



In this issue:

Changes To Metrolink Incentive	2
Metrolink Schedule Changes	2
Ask Us	2
Metrolink Quarterly Drawing Winner	3
"Orange Crush" Closes For A Year	3
OCTA Annual Bus Pass Program	4
Commuter Club News	4
Incentives For IE Residents	4

Special points of interest:

- The toll lanes on the 91 Freeway in OC let carpools with 3 or more ride free (except when traveling eastbound M-F, 4-6 p.m. when tolls apply at a 50% discount). You must have a "transponder". For details, [click here](#).
- HOV stands for "high occupancy vehicle"—more than one person in the vehicle. You'll recognize HOV lanes (more commonly referred to as carpool lanes) by the diamonds painted on the road...a reason they're also referred to as "diamond lanes."

Annual Transportation Survey Results

A big **THANK YOU** to all that completed the annual transportation survey last October! Once again we achieved a 91% response rate to the survey.

During the survey week, nearly 62,095 employee trips were made from home to work using 50,605 vehicle trips. The ratio between the two numbers, or the average vehicle ridership, was 1.23, slightly better than last year. More importantly, it means that, by ridesharing or working flex hours, 11,490 trips were eliminated during that single week. The average round trip commute distance in the region is 34 miles, so during that week nearly 400,000 miles of travel were eliminated. Projected for a year, that equates to 20 million miles! Think of the savings in terms of gasoline, wear/tear, pollution and stress!

In 2005 we saw a nice increase in the number of Metrolink and bus riders. Carpoolers (14%) represent the largest group of employees that have reduced vehicle trips followed by those

commuting by public transit (3%). Our goal for next year is to reduce the number of solo drivers from the current 85% to 80%.

And there is more good news! All employees who completed a survey were included in a drawing to win a \$100 gift certificate to the Main Place Mall in Santa Ana. The lucky winner was Laura Martinez, Assessor's Office.



Annual Survey Drawing Winner -
Laura Martinez, Assessor's Office

Rideshare Week Winning Display

This year to help spread the word about Rideshare Week, October 3-7, 2005, we enlisted the help of our on-site coordinators. They were provided with some promotional goodies and asked to let their imaginations run wild! There was also an incentive of a \$25 gift certificate to the "most creative," and the lucky winner was Ellen Naylor. She designed a great promotion at 331 The City Drive in Orange. Congratulations Ellen.



Ellen Naylor's Winning Display,
Juvenile Hall Business Office



[Click here](#) for help with planning your commute to work.

Changes To Metrolink Incentive

The new tax savings incentive now replaces the "Get Into Training" new rider, current rider, and quarterly drawing subsidies. This change consolidates and simplifies the process! Metrolink riders that elect to purchase tickets through the payroll deduction process not only get the **first pass at no charge** but they can realize savings on income taxes each month thereafter.

The tax savings incentive known as the Commuter Choice Program is available to all County of Orange employees that elect to have the cost of the ticket deducted each month from their paycheck. The first \$105 is considered pre-tax, thus reducing your taxable income by as much as \$1,260 per year. Each

month, the ticket is ordered on your behalf and Metrolink sends the ticket directly to you. For more information about the Commuter Choice Program and to print the Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization Form, [click here](#).

Employees that are interested in trying the train for the very **first time** can sign up for the County's new "Try The Train On Us" Program. You'll receive a complimentary four-trip Metrolink ticket along with details on how to get a personalized trip itinerary. If you decide to keep riding the train, you too may sign up for the Commuter Choice Program! [Click here](#) for the application form. You can also call the Commuter Assistance Message Center at 714/834-4068.



For information on Metrolink schedules and routes, visit www.metrolinktrains.com.

Metrolink Schedule Changes

On January 2nd, Metrolink added two new round-trip trains between Oceanside and Riverside-Downtown, and two trains will extend service from Irvine to San Juan Capistrano:

New train # 850 will depart from Oceanside at 7:30 a.m. arriving at Riverside-Downtown at 9:40 a.m.

New train # 852 will depart from Oceanside at 10:35 a.m. arriving at Riverside-Downtown at 12:40 p.m.

New train # 851 will depart from Riverside-Downtown at 10:50 a.m. arriving at Oceanside at 12:55 p.m.

New train # 853 will depart from Riverside-Downtown at 1:10 p.m. arriving at Oceanside at 3:15 p.m.

Train # 802 will depart from San Juan Capistrano at 1:48 p.m. and from Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo at 1:55 p.m.

Train # 811 will depart 52 minutes earlier from San Bernardino at 11:25 a.m. and extend service to Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo and San Juan Capistrano.

