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Contact:

Marc Littman

Metro Media Relations

213.922.4609/213.922.2700

www.metro.net/pressroom

Metro Rail, Metro Orange Line Set New Ridership Records as Commuters Balk at Paying High Gas Prices

Metro Rail ridership records were set on several rail lines in June 2008 as commuters and others parked their cars and opted for cheap and fast service to avoid high gas prices. The Metro Red and Purple subway lines, the Metro Gold and Green Lines all set weekday ridership records and the Metro Blue Line fell just short of a record. Metro Orange Line buses also set a ridership record.

Last month 309,000 passengers boarded Metro Rail trains on an average weekday, up 12.8 percent, compared to a year earlier. About half of those riders (153,928) rode the subway, which connects downtown Los Angeles and Universal City and North Hollywood via Hollywood with a spur to Wilshire and Western.

For the second month in a row, the Metro Gold Line from downtown Los Angeles to Pasadena, set a new ridership record with 26,338 average weekday boardings, up 31.8 percent in June 2008 over last year.

"The cost-effective, convenient alternative to driving propelled the Gold Line to an all-time high in ridership," said County Supervisor and Metro Board Member Michael D. Antonovich.

The Metro Green Line connecting Norwalk and El Segundo nabbed a record with 44,034 boardings, and the Metro Blue Line, which travels from downtown Los Angeles to Long Beach, experienced its second highest ridership with 84,353 average weekday boardings.

The popular Metro Orange Line, a 14-mile busway that operates like a "train on rubber wheels" from North Hollywood to Woodland Hills in the San Fernando Valley, boosted weekday ridership by 4.4 percent over last year to 26,596 boardings.

An even better measure of Metro Rail's growing popularity is to compare total boardings for the fourth quarter of FY2008 (April-May-June) with the fourth quarter of FY2007. Metro Rail ridership surged 7.13 percent. At the same time, Metro bus ridership, which had been lagging following last summer's fare hike, bounced back. It's still down 1.96 percent for the quarter compared to last year but it had been down as much as 7 percent in previous quarters.

Metro schedulers observe that a sharp drop in Metro Day Pass sales has resulted in bus riders making fewer extra discretionary trips, however, Metro Rail has consistently gained new commuter riders eager to avoid pain at the gas pump. Combined Metro Bus and Rail ridership was just about even in the fourth quarter compared to a year earlier.

The combination of cheap fares and fast service competitive with driving is luring more riders, according to Metro officials who note that Metro's \$5 day pass is about what a gallon of gas costs and if the cost of fuel, vehicle depreciation, maintenance, insurance and parking are factored in, those who use public transit opt for vanpools or carpools can easily save well over \$6,000 a year by getting rid of one of the average family's 2.5 cars and trucks.

Go to Metro.net to access the 24/7 Metro trip planner and learn more about Metro rideshare programs or call 1-800 Commute for information.

Metro-122

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