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## **Metro Ridership Balloons Along with Gas Prices**

In the wake of rocketing gas prices, Metro is experiencing significant gains in ridership, as Southern Californians scramble to avoid paying more than \$3 a gallon for gas.

In the first quarter of 2006, total Metro Rail ridership rose almost 11.4 percent and bus ridership increased 7 percent over the same period last year, based on total monthly boardings.

The most significant gains were seen on the Metro Red Line between North Hollywood and downtown Los Angeles. It climbed nearly 13.7 percent to 3,361,110 average monthly boardings during the January, February, March period. Ridership also ballooned on the Metro Orange Line, which is not tallied along with bus figures. Since its debut at the end of October, 2005, ridership has grown to more than 18,000 weekday passengers, or about triple first year ridership projections. The Metro Blue Line between downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach grew more than 10.7 percent to 2,091,469 average monthly boardings during the January, February, March period.

There are also anecdotal indications that ridership is on the rise. Metro parking lots are filling up faster and earlier, according to Metro officials, and many rush-hour buses and trains are filled to capacity. Visits to the Southern California regional ride-share Web site ([www.commutessmart.info](http://www.commutessmart.info)) more than doubled in March over February. The Metro Web site ([www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net)), which dispenses bus and train travel instructions, experienced a 10 percent rise in traffic in March over the previous month as commuters searched for alternatives to expanding gas prices.

The migration to mass transit makes sense, according to Los Angeles Mayor and Metro Board Chairman Antonio Villaraigosa.

"Metro buses and trains offer an alternative and more service is being added all the time, with new express buses and Metro Rapid lines through particularly busy corridors. And if those don't work for you there are also van pools and car pools. Those options are outlined at [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) and it's easy to sign up. Not only can you save yourself from rising gas prices; drivers traveling solo can save more than \$5,000 a year, including car depreciation, insurance, gas and parking, if they switch to Metro."

Signing up for a car or van pool is easy. Simply go to [www.commutessmart.info](http://www.commutessmart.info), which also supplies transportation and traffic reports for all of Southern California. Those unfamiliar with the Metro system can go to [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net), type in departure and destination addresses and receive detailed instructions on what transit to take and when. The same information can be retrieved from 1-800-COMMUTE.

And if there's any doubt about what a migration from car to Metro transit or ride sharing can do for a budget, [www.commutessmart.info](http://www.commutessmart.info) has a calculator that breaks down the cost per mile of driving and compares it with the estimated savings per year experienced by commuting with one or more persons in a car or van pool. The savings can be significant. And, of course, it's rising all the time.

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