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## **Growing Number of L.A. Companies Help Employees Avoid High Gasoline Prices by Joining Metro Transit Pass Programs**

- Go Metro to Work

A growing number of companies throughout Los Angeles County are joining Metro's Transit Access Pass programs in efforts to help their employees beat the high price of gasoline.

To date, more than 20 L.A. area businesses, large and small, have taken advantage of agency pass programs. With the price of gasoline now exceeding \$3 per gallon, commuting options such as public transit and ridesharing are receiving renewed interest as cost-effective alternatives to single-passenger driving.

The Omni Los Angeles Hotel in downtown L.A. is the latest and largest company to enroll in Metro's B-TAP program, short for Business Transit Access Pass program, which is designed expressly for businesses seeking to help ensure employee transportation and to bolster the offerings within the employee's benefits package. Business owners that provide B-TAP to their employees can take advantage of tax benefits that help reduce the cost of the program. All 220 full-time Omni employees have received annual passes.

"With rising gas prices, this seemed like the responsible thing to do," said Bob Graney, Omni General Manager. "And we're already seeing the benefits. Our associates are rested, more relaxed and ready to start the workday. Omni believes in the balance between family and work and by partnering with Metro in the Employer Pass Program, we're showing that commitment in a tangible way."

Sayat Kosger, manager and co-owner of Hercules Custom Furniture, a specialized furniture manufacturing company in Los Angeles, said "The Metro pass program made it affordable for my workers to come to work. They love it and are very thankful about it. All my employees use the passes. There's a bus stop right around the corner, so it's very convenient. It also helps build employee loyalty."

The Grafton on Sunset, a luxury hotel in West Hollywood, provides B-TAP passes for its hotel employees. The pass program provides a solution to costly on-site parking fees. "We want to make sure everyone can get to work," said hotel controller Chad Tompson. "All of the parking along Sunset Boulevard is leased by a third party, and we didn't want to charge our employees for parking."

Tompson said that 35 hotel employees – 80 percent of the hotel's workforce – utilize the transit passes for travel on the many Metro Buses and Metro Red Line that operate in the Hollywood area.

"We applied for B-TAP Passes just in time before the big gas hike hit us," said Lilibeth Navarro, executive director of CALIF, an independent living center in Los Angeles that provides advocacy and social services for people with disabilities. "A lot of our employees have been coming to work earlier. Attendance has gone up and morale is better."

Navarro said it was easy for the organization's board of directors to approve participation in B-TAP for its 15 staff members. "As long as we have it in the budget, I don't have to debate why it's needed. They know. They feel good about preserving the environment by not wasting so much gas."

Other company passes available are Metro's Institutional Transit Access Pass (I-TAP) program, for large organizations such as colleges, universities and trade schools, and Annual Transit Access Pass (A-TAP) program, which allows businesses to provide annual passes for only those employees who currently take Metro to work.

Businesses interested in adding a transit access pass program to their benefits package can call Metro's Commute Services Department at 213-922-2811. Or they can visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) for more information.

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