

ONTHEGO

News for Your Employees

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Ride Free on Transit Equity Day



Feb. 4 is Transit Equity Day. In honor of Rosa Parks' birthday, it's a day that promotes making transit affordable and accessible to people in all communities.

Fares will be free Feb. 4 on Metrolink trains throughout Southern California. All you have to do is simply arrive at the station and board the train (no ticket required) to ride Metrolink all day, anywhere it goes.

Rides are free for the day on Metro Bus and Rail and Bike Share as well as OC Bus.

People in San Bernardino County can also board their local bus for free for the day. This includes Omnitrans, Morongo Basin Transit Authority (MBTA) and Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVTA).

Ventura County transit providers will celebrate Transit Equity Day the following day, Feb. 5, with free rides.

2024 Rideshare Calendar



Mark your calendars, then look for event updates in future issues of *On the Go*.

- Feb. 4 is Transit Equity Day.** Metrolink, Metro, OC Bus and San Bernardino County transit providers will be celebrating by offering free rides all day. (Ventura County transit will be free on Feb. 5.)

- National Transit Operator and Worker Appreciation Day is March 18**—take a minute to thank a transit worker!

- April is Earthquake Preparedness Month.** Get your employees ready for commuting in crisis conditions; contact the California's Office of Emergency Services at caloes.ca.gov or your local Red Cross office.

- Earth Day is April 22**—a day to celebrate ridesharing's contribution to clean air, earthday.org.

Continued on page 2 →



Calendar of Events

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2024 Rideshare Calendar

continued from page 1

- **626 Golden Streets: Heart of the Foothills** open streets event is April 28 (tentative), 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., 626goldenstreets.com.



- **May is National Bike Month**, presented locally by the transportation agencies for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties and traditionally featuring prizes, rides, rallies and more.

Bike Week is May 13-19 and Bike to Work Day is May 17.



- **May is also Clean Air Month**, and the American Lung Association kicks it off with the release of its *State of the Air Report* (a report grading major cities' air quality), lung.org.

- **Employee Health and Fitness Day** is May 15, a great day to remind employees about the health benefits of alternatives to solo driving like biking and walking.

- **Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) International Conference**— where ETCs and other transportation professionals can network and learn the latest in commute management—is Aug. 4-7 in Denver, CO, actweb.org.

- **The annual Rail Safety Week campaign** is now called “See Tracks? Think Train Week” and this year is being held Sept. 23-29. Get safety tips to pass on to employees as well as news on campaign events from Operation Lifesaver at oli.org.



- **National Drive Electric Week** is Sept. 27-Oct. 6, driveelectricweek.org.

- **Rideshare Week 2024** is Oct. 7-11, promoting alternatives to driving alone in Southern California.

- **In the spirit of sharing**, every November and December, transit agencies partner with firefighters to stuff buses full of toys for needy kids in the Spark of Love Toy Drive. Closer to the event date, look for information at abc7.com/sparkoflove/.



Important Tax News:

Transportation Fringe Benefit Gets a Raise



Employees can receive transit and vanpool benefits tax-free up to \$315 a month in 2024, according to a recent announcement by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

That's a \$15 monthly increase over the current transportation fringe benefit.

The IRS allows both employers and employees to receive tax benefits through the pre-tax purchasing of public transit fare media including vanpool fares.

Employers can also choose to provide employees with a direct subsidy up to the monthly limit, perhaps eliminating the cost of commuting altogether.

Parking is also an allowable transportation fringe benefit—and the monthly maximum an employee claims can be a mix of transit and parking.

For more information, consult your tax professional.

The Year in Review

From new express lanes to better rail connections to discounts and more, here are 10 of the biggest happenings in transportation during 2023...

1. Agencies Join Forces to Create Better Carpool/Vanpool Matching

The rideshare databases for [RideMatch.info](#) and [IECommuter.org](#) merged data last year. As a result, when your employees get RideGuides—either as part of the annual survey process or when requesting one online—they'll get the best matches possible, even when traveling across county lines.

The system for Los Angeles/Orange/Ventura counties was previously separate from Riverside/San Bernardino counties.

2. Traveling on Metro Rail Gets Faster with the Opening of the Regional Connector



Metro opened its long-awaited [Regional Connector](#), which allows riders on Metro Rail to travel between Azusa, East LA and the beaches without having to transfer.

With the new

Regional Connector, the A, E and L Lines are combined into two: the new A and E Lines.

The lines share three new stations in downtown Los Angeles: Little Tokyo/Arts District, Historic Broadway and Grand Av Arts/Bunker Hill.

3. Orange County's 405 Express Lanes Make Travel Faster

The 405 Express Lanes opened on Dec. 1.

