

ON THE GO

News for Your Employees

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Holiday Fun, Free Rides and More



The holidays are almost here—and your Southern California rideshare agencies have ways that you can put some sharing into the season.

All Aboard the Metrolink Holiday Express

Metrolink's **Holiday Express Train** is back this season, bringing festive fun to families and friends across Southern California. Specially decorated trains give riders a fun trip filled with cheerful carolers, holiday characters, interactive activities and Santa and Mrs. Claus themselves. Tickets go on sale Nov. 3 and typically sell out quickly.

Upcoming events are:

- Dec. 6, Union Station
- Dec. 7, San Bernardino Depot Station
- Dec. 13 and 14, Irvine Station
- Dec. 20, Riverside-Downtown Station
- Dec. 21, Simi Valley Station

Holiday Express trains will also collect donations of new, unwrapped toys and socks for those in need.

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Rideshare Week Roundup

Southern California commuters celebrated Rideshare Week last month. Throughout the week of Oct. 6-10, ridesharers had the chance to win prizes and participate in worksite events from rideshare fairs to rallies to contests and more.

Thank you to the thousands of commuters who chose an alternative to driving alone—whether carpooling, vanpooling, bus/rail, biking, walking or teleworking.

A Special Thanks to the 2025 Rideshare Week Top Level Sponsors:

Los Angeles County

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Holiday Fun

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“Stuff a Bus” with Toys for Kids

Transit agencies are partnering with KABC7 and the Southern California Firefighters for the annual Spark of Love Toy Drive. You’re asked to help “stuff a bus” full of new toys for underserved families.

For details on upcoming dates and locations, visit abc7.com/sparkoflove.



Free Rides

Metro will offer free rides on bus and rail from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. Look for details at metro.net.

Rides are free on OC Bus on New Year’s Eve. Details will be posted at octa.net.

Commuter Tax Benefits: Bikes Get Cut, Transit/Vanpool Get a Boost

H.R.1 (the Act), signed into law on July 4, permanently eliminates the \$20 per month qualified bicycle commuting reimbursement benefit. The benefit—which allows employers to reimburse employees up to \$20 per month tax-free for bicycle commuting expenses—had been suspended in 2018 through the end of 2025.

Some good news: Employees can receive transit and vanpool benefits tax-free up to \$340 a month in 2026, according to a recent announcement by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). That’s a \$15 monthly increase over the current transportation fringe benefit.

The IRS allows both employers and employees to receive tax benefits through the pre-tax purchasing of public transit fare media including vanpool fares. Employers can also choose to provide employees with a direct subsidy up to the monthly limit, perhaps eliminating the cost of commuting altogether.

Parking is also an allowable transportation fringe benefit—and the monthly maximum an employee claims can be a mix of transit and parking.

For more information, consult your tax professional.

Important Changes on EV Access to Carpool Lanes and Express Lanes

You may have heard that electric vehicles (EVs) lost their solo access to carpool lanes when the federal Clean Air Vehicle decal program ended on Oct. 1. If you get caught driving alone in the carpool lane, even in an EV, you can be cited.

It’s not just carpool lanes that are affected. There is also no longer a discount for EVs using California’s express lanes. Drivers of EVs will now pay the full toll unless they meet the carpool occupancy requirements and have a valid transponder in the vehicle. In Southern California, these are:

- **Metro ExpressLanes on I-10 in Los Angeles County:** 3+-person carpools ride free at all hours, 2-person carpools ride free during off-peak hours.
- **SB Express Lanes on I-10:** 3+ person carpools travel toll free at all times.
- **Metro ExpressLanes on I-110:** 2+-person carpools ride free.
- **91 Express Lanes:** 3+ person carpools ride free except eastbound weekdays from 4 to 6 p.m, when they get a 50% discount. (Note: Occupancy in 91 Express Lanes in Riverside County is now being verified. If fewer than three occupants are detected, the toll and a \$5 fee will be charged.*)
- **15 Express Lanes (Riverside Express):** 3+ person carpools always ride free.
- **405 Express Lanes:** 2-person carpools ride free during non-peak hours, and 3+ person carpools ride free at all times.



*Drivers are encouraged to review all Express Lanes rules and occupancy requirements before using the lanes to avoid unexpected charges.



