

MTA Expanding Commuter Incentive Program to Cut Vehicle Miles, Emissions

(Jan. 2) The MTA hopes to eliminate 24 million vehicle miles and 190,000 pounds of emissions over the next four and a half years with the expansion of two successful commuter incentive programs.

Since Rideshare Rewards and Club Metro began in March, 1998, more than 6,000 commuters have signed up for the incentive programs. This year, the agency - working in partnership with SCAG and several business groups - will expand the programs into the central and southern areas of Los Angeles County.

Between today and June 2005, the MTA and its partners hope to enroll 8,300 more Rideshare Rewards participants and 3,600 Club Metro members. The programs currently are offered in southeast portions of the county, the South Bay, the San Gabriel, San Fernando, Antelope and Santa Clarita valleys.

Rideshare Rewards and Club Metro are intended to encourage drive-alone commuters to switch to carpooling, vanpooling, using Metro Bus, Metro Rail or Metrolink, bicycling, walking or telecommuting. To date, more than 4,000 employers have joined the programs. Employers with fewer than 250 employees are eligible.

Eliminated 690,000 one-way trips

By taking 6,000 drive-alone commuters off the road, Rideshare Rewards and Club Metro have eliminated more than 690,000 one-way vehicle trips since 1998, says Transportation Planner Eric Carlson. That's a reduction of some 10 million miles and more than 86,000 pounds of vehicle emissions.

In turn, the MTA has paid out \$410,000 in incentives to members of the two programs. Rideshare Rewards participants have averaged nearly \$100 each in incentives, Carlson says.

Those enrolled in Rideshare Rewards can earn \$2 a day in gift certificates at Ralphs, Target or Unocal for each day they rideshare during their first three months of participation. Club Metro rewards commuters who have been ridesharing for six months or longer. They receive a nationally recognized discount coupon book with savings at local merchants and restaurants.

The new goal calls for eliminating 1.6 million additional one-way vehicle trips and 24 million vehicle miles, while preventing some 190,000 pounds of emissions.

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