The lanes combine the existing carpool lane with a new lane in both directions in the center of the freeway between SR-73 in Costa Mesa and I-605 at the border of Los Angeles County.

The 405 Express Lanes allow solo vehicles to ride for a toll. Vehicles with three or more people can access the lanes for free, as well as two-person carpools during non-peak hours.

See details on pg. 5.



4. Metrolink's VC Line Expands Service

Metrolink's Ventura County Line service has been expanded to run seven days a week, with two round trips per day on Saturday and Sunday.

Find out more at [metrolinktrains.com/vcweekends](#).

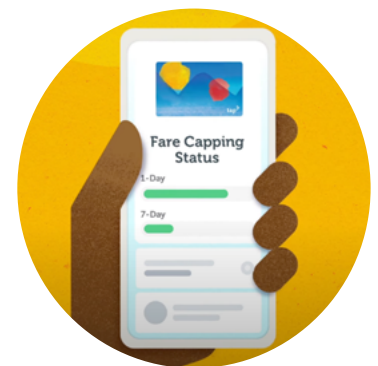
5. Metro Joins Omnitrans in Offering Fare Capping to Make Transit More Equitable

[Metro last year adopted a policy of "fare capping"](#)—a new way to pay fares that makes it easier and more affordable to ride bus and rail when paying per ride.

Omnitrans transit in San Bernardino adopted this fare system in 2022.

With fare capping, the more you ride, the more you save. Rides are free once you meet the daily or weekly fare cap.

That means now when riding Metro, you'll never pay more than \$5 in a day or \$18 within seven days.



Continued on page 4 ➔

The Year in Review

continued from page 3

6. Transit Agencies Add Programs to Make Riding Safer



- Gold Coast Transit in Ventura County recently introduced **Late Night Safe Ride**. This shared ride, on-demand service is available 7 p.m. to 12 Midnight for just a \$2 fare—ideal for workers who commute at night.

Rides can be requested by calling 805.485.2319.

- Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVTa) announced the launch of its **Safe Rides** program. A team of deputies ride buses, as well as monitor activity at bus stops and the Victor Valley Transportation Center.

- Metro now has a team of nearly 300 Ambassadors—roving customer service pros who are out and about to aid customers.

The Metro Board last year also approved the hiring of 48 new transit security officers to keep bus operators and riders safe.

7. Metro ExpressLanes Allow “Pay As You Go” Access

As part of a pilot project, people can now ride in Metro’s ExpressLanes on the I-10 and I-110 freeways even without a valid FasTrak account or transponder. Instead, they’ll be billed for the posted toll plus a \$4 processing fee.

Prior to this, driving in the Metro ExpressLanes without an account or transponder would have cost a minimum of \$25 plus the posted toll rate.



8. Vanpool Subsidies Increase in the Inland Empire

Vanpoolers in the Inland Empire can now **earn subsidies of up to \$700 every month toward vanpool lease costs**.

The monthly subsidy for vanpools that travel into Riverside and San Bernardino counties is \$600 (up from \$400). Zero-emission vehicles may qualify for up to a \$700 monthly subsidy (previously \$500).



9. OCTA Continues Its Commitment to Make It Easier to Start Vanpools

As a pilot program starting in 2021, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) dropped the minimum ridership to 50% to allow a vanpool to qualify for incentives—including **\$400 monthly subsidies**.

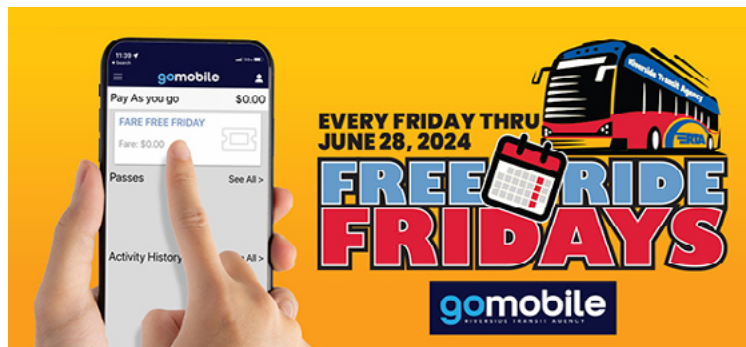
OCTA in 2023 announced that it will keep the minimum at 50% permanently to make it easier to get vanpools on the road.

10. Fridays Are Free on RTA

Thanks to the Free Ride Fridays program launched last year, it’s free to ride Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) buses on Fridays, including CommuterLink and GoMicro buses.

The special promotion will run through June 2024.