10 Changes in Transportation in 2025 that May Impact Your Rideshare Program

In case you missed the news, here are some of the big happenings this year...

1. AQMD rolled out changes to Rule 2202 reporting. On Jan. 1, 2025, South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) amendments to its Rule 2202 mandate went into effect. New rules require that worksites that survey have an employee transportation coordinator (ETC). They also require that ETCs collect data on telework activity and employee vehicle miles traveled, among other changes.

Find out more at aqmd.gov.

2. Metrolink riders can get alerts. A new alerts tool makes it easier for riders to **track real-time train information**, including delays and service interruptions. This means that they can better time when they need to get to the station or make alternate travel plans if their usual train isn't available.

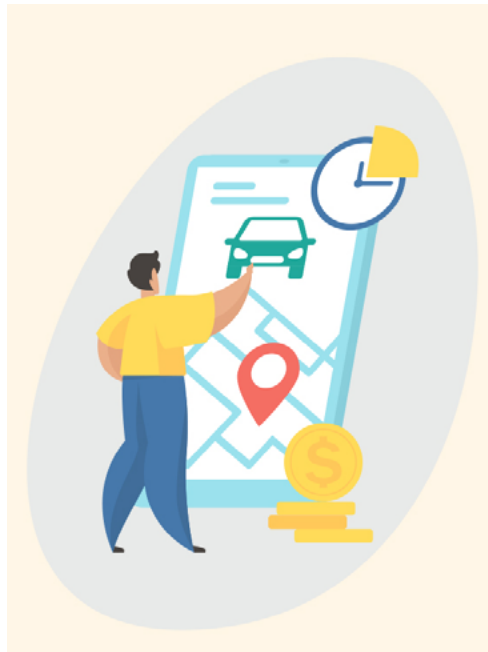
3. Metro opened its much-anticipated LAX/Metro Transit Center. Located at Aviation Boulevard and 96th Street, the **LAX/ Metro Transit Center** offers riders dozens of convenient transit connections to Los Angeles World Airport (LAX).

The station serves two light rail lines—the C and K Lines—as well as several Metro and partner agency bus lines, including Beach Cities, Big Blue Bus, Culver City Bus, LAX FlyAway, GTrans and Torrance Transit.

Ultimately, it will include a direct connection to the airport via the LAX Automated People Mover, expected to open early next year.

4. Ridematch.info underwent a bit of a facelift. **Ridematch.info** is the rideshare database for Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura counties. Not only did it get a new look, but it now sports a more user-friendly design and interface.

The site allows commuters to instantly generate customized carpool/vanpool matches and transit routing. It also features other ridesharing resources, such as Park & Ride lots and EV charging stations.



5. Metrolink introduced a new SoCal Day Pass. It offers unlimited rides for \$10 on weekends and \$15 on weekdays. An **LA Zone Pass** is \$5 for rides all day between select stations near downtown Los Angeles.

6. OC Bus riders can now “Wave.” OC Bus introduced its Wave fare payment system that allows riders to load value onto a Wave card or mobile account or use a contactless card. Wave guarantees riders the best fare—they pay as they go without needing to prepay for discounts. Once they reach a daily cap (\$4.50 for regular riders), or a monthly cap (\$69), the rest of the rides are free.

7. ONTConnect adds more service to Ontario Airport. **ONTConnect (Route 380)** offers daily, limited stop service to and from the Ontario International Airport and the Rancho Cucamonga Metrolink Station. Omnitrans this year added more trips to the route—meaning more shuttles, more often.

Rides are only \$2, with free transfers from Metrolink.

8. Bus riders in Ventura County can now “tap to ride.” With the **Tap2Ride** payment system launched this year, VCTC Intercity Bus riders can pay fares with a credit card or mobile device.

They simply tap their credit/debit card or phone/watch on the yellow payment reader to board. No app or account is needed.

Tap2Ride also features fare capping, so once riders reach the 31-day cap, they ride free.

9. The nation’s longest light rail line got longer. Metro’s **A Line Extension to Pomona** opened on Sept. 19. The A Line Extension adds more than nine miles of track. It features four new stations in Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne and Pomona.

Riders can transfer between Metro and Metrolink at the Pomona Station, giving everyone a new, faster way to ride between the Inland Empire and Foothill Cities corridor.

