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DPW Employee Charged with Defrauding Rideshare Program

(Nov. 17, 2004) A former LA County Department of Public Works employee was scheduled to appear in Los Angeles Superior Court, Wednesday, to answer charges of defrauding Metro's Rideshare Rewards Program.

April Gonzales is charged with felony grand theft and public officer crime for allegedly misappropriating \$700 in Target gift certificates while she was employee transportation coordinator at DPW's Alcazar Street facility in Lincoln Heights.

DPW audited its Rideshare Rewards Program, last March, after receiving a tip and brought discrepancies to the attention of Metro's Office of the Inspector General, according to Senior Investigator Brian O'Reilly.

O'Reilly alleged that Gonzales sometimes enrolled fictitious employees in the Rideshare Rewards Program or enrolled employees who were not carpooling. Other times, he said, she kept gift certificates that should have been distributed to DPW employees.

LA County District Attorney Anthony Colannino filed one count each of felony grand theft and public officer crime charges against Gonzales, Oct. 7. She was arraigned, Oct. 28, in Superior Court and pled not guilty to both counts and was released on her own recognizance.

The Rideshare Rewards Program, started in 1997, encourages ridesharing by workers at companies with fewer than 250 employees. Through the program, employees who rideshare can earn Target, Ralphs or Best Buy gift certificates valued at up to \$120.

Rideshare Rewards will be revised and combined with another incentive program in December. It will be renamed the Metro Rewards Program.