Guest Blogger Jenny: Forget The Carpool. We Need A Bus.

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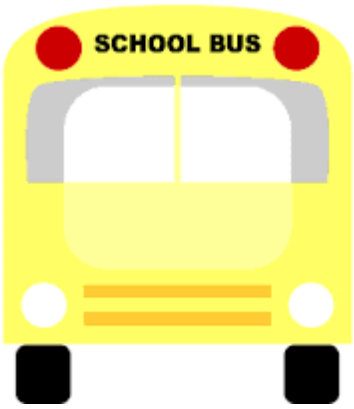

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Anyone whoâ€™s ever had any sort of school commute understands the intrinsic value of a carpool. Itâ€™s the well-oiled support machine that keeps your schedule running and keeps you from revving up and down L.A.â€™s heinous freeways all week long (Iâ€™ve written about the love I have for my carpool before). But sometimes, circumstances beyond your control render the carpool useless. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Cal Trans!

Seriously, Cal Trans is about to ruin my life, and the life of every other school commuting parent heading toward the Westside (which is almost all of them). The scheduled widening of the 405 freeway, along with the closure of the Mulholland Bridge, is about to make the east/west commute into one nasty and serious commitment. Bring water and food, because if you decide to brave that commute come this August, you just might need it.

Thereâ€™s a bunch of schools up on that stretch of Mulholland Drive, just over that soon to be defunct bridge and the 405. Schools with kids aplenty, like Milken, Curtis, Berkeley Hall, Mirman (Annaâ€™s school), and Westland. The commute was already pretty bad if you came north up the 405, since the Mulholland off ramp has been closed for a while, creating way more traffic on your only other option, Sepulveda.

But now, well, itâ€™s going to be virtually impossible to get there. With the bridge closed, traffic will be forced onto some sort of serpentine route through a hapless Valley neighborhood (I tried this route once, just for kicks, and got lost. It does not bode well). Imagine all those cars snaking through some back route to Mulholland, complete with stop signs and Children Playing signs. Those peaceful neighborhood residents will hate us, and we will curse our sorry vehicular existences.

So you can imagine my delight when Mirman proposed a bus route convenient to Eastsiders like us. Possibly shared with Curtis, it would pick our kids up close by and roll through the Westside. Our children will do homework, talk, possibly snooze, and do whatever else bus riding children do until arrival at their respective schools. This means no commute. This means no more sitting on the 101, sweating the time. This means dismantling the coffee IV drip system currently installed in the car. The bus is the answer.

If we can get enough parents (and thus, kids) on board.

And thatâ€™s a big if. Buses, you see, are pretty pricey. You might fork out another couple grand, on top of the tuition, for a twice daily bus route. Thatâ€™s a lot of money. On the other hand, time is money, and without the bus, time will be lost, never to return. Plus, the gas prices are so insane these days, you could end up spending that much in commuting fuel costs anyway. And letâ€™s not forget that â€œgreenâ€• issue, since all those extra cars on the freeway add up to way more emissions than a single bus (Iâ€™ve often pondered this while staring at the idling SUVs waiting in the carpool line).

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So Iâ€™ve done my due diligence on the subject, and went even further: I wrote a very persuasive email missive to every relevant parent on our school carpool list. It was a rational plea for bus usage, and I used every bit of my direct response advertising copywriting skill to make the bus as irresistible a transportation option as has ever rolled the L.A. streets. I charmingly argued and cajoled. All the parents need to do, I wrote, is fill out the online form that merely indicates interest in the bus. Itâ€™s not a firm commitment, just an interest. Please. For all that is holy.

The due date for this online form was June 10. I still have no idea if our area made the cut for the route. I hope so, because otherwise, itâ€™s going to be one long school year indeed.

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School this year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News and on Mamapedia, The Well Mom, Sane Moms, Hybrid Mom, The Culture Mom and A Child Grows In Brooklyn. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog, ***Find A Toad****.*

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