



OC Commuter

News for a better commute from the OC Rideshare Office



In Case You Missed the BIG News...

As 2022 winds to a close, let's take a look at a few of the changes in transportation that have happened over the past year.

Transit providers restored more service.

Southern California transit providers continued to restore service that had been cut due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now there are more buses, trains, new routes and more frequent service throughout the system.

To find the most current schedules and routes:

- Metrolink: metrolinktrains.com or call or text 1.800.371.5465.
- OC Bus: octa.net or call 714.560.OCTA (6282).



Metrolink introduced the money-saving "Flex Pass."

This new fare option allows riders to save 10% over the cost of regular fares.

The 5-Day Flex Pass is good for travel five days within a 30-day period. It's ideal for commuters working a hybrid schedule who want to ride the train but aren't commuting on a daily basis.

There is also a 10-Day Flex Pass option (good for travel 10 days over a 60-day period).



'Tis the Season

The holidays are here, and we have ways to get the most from it and put the "sharing" back into ridesharing.

Donate Toys for Kids—Transit agencies are partnering with KABC7 and the Southern California Firefighters for the annual Spark of Love Toy Drive.

You're asked to help "stuff a bus" full of new toys for underserved families:

Dec. 16, 4 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Red Robin parking lot, 3900 Bristol St., Santa Ana

For details, other locations and ways to donate, visit abc7.com/sparkoflove.

\$10 All Day—On Christmas and New Year's Day, Metrolink will run on its Sunday schedule and price—so it is only \$10 to travel all day, anywhere Metrolink goes.



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In Case You Missed... *(Continued from page 1)*

Prices at the pumps hit record highs.

According to the American Automobile Association, as of March 2022, prices in Orange County hit nearly \$6 per gallon (compared to \$3.90 a gallon a year prior). As of November, it was still on average \$5.40/gal.—prompting many people to find ways to drive less.

If you'd like to find out your options—including potential carpool partners and transit routing—call 511 or visit ridematch.info. The Rideshare Office can also help.



I-405 construction passed the 80% completion mark.

In cooperation with Caltrans, OCTA is improving 16 miles of I-405 between SR-73 and I-605. When complete it will include new express lanes, bike lanes and more. Get construction updates and closures that may impact your commute at octa.net.



Bravo! Route 553 express service launched.

In October, OC Bus introduced the new **Bravo! Route 553**. The rapid, limited-stop bus service runs along Main Street in Santa Ana, Orange and Anaheim.

This corridor is also served by the previously existing OC Bus Route 53, which offers local service.



Metrolink rolled out discounts for low-income riders.

Metrolink now offers a 50% discount on any Metrolink fare or pass for qualifying low-income riders. Find out more at metrolinktrains.com. The program is in effect through August, 2023.



OCTA turned 50.

Get some of the highlights of the past half-century of transit in Orange County at octa.net, plus share your story!



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Sign Up for \$5/Day Incentives—Expanded Offer Ends in 2023

If you live in Riverside or San Bernardino counties, you may qualify for IE Commuter's \$5/Day program. It offers \$5 in gift cards for each day a commuter rideshares to work in a three-month period—up to \$125.

The program is open to commuters who are new to ridesharing. As part of a limited-time offer, ridesharers who'd previously claimed \$2/Day incentives have also been able to qualify—even if not new to ridesharing.

In order to get \$5/Day incentives if you've previously claimed \$2/Day incentives, you must log your first month of trips by Dec. 31.

Get details at IECommuter.org.



Survey Results Are In

Remember that survey you filled out back in October that asked how you commute during the week? Well, the results are in. It turns out, even though more County employees are returning to the office, you're not all driving solo.

The survey measures "average vehicle ridership," or AVR, which is how many people on average are in each vehicle arriving at the worksite.

For the 2022 survey year, the County's AVR is 1.37 (vs. 1.38 in 2021). "While it's a tiny dip in AVR, it's still good news," says Denise Van Stratten, the County's employee transportation coordinator. "We have more people coming into the office with the easing of COVID restrictions, but many are still choosing alternatives to driving alone like carpooling or riding transit."



Congratulations Transportation Survey Raffle Winners



The County of Orange is required to conduct a transportation survey each year.

