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Rideshare Thursday Coming Back Soon

Some of you may remember the "Rideshare Thursday" promotional campaign launched in 1994. Its goal was to show how ridesharing just one day a week helps the environment. The theme seemed to take on a life of its own, and many traffic reporters still use the term today - long after the campaign ended. Local agencies have decided to bring the campaign back with some great new incentives for rideshare commuters. We'll keep you posted when the new program kicks off.

Human Resource Services



OC Commuter



Annual Transportation Survey Completed

Thank you to all employees who recently completed the Annual Transportation Survey! All County of Orange and Superior Court employees were asked to complete a brief survey of how they commute to work. The survey is a requirement of the South Coast Air Quality Management District regulation, but it also highlights commuting trends and helps us to develop programs to enhance our existing rideshare program. The survey gives employees the opportunity to send us comments and ask questions about the Commuter Assistance Program. Here are some questions and a few comments we received during the survey process:

Questions:

Q: Why does only a portion of my Metrolink pass payment qualify to be pre-tax?

A: The County's Commuter Choice Program is based on a provision of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), Section 132 (f) that allows employees to use pre-tax dollars to pay for their monthly pass/fare. Currently, the maximum that is allowed per month under the pre-tax benefit is \$125. If your monthly Metrolink pass exceeds that amount, the difference is not considered pre-tax at this time.

Q: I drop off my husband at work at least twice a week – are we considered a carpool even though he does not work for the County?

A: Yes you are, as long as you are carpooling for more than 50 percent of your trip.

Q: How do I enroll in the Commuter Club since I rideshare at least 5 days a week?

A: It's really easy – if you did not sign up during the Annual Transportation Survey, you can go to the Rideshare webpage, click on the <u>All-In-One application</u> and send us your completed form. That's how easy it is! We'll send you a Commuter Club card and your annual thank you gift.

Q: Is it possible to get text alerts when there is a problem with the Metrolink Trains?

A: Absolutely! You can follow Metrolink on Twitter at http://twitter.com/metrolink and receive instant messages on your smart phone regarding incidents or advisories.

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Comments:

"For me it's good to carpool. It helps me save on gas and car maintenance costs."

We agree! If you are interested in finding a carpool partner, check out the <u>Carpool Classifieds</u>. It includes a list of co-workers ready to start carpooling or vanpooling.

"I enjoy taking the bus!"

That's great! We hope you are taking advantage of the annual OCTA E-Pass program that the County offers employees and get the benefit of paying for your transit pass with pre-tax dollars by using the Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization Form.

All employees who completed the Annual Transportation Survey were entered into a random drawing to win a \$200 gift card. The winner for 2012 is **Kim E. Hansen**, Treasurer-Tax Collector — Congratulations!



Kim E. Hansen

Commuter Club Quarterly Winners!

Each quarter we randomly select eight lucky Commuter Club members who each receive a \$25 gift certificate. This quarter's winners are:

- Dan Mc Namee, Sheriff/Coroner
- Gladys Villalobos, Social Services Agency
- Nicole Stanfield, Health Care Agency
- Howard Huang, Sheriff/Coroner
- Maria Nora Vida, Probation
- Jim Mendelson, District Attorney
- Wendi Osborne, OC Public Works
- Lorena Yonamine, Social Services Agency

Congratulations – your electronic gift certificate can be exchanged at GiftCertificates.com for original gift certificates from hundreds of popular stores, restaurants and much more.

Are you ridesharing at least five days per month? Then you too can become a Commuter Club member! Just complete the <u>All-In-One application</u> and we'll send you a Commuter Club card and new member sign-up gift.

OCEA Health Fair - a Huge Success

The Rideshare Program staff hosted a booth at the 2012 OCEA Health Fair on October 2. We hope you stopped by to spin the Rideshare Wheel for prizes! Even though it was a very warm day, hundreds of employees won fun prizes, picked up information about Rideshare Week, and details about the various rideshare incentives offered to all County of Orange and Superior Court employees.



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Vanpools are Cool! Here's Why

First, congratulations to our newest vanpool group, Laura Liu, Peggy Laub, Augustine Stewart, Sarah Quach, Richard Lindsay and Linda Burwell who recently celebrated their third month as vanpoolers.

They look happy, don't they? Well, that could be you too. The County of Orange offers a wide range of services and valuable incentives to help employees start or join a new vanpool. If you are ready to explore your options, we are ready to help you!

We know it takes a little coordination to get a vanpool started, so the OC Rideshare Program also offers an incentive called <u>Start-A-Vanpool</u>. Any employee that leases a vanpool vehicle and forms a vanpool group with at least three other County of Orange employees receives a \$300 gift card after the vanpool has been on the road for three months, plus another \$300 gift card after six months.

And there is even more. Employees may purchase their vanpool payment "vouchers" through a monthly payroll deduction in the Commuter Choice program. By doing so, your taxable income will be reduced by the amount of your payment with a cap of \$125 per month. This income tax savings is like extra money in your wallet every month.

Save more money. Vanpools are operated on a month-to-month lease between the employee leasing the van and a private vanpool provider. Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) provides a \$400 per



month subsidy to vanpool groups to offset monthly lease costs. For example, let's say \$1000 is the estimated monthly cost of leasing a van commuting from the Inland Empire. With the OCTA subsidy, the vanpool group would split a reduced monthly lease expense of \$600, as long they meet certain monthly reporting requirements.

