

Moving Ahead in Los

*UCLA Transportation
moves its campus into
the next century.*

By Karen Hallisey and Michael Sommers

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES (UCLA) celebrates its centennial this year, and while its mission of education, research, and service has stayed the same, the university's parking and mobility needs have shifted significantly during the past century.

When ground broke on the UCLA campus in 1919, the surrounding area was rural and sparsely populated. That's not true anymore. UCLA is now situated in the second largest city in America, bordered by three of the busiest streets in the metro area and close to some of the most congested freeways in the nation. And with an infamous car culture that has long dominated mobility in the region, emissions have greatly affected air quality in the LA basin and beyond.

Things began to change when the Olympic Games came to Los Angeles in 1984. With UCLA designated as an Olympic Village and hosting several key events, UCLA Transportation launched a modest commuter vanpool program in an attempt to proactively counter the anticipated traffic congestion during the games. But as the games came to an end, the university's sustainable transportation program was just beginning.

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Now, 35 years later, thousands of commuters across the campus participate in UCLA Transportation's subsidized vanpool, carpool, public transit, bike, and walk programs. By making a deliberate shift away from simply providing access to parking on the campus to investing in more mobility and sustainable transportation options for staff, faculty, and students, UCLA has become an example of how best to address serious traffic and air quality issues while providing convenient and economic alternative modes of transportation to its customers. In doing so, the department's efforts have earned recognition from the International Parking & Mobility Institute (IPMI) as an Accredited Parking Organization with Distinction for its robust programs and services.

Work Hard, Commute Easy

UCLA Transportation is charged with getting commuters out of their cars and into more sustainable transportation modes to ease traffic and decrease the university's overall carbon footprint. Despite 85,000 students, employees, and visitors on its campus each day, the UCLA employee drive-alone rate has dropped below 50 percent for the first time. And with its commuting student drive-alone rate at just 23 percent, the combined drive-alone rate at UCLA is now just less than 37 percent. Compared to LA County's commuter drive-alone rate at 76 percent, one has to ask—how did UCLA do it?

UCLA Transportation consistently rolls out programs that are cost-effective, convenient, and accessible. Finding a better way to UCLA starts with smart and sustainable commute options; the department recently launched a new online trip planning tool to help commuters explore their best routes to the university, be it by vanpool, public transit, carpool, biking, or walking.

Ride-sharing

For commuters coming from more than 15 miles away, the UCLA vanpool program is often a lifesaver as it provides a reliable means of transportation at an affordable monthly rate. Vanpool riders avoid directly battling LA traffic by relaxing in a deluxe passenger van. Currently, UCLA has 147 vanpools serving 80 Southern California communities; they come to campus each weekday from as far as 70 miles away. Carpooling is also an attractive option for both employees and students, offering discounted parking permits with the convenience of having a car on campus when needed.

In 2018, UCLA Transportation negotiated with Lyft and Uber to offer the campus community discounted



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flat-rate fares for short-range shared rides to encourage carpooling to and from campus. The promotion, which came at no cost to the university, matched riders going in the same direction and charged a flat rate within a five-mile radius of UCLA.

Public Transit

Although public transit ridership has declined in LA County—it's currently at the lowest level in more than a decade—transit use has increased at UCLA. With seven transit agencies serving the campus, including local and commuter lines, UCLA subsidizes transit use for its students and employees. To encourage ridership, UCLA Transportation offers the Bruin Commuter Transit Benefit Program, which provides a free transit pass for an entire academic quarter to those who are new to transit and wish to try it. Thousands of eligible students and employees have joined the award-winning program and opted out of parking permits, making it one of UCLA Transportation's most successful programs and increasing the university's overall transit use by 5 percent.

Active Transportation Options

As more people invest in health and fitness, UCLA Transportation continues to promote active transportation commute options such as biking and walking by launching innovative programs and enhancing the university's built environment. Enhanced crosswalks, narrower streets, and slower speed limits on campus

play a significant role in keeping active transportation users safe from vehicle traffic.

UCLA has more than seven miles of bike routes, hundreds of accessible bike racks and lockers, an affordable bike-share system, and a bike shop located on its central campus. This year, more than a half-mile of green designated bike lanes were installed on campus roadways in an attempt to keep cyclists and other commuters visible to motorists while keeping sidewalks clear for pedestrians.

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For its efforts, UCLA was designated a Bicycle Friendly University twice by the League of American Bicyclists, receiving bronze status in 2011 and upgraded silver status in 2015. And with more than 3,000 bicyclists now arriving to campus each day, the bike community at UCLