

ON THE GO

News for Your Employees

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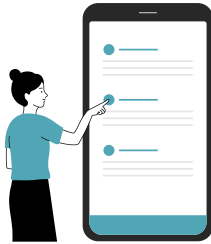
Are You Due to Survey?

The Ups & Downs of Conducting a Transportation Survey During the COVID-19 Pandemic

With everything going on these days, it may seem like the last thing you want to add to your plate is conducting an annual transportation survey.

Back in March when closures due to COVID-19 first got underway, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) allowed automatic extensions for employers with a Rule 2202 plan due.

The agency **in a letter sent earlier this month** announced that it will continue to grant 90-day extensions to many employers. Those proceeding with surveying will be allowed to use payroll or HR records to account for telecommuting employees. In addition, furloughed employees are allowed to be exempt from the 250-employee threshold count for Rule 2202 applicability.



In Ventura County, the air district provided an interim 2-month extension to employers that received notices to conduct Rule 211 notices. (For more information on Rule 211 notifications, see “For Ventura County Employers” story below.)

“Depending on what changes you’ve made at your worksite to allow for social distancing, it’s possible surveying now

will actually result in a better AVR than usual,” says Denise VanStratten, trainer for ITS, a Southern California-based transportation consultant agency. “Or at the very least, the good could outweigh the bad.”

Here, we outline options to consider when preparing to survey or deciding if you want to apply for a deadline extension...

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For Ventura County Employers...

In October, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD) finished its Rule 211 survey notices for the year. New notices won’t go out until January 2021.

In the meantime, VCAPCD will grant extensions upon review of requests between now and end of 2020. The agency had offered an automatic 2-month extension and will review that policy when notices are due to go out again.

December 2020 through January 2021, employers are required to update their worksite registrations or information at vcapcd.org.

For more information, contact Ben Cacatian at ben@vcapcd.org or visit the Rule 211 webpage at vcapcd.org/rule211.

Running a Rideshare Program in the Age of COVID-19

Most likely, it’s not “business as usual” with your rideshare program. Even though we are more than nine months into the COVID-19 pandemic, how employees work and get to work is constantly evolving. How you manage their commutes is most likely changing along with it.

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Ride the Train, Earn Rewards

Now when you ride Metrolink, you can earn points to redeem for free tickets, as well as discounts at area retailers, restaurants and attractions.



Metrolink’s new **SoCal Explorer** program is free to join. For a limited time, when you sign up, you’ll automatically get 750 points—enough for a round-trip ticket on Metrolink.

Each time you ride, log your trip using the app or by scanning and submitting proof of a paper ticket to earn a point per mile.



Calendar of Events

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Due to Survey?

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An upside: Many companies still have employees working at home. Every teleworking employee counts as a “zero commute” on the survey—a potential boost to your AVR.

According to a survey recently released by the Orange County Transportation Authority, working from home increased from 0.8 days per week to 2.6 days per week for the average employee as of July.

Depending on how many of your employees telework, it may offset any reduction in ridesharing at the worksite.

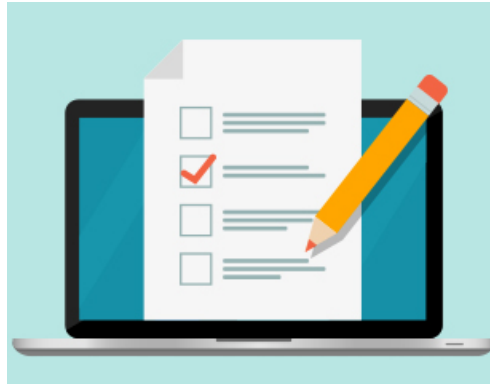
A downside: As we said, fewer people are ridesharing. Your employees may be hesitant to board a train or bus or share a carpool or vanpool due to the virus. Many transit agencies canceled specific routes, leaving riders to find an alternative.

“This doesn’t necessarily mean they all switched to driving alone,” says VanStratten. “They could be teleworking. They may be opting to bike or walk to work. Or some may be furloughed and therefore don’t impact your survey.”

Many, however, have opted to drive alone for the time being, and that will impact your AVR number.

