

Los Angeles Times



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 From the Los Angeles Times

Metrolink train fares to rise an average 5.5%

The five-county Southern California agency cites the soaring cost of diesel fuel as a reason.

By Joanna Lin
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Metrolink fares will increase an average of 5.5% beginning Tuesday to help pay for rising fuel costs.

The rate hike is expected to generate about \$3 million in additional revenue for the rail operator, officials said. Diesel fuel costs are almost \$4.8 million more than the agency allocated for the current fiscal year.

"We did not anticipate diesel fuel doing what it did this year," said Denise Tyrrell, a Metrolink spokeswoman. "We budgeted for \$2.50 per gallon, and now it's over \$4.50 a gallon. And we buy 6 million gallons a year."

More than 45,000 commuters board Metrolink trains weekdays in Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The fares they pay make up 45% of Metrolink's operational costs, Tyrrell said.

Because Metrolink's fares are based on mileage, the new fares will vary, though none of the regular fares will increase by more than 10%.

A one-way ticket between Union Station and San Bernardino, for example, will increase from \$10 to \$10.75.

The discounted fare for the group travel program will increase by \$3, from \$7 to \$10 per round-trip ticket. Metrolink will also require that groups include 15 people or more as opposed to 10 or more.

Tyrrell said Metrolink's five county transit agency partners, which provide 45% of the commuter service's operating costs, are also paying more to combat rising costs.

In April, Metrolink's board approved a 2% system-wide fare increase that builds on a previously approved 3.5% rate hike, both of which will take effect next week.

Fares will go up an additional 3.5% in July 2009 as the final stage of Metrolink's three-year rollout of fare increases, Tyrrell said.

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