



OC Commuter

News for a better commute from the OC Rideshare Office



5 Fast Facts About the New 405 Express Lanes

405 Express Lanes
14 miles
between the SR-73 freeway in Costa Mesa and I-605 near the L.A. County line

Roughly **1 in 4** of the vehicles using the toll lanes are carpools.

The 405 Express Lanes have already logged more than 2 million user trips since they opened December of last year.

That level of usage is about the same as that of the 91 Express Lanes, which Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) has owned and operated for more than 20 years.

Did You Know...?

1. The 405 Express Lanes cover 14 miles of I-405 between the SR-73 freeway in Costa Mesa and I-605 near the L.A. County line—one of the busiest stretches of freeway in the nation.
2. They carry about twice as much carpool traffic as nearby freeways due to a policy of allowing 3+ person carpools to travel for free. Roughly one in four of the vehicles using the toll lanes are carpools.

Most travel is between I-605 and SR22

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A Whole New Ballgame

Get to the stadium to cheer on your favorite baseball team without dealing with the hassle and expense of driving and parking.

The Angels Express Train Is Back

Metrolink is bringing back its Angels Express trains. The Angels Express will be available for select home games with trains operating from Oceanside, L.A. Union Station and Riverside-Downtown to Anaheim, just steps from the stadium. Round-trip fares are only \$10, and kids 17 and under ride free.

The Dodger Stadium Express

Ride Metrolink to L.A. Union Station, then catch the free **Dodger Stadium Express** bus to the ballpark for every home game.



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5 Fast Facts... (Continued from page 1)

3. A FasTrak transponder with a valid account to pay tolls is required to use the lanes—even if traveling free as a carpool. As of February, 6,800 transponders had been issued to allow access to the lanes.
4. The heaviest traveled days are Fridays; the least traveled days are Sundays.
5. Most travel is between I-605 and SR 22.

For more information, visit 405expresslanes.com.



A Great Way to Stop Smog...

Ridesharing instead of driving alone is a good way to do your share for clean air. A car causes .96 pounds of CO₂ per mile to be spewed into the air—so driving alone means you're responsible for nearly a pound of pollutants for every mile you drive.

Transit on average is roughly half that, at .45 pounds/mile per person.

Vanpooling is only .22—so almost five people can travel for the carbon footprint of one.

Of course, bicycling and walking are a zero-emission way to go.

Getting people out of their solo commutes plays an important role in California's clean air efforts, since 37% of the state's total emissions come from vehicles.



OCTA Free Wilderness Hikes

OCTA oversees more than 1,300 acres of protected wilderness. To encourage people to appreciate the environment, they hold a series of guided wilderness hikes through these areas that are otherwise not open to the public.

Upcoming hikes are March 16 at Wren's View Preserve and June 1 at Pacific Horizon Preserve.

See the full schedule at preservingourlegacy.org.

Ride Free on Earth Day

Earth Day is April 22—and your chance to do your share for clean air.

Motor vehicles are the cause of most of the emissions that cause smog. To encourage people to try transit instead of driving alone, rides will be free all day on **Metrolink, OC Bus, Metro Bus/Rail**, and all **San Bernardino County** and **Ventura County** transit providers.



Earth Day organizers offer a guide featuring **52 Ways to Invest in Our Planet**—from driving less to switching to a clean-fuel vehicle to buying less plastic and more.

You can also link to a **personal carbon footprint calculator**—see how those changes you make (like ridesharing) can add up.

Go to earthday.org to find out about virtual and in-person Earth Day events.

Do You Live in the Inland Empire? Join the IE Earth Day Contest

If you commute from Riverside or San Bernardino counties, you can win prizes including gift cards, whale watching tickets and more when you log your trips in April.

Here's how to participate:

- Create or log into your account at IECommuter.org.
- Sign up for the promotion at IECommuter.org/EarthDay.
- Throughout April, log any day you rideshare or telework. Each day logged is an entry into the prize drawing.



Save the Date for the Next Lunch and Learn Workshop

The next Lunch and Learn is March 20, 12 Noon to 1 p.m. Tune in to learn more about how you can save money and make riding OC Bus more convenient by signing up for a Perk Pass.



Lunch and Learn virtual workshops are offered every other month by the Rideshare Office to help you find out ways to improve your commute. The 30-minute workshops are conducted online via Teams, followed by a 30-minute session for participants to ask questions.

You don't need to pre-register to attend the Lunch and Learn. Just [click on this link](#) at the start of the workshop to participate.

If you have questions, or to sign up for an email reminder, contact the Rideshare Office at 714.834.7600.

Are You Paying Too Much Income Tax?

A tax season reminder from the Rideshare Office: If you vanpool or ride the bus/Metrolink to work and you aren't signed up for the Commuter Choice program, you could be paying more income tax than you need to.

