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## **Metro Ridership Soars as Commuters Free Themselves From High Gas Prices**

- Metro Orange Line Already Reaches 2020 Ridership Forecast

Metro ridership, particularly on the Metro Orange Line and Metro Rail, surged in May 2006 compared to a year ago as gas prices remained stubbornly high. Weekday ridership on the new Metro Orange Line, the 14-mile transitway that opened last fall in the San Fernando Valley, averaged 21,828 boardings, a milestone the Environmental Impact Report predicted wouldn't be reached until 2020.

Metro Rail ridership climbed 18 percent in May over last year, a gain of more than 1.1 million boardings (7.7 million boardings in May 2006 compared to 6.6 million in May 2005).

Directly operated Metro Bus service, including the Metro Orange Line, carried 10 percent more riders (34 million in May 2006 compared to 31 million in May 2005).

"With a \$3 Metro day pass costing less than a gallon of gas, it's a powerful lure for commuters," said Los Angeles City Mayor and Metro Board Chairman Antonio Villaraigosa. "Combine that with new and better service such as the Metro Orange Line and commuters are finding they really can free themselves from high gas prices if they go Metro."

To make the benefits -- and savings -- of public transportation tangible to the greatest number of Los Angeles County residents, Metro has undertaken a number of transit initiatives, including the "Free Yourself" ad campaign that depicts a motorist handcuffed to a gas pump and reads: "Free yourself. Go Metro." The ads appear on billboards and bus shelters, the sides of buses and in newspaper advertisements throughout Los Angeles County.

Metro's online Trip Planner at [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) provides point-to-point directions for getting around Los Angeles using Metro Bus and Rail and other municipally operated transit services. The Trip Planner now features a gasoline savings calculator that estimates how much money a commuter could save per trip by switching to public transit.

These initiatives are particularly important to attract first-time users who are unfamiliar with public transportation in the area.

After housing, transportation is the second highest cost for American families, outpacing both food and health care costs. Since January 2003, gas prices have increased by 100 percent.

"By using public transportation on a regular basis, a person can save between \$300 and \$3,000 in fuel costs alone per year," said Metro CEO Roger Snoble. "Those savings could be used for necessities such as food and medicine, help pay a student loan, or make the dream of a family vacation a reality. "Yearly commuting costs on the Metro System are just \$624. Besides just fuel costs, it costs several thousands of dollars more to travel daily by car when the true costs associated with fueling, operating and maintaining an automobile are included.

Metro also is promoting carpools and vanpools as another way to beat the high price of gas. CommuteSmart.info, a web site Metro sponsors, can connect commuters throughout Southern California.

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