With all of these great money-saving incentives and the added benefits of using the carpool lanes – isn't it time to start vanpooling? To be included on the growing list of interested County of Orange commuters, please complete the "Car/Vanpool Classifieds" section of the All-In-One form. You will be invited to attend the next Vanpool Informational Meeting—your chance to get more details on how easy it is to start a cool vanpool.

Vanpool Information Meeting January 9, 2013

To learn more about saving money by vanpooling or to join or start a new group, plan to attend the Vanpool Information Meeting on January 9, 2013. All you have to do is complete the "Car/Vanpool Classified" section of the <u>All-in-One form</u>. You will be added to a growing list of interested employees and invited to the January 9, 2013 lunch meeting.

A Vanpool Service Provider will cover the following topics:

- How vanpooling works
- Monthly lease and other costs
- How you can pay for your monthly vanpool fare with pre-tax dollars
- How a vanpool group can qualify for a \$400 reduction on the monthly lease
- Additional incentives for actually leasing the vehicle and organizing the vanpool group

Mark your calendar now and be on the lookout for more details and your invitation to attend.



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OCTA Updates

Create your customized OCTA eBusbook - You can easily create it online and include the bus and train routes you use the most plus connecting transit information. Add to it as you please with optional routes, customer service information and selected other commuter services. View it online, print it and even share it with friends. Create your eBusbook now. It's as easy as 1-2-3.

OCTA and Anaheim Resort Transit (ART) have a new transfer agreement - Bus riders can now transfer at no additional cost between OCTA and ART at bus stops where the two transit services directly connect. Check here for a list of OCTA and ART connecting bus stops.

Save money by the busload! - OCTA saves you money by offering their bus riders special discounts to area venues and merchants. Just show your valid OCTA bus pass, Metrolink ticket or 91 Express Lanes transponder for great savings.

For a complete list of all OCTA Destination Discounts available go to http://www.octa.net/bus-destinations.aspx. Enjoy a wideo tour of OCTA's website and get familiar with the many services they offer.

Metrolink Updates

Schedule Changes

Metrolink recently made a few changes that became effective in October to their schedule of trains in conjunction with Amtrak changes. The affected week-day lines are the Orange County Line and the San Bernardino Line. For a complete listing of all service changes, visit Metrolink Trains. For current Amtrak schedules, please visit www.amtrak.com.

Free Airport Shuttles for Metrolink Pass Holders

A Metrolink rider with a monthly pass that has a boarding pass for a flight at LAX, can hop aboard a Union Station FlyAway® bus to or from LAX at no additional cost. FlyAway® buses run every 30 minutes during peak hours every day of the year. For more information, visit www.metrolinktrains.com.

Metrolink riders departing or arriving from John Wayne Airport can ride for free on the *iShuttle*. The shuttle runs exclusively between the Tustin Metrolink station and John Wayne Airport.

Just show a valid Metrolink ticket or pass and hop aboard. For more information, visit www.irvineshuttle.net.



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E-Pass Bus Program

Employees taking transit to work can request an annual OCTA E-Pass and pay for it each month through payroll deductions. New annual passes are sent to current E-Pass holders in October so be sure to look for your new pass in the mail.

Are you interested in taking the bus to work? The OCTA E-Pass program is a great value and eliminates the need to have cash or make a trip to a store to buy a bus pass. You can use your E-Pass every day for work or personal use on any OCTA local route. All you do is swipe the card on the bus and OCTA tracks the number of rides taken. Each ride is \$1.00 up to a maximum of \$55 per month. At the end of the month, employees will see a deduction of up to \$55 per month on their pay stub. But the best part is that the cost of the E-Pass is paid with pre-tax dollars under the Commuter Choice tax benefits program. It's like money in the bank since you can save on your federal income tax.

To sign up, simply complete the <u>Voluntary Payroll</u> <u>Deduction Authorization Form</u> and we'll do the rest.

91 Express Lane Toll Rate Reductions

OCTA uses congestion management pricing to determine the toll prices on the 91 Express Lanes. Traffic volumes are continually monitored. When hourly traffic volumes are consistently high, and heavy congestion is identified, the rate is increased. If hourly traffic volumes drop below optimal levels, the toll rate is decreased. Because of lower traffic volumes, the 91 Express Lanes toll rates decreased their rates by \$0.50 on October 1, 2012. Most commuters saw the decrease on Tuesdays from 4 pm - 6 pm, and on Fridays from 3 pm - 4 pm and 5 pm - 6 pm. For current toll rates, click here.



Did You Know...

Use www.Go511.com to help you quickly find traffic information and plan possible alternate routes for your commute before leaving your home or office. Using the interactive map, you can view real-time, live freeway traffic drive times and freeway speeds along your designated route. You'll also see any road construction, traffic incidents, SigAlerts, or road/lane closures. You can even check the weather in your neighborhood or any other city in Southern California!



<u>Text4Next</u>, the text messaging service from OCTA, is available for all Orange County transit riders. Riders can use their cell phones to get a list of the next three scheduled times when a bus will arrive at their bus stop by sending a text message. To receive personalized information, send a text message to: OCTAgo (628246), type "bus", then your bus stop number, and then the bus route number (for example: Bus 3563 71). You will instantly receive a text response! For more information please visit www.octa.net/OCTAgo.

Depending upon your department's internal policy, social media links might not be available

Commuter Assistance Program Office County of Orange Human Resource Services 333 W. Santa Ana Blvd, Bldg 10, 1st Floor Santa Ana, CA 92701



Phone: 714-647-1931 E-mail: rideshare@ocgov.com www.ocgov.com/hr/rideshare

The OC Commuter Newsletter is published by the Commuter Assistance Program Office managed by the Human Resource Services. 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.