10. Rideshare Week celebrated 40 years! Caltrans rolled out the first annual Rideshare Week campaign in 1985. Rideshare Week celebrates alternatives to driving alone, including carpooling, vanpooling, riding bus/rail, walking, biking and telecommuting.

Held Monday through Friday the first week of October, it is now presented by the Southern California transportation agencies.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Did You Know...?



Ridership on the Metro K Line is up significantly—most likely thanks to the recent opening of the [LAX/Metro Transit Center](#).

The first month it was open, K Line ridership jumped nearly 140% on weekdays and roughly 200% on Saturdays and Sundays over the same time the previous year, according to data collected by Metro.

With the new transit center closing the final gap along the K Line, it now runs continuously from the Expo/Crenshaw Station to Redondo Beach. It also intersects with many other Metro rail lines, making it possible for more Southern Californians to travel to and from LAX via transit.

Two Metro Stations Get “Mini Makeovers”

Metro recently spruced up two of its key stations on the Harbor Transitway on the 110 freeway: the Slauson Station and the 37th/USC Station (with access to campus, the Coliseum, BMO Stadium and Exposition Park museums). Some of the improvements:

- Lighting has been converted to LED for better safety.
- They also underwent a deep clean—including the removal of objects that were creating “hidden” areas on the platform.
- Metro installed a Throne restroom at Slauson Station for A Line riders and those using its recently opened Rail-to-Rail walking and bike path.
- For a quieter waiting experience for riders, Metro also recently had transparent sound walls installed.

The next station to get the mini-makeover treatment on the Transitway will be Manchester Station.

Parking Available at the Downtown Azusa Metro Station

Daily paid parking is now available at the [Downtown Azusa parking structure](#). Previously, parking was only offered through monthly permits.

Parking is \$3 per day for transit patrons and \$1 per hour (up to three hours) for the general public.



ORANGE COUNTY

Share Your Transportation Thoughts for a Chance to Win \$50

What changes are needed to make Orange County roads better? How can your bike ride be improved? Are the bikeways meeting your needs? What's working—and what isn't? Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) wants to know.

Every four years, OCTA updates its Long-Range Transportation Plan to outline priorities for transportation improvements in Orange County over the next 20-plus years.

"We want to hear directly from those who use our roads, buses, trains and bikeways every day to help shape a vision that serves our entire county," says OCTA Chair Doug Chaffee.

To weigh in, take an [online survey](#) by Nov. 9. As a thanks for your input, you'll be automatically entered to win one of four \$50 gift cards.



What You Might Not Know About OCTA's Wave



OCTA's Wave fare payment system

launched last month, allowing riders to pay using a contactless reloadable smart card or mobile app. Here are a few fun facts you may not know about Wave:

- Smart cards are re-loadable and never expire.
- By registering a Wave card, users can recover their balance if the card is lost or stolen and transfer the balance to a new card.
- Wave uses "fare capping," which means riders pay per ride. Once they reach the daily or monthly cap, rides are free.

OC Bus Services Changes Include Better Metrolink Connections

OC Bus last month made schedule adjustments on bus routes to improve service and better meet riders' needs. This includes improving frequency on several routes and ending Routes 29 and 129 at the Metrolink Station, among other changes.

To learn what routes are impacted—or if the changes mean your commuters may have better options on OC Bus—visit [octa.net](#).



RIVERSIDE/ SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

Get There Fast, Zero Emissions

North America's first self-powered, zero-emission train car is now in service on **Arrow passenger rail service** between San Bernardino and Redlands.

This Zero-Emission Multiple Unit (ZEMU) uses technology that only produces water vapor as emissions. An innovative clean transit alternative, it is helping to improve air quality and providing a cleaner, quieter ride.



IE Commuter Shines a Spotlight on Ridesharers



Your employees who carpool, vanpool, ride transit, bike, walk or telecommute to work deserve their moment in the spotlight. IE Commuter is making that happen by awarding a monthly \$100 gift card prize.

They simply log their rideshare days at IECommuter.org to be automatically entered into the drawing (maximum one entry per day).

If they win, they'll have the option to share their rideshare story in the **Rideshare Spotlight**.

