

# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** December 17, 2008

**SUBJECT:** San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare Program Update

### SUMMARY

This staff report provides an overview on current projects conducted by San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare. Rideshare has completed tasks in the following areas: Rideshare Programs, Rideshare Week, Green Awards, Google Transit and Rideshare Program Coordinator.

Also included are routine TripLink, Rideshare.org and 541-CARS data. During the 2008 calendar year, TripLink's 2,667 users have logged a reduction of 81,394 trips, 1,289,350 vehicle miles traveled and 4,089 pounds of toxic gasses. During the month of October alone, the rideshare.org webpage received 4,797 visits and the toll free telephone number 541-CARS received 461 calls.

### RECOMMENDATION

**Staff:** Receive Information

**SSTAC/TTAC/CTAC:** Received Information

### DISCUSSION

#### Rideshare Programs Information

##### Transportation Choices Program:

In response to Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) feedback, Rideshare has discontinued the quarterly ETC Luncheons and is instead offering monthly ETC Orientations. The orientations purpose is to educate the over 100 ETC's participating in our employer program on transportation choices, thus empowering them to talk confidently to co-workers about all of the commute options. By creating confident and informed ETC's through smaller group information sessions, Rideshare believes that the program will produce greater results with prolonged interest and involvement. The first ETC Orientation, Transit 101, was held in November. The purpose of the session was to teach ETC's how to read the various transit schedules, plan a route using several transit systems and calculate fares. The next orientation in December is focused on navigating the TripLink system.

Transportation  
Choices  
Program

In October, the IRS released information about a new Bicycle Commuter Tax Benefit as well as an increase in the already existing Transit Tax Benefit. Beginning in January 2009, employers will be able to offer their employees a fringe tax benefit of \$20 per month for cycling to work. The benefit can be given as a cash reimbursement, pre-tax from the employee's salary or a combination of the two. The tax benefit can also be used by the employer to build cycling related infrastructure. In addition, the Transit Tax Benefit will increase from \$115 per month to \$120 per month. Rideshare will be working with employers to promote the benefit and use TripLink as a tool for tracking employee bicycle commuting trips and miles.

##### Senior Transportation Options Program:

SLO Regional Rideshare recently finished teaching a class for Cal Poly's Continuing Education program titled, "Changing Your World, One Ride at a Time." The class had about 18 students and included one classroom session and four field trips where participants navigated the transit system in San Luis Obispo County. In all, the class recruited 11 new riders. Rideshare will



continue to stay in contact with the students to measure the programs success in sustaining new transit ridership.

Safe Routes to School: See staff report C-2.

### **Rideshare Week**

Rideshare Week, October 20-24, encouraged individuals to bus, bike, carpool, vanpool or walk to work instead of driving alone. This annual Rideshare event used pledge forms as a way to track involvement and award incentives. During the campaign, 779 pledges were received, effectively reducing 18,299 drive alone vehicle miles and an estimated \$2,378 in foreign oil. Of the 779 pledges, 70 were from individuals who used an alternative to driving alone for the first time.



To market the event, Rideshare used several forms of media including newspaper advertising, radio, television, community calendars, newsletters, emails and press releases. Rideshare also hosted events for Rideshare Week including a booth at SLO Farmers Market, transit outreach, breakfast on the Bicycle Boulevard, a Vanpool Decorating Contest and pedestrian outreach. Attached is the Rideshare Week Wrap-Up Report which includes more information about the event success, lessons learned and detailed pledge data.

### **Green Awards**

As an active member of the San Luis Obispo County Green Awards Program, Rideshare helped select six winners out of 50 submitted nominations for the 2008 awards ceremony. On Thursday, November 13th the winners were announced and awarded at a San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce luncheon. The 2008 San Luis Obispo County Green Awards Winners are: Growing Grounds Farm, Habitat of Humanity for San Luis Obispo County, Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes, Meathead Movers, Poor Richard's Press and Wolff Vineyards. Rideshare will continue to work with the committee to grow and strengthen the program.