A downside: There are new challenges to distributing and collecting surveys. How do you catch employees’ attention with so much going on to distract them? If you use a paper survey, how will you survey at-home workers? You’ll most likely need more buy-in from managers to help make the survey a priority.

You’ll also need to combat the assumption of teleworkers that they don’t need to fill out the survey since they’re “not commuting.”



Reaching the minimum 60% return rate can be difficult in the best of times, and few would say these are the best of times.

An upside: Switching to an online survey allows for easier, contact-free surveying. Online surveys are provided free by your county rideshare agencies, who will also work with you through the process and process the results.

An upside: Some of those employees who switched from ridesharing to driving alone could be driving an electric vehicle (EV). Like telework, EVs count as a zero commute as long as they are under electric power for that morning commute.

An upside if your company usually buys emission credits as part of your emission reduction strategy: You could possibly save money this year. If a significant number of employees are working at home, it’s possible if you survey you could attain your AVR target thanks to the boost of all those non-drivers. Even if you fall short of your target goal, you may only need to buy enough credits to make up the difference.

For more information, call the South Coast AQMD at 909.396.3271 or visit them online at aqmd.gov. You can also contact the representative at your county rideshare agency for assistance with the survey process, including setting up the online links. ■

Metrolink Schedule Changes

In March, Metrolink temporarily reduced its service levels due to a decrease in ridership caused by COVID-19. On Nov. 16, it introduced modifications to that schedule.

“We’ve watched our ridership very closely, and we built this modified schedule to reflect the changes we see in your travel patterns,” the agency announced.

The changes include:

- Earlier travel times in the mornings and afternoons
- Re-introducing the Express service on the San Bernardino Line so people can get to and from Los Angeles faster
- Shifting schedules on the San Bernardino and Antelope Valley Lines so they depart at regular times and allow for seamless transfers to other trains or buses
- Temporarily suspending trains with low ridership and adding back those that better serve riders’ needs

For details, visit metrolinktrains.com/scheduleupdate.





Rideshare in the Age of COVID-19

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Some ETCs hesitate to bang the drum and promote ridesharing due to social distancing concerns.

Yet many people rely on options such as carpooling, vanpooling and public transit to get to work. What if an employee's usual bus route gets canceled? Or their carpool partner quits due to COVID concerns? Or their car breaks down and they can't afford to get it fixed? As an ETC, your help is needed now more than ever.

"We have to promote ways employees can rideshare, even during the COVID-19 crisis," says Denise Gordon, ETC for Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center. "Right now, some people are afraid to get on the bus, or to ride with someone else. There are others who need to get to work who don't have the option to drive."

Gordon also found that there's still a strong need for ridematching assistance. "We've had employees ask us to help them find a ridematch because they were moving further away to less populated areas," she says. "They have a longer commute so needed alternatives to driving alone."

The Rideshare office regularly sends out monthly email blasts. When the pandemic struck, they made a point to focus eblasts on transit safety, providing details on the steps transit agencies were taking to make buses and trains clean and allow riders to social distance.

The eblasts also often give reminders about rideshare incentives. "We push out information on incentives regularly

so the employees won't forget what's here for them."

At the City of Fontana, most administrative staff shifted to telework back in March, according to ETC Taylor Starling. "Our IT department has been really helpful in making sure employees are equipped to work at home," she says.

Teleworkers at the city also earn an incentive of \$2.50 a day, up to \$40 a month, plus gift card rewards.

The city now distributes all its rideshare incentives electronically so no direct contact with the rideshare office is required.

Recently, some employees have returned to work, and some to their regular carpool groups, Starling says. She tries to offer

advice to do so safely. "I tell carpoolers that if you do happen to have a vehicle that has a back seat, you have the option to sit in the back seat so you can still social distance."

Other strategies employers are using, especially at worksites where telework is not an option:

- **Shifting the focus** to biking and walking—alternatives to driving alone that can more easily be done while maintaining a safe distance. Many bike share programs now offer electric bikes, making it a potential option for more commuters.

- **Hosting educational zoom events**, such as on bike safety, how to tune up a bike, ways to social distance on the bus, etc.

- **Implementing flex schedules** that allow employees to work fewer days and/or commute at less busy times.

