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Dear Houston Commuter:

As a Houston area High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane user, you may recognize that the Metropolitan Transit Authority's (METRO) HOV network provides commuters with a fast and efficient alternative to congestion. Built primarily for buses, the HOV lanes also promote ridesharing through vanpools and carpools.

Houston commuters who form carpools use the HOV lanes as a convenient way to avoid freeway congestion. Minimum occupancy requirements are standard on all HOV lanes, with 2 person carpools being common. These carpools are permitted to travel the HOV lanes at designated times. The exceptionally busy Northwest (290) and Katy freeways require larger carpools for the use of the HOV lanes during certain peak hours. During the morning and evening rush hours on the Katy freeway and the morning rush hours on the Northwest freeway, a minimum of 3 people per vehicle is needed to ride the HOV lane. **METRO is increasing enforcement of the Houston area HOV system, therefore it is important to be aware of the minimum occupancy requirements at all times.**

HOV Lane Schedules:

Days Open	Hours of Operation	Freeway	Direction	Minimum Occupancy
Monday - Friday	5:00 a.m. – 6:45 a.m.	All HOV lanes	Inbound	2 people
	6:45 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	Northwest and Katy Freeway	Inbound	3 people or 2 people if QuickRide participants
		All other HOV lanes	Inbound	2 people
	8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	All HOV lanes	Inbound	2 people
	2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	All HOV lanes	Outbound	2 people
	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Katy Freeway	Outbound	3 people or 2 people if QuickRide participants
		All other HOV lanes	Outbound	2 people
	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	All HOV lanes	Outbound	2 people
Saturday	5:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Katy Freeway	Outbound	2 people
Sunday	5:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Katy Freeway	Inbound	2 people

It is often difficult to form the larger carpools required during rush hours, so METRO provides an alternative for Houston drivers. METRO's QuickRide program allows participants to ride the HOV lanes in 2-person carpools. QuickRide participants pay a \$2 trip fee which is deducted from their QuickRide account. By joining the QuickRide program, you can have the luxury of a fast commute with only one other person.

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QuickRide Permits:

Enforcement of vehicle occupancy regulations is essential for the success of the Houston HOV system. METRO's Police & Traffic Management Department is responsible for monitoring the use of the HOV lane and enforcing these regulations. METRO's QuickRide participants are provided with a Fee Tag transponder and an Auto ID hang tag. **These identification permits must be displayed so that the program can be adequately enforced.** METRO Police may ask users to pull to the side of the lane to check Fee Tags and vehicle occupancy. Individuals who are not participants in the QuickRide program will be easily recognized as HOV lane violators when less than 3 people are present in the vehicle. Drivers may be charged for violation of the vehicle occupancy regulation and are subject to a maximum fine of \$200.00.

QuickRide Application:

If you frequently travel the Katy or Northwest (290) freeways but are unable to form a 3-person carpool, the QuickRide program may be ideal for your rush hour commute. To enroll in the QuickRide program, find a friend and form a carpool. (The QuickRide program is not available to single occupant vehicles.) Then you can fill out a METRO QuickRide application. The application may be printed off the METRO website at <http://www.hou-metro.harris.tx.us/pdf/qrapp.pdf>. You may also contact METRO RideShare at 713-224-RIDE or toll free at 1-888-606-RIDE to receive an application.

Your QuickRide Account:

Once your METRO QuickRide application is accepted, an account will be opened and the proper permits sent. Your METRO QuickRide account must be secured with a credit card. An initial charge of \$15 is required for the use of the Fee Tag transponder. Many QuickRide participants already have a transponder from the Harris County Toll Road Authority (EZ Tag). This transponder may be used as the Fee Tag in the QuickRide program. You will not be issued or charged for an additional transponder. **It is necessary that METRO have a record of your EZ Tag number so it can be used for your new QuickRide account.**

As a QuickRide participant, you pay a monthly fee of \$2.50 which is charged to your credit card. An initial balance of \$40 is necessary to open a QuickRide account. This amount is also deducted from your credit card when the account is established. With each one way HOV trip, during QuickRide hours, the transponder is read. The trip is recorded and the \$2 fee is automatically deducted from your prepaid balance. A minimum balance of \$10 is required at all times. Your account will be kept current with a \$30 charge to your credit card every time the account balance falls to \$10 or less. METRO will issue a monthly statement detailing your account activity.

As a participant of the QuickRide program, it is only necessary to have one passenger in your vehicle. If you have two, that is not a problem. You can simply remove your QuickRide Fee Tag and place it in the provided static shield pouch. This way, your transponder (Fee Tag) will not be read and you will not be charged for that trip.

Thank you!