### **Google Transit**

San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare, Air Pollution Control District (APCD) and SLO Transit launched an online bus trip planner over Thanksgiving weekend via Google Transit. Google Transit, a function of Google Maps, allows users to enter their starting and ending location online and receive walking, transit and driving directions. Individuals can now plan their bus trips in the City of San Luis Obispo by going to [www.google.com/transit](http://www.google.com/transit) or visiting [www.rideshare.org](http://www.rideshare.org) and clicking on the Trip Planning link. Once starting and ending points are entered, users are shown an interactive map that indicates the nearest stop, route information and timeline.

As the "One Stop Shop" for transportation information, the San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare believes this tool will bring the bus one step closer to the user. The barrier of trip planning that once prohibited transit use will no longer be a factor when taking a trip by bus for the first time. As the lead for the project, Rideshare will be helping users with questions and maintaining the system data moving forward.

SLO Transit was the first transit operator in the county to volunteer time and data for the online trip planner. Rideshare is in the process of getting the other fixed route operators onboard to create a comprehensive online transit tool for the entire county. Without county wide involvement, Google Transit cannot reach its full potential and usability. The goal of the tool is to allow an individual to plan a trip throughout the county online without looking at several transit schedules and maps.

### **Rideshare Program Coordinator**

Rideshare is hiring a Program Coordinator to replace the vacant position left by Jessica Berry, who has transferred to another position within SLOCOG. Applications for the position will be accepted until

December 5, 2008 at which point the interview process will begin. The Program Coordinator will oversee and assist with Rideshare service, outreach, marketing and program development and/or delivery. A full Job Description is attached.

**TripLink, Website and 541-CARS Data**

Listed below is data used to analyze awareness of Rideshare programs and services. By comparing this data to other factors such as gas prices, Rideshare campaigns and program outreach, Rideshare can better determine its effect on the community of San Luis Obispo. Data tracking of this nature began in July of 2008, thus providing a raw benchmark in assessing the long term achievements of the program.

TripLink

Listed below is information gathered from TripLink during the calendar year. During the months of June and July, a 10% increase in new users occurred, a direct correlation to the spike in gas prices. During the month of October, TripLink had a 5% increase in new users with a total of 2,667 individuals registered.

TripLink 2008 User Data								
	Usage Info			Emissions				
Date	Employees	One-way trips	VMT	ROG (lbs)	Nox (lbs)	PM10 (lbs)	Total New Users	Total Users
Jan-08	512	7519	115793	148.17	165.28	55.77	135	1588
Feb-08	493	7168	120603	151.81	171.10	58.06	64	1652
Mar-08	497	7554	118187	150.77	168.51	56.92	97	1749
Apr-08	519	7859	123471	157.39	176.00	59.46	120	1869
May-08	556	7917	117387	151.32	168.02	56.54	117	1986
Jun-08	574	8034	125393	160.04	178.81	60.39	200	2186
Jul-08	592	8770	141593	179.57	201.44	68.18	175	2361
Aug-08	596	8405	134053	170.40	190.87	64.55	90	2451
Sep-08	620	8945	143182	181.88	203.82	68.95	94	2545
Oct-08	617	9223	149688	189.66	212.88	72.07	122	2667
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,576</b>	<b>81,394</b>	<b>1,289,350</b>	<b>1,641</b>	<b>1,836</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>2,667</b>

Rideshare.org & 541-CARS

During the month of October, the rideshare.org homepage received 4,797 visits and 1,981 clicks. In addition, 1,880 visits were made to the Rideshare Week webpage, 2,310 were made to the TripLink webpage and 1,782 visits were made to the Bus webpage. Of the visits made to the bus page, an alarming 771 clicks are attributed to the SLO Transit online schedule. The high activity towards SLO Transit correlates with returning Cal Poly students and Rideshare outreach during WOW Week. During the month of September, 615 calls were made to the toll free Rideshare phone number, 541-CARS. In October, that number fell to 461 calls.

