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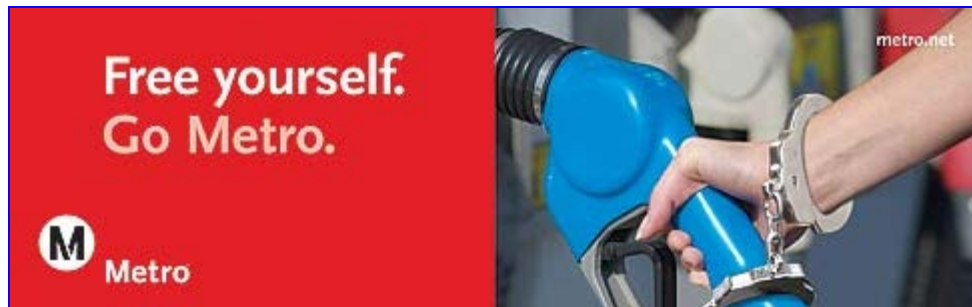
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'Free Yourself' From High Gasoline Costs, Metro Ads Urge

- Ads set for billboards, bus shelters, bus cards, newspapers

By DAVE SOTERO

(May 9, 2006) Metro has launched a new ad campaign that urges drivers to free themselves from record-high gasoline prices.

The ads depict a motorist handcuffed to a gas pump and read: "Free yourself. Go Metro." The ads will appear on billboards and bus shelters and also will be placed on the sides of buses and in newspapers throughout LA County.

"The message is simple," says Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. "It's high time that all Angelenos take a serious look at how much money they are spending at the pump. If you're burdened by having to pay spiraling prices for fuel, ease the burden by choosing public transit."

The cost for a single gallon of gasoline now exceeds that of a \$3 Metro Day Pass. The American Automobile Association reports the cost of regular unleaded gasoline in the Los Angeles-Long Beach area has risen from \$2.58 to \$3.36 per gallon in the last year alone.

The cost of filling a sport-utility vehicle a single time is now the same or more than the cost of a \$52 Metro pass that's good for an entire month. Yearly commuting costs on the Metro System are just \$624.

The "Free Yourself" ad campaign complements Metro's ongoing marketing efforts to lure solo drivers from their cars.

The public has responded by using Metro Bus and Rail services in growing numbers. First quarter 2006 ridership gains are up from previous year levels by 11 percent for Metro Rail and 7 percent for Metro Bus.