To board at no cost, riders will need a Free Ride Friday pass, available via the GoMobile app at [riversidetransit.com](https://www.riversidetransit.com).



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Metro Adds More Frequent Bus and Rail Service

Metro last month added more frequent light rail service on the A, C, E and K lines as part of its program of twice-yearly service changes. It also added more late-night trains on the A and E lines.

For bus riders, Metro made some schedule changes to improve on-time performance and provide more room for riders on the busiest lines.

Many of these changes are in direct response to rider requests.

The new timetables are here: mybus.metro.net.

To read more about these changes, visit Metro's [The Source](#).



Lawndale Beat Becomes the 27th Agency to Use TAP

The Lawndale Beat shuttle now accepts [TAP cards](#) as a form of payment, making it the 27th agency in the TAP network.

TAP cards allow transit riders to pre-load fares onto a card or the TAP app. Then they simply tap when boarding and the correct fare will be automatically deducted.

The TAP card allows riders to transfer between multiple agencies without any hassle.

Using a TAP card (versus paying cash) also qualifies riders for the lowest fares possible through Metro's [fare capping policy](#).

ORANGE COUNTY

New Website Provides 405 Express Lanes Registration and Information

The 405 Express Lanes opened on Dec. 1. Solo drivers can access traffic-free lanes for a toll and three-person carpools for free (two-person carpools ride free during non-peak hours).

The lanes run in both directions on the 405 Freeway between SR-73 in Costa Mesa and I-605 at the border of Los Angeles County.

All vehicles—including carpools—must have a FasTrak transponder, set to the correct occupancy of the vehicle.

Tolls vary by hour, day of the week, direction of travel and distance traveled. Drivers on average will pay about \$3 to travel the entire 14 miles, according to OCTA. The maximum toll rate is \$9.95 from 3-5 p.m. on Fridays if traveling from SR-73 north to the county line.

Get details and open an account at 405expresslanes.com.

Celebrate the Lunar New Year with Metrolink

Ring in the Lunar New Year with a celebration at the Irvine Metrolink station on Feb. 17. The event will feature entertainment, food, giveaways and more.

Then you can ride Metrolink to the Golden Dragon Parade in Los Angeles. Chinatown is within easy walking distance of LA Union Station.

Details will be posted at metrolinktrains.com.



Microtransit Service Now Available in Hemet-San Jacinto



Riverside Transit Agency launched a new microtransit service—GoMicro—serving a zone in Hemet and San Jacinto. Minibuses operate daily, serving nearly 300 stops.

To introduce the service, rides will be free through Jan. 7.

When the promotional period ends, GoMicro fares will be the same as those on other RTA local buses. Students who are part of the Go-Pass and U-Pass participating colleges ride for free.

Reservations can be made via mobile app, at book.gomicro.rideco.com or by calling 951.633.2629.

Get details and download the app at RiversideTransit.com.

RIVERSIDE/ SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

Omnitrans Adds Mobile Fare Validators

Omnitrans buses are equipped with new QR code validators that make it faster and more convenient to board.

Riders simply purchase a pass, activate it before boarding, and then scan their personalized QR code. The validators work with mobile fares on both the Transit app (Omnitrans' official mobile app) and the Token Transit app.

For details and to view a brief how-to tutorial, visit omnitrans.org/validators.



Disabled Veterans Can Ride Toll-Free on SB Express Lanes

Disabled veterans can now travel toll-free on the SB Express Lanes along I-10 when they enroll in the Disabled Veteran Program.

Proof of residency in San Bernardino County is required, as is a valid FasTrak transponder and account.

Learn more and find out how to apply at gosbcta.com.



VENTURA COUNTY

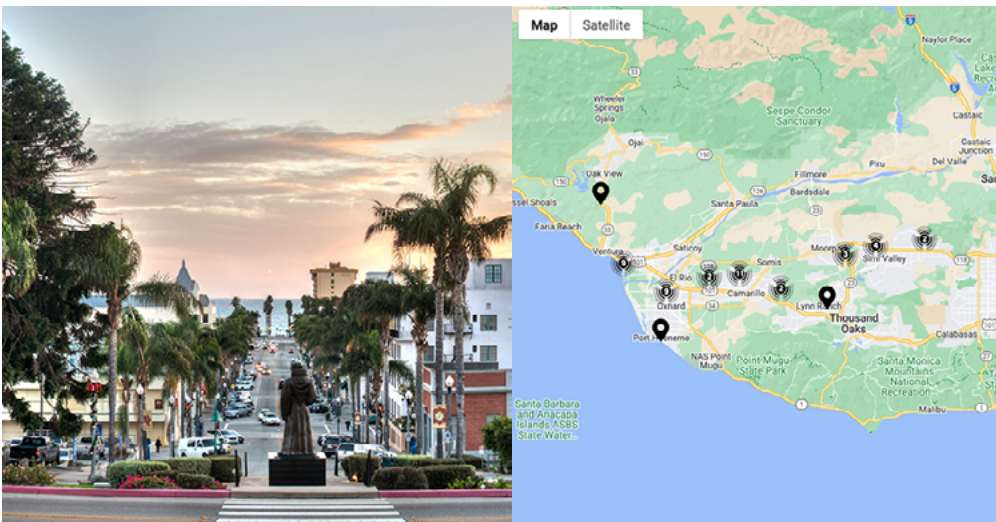
Ride the Amtrak Surfliner with Your Metrolink Ticket