Staff Report Prepared By Morgen Marshall



---

**Peace, Love, Rideshare**

**Rideshare Week 2008**

**Wrap-Up Report**



---

## Peace, Love, Rideshare Rideshare Week 2008 Wrap-Up Report

### *I. Pre-Event*

#### Background

It is estimated that Rideshare Week began in 2000 when SLO Regional Rideshare was part of the Regional Transit Authority. Since then, the event has occurred every year with a different theme and duration. Data from past events is limited to 2007 when Rideshare became a part of the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments.

In 2007 the event lasted the month of October, appropriately called Rideshare Month. Afterwards, it was decided that instead of investing in a month long event, funds should instead be spent on a week long event with the cost savings allocated to a smaller long term campaign. Thus, Rideshare Week and its year long offset, The Low Carbon Diet campaign emerged.

It should be noted that the method by which individuals pledged not to drive alone significantly changed from Rideshare Month 2007 to Rideshare Week 2008. In August of 2007, Rideshare's online rideshare matching system was launched, creating an ideal tool for measuring activity during Rideshare Month. Since there were relatively few users already in the system, Rideshare simultaneously promoted both Rideshare Month and the launch of TripLink. Any individual who signed up for TripLink and filled out their commute calendar during the month of October was counted as a pledge for Rideshare Month.

A year later, with over 2,300 users in the TripLink system, the method by which users "pledged" to participate in Rideshare Week was not as simplistic. It was decided that instead of using an individual's TripLink Commute Calendar as a measurement tool for participation, individuals would instead have to fill out a separate pledge form (Appendix A). This was decided for two reasons:

- It was determined that the data and reporting mechanisms in TripLink were not comprehensive enough for the campaign's needs. To this day, it is difficult to report how many individuals fill out their calendars during a certain time period, only the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), trips and emissions that are collectively reduced. Also, it is difficult to quantify the amount of "active" users within the system without counting duplicates or inactive users. Note: Rideshare is currently working to rectify these reporting issues.
- Rideshare wanted to get additional information from event participants on how they heard about the event, if they participated before and what encouraged them to participate. This type of information would have been unavailable if TripLink was used to measure involvement.

### Purpose & Goal

The purpose of Rideshare Week, October 20-24, 2008 was to encourage and promote bus, bike, carpool, vanpool and walk as a way to get to work. In addition, Rideshare Week was used as a data gathering tool, measuring the amount of involvement and the subsequent results. In 2007, the goal was to receive 1,500 pledges/users in TripLink as a result of Rideshare Month. In the end, 1,200 pledges were gained. Using this data as a benchmark, the goal for Rideshare Week 2008 was again set at 1,500 pledges.

### Event Committee

The committee that helped plan Rideshare Week 2008 included: Susan Rains, Cal Poly; John Webster & Dee Lawson, SLO Transit; Becky Cripe, San Luis Obispo County; Meghan Field, APCD; and Morgen Marshall, Jessica Berry, Cindy Blake, SLO Regional Rideshare. The committee met five times before the event.

The committee decided at the first meeting that the target market for the event would primarily be employees. It should be noted that other user groups were not discouraged to participate. At the second meeting, the theme of *Peace, Love, Rideshare* was chosen. It was decided that people might be tired of cost focused campaigns and that something "fun" would be more eye catching. Committee Meeting minutes are in Appendix B.

### Budget & Sponsorship

One significant difference between the 2008 campaign and years past was the event budget. Due to a reduced budget, Rideshare relied heavily upon sponsorship and thus reduced promotions and prizes. Although it was assumed that the cost of a one week campaign would be significantly less than a month long campaign, that idea did not come to fruition. The projected budget for Rideshare Week 2008 was \$10,550 with an actual of \$10,148. Sponsorships accounted for over \$4,500 of the actual budget.



