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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

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► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

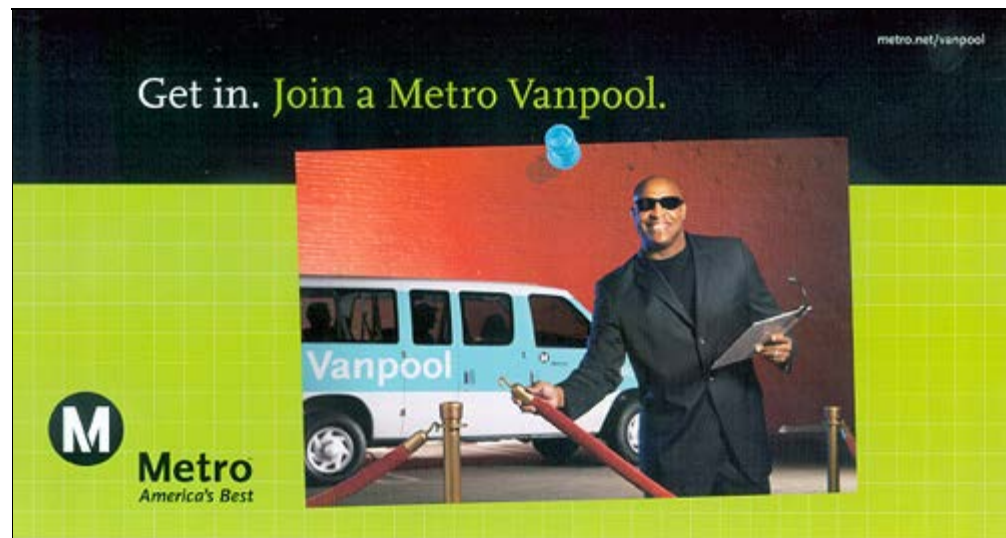
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Marketing brochure illustrates the rideshare advantage. Check it out: [metro.net/vanpool](#)



Moving Forward: Metro Vanpool Program Reaches 500 Vehicles

- Program now transports upwards of 4,500 riders daily and logs 1 million revenue miles a month

By JIMMY STROUP

(Nov. 15, 2007) Metro's Vanpool Program hasn't even been in operation a year yet, but the number of vehicles enrolled in the subsidized program – 500 – makes it seem like it's been around a lot longer than that.

Transportation Planning Manager Jami Carrington – who has been working with Metro's Research and Development group to develop the program since it's infancy in 2002 – said the 500 mark is an important milestone, but has grander plans for the program that transports upwards of 4,500 riders daily and logs some 1 million revenue miles a month.

"We expected to enroll more vanpool vehicles that travel shorter distances," she said. "What we are actually experiencing are fewer vans commuting longer distances."

The vanpool program currently operates on grant money obtained by Carrington and her team. One of the primary goals of the program is to achieve enough participation to qualify for annual revenue from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The FTA provides grants to public rideshare programs like Metro's Vanpool Program based on public "passenger miles," which is the number of riders multiplied by the miles they travel daily.

How it works

Basically, Metro contracts with private vanpool companies that agree to enroll riders. To be eligible for the program, the vanpool participants must

be traveling to an LA County workplace and agree to all reporting requirements.

Metro then agrees to pay a subsidy to the vanpool company, reducing the cost to their riders and making vanpooling more attractive to potential vanpool riders. The average vanpool rider saves more than \$600 in drive-alone costs each month by enrolling in the Metro-subsidized program.

"That's where it starts; the rider signs the van lease and applies for the program subsidy through the vanpool services vendor," Carrington said. "The private company is the gatekeeper; they're doing the most important work. We're there the rest of the way collecting the data and producing the reports for the federal grants program with the FTA."

Within the next two years, the vanpool program should be fully funded by the FTA at a ratio of about \$2 for every \$1 in vanpool program costs. In this way it serves the agency by creating an alternative public transportation option and by generating more funds for the region.

"The program is self-sustaining. No Metro funds should be necessary after these first years," she said.

Started with enrolling vanpoolers

Metro's only been through the first few phases of the campaign to make commuters aware of how vanpooling can work. It started with enrolling vanpoolers who were already in a program.

Soon, Metro will begin to advertise on the sides of the vanpool vehicles themselves, pointing the way to the Web site – www.metro.net/vanpool – for more information.

"There's some background and education involved in converting people," Carrington said. "Once people learn about it fully, it becomes more attractive and people start saying, 'Oh! That seems like it could work well for me.'"

This time next year, the Research and Development team hopes to have nearly 800 vehicles involved in Metro's program – which would equate to a daily ridership of more than 5,500 people.

Carrington admits it's a lofty goal, but she's hopeful for a program that's gaining ground all the time. And at only eight months old, Metro's program has already surpassed San Diego's vanpool program in size; that program has been operating for more than 10 years.