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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metro Urges Public to “Share The Ride” During California Rideshare Week Oct. 1-5

Metro urges Los Angeles commuters to share the ride the week of October 1 to 5 and beyond as part of the annual California Rideshare Week, a statewide campaign to reduce solo driving that is causing major traffic congestion on the state’s streets and freeways.

As Los Angeles County’s transportation planner, coordinator, designer, builder and operator, Metro offers an array of ridesharing solutions for daily commuters including online trip planning and ride matching service, an (800) hot line, and employer transit pass and vanpool programs.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 73 percent of Los Angeles County workers drove to work alone in 2003, 13 percent carpooled, 6 percent took public transportation, and 4 percent use other means. The remaining 4 percent worked at home. Among those who commute to work, the average travel time was 29 minutes.

In a time of high gasoline prices, daily L.A. County commuters who switch from solo driving to public transportation, carpools or vanpools can also save at least \$4,000 per year in commuting cost.

“Once again the Texas Transportation Institute has found that L.A. has the worst traffic congestion in the country,” said Metro Director Commute Services David Sutton. “Of course, no study has to tell us that because we live it everyday. Fortunately, there is an easy solution. All we have to do is reduce the number of solo car trips we make by carpooling, vanpooling or taking transit to work. If we can all commit to sharing the ride at least 25% of the time we will see a dramatic increase in freeway speeds and with the vanpool and transit pass programs we offer, there is no better time to share the ride. You’ll also notice that you’re able to hold on to a lot more of your paycheck at the end of each month.”

Metro is working with thousands of employers throughout Southern California on ridesharing programs that include carpooling, vanpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and telecommuting. More than 200 employers will be conducting rideshare events within their companies to promote Rideshare Week.

Participation in Metro Commute Services Programs grows every year. About 1,200 worksites now participate in these programs, representing a 65 percent increase within the last four years.

Over 185 worksites have signed up for Metro’s annual pass program and about 5,000 employees now enjoy this money saving commuter benefit.

In August, Metro launched its new five-year, \$19 million Metro Vanpool Program that provides substantial savings to new or existing vanpool commuters of up to \$400 per month subsidy to lower the leasing cost of a vanpool vehicle and the fare to each rider. The program is self-sustaining and is funded through special state and federal rideshare grants that reimburse Metro based on the number of vanpool riders and vanpool vehicle miles driven. About 500 Van now participate.

Metro’s rideshare incentive programs for employees provides new employees with an entire week of unlimited access to Metro Buses and Metro Rail. The program seeks to encourage new company employees to explore alternatives to driving alone to work. A Metro travel kit is provided as part of the program.

Metro’s Commute Services Programs are not limited to employers. Metro School Pool is a service offering free, voluntary and confidential matching and directory service to parents interested in organizing school carpools. The program is open to students in all participating public and private elementary, middle and high schools in Los Angeles County. Parents share the task of driving students to and from school.

The 1-800-COMMUTE, (Option 3) phone line, which provides transportation information for Southern California's five county region, is also a valuable tool for obtaining rideshare information.

On the web, WWW.COMMUTESMART.INFO has been successful in helping interested ridesharers find partners in their communities. The web site contains more than 100,000 commuters seeking carpool or vanpool partners.

Commuters seeking to use public transportation to share the ride can plan their trips using an online trip planner available at WWW.METRO.NET.

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