IE Commuter also features a monthly **Telework Spotlight**. For employees to be eligible, your worksite must be signed up with the IE Commuter Telework Employer Assistance program and they must have an IE Commuter account.

Get Free Rides, then Give to Help Feed the Hungry



Basin Transit will treat riders to free rides and promotional giveaways on Nov. 22 in honor of Rider Appreciation Day.

You're also invited to help them **"Fill the Bus" with food donations**, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. at the Walmart Supercenter in Yucca Valley. Donations of non-perishable food items, turkeys, hams and holiday trimmings will make a difference for families in the Morongo Basin this Thanksgiving.



VENTURA COUNTY

What Is Your Commute Costing You?



Now you can quickly find out using the Cost Calculator at goventura.org. It makes it simple to see how much money you can save by choosing smarter travel options like walking, biking, carpooling or taking the bus.

Simply input basic information, like how far you drive, what type of car you have,

what you typically pay for gas, tolls, etc. It quickly calculates the real cost of commuting—including factors such as wear and tear.

You might be surprised at what the commute is really costing you.

Coastal Express Expands Service with More Trips and New Stops

Big changes are coming Nov. 3 to the Coastal Express, connecting riders along the Ventura-Santa Barbara corridor. Changes include:

- New service to the Santa Barbara Airport
- Expanded service to Camarillo, Oxnard and University of California, Santa Barbara
- More weekday and express trips during peak commute times, including to and from the Metrolink Camarillo Station
- Clearer route numbers and updated maps for easier navigation

Find out more at goventura.org.



Veterans Ride Free on Veterans Day



U.S. military veterans as well as active military can **ride Ventura County buses for free on Veterans Day**, Nov. 11. To qualify for a free ride, veterans should show their valid veteran's identification to the bus driver upon boarding any participating fixed-route bus service.

Veterans without proper identification may be asked to share their branch, dates and location of service with the bus driver.

CALENDAR

Events

Rides to the polls are free on Election Day, Nov. 4, on Metro Bus and Rail and all San Bernardino County buses.

Ventura County buses will offer free rides for veterans and active military on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. For a list of participating providers, visit goventura.org/free.

Ride Metrolink for \$10 all day on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas and New Year's Day. Trains will run on their Sunday schedule.

The Metrolink Holiday Express will bring holiday fun to stations throughout Southern California Dec. 6-21. Tickets go on sale Nov. 3. See the schedule at metrolinktrains.com.

Help "stuff a bus" full of new toys for underserved families. For times and locations, visit abc7.com/sparkoflove.

Go Metro to the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1. Details and special event hours will be available at metro.net.

Training

Metro Commuter Options & Regulatory Compliance Support offers free ETC Briefings where Los Angeles area employers can learn about the transportation survey process. Until further notice, briefings are being offered online only. **To register for a briefing, click here.** If you can't make that meeting, email Metro to set up a one-on-one virtual meeting. Upcoming ETC Briefings are Nov. 19 and Dec. 17, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

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South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) offers two-day ETC training via Zoom for \$237.81. The next scheduled sessions are Nov. 4 and 6, Nov. 18 and 20 and Dec. 9 and 11. For more information, contact the South Coast AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit aqmd.gov.

Network Opportunities

Burbank TMO serves businesses in Downtown and Media District areas; call 818.953.7788, director@btmo.org.

Go Glendale meets regularly; call 213.425.0955; email director@goglendale.org.

IE Commuter offers bi-annual marketing workshops for ETCs in the Inland Empire; call 1.866.RIDESHARE (866.743.3742).

Irvine Spectrum TMA meets regularly; call 949.727.4273 or email kelly@spectrumotion.com.

The LAX TMO hosts quarterly virtual meetings with employers who operate at LAX. Email commuteLAX@lawa.org to be invited to the next meeting.

Orange County Network meets regularly; email sharetheride@octa.net.

Pasadena TMA meets regularly; contact Talin Shahbazian at tshahbazian@cityofpasadena.net.

Playa Vista's TMA, Compass, meets regularly. Employees who commute to Playa Vista are eligible for incentives for all modes of sustainable transportation. For more information, email Noe Solano at noe@playavistacompass.com.

Santa Monica TMO meets regularly; contact info@gosamotmo.org or call 213.425.0955.



ON THE GO

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Riverside/San Bernardino Rideshare Program

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