SmartRide Real Time Ridesharing Program Pilots at SBCC

Project offers a new, fast, inexpensive way to carpool in real time using cell phones, helping to reduce traffic congestion, energy use, and strain on parking lots and buses

Santa Barbara, CA February 20th, 2013 - Santa Barbara City College students, faculty, and staff are some of the first in the nation to test a mobile application that matches carpoolers in real time. The project, called SmartRide (learn more and sign up at www.SmartRide.org), aims to create a critical mass of users that taps into the river of cars driving between SBCC, Isla Vista, downtown Santa Barbara, and other areas. Riders open the app and instantly find drivers nearby who want to carpool. The system allows users to text or call to meet, match using the app, and facilitates a cashless payment based on mileage.

"Carpooling is the fastest, cheapest way to cut down on congestion and pollution as there are people driving everywhere, but usually with just a driver and four empty seats. SmartRide builds on Traffic Solutions' existing commuter eight to five oriented online carpool matching services by allowing those with changing schedules to offer rides in real time using their smart phone" said Kent Epperson, Director of SBCAG Traffic Solutions. "Our goal is to build a critical mass of users so riders can go online and find drivers going their way."

"SBCC's parking system is challenged with too many cars, and drivers often can't easily find parking. SmartRide participants can use the convenient carpool parking, and cut down on the number of cars driving to campus" said Joe Sullivan, VP of Business Services at SBCC. "Additionally, MTD's excellent bus service is a victim of its own success, with many of the buses exceeding capacity to the point of having to force students to wait for the next bus. While MTD has plans to add larger articulated buses and hopes to be able to provide additional service to meet the demand, this is not likely to occur for over a year. SmartRide can help with this overflow and help students get to class on time in the interim."

SmartRide is powered by a smart-phone application called "Avego", available on Android and iPhone, and usable on any internet capable phone and through an internet portal. After a quick user sign-up at SmartRide.org and downloading the Avego app, drivers can set their

user profile, add schedules if they want to offer rides at a set time on specific days, or just turn on the app when they want to offer a ride. Riders open the app when they need a ride, and find drivers "ready to go" or leaving soon, sorted by proximity. They can see each other's photo, rating, and user feedback and then text or call to arrange where to meet up. Upon meeting, they match through the app, which tracks the ride using GPS and facilitates cashless payment. Users rate other users from one to five stars, and can leave comments, which helps to add safety and community to the system.

"Carpooling is the easiest way to effectively double the mpg of any car" said Michael Chiacos, Transportation Manager at the Community Environmental Council. "Rather than using scarce transportation dollars to build new roads or buy new buses, this project makes the existing transportation infrastructure more efficient by using smart phone technology."

SmartRide is a Real Time Ridesharing Pilot project led by Traffic Solutions, the governmental rideshare agency for Santa Barbara County (a division of SBCAG), and the Community Environmental Council, a non-profit organization working to reduce the use of fossil fuels on the Central Coast. The project received grant funding from the Federal Highway Administration through a program that encourages innovative ways to use our current transportation system more efficiently.

Visit www.SmartRide.org and follow the project at http://www.facebook.com/SmartRideSB

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If you'd like more information about this topic or to schedule an interview, please contact:

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