As a “thank you” for turning in the recent survey, all participants were entered into a raffle for Amazon gift cards. Winners are:

\$100 Gift Card

- Christina Dudoit, SSA
- Jasmine Le Tourneux, SSA
- Martha Pacheco de Concepcio, HCA
- Stephanie Caughlin, DA
- Sufean Alrawe, OCPW
- Thomas Smith, Sheriff-Coroner
- Vincent Nguyen, OCCR
- William Rodriguez, Sheriff-Coroner

\$25 Gift Card

- Jerry Millhollon, Sheriff-Coroner
- Elmer Rapalo, HCA
- Daniela Diaz, Clerk-Recorder
- Shannon German, HCA
- Jamie Jennings, Superior Courts
- David Palmquist, OCCR
- Pamela Miller, SSA
- Michael Row, SSA



IRS Cap Up \$20

For the 2022 tax year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) maximum if you pay for transit and vanpool fares using pre-tax dollars gets a slight bump— from \$280 to \$300 per month.

The County **allows employees to pay for fares using pre-tax dollars**, thus lowering overall income and potentially saving on income tax.

For more information, consult your tax professional or **the IRS**.

Win a Free Metrolink Pass

Exclusively for County of Orange and Superior Court employees: You could win a free January 2023 Metrolink monthly pass when you purchase a December monthly pass.

You'll automatically be entered into the contest when you buy your pass.*

Metrolink will notify the winner by Dec. 20 and send a promo code via email.

For added savings, you can get a 30% discount on the December monthly pass (must be purchased by Dec. 14).

As a monthly pass holder, you'll also qualify for special perks, including a free “bring a friend” pass, bonus points when you sign up for the **So Cal Explorer loyalty program** and free rides systemwide on weekends.

* Pass must be purchased via payroll deduction through the **Rideshare Office**.

More Survey Findings...

Thanks to ridesharing and teleworking, employees last year drove nearly 640,000 fewer miles and helped reduce about a *half-million* pounds of auto emissions versus if they'd driven alone to work.

The number of employees driving into the office slightly increased from 2021 to 2022. The good news: The number of employees carpooling increased by 23%. Bus ridership more than doubled.

Departments That Went “the Extra Mile”

To collect the best data possible and meet clean air mandates, it's vital that the County gets a high participation for the transportation survey. Thank you to everyone who turned in a survey, and a special thanks to departments with a 95% or higher response rate:

- Assessor
- Clerk of the Board
- Employees Retirement System
- Campaign Finance & Ethics
- Internal Audit
- John Wayne Airport
- OC Public Works
- OC Waste & Recycling
- Office of Independent Review
- Registrar of Voters
- Sheriff-Coroner
- Superior Court



95%

In Case You Missed...*(Continued from page 2)*

Go511 expanded to include the Inland Empire.

The go511.com information website for Southern California previously only provided help for people traveling in Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura counties. It has recently been expanded to also include Riverside and San Bernardino counties—a big help to people who commute cross-county.



Introducing... New Arrow Rail Service



If you live in San Bernardino, getting around just got a whole lot easier—and faster—with the launch of the **Arrow rail line**.

This nine-mile track includes four new stations and runs between a new station at the University of Redlands and Metrolink's existing San Bernardino-Downtown Station.

It features clean-technology train cars—seating nearly 120 passengers and reaching speeds up to 79 mph.

Arrow connects daily to and from Metrolink's San Bernardino and Inland Empire-Orange County lines. It is also served by sbX Rapid Transit, Mountain Transit, Omnitrans, Pass Transit and Victor Valley Transit.

Riders can transfer free to the **SB Connect**, which runs weekdays to County offices and courts.

Feeling the Sting of High Gas Prices?

Some good news: The State of California is sending money directly to millions of residents to help with rising costs and high gas prices.

Dubbed the Middle Class Tax Refund (MCTR), it's a one-time payment of \$200 to \$1,050. Those eligible will automatically receive a payment via check or direct deposit. Payments started in October and are expected to be issued through January 2023.

For more information and to find out if you're eligible for the refund, visit taxrefund.ca.gov or call 800.542.9332.



Save While You Support Local Businesses

Doing some holiday shopping and celebrating in Santa Ana? You can get special discounts with the Eat Shop Play program that aims to support businesses along the construction zone for the OC Streetcar.

Find a map along with details at octa.net/eatshopplay—or look for the Eat Shop Play decal outside participating merchants.



Get Construction Updates

Orange County has several freeway projects underway, which may affect your commute. Visit Orange County Transportation Authority for the latest updates and alerts:

- Widening of the **I-5 between SR-73 and El Toro Road**
- Building express lanes and other improvements on **I-405 between SR-73 and I-605**
- Adding new lanes to **SR 55 between I-405 and I-5**



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Web: <https://hrs.ocgov.com/hr-resources/rideshare>

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