Metrolink recently expanded its codeshare program, a pilot partnership between Metrolink and the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner.

Now **codeshare allows Metrolink ticket holders to ride all trains running between LA and Ventura** (including the Downtown-Ventura Beach station).

Passengers of both services can use either ticket types to board any of the trains traveling along the VC Line—including on the weekends—greatly expanding the availability of service along the area.

Codeshare is slated to run through June 30.



Explore Ventura County on Metrolink

Did you know...? Metrolink trains are a great way to get to all that Ventura County has to offer without the hassle of driving.

Metrolink offers a handy guide to help you find how to ride the train to top destinations, arts and culture, shopping, nightlife, outdoor activities and more.

On Saturdays and Sundays, it's only \$10 to ride all day long, anywhere Metrolink goes.

Join the **SoCal Explorer loyalty program** and earn points toward free future Metrolink travel. You'll also qualify for **special discounts** at participating merchants.

Find out more at metrolinktrains.com.

CALENDAR

Transit Equity Day is Feb. 4. Metrolink, Metro, OC Bus and San Bernardino transit providers will celebrate with free rides all day.

Join Metrolink for a Lunar New Year celebration on Feb. 17 at the Irvine Metrolink station—then ride the train to see the Golden Dragon Parade in Chinatown near LA's Union Station.

IE Commuter's Earth Day 2024/ Spring ETC Marketing Workshop is March 6. It will feature information on the upcoming Earth Day campaign, as well as other regional rideshare and transit information. Attendees will earn a marketing certificate for the South Coast AQMD Rule 2202. Look for an invitation via email or contact your rideshare representative.

A Virtual Spring Marketing Workshop for ETCs in Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura counties will be held April 10. Save the date and look for details in the next issue of *On the Go* for ETCs.

Network Opportunities

Burbank TMO serves businesses in Downtown and Media District areas; call 818.953.7788, director@btmo.org.

Go Glendale meets regularly; call 213.425.0955; email director@goglendale.org.

IE Commuter offers bi-annual marketing workshops for ETCs in the Inland Empire; call 1.866.RIDESHARE (866.743.3742).

Irvine Spectrum TMA meets regularly; call 949.727.4273 or email kelly@spectrumotion.com.

Continued on page 8 ➔

LAX TMA has a TMA underway; email mmolina@lawa.org or tbackstrom@lawa.org.

Orange County Network meets regularly; email sharetheride@octa.net.

Pasadena TMA meets regularly; contact Talin Shahbazian at tshahbazian@cityofpasadena.net.

Santa Monica TMO meets regularly; contact info@GoSaMoTMO.org, or call 213.425.0955.

Training

Metro Commuter Options & Regulatory Compliance Support offers free ETC Briefings where Los Angeles area employers can learn about the transportation survey process. Until further notice, briefings are being offered online only. **To register for a briefing, click here.** If you can't make that meeting, email Metro to set up a one-on-one virtual meeting. Upcoming ETC Briefings are Jan. 30 and Feb. 27, 10 a.m. – 12 Noon.

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) offers two-day ETC training via Zoom for \$222.98. The next scheduled sessions are Jan. 9 and 11, Jan. 23 and 25, Feb. 6 and 8 and Feb. 20 and 22. For more information, contact the South Coast AQMD's training program at etctraining@aqmd.gov or visit aqmd.gov.



ON THE GO

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Riverside/San Bernardino Rideshare Program

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751 E. Daily Dr., Ste. 420

Camarillo, CA 93010

Business: 951.352.8006

goventura.org/rideshare

Twitter: [@GoVCTC](https://twitter.com/GoVCTC)

Facebook: [GoVCTC](https://www.facebook.com/GoVCTC)

Instagram: [@goVCTC](https://www.instagram.com/goVCTC)

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Facebook: [OCTASharetheRide](https://www.facebook.com/OCTASharetheRide)

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