For more information on Metrolink schedules and routes, [click here](#).

Ask Us

We get lots of questions from employees regarding their commute to work. Some we can answer immediately, while others take a little time to research. If you have a question, send an email note to rideshare@ocgov.com.



*Christopher Miller,
County Counsel*

Metrolink Quarterly Drawing Winner

Congratulations to Chris Miller, County Counsel

Chris enrolled in the Get Into Training program as a current Metrolink rider in March of 2000 when the program first started. In fact, Chris has been riding the train from Oceanside into Santa Ana since 1991! Amtrak was available prior to Metrolink which he's been riding since its inception.

Chris is participating in the new Commuter Choice program available to all County of Orange employees, and enjoys the convenience of purchasing his monthly pass

through the payroll deduction process. He says it's nice not having to think about ordering his pass each month. All he has to do is watch the mail for his pass to arrive.

By participating in the Commuter Choice Program, the first \$105 of Chris' monthly pass fare is considered pre-tax, thus reducing his taxable income by as much as \$1,260 per year.

If you're interested in knowing more about the Commuter Choice program, or to download a Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization form, [click here](#). You can also call the Commuter Assistance Message Center at 714/834-4068.



The regional rideshare website, www.commutessmart.info provides real-time freeway traffic maps.

Did You Know?

- April is Earthquake Preparedness Month – it's a good time to be ready for commuting in crisis conditions. For more details [click here](#).
- The regional rideshare website, www.commutessmart.info, recently expanded its real-time freeway traffic maps that show current traffic conditions throughout Southern California including expanded coverage of San Bernardino and Riverside counties. [Click here](#) to view the maps.
- Estimated travel times are now being posted on electronic freeway signs. The information comes from sensors embedded in the freeways. For details [click here](#).



"Orange Crush" Closes For A Year

As if the "Orange Crush" wasn't a big enough traffic mess already, for the next year the crowded connector between the eastbound Garden Grove (22) and southbound Santa Ana (5) freeways is closed for construction. That's the bad news. The good news is the project will add carpool and auxiliary lanes along a 12-mile stretch of the 22.



OCTA Annual Bus Pass Program

Have you tried it yet? The OCTA Annual Bus Pass Program is available to all County of Orange employees. No more waiting in line to buy a monthly bus pass! If you sign up for the County's Commuter Choice voluntary payroll deduction program, you'll receive an annual bus pass that provides unlimited bus transportation at OCTA's lowest fare available of only \$0.75 per boarding, with a maximum of just \$45 per month – no matter how many rides are taken. The best part is that the pass is good on all local OCTA bus routes, seven days a week.

If you are riding the bus to work now, and decide to switch to the annual bus pass, we'll give you the first month free! For more

information about the Commuter Choice Program and to print the Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization Form, [click here](#).

Employees that are interested in trying the bus for the very first time can sign up for the County's Try The Bus On Us program. You'll receive a complimentary one-day OCTA bus pass along with details on how to get a personalized transit itinerary. If you decide to keep riding the bus, you may sign up for the Commuter Choice Program to purchase the annual bus pass, and we'll pay for the first month's fare. [Click here](#) for the application form. You can also call the Commuter Assistance Message Center at 714/834-4068.

Commuter Club News

It's time to renew your membership in the Commuter Club reward program for 2006. We are making a few changes this year. We'll be sending a brief survey to all current Commuter Club members – be sure to respond to indicate your interest in continuing in the program and also to give us your comments on the type of reward gift that will replace the Healthy Dining Guide and discount coupons.

If you'd like to join the Commuter Club and commit to ridesharing at least five times per month, [click here](#) for an All-In-One form, send an e-mail to rideshare@ocgov.com, or call the Message Center at 714/834-4068.

Next quarter, a new prize-drawing element will be added to the Commuter Club program—look for it in the next issue of *The County Commuter*.

Incentives For I E Residents

Do you live in the Inland Empire? If you are ridesharing to work by train, bus, carpool or vanpool, and have been doing so for at least three months or more, you may qualify for the Rideshare Plus Rewards Program offered by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG).

For more information and an application, [click here](#). If you are already a member of Club Ride or Team Ride, the folks at RCTC and SANBAG are sending out your new membership card and merchant directory with over 450 merchants that accept the discount card. If you don't have access to the web, you can call 1-866-RIDESHARE for an application to be mailed to you.

Commuter Assistance Program

County of Orange
Human Resources Department
10 Civic Center Plaza
Santa Ana, CA 92701
714-834-4068
714-834-5520 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.