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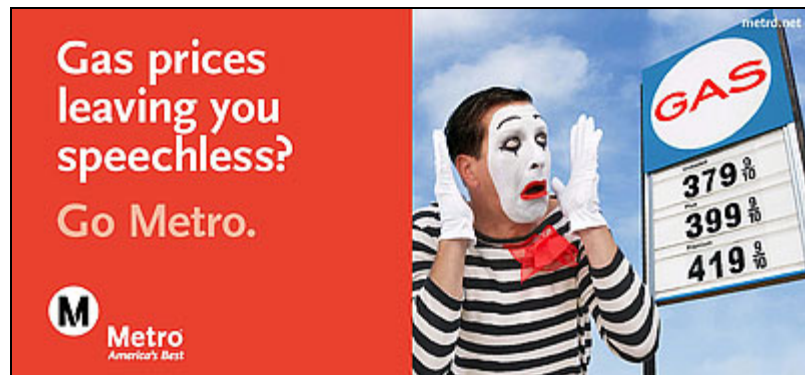
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Metro Ads Offer Options to Drivers 'Speechless' from Gas Prices

By DAVE SOTERO

(March 27, 2007) Metro is launching a new ridership campaign to attract LA commuters rendered 'speechless' by the chronic rise of gasoline prices.

Ads asking, "Gas Prices Leaving You Speechless? Go Metro," began appearing on Metro buses, local billboards and in more than 100 newspapers last week.

Noting that ridership usually increases during periods of rising gasoline prices – which often have exceeded \$3 per gallon during the past several years – the agency believes \$3 is the threshold that makes the Metro Day Pass a more logical choice for cost-conscious commuters.

Ridership increased 5.74 percent from 2005 to 2006, representing an annual addition of more than 26.6 million boardings. The agency's total ridership increase was twice as large as the national average.

Measured separately, Metro Bus system ridership grew 5.28 percent, and Metro Rail system ridership grew 8.07 percent.

However, Metro's ridership gains can be attributed to more than fluctuations in auto fuel prices. The agency has recently made strong service improvements, including the addition of new Metro Rapid Lines and the popular Metro Express Lines, which posted a 9 percent increase between 2005 and 2006. Express Lines serving the Harbor Transitway showed a 7 percent year over year growth.

Real-time alerts

New customer service improvements on the way include a "NexTrip" service for web-enabled cell phone users. Slated for introduction later this spring, the service will provide real-time notices to alert riders when Metro buses are coming.

A similar service is currently being tested for several Metro Rapid lines

and will be available at www.rapidbus.net.

Metro’s marketing efforts also have helped drive increased public awareness of its services and resulting ridership gains. In 2006, for example, 73 percent of people surveyed by Metro said they were aware of Metro bus routes in their area, up from 55 percent in 2004.

Additionally, when asked if Metro’s image was better than the previous year, 84 percent of respondents said yes, up from 74 percent in 2004.

Survey respondents who saw Metro advertising were twice as likely to try going Metro in the next six months than those who had not.