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Photo op: Rideshare spokesman Huell Howser, 3rd from left, joins traffic reporters, from left, Dona Dower, Diana Rizzo, Ginger Chan, Tom Storey, Lori Ryan and Humberto Jimenez at 11th annual Golden Pylon Awards.



Photos by Juan Ocampo

Southland Transit Agencies Hail Traffic News Reporters as "Part of the Solution" to Region's Giant Traffic Jam

· PBS television host and the region's official Rideshare spokesman Huell Howser welcomed traffic reporters to 11th Annual Golden Pylon Awards Sept. 19 in Hollywood. Awards spotlight achievement of broadcast traffic reporters who help keep the traffic moving by pitching Rideshare and other public transit options. Presentation follows release of much-anticipated Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Annual Urban Mobility Report, the nationally known study on traffic congestion in the nation's 85 largest metropolitan areas. Event is a prelude to Rideshare Week Oct. 1-5.



Emcee Huell Howser takes note: "Wait a minute. If you all are here having lunch, then who's reporting on all that traffic out there?"

broadcast outlets.

They are:

By GAYLE ANDERSON Sept. 20, 2007) The Southland's official Rideshare spokesman, PBS television host Huell Howser, handed out coveted Golden Pylon Awards to Southland traffic reporters at an awards luncheon Wednesday, honoring the true grit reporters whose on-air traffic talk keeps the region's traffic moving by promoting rideshare options such as carpool lanes, vanpools and public transportation.

Illuminating a stellar effort in unraveling the region's huge traffic knot, gleaming Lucite trophies in the shape of a traffic cone pylon went to five reporters who report on the daily traffic grind for numerous

Tom Storey, Metro Networks – You hear him from the air on KFWB Air

980.

- Ginger Chan, AirWatch/Clear Channel Traffic You hear her in the afternoons on KIIS-FM and KLAC.
- Humberto Jimenez, California Highway Patrol officer broadcasts traffic reports for a number of media, including Univision, Ch 34, Radio Mexico, KFRN Family Radio, KIRN Radio Iran.
- Dona Dower, Metro Networks You hear her in the mornings on KFRG, San Bernardino.
- Diana Rizzo, Metro Networks You hear her in the mornings on KTWV "The Wave."

"Thanks to traffic reporters, the word is getting out," said Rideshare spokesman Huell Howser, producer and host of local PBS television series including Calfornia's Green, an environmental program highlighting innovative local solutions to environmental challenges. "Traffic reporters face the worst of our traffic woes every day on the front line. Their fast, accurate road condition reports and strategically placed promotion of rideshare options help thousands of commuters avoid traffic snarls each day."



And, it was fun! Event coordinator Jill Smolinski, foreground, leads traffic reporter teams in a traffic-themed version of "Family Feud" as Donna Blanchard of Metro Commute Services, center, reveals the survey answers. Below, the 'singing traffic reporter' Chris Hughes (you can hear him on A.M. 1150, K-Talk) belts out a Rideshare anthem "Pick Me Up Before You Go" - a parody of a George Michaels song. At left, he is hauled away by CHP officers who "just couldn't take it any longer."





By promoting public transportation options in the face of the daily traffic grind, traffic reporters are becoming part of the solution to congestion, said Howser, who urges commuters to heed the call to carpools, vanpools and other means of public transportation.

"I'm inviting every solo commuter in Southern California to leave their car at home and share the ride," he said. Howser offers ridesharing tips and "Tales from the Fast Lane" at www.commutesmart.info, where commuters can find a carpool partner, a vanpool, and get fast, on-line routing for bus or train.



Emcee Howser with Rideshare officials, including Metro Commute Services Director David Sutton and Warren Morse, DEO of Marketing, center, event coordinator Jill Smolinski, seated, at left, and Transportation Program Director Cosette Stark, seated, second from left. The awards ceremony is sponsored by five regional transit agencies: Metro in Los Angeles County, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments and Ventura County Transportation Commission.

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The Golden Pylon Awards is a traditional prelude to Rideshare Week – Oct. 1 -5 – a statewide campaign aimed to encourage thousands of commuters to 'share the ride' to help reduce traffic and smog. Currently 77 percent of commuters drive alone to work, and traffic congestion increases by 3 percent each year.

The awards underscored the release Sept. 18 of the Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Annual Urban Mobility Report, which noted that traffic congestion continues to plague American cities of all sizes.

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