work qualifies for up to four free rides in a 12-month period in the following circumstances:

- Unexpected illness of an employee or member of the employee's family
- Unscheduled or unanticipated overtime or extended workday
- Missed connections with a planned ride home due to unanticipated change in work schedule
- Other emergency situation as deemed appropriate

To get a copy of the GRH Authorization Form and a copy of the "Rules and Regulations," send an e-mail to rideshare@ocgov.com, call the Message Center at 714/647-1931 or click [here](#) to be linked to the Commuter Assistance Program website. You can also get a copy from your Human Resources representative, where the Authorization Form is available on the HR portal.



OCTA's E-Pass Program Saves Money

The County has been participating in OCTA's employer pass program for two years now. Through a coordinated effort, employees purchase bus fares at a discount through the payroll deduction process. By doing so, they save by paying only for trips taken and by reducing their taxable income. A recent review of the program showed that County of Orange employees have saved an average of \$360 per year on bus fare alone! Savings on gasoline and vehicle wear and tear is additional!

Did you know that you too can use the OCTA E-Pass, and ride free for the first month? In 2007, you'll never pay more than \$.75 per ride (and only for the rides taken) up to \$45 per month, no matter how many times you ride! If purchased separately, a one-way ride would cost approximately \$2.25. The E-Pass is good on all local OCTA routes, and is flexible and easy to use.

Here's how it works:

- Register for participation. Click [here](#) to download the County's Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization Form.
- You'll receive the OCTA E-Pass card that you swipe as you board the local bus.
- Boardings are tracked electronically and reported to us each month.
- You will not be charged for the first month of rides if you continue for at least two months.
- You'll then receive a payroll deduction each month based on the boarding report from OCTA.

For more details about the E-Pass, OCTA routes or schedules, click [here](#) to be linked to www.octa.net or call 714/636-RIDE (7433).

For information about the County's annual OCTA E-Pass program, send an e-mail to rideshare@ocgov.com, call the Message Center at 714/647-1931, click [here](#) to be linked to the Commuter Assistance Program website, or click [here](#) for a list of our 30 commuter information display racks where you can pick up an application.

Gas-Saving Myths

Using a special additive or cutting off your A/C won't really cut your gasoline consumption. But myths like these run rampant in the minds of American drivers.

The price of gasoline is again setting record highs, so before you attempt a half-baked scheme to stretch your gas dollars, here's a look at what's fact and what's fiction when it comes to fuel economy:

Windows, Air Conditioning — Does It Matter?

There's the old saying that leaving your windows rolled down creates an aerodynamic drag on your car, cutting down on your fuel efficiency. And there's the notion that the fastest way to drain your gas tank is by running your air conditioning. Neither one is exactly spot on. In two separate studies, conducted by Consumer Reports

and the automotive website Edmunds.com, they looked at how running your A/C and opening car windows affected the fuel economy of a sedan and an SUV traveling at highway speeds.

What they found was that by running the air conditioner, while it did draw power from the vehicle's engine, only reduced each vehicle's fuel economy by about 1 mile per gallon. The Consumer Reports' study revealed that, while opening the windows does increase the aerodynamic drag on a car, it does not have a measurable effect on the vehicle's fuel economy even at highway speeds.

Bottom line? If you're driving around town on errands, you might save some gas rolling down the windows instead of using the A/C.

Gas-Saving Myths, Continued

Restart Your Engines

It's probably a myth that goes back to the days when cars were equipped with carburetors, but many drivers believe that starting up and turning off your car repeatedly is a fast way to drain your gas tank.

But because of modern fuel-injection technology, drivers actually save gas by turning off their engine than by letting their car needlessly idle – not to mention the exhaust from your tail pipe!

Tips You Can Use:

So what are some fuel-savings tips you can trust?

- Make sure your tires are properly inflated for starters. Besides posing a safety hazard, under inflated tires can reduce your fuel economy.
- Removing excess weight from your car can also help save you gas. The Department of Energy estimates that drivers can save anywhere between 3 and 6 cents a gallon (assuming gas prices of \$2.97 a gallon) just by removing those golf clubs and other unnecessary weight from your trunk.
- If your car comes equipped with cruise control, make sure you use it, especially on long trips. The Edmunds.com study revealed that using cruise control at highway speeds offered an average fuel economy savings of 7 percent.
- Rapid starts and stops and exceeding the speed limit will dent your pocketbook. Just by adhering to one of those, the Department of Energy estimates that drivers can save anywhere between 15 and 98 cents a gallon, again assuming pump prices are at \$2.97 a gallon – don't we wish!
- But the biggest fuel saver is carpooling, taking the bus or train, walking or biking to work!

If you are ready to start ridesharing and save some fuel, click [here](#) to be linked to the Commuter Assistance Program website where we provide a variety of options and incentives for you to start ridesharing. We can also be reached by sending an e-mail to rideshare@ocgov.com or by phone at 714/647-1931.



Commuter Assistance Program

County of Orange
 Human Resources Department
 10 Civic Center Plaza
 Santa Ana, CA 92701
 714-647-1931
 714-653-1148 FAX
rideshare@ocgov.com
www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare

The County Commuter Newsletter is published by the Commuter Assistance Program Office managed by the Human Resources Department. Our mission is to distribute commuter information to all County of Orange employees so that they can make informed decisions about how they travel to work. For more information about the Commuter Assistance Program, please go to the web site.

Outreach To Solo Commuters

During the last Annual Transportation Survey, we learned more about where your commute to work starts. This information has helped us to identify, highlight and promote the alternate commute options available to each of you. This is the time to consider alternatives to driving alone to work. We have begun an outreach campaign that is area specific within each county—Orange County, Los Angeles County, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

Be on the lookout for information from our staff regarding ways for *YOU* to cut commuting costs, save time and reduce the stress of driving in traffic. South OC residents have been contacted—Central OC residents—you're next!