*Local students enjoying the Bike Breakfast on the Bicycle Boulevard during Rideshare Week*

Rideshare Week sponsors were selected from a list of organizations that have contributed to Rideshare events in years past. Potential sponsors were then sent an individualized letter with a structured sponsorship tier and benefits. After sponsors were confirmed, they were sent a Thank You Letter and Rideshare Week collateral. Sponsorship letters are shown in Appendix C. Sponsors for Rideshare Week 2008 included: Air Pollution Control District (APCD), New Times, SLO Transit, Ride-On, Sycamore Mineral Springs, Tolosa Press, Central Coast Outdoors, Regional Transit Authority (RTA), Enterprise Rideshare, Cal Poly Commuter & Access Services, Big Sky Café, Black Horse Coffee, Boo Boo Records, and It's a Grind Coffee.

### Marketing

With the theme Peace, Love, Rideshare, marketing Rideshare Week 2008 was a lot of fun. Collateral for the event included 11X17 posters, 8 ½X5 ½ double sided flyers with the pledge form on the back, stickers, 11X17 car cards and two banners. One banner was hung on Marsh Street and another was attached to the SLO Trolley. Advertising included ads in the Tribune, New Times, Tolosa Press, Mustang Daily and the County Blade and a radio commercial on Clear Channel Radio (samples of collateral and advertising in Appendix D).

Public relations material included two press releases, postings on over ten community calendars, a commercial posted on Channel 2 & 21, use of the TripLink Events Calendar, information in the Rideshare Quarterly Newsletter and ETC Newsletter, pledge forms stapled to City of San Luis Obispo pay stubs and a Proclamation from APCD. In addition, the webpage at [www.rideshare.org/rideshareweek](http://www.rideshare.org/rideshareweek) was frequently updated. Local coverage included an article in the Tribune. Example public relations materials are in Appendix E.

### Events

Rideshare Week 2008 was designed to celebrate a different transportation mode each day. Monday celebrated bus, Tuesday bike, Wednesday carpool, Thursday vanpool and Friday walk. Rideshare originally anticipated to host an event each day, but after consideration, it became difficult to organize an event for carpoolers.

The kick-off for Rideshare Week 2008 started the previous Thursday at Farmers Market. Rideshare secured two vendor spaces and had a vanpool decorated with the theme *Peace, Love, Rideshare* by an artist. In addition, the Rideshare team was available to answer questions and encourage individuals to pledge.



*Vanpool decorating at Farmers Market*

For Monday's Bus Day, three teams of two handed out juice boxes, granola bars and stickers to morning riders at key transit locations in North County, South County and San Luis Obispo. On Tuesday's Bike Day, a Bike Breakfast was hosted on the Bicycle Boulevard and included coffee, pancakes, breads and fresh fruit. Similar to years past, Rideshare continued to execute the Vanpool Decorating Contest during Rideshare Week. All vanpool drivers were notified of the contest and six vanpools participated. Vanpools were provided paints and had to decorate their van with the theme *Peace, Love, Rideshare* and submit their pictures. On Thursday's Vanpool Day, the winner of the Vanpool Decorating Contest was chosen. On Friday's Walk Day, two separate teams handed out juice, granola bars and stickers to walkers in the Mission Plaza and on the Jennifer Street Bridge. Outreach information in Appendix F.

### Prizes

Eleven prizes were advertised during the week including:

- Four Grand Prizes of \$150 value given out on bus, bike, carpool and walk day to participants using that day's transportation mode
- Four Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) Prizes of \$25 value for the:
  - Most Referrals
  - Most Enthusiastic
  - Most Pledges in an Organization
  - Most Pledges by a Rookie ETC
- One Vanpool Decorating Contest Prize that included a \$150 lunch and \$5 coffee cards for each rider
- One Grand Prize, a "Dream Stay-cation" of \$500 value for a random participant at the end of the week



*Vanpool Decorating Contest Entree*

It should be noted that the Grand Prize of a "Dream Stay-cation" was much smaller than previous years. In 2007, the grand prize was an "Island Vacation" and the year before it

was a "Trip Around the World". With a smaller budget and higher travel costs, Rideshare decided to stay local and promote vacationing on the Central Coast. The "Dream Staycation" included a one night stay at Sycamore Mineral Springs in Avila Beach, a cycling wine tour for two in Edna Valley and gift certificates for lunch and dinner along the Bob Jones Bicycle Trail. The concept was that once the couple arrived in Avila Beach, they would not need their car for the remainder of the weekend. For a more detailed list of prizes, see Appendix G.