- **Emailing links** to local transit agency websites with updates on route or schedule changes that may affect employees' commutes.

- **Adding incentives** or promotional perks for commuters to switch to an electric vehicle and/or distributing information on incentives that may already be available.

If you're looking for additional ways to help employees during the pandemic, the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) offers a **free guide** with tips for both ETCs and commuters. Or contact your county rideshare agency representative to find out about any online workshops or other resources they offer. Check the Calendar on page 7 for scheduled training events. ■

"WE HAVE TO PROMOTE WAYS EMPLOYEES CAN RIDESHARE, EVEN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS. RIGHT NOW, SOME PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO GET ON THE BUS, OR TO RIDE WITH SOMEONE ELSE. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO NEED TO GET TO WORK WHO DON'T HAVE THE OPTION TO DRIVE."



LOS ANGELES COUNTY



Coming in December: Metro Micro

L.A. Metro in December will launch **Metro Micro**, an on-demand shuttle bus service. Metro Micro fills a gap in areas where bus service is consistently under-used or areas that are hard to serve with full-size buses on fixed routes.

The shuttle will begin in two areas: Watts/Willowbrook and LAX/Inglewood. It will expand in mid-2021 to the Northwest San Fernando Valley, Highland Park/Glendale/Eagle Rock, Altadena/Pasadena/Sierra Madre and UCLA/Westwood/Century City.

For the first six months, customers can ride for a special promotional fare of \$1 per trip. (This will not include a transfer to bus or rail.) Rides can be ordered by app, phone or online.

The **service zones** include some of Metro's busiest bus and rail lines, allowing Metro Micro to serve as a vital first/last mile tool for those who want to ride transit but need a better way to get there.



A Big Plan for Better Bus Service

Metro's Board of Directors last month approved the NextGen plan to overhaul Metro's bus system. The plan will increase frequency of buses, improve service on most routes and put more buses in areas with the greatest demand.

Under the NextGen plan, buses will arrive every five to 10 minutes for 83% of current riders (compared to around 48% today).

You can view the **line by line changes here**. Metro also created a trip planner that lets you **compare current rides with future ones**.

Hub for Bikes & Buses Opens

A state-of-the-art customer center at the Rosa Parks rail station opened in October, with the bike hub opening in November.

The 3-year renovation includes a public plaza area, customer center, transit security center, transit court and bike hub.

Customers can buy and load transit passes onto their TAP cards and get information about getting around on the Metro system, among other services.

The bike hub will be open 24 hours, offering light bicycle repairs, maintenance and storage.





ORANGE COUNTY

OC Bike Map Gets an Update

OCTA has updated its [Bikeways Map](#). The interactive map shows designated bike paths throughout Orange County—from off-road paved paths to on-road separated bikeways.

The map rates paths by steepness of grade and also offers bike safety tips and links to information on how to bring a bike on board transit.



Front Door Boarding Is Coming Back

OC Bus is switching back to front door boarding (it had previously allowed rear-boarding only due to COVID-19 concerns). Buses will have new safety measures—such as plexiglass barriers between the coach operators and passengers. This will be a phased rollout and will continue until all buses have been modified.

Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) recommends that during the phased rollout period, as your bus is pulling up, check to see if the bus is boarding from the front or the rear door. Have your bus fare ready before you board.



How COVID-19 Has Impacted OC Commutes

Working exclusively from home increased from 12% to nearly half (47%) of employees in Orange County due to COVID-19, according to a survey conducted in July by Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA).

The survey's findings will help OCTA to develop transportation options that meet the changing needs of riders during the pandemic.

Other findings include...

- Unemployment increased from 4% to 18% between February and June.
- There has been a large drop in transit, active transportation and rideshare usage due to fewer people commuting and fewer overall trips.
- Working from home increased from 0.8 days per week to 2.6 days per week for the average employee.

• Once the pandemic is over, about half of employees say they prefer to maintain or increase the percentage of days they work remotely.

To see the full survey results, [click here](#).



RIVERSIDE/SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY



Construction Updates at Your Fingertips

Want to know if a road or freeway construction is going to affect the commute? There's a map for that! The San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) offers an interactive, mobile-friendly map of updates—including closures and detours—on major construction projects in the county.