Commuter Choice allows you to purchase your fares through a convenient monthly payroll deduction using pre-tax dollars. By doing so, you can reduce your taxable income—up to the IRS limit of \$315 each month.

For details, contact the Rideshare Office, or fill out and submit the [Voluntary Payroll Deduction Authorization form](#).

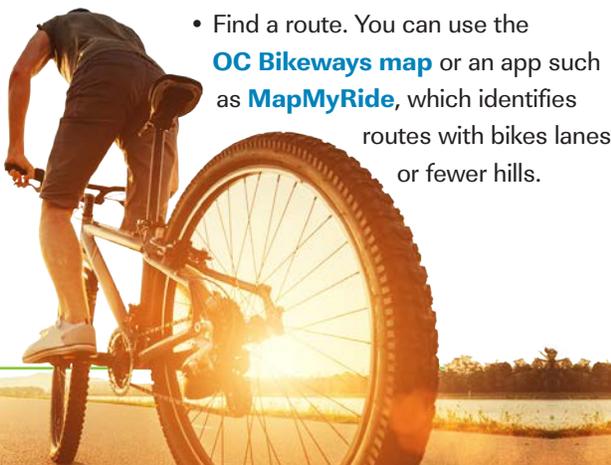


Get in Gear for Bike Month

May is Bike Month, and Southern California transportation agencies are gearing up to offer special events for bicyclists all month long.

Here, we offer some tips to get ready to participate in the big event:

- If it's been a while since you've rolled out your bike, consider taking it for a tune-up to make sure it's road ready.
- Visit OCTA online for tips [on bike safety](#). If you're thinking of using an electric bicycle for the commute, [OCTA's E-Bike Guide](#) can help you navigate the different resources available, as well as the rules of the road.
- Find a route. You can use the [OC Bikeways map](#) or an app such as [MapMyRide](#), which identifies routes with bike lanes or fewer hills.



- Live too far from the office to bike the whole way? Metrolink allows you to bring your bike onboard. OC Bus (and most transit agencies) have front-end bike racks where you can stow your bike before you board.

Here's What's Happening...

- Bike Week is May 13-17.
- Bike to Work Day is Thursday, May 16.
- OCTA will hold a bike rally on May 16, 7:30 to 9 a.m. at the Orange Metrolink Station. Get pumped up about Bike Month with speakers, snacks, prizes and giveaways. Then enjoy a group ride to the OCTA Administrative Headquarters in Orange.
- Look for information about Bike Month contests, prizes and promotions to be posted at [octa.net/bike](#) and on [Facebook](#) and [X](#) (formerly Twitter). You can also look for Bike Month events at [metrolinktrains.com](#).

The Rideshare Office Can Help You Get Into Vanpooling

A vanpool is five or more people who commute together regularly in a leased van, splitting expenses. It's a bargain, low-stress way to commute. But is it for you? It could be if you live 15+ miles from work and have fairly consistent work hours.

There are plenty of good reasons to vanpool, and the Rideshare Office can help you get started.

To find if there's an open seat on a vanpool, log into ridematch.info. Enter information about your commute such as where you live and work and your schedule. You'll get an instant list of any vanpools on your route.

If there's no vanpool serving your commute, why not start one of your own?

Starting One Is as Easy as 1-2-3

- 1) Find other riders at your worksite. Call the OC Rideshare office at 714.834.7600. They'll prepare a RideGuide for you to help locate riders who live near you with similar schedules. They can also set up a "meet and greet" of your potential vanpool riders to get it off the ground.
- 2) Decide on your route and common pick-up location for riders.
- 3) Contact an approved vanpool leasing vendor to let them know you are ready to start a new vanpool. They'll walk you through the steps and provide any required forms.

OCTA can also answer your questions about starting a vanpool. Contact OCTA Vanpool Program Specialist Kristopher Hewkin at 714.560.5331, khewkin@octa.net.



Vanpool Perks & Subsidies

- If you start a new vanpool, you could be eligible for a **\$300 start-up bonus**.
- OCTA offers a **\$400 monthly subsidy** toward vanpool lease costs for qualifying vanpools, lowering fares on average 25%.
- Sign up to pay for vanpool fares through the Rideshare Office using pre-tax dollars to **save money by reducing your overall taxable income**.
- Vanpooling will allow you to join Club Rideshare, **earning a \$40 bonus**, plus being eligible for \$25 gift card prize drawings throughout the year.



Ride Metrolink to the Swallows Day Parade

The 64th annual Swallows Day Parade and Mercado Street Fair is March 23 in San Juan Capistrano. To make it easier for people to attend the family-friendly event, OCTA is teaming up with Metrolink to offer a sweepstakes for free Metrolink tickets to get there.

Sweepstakes details will be posted at octa.net.



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