## ***II. Post Event***

### Participation

In total, 779 individuals pledged during Rideshare Week 2008. This breaks down to a reduction of 9,149 vehicle trips, 18,299 vehicle miles and \$2,379 that would otherwise be spent on foreign oil. The most popular mode during Rideshare Week was carpool, with 1,187 trips allocated. A startling 70 individuals who had never before used an alternative to driving alone submitted pledges. For a more detailed breakdown of participant data, see Appendix G.

### Budget

As mentioned above, the final amount spent on Rideshare Week 2008 was below the budget predictions by about \$400. This success is largely due to sponsorship and in-kind contributions.

## ***III. Evaluation***

In evaluating Rideshare Week 2008, there are two areas of focus: Successes and Lessons Learned. After the event, a feedback survey was sent to all 779 participants and a Wrap-Up Meeting was held with the committee to evaluate the event. The feedback from both groups is listed below.

### Successes

There were several successes during Rideshare Week 2008, aside from the obvious benefits from participation. Listed below are some of the major successes that are recommended to repeat next year.

- Thursday Farmers Market: Although we only received about 30 pledges at the event itself, we created a lot of awareness and visibility. Having artists paint the van during the market, in addition to providing substantial lighting, was critical to the events success. It was also a great way for the team to kick-off Rideshare Week and break out much used 70's outfits.
- Rideshare Week Website: An effective tool to give information about news, events, prizes and general information. Between September 25<sup>th</sup> and October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1,880 people viewed the Rideshare Week webpage.
- Rideshare Week Theme: Peace, Love, Rideshare effectively got people's attention and provided a lot of campaign ideas. The graphics associated with the theme were very fun and colorful and therefore, people wanted to display the posters and wear the stickers.
- New Users: Almost 10% of the individuals who pledged for Rideshare Week were new users, meaning they had not bused, biked, carpooled, vanpooled or walked to work before the event. This is a huge success. It has not been determined why this event had such a large response from new users or how this number compares to years past.

- ETC Outreach: The use of ETC's as an outreach tool had an alarming success rate. Over 35% of participants heard about the event through a co-worker. This is a large indicator that ETC prizes and using the monthly ETC E-newsletter is a great way to encourage participation in the future.
- Budget: Through sponsorship and in-house materials, Rideshare effectively stayed under budget. Compared to previous years, Rideshare spent less resources on advertising and instead used free media channels such as email marketing, the TripLink calendar and community calendars.
- Vanpool Decorating Contest: In years past, the decision of whether to do this contest has been debated. This year Rideshare proved that through effective management of driver communication, supply delivery and promotion, the event can be a success. There were six participating vanpools during Rideshare Week 2008 versus two the previous year. It is recommended to do this event again with even more promotion.

### Lessons Learned

There were several lessons learned during Rideshare Week 2008. Listed below are some of the lessons learned that should be evaluated before repeating next year.