To access the maps, go to goSBCTA.com/projects. Then click on any of the currently mapped projects:

- I-10 Express Lanes
- SR 210 Lane Addition/Base Line Interchange
- The Arrow rail project
- Mt. Vernon Avenue Bridge
- SR 60/Archibald Avenue

You can find out more about these projects and the maps in the latest [SBCTA Today video segment](#).



How Full Is My Bus?

Help your fellow riders get the answer. Omnitrans is partnering with the *Transit* app to allow bus riders to **report how full or empty your bus is in real time**.

Your anonymous response will be shared with other riders for the next 10 minutes before expiring.

While you're waiting for a bus, you'll be able to view information provided by other riders to decide whether the next bus or train is the one for you.

Download the free Transit app from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

Introducing... OmniRide, On-Demand Shared Service

The San Bernardino Valley now has its first-ever microtransit service—OmniRide. It provides reservation-based, on-demand, shared service (similar to an Uber or Lyft) to residents and commuters within the Chino and Chino Hills region.

Fare is \$4 per ride and includes an Omnitrans day-pass for transfer to fixed-route buses or Metrolink. Make reservations using the free mobile app (available in the [Apple Store](#) or on [Google Play](#)) or by calling 909.383.1680.

Learn more at Omnitrans.org/OmniRide.



IE Commuter: Looking Good!

The rideshare website for Riverside and San Bernardino counties has a fresh new look. It's also easier to navigate and includes helpful links to sign up for incentives and other services offered to commuters and employers.

Check it out at IECommuter.org.



VENTURA COUNTY

Ventura's Plan for Emergencies

Due to the devastation caused by recent disasters such as the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow event, several transportation agencies joined forces to draft the Transportation Emergency Preparedness Plan (TEPP) for Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

The plan identifies key challenges, including the fact that there is only one main thoroughfare, US Highway 101, linking the two counties. There is also currently no transportation plan in place to coordinate evacuations.

A series of actions are proposed based on a number of potential emergencies—from earthquakes to mudslides to cyber attacks and more. The TEPP lists current resources, such as available transit options, and outlines those that are needed to keep citizens safe in case of emergency.

Find out more at goventura.org, or to read the draft plan, [click here](#).



Get Telework Tips and Videos

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) offers tips, webinars and other resources on telework on its website at goventura.org.

Webinars for managers offer advice for effectively managing employees remotely. Topics range from how to know employees are working to managing by results vs. hours worked. You can also learn to integrate telework into the way you do business even after COVID-19 isn't the driving force for why employees are working offsite.

You'll also find helpful worksheets that can help you track employee performance.

Employees can get telework tips, including time management, setting up an ergonomic workspace at home, beneficial stretches to reduce stress and more.

This webinar on the Dos & Don'ts of remote management is just one of many ETC telework resources VCTC offers on its website.



CALENDAR

Events

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

Network Opportunities

Please note: Due to COVID-19 concerns, network meetings may be canceled or conducted via online platform—please contact organizers for more information.

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

Century City TMO serves businesses in the Century City area; call Linda Paradise Lyles, 310.453.1714, linda@cctmo.org.

Compass at Playa Vista meets regularly; call Aaron Gaul, 310.929.5946, aaron@playavistacompass.com.

Go Glendale meets regularly; call 818.543.7641.

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, email steve@spectrumotion.com.

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 Puja Thomas Patel, 424.330.4298.

Torrance Transportation Network meets regularly; call Kim Fuentes at 310.784.7902.

Training

Metro Rideshare/Shared Mobility 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 sign up, send an email to SharedMobility@metro.net; you will be sent a link with a password to log into the meeting. If you can't make that meeting, email Metro to set up a one-on-one virtual meeting. Upcoming ETC Briefings are Dec. 9 and Jan. 13, 2021, 9:30-11:30 a.m.; contact Metro for information on how to participate on these dates.

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) offers two-day ETC training via Zoom for \$189.73. The next scheduled session runs Dec. 8 and 10, 9-11:30 a.m. 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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For subscription information or to change your **ON THE GO** e-mail address, contact your representative at the rideshare office nearest you.

Riverside/San Bernardino Rideshare Program

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