- SurveyMonkey (software) vs. TripLink: Although we were able to receive more data from our users by not using TripLink and instead using a separate pledge form, in the end, the benefit is not sufficient enough to repeat. It is assumed that if we were able encourage new and current users to fill out TripLink Calendars as a way to pledge, we would have much higher participation. It is strongly encouraged to use TripLink for pledges next year.
- Goal Setting: In evaluating our goal, it is clear that we set our sights too high. A goal of 1,500 would be much more manageable if the event was a month long and if we used TripLink to receive pledges. Taking away these two factors, the achievement of 800 pledges is substantial and should be considered a success. On the other hand, we will consider all of the factors before setting our goal for next year.
- Week vs. Month: The decision of whether the event was more successful as a month long versus a week long campaign is neutral. It was determined that the expenditures for a week long campaign are not much smaller than that of a month long campaign. Also, with a time span of one week, it was more difficult to hold educational sessions about different modes and attract more new users. On the other hand, a month long campaign is more staff intensive and will take more involved partnership. Thus, it will need to be determined next year whether this event should last a week or a month.
- Partnership: There is an inherent need to create more ownership over the event from partner agencies. Although we had involvement from Cal Poly, APCD and SLO Transit in planning the event, it would be ideal to encourage participation from different vanpool providers, SLO Bike Coalition and other groups. The more involvement and ownership we receive, the more successful the mini-events and overall participation will be. The strategy by which to increase partner participation is unknown, but it should be of utmost priority for 2009. Some feedback has suggested that a month long event with more emphasis placed on the different modes will provide time for more outreach opportunities and thus encourage more involvement from partner agencies.
- Prizes: There were eleven prizes during Rideshare Week 2008, five of which had a \$150 value. Feedback indicated that individuals maybe more encouraged to pledge if there was a higher chance of winning a prize. Therefore, it is suggested that instead of having few prizes of high value, there should be several prizes of lower value.
- Banner: The banner that was hung up on Marsh Street was too small. It is recommended that a larger one be purchased for next year.

In all, Rideshare Week 2008 was a success and brought the importance of not driving alone to the public eye. A large part of the success should be attributed to the creative support and investment from Rideshare staff. In addition, the event could not have been as successful without support from sponsors and partner agencies. Rideshare Week also provided a valuable learning opportunity and will only improve with lessons learned. Rideshare is grateful to the individuals in San Luis Obispo County who pledged to share the Peace, Love, Rideshare during Rideshare Week 2008.



---

## Rideshare Program Coordinator

\$20.09- \$24.99 per hour, plus benefit package

Status: 3/4 to full time

Closing Date: Monday, December 8, 2008 at 12PM

First Round Interviews: Thursday, December 18, 2008

### I. Definition and Purpose

The San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare, a division of the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), is seeking a Program Coordinator to assist and/or operate essential functions within the Rideshare Program. The Rideshare Program Coordinator is a full-time staff employee and an integral part of the energetic and innovative team leading the delivery of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and services in San Luis Obispo County. The Program Coordinator will oversee and assist with Rideshare service, outreach, marketing and program development and/or delivery. Scope may include assignments in one or more areas within Rideshare depending upon organizational priority. The Program Coordinator will be utilized as key resource in encouraging residents and visitors to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled and single occupant vehicle trips as well as reduce air pollution and energy consumption in San Luis Obispo County.

### II. Essential Qualifications

- Strong written and oral communication skills essential
- Experience coordinating several projects at once and organizing events
- Experience working with diverse populations
- Computer literacy in Microsoft Office platform
- Proven ability to learn new software and technical programs
- Demonstrated ability to facilitate large groups and manage relationships
- Confident cyclist with an enthusiasm to increase bicycle ridership
- Organization skills essential
- Familiarity with transportation demand management strategies
- Experience managing a budget

### III. Education and Experience

- Degree with major coursework in public or business administration, education, planning, marketing or related field
- Two years experience in transportation demand management, public outreach, project management or education
- Equivalent combination of applicable education and experience listed above

#### IV. Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Coordinate, promote, execute and evaluate Bike Month including Commute Challenge, events, education and outreach
- Coordinate Safe Routes to School program including collaboration with partner organizations, grant assistance, dissemination of information, planning events and development of program materials
- Assist with Rideshare programs, marketing and promotional campaigns
- Applicable web-based content management and development
- Assist with program implementation and outreach to under represented populations

SLOCOG reserves the right to retain this position "vacant" subject to budgetary shortfalls.

See <http://rideshare.org/cm/about/aboutUs.html> to download an application. Please submit application, resume, and cover letter to:

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments  
SLO Regional Rideshare Program Coordinator Position  
1150 Osos Street; Suite 202  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

FAX: 805.781.5703

Email: [mmarshall@rideshare.org](mailto:mmarshall@rideshare.org)

For more information about SLO Regional Rideshare [www.rideshare.org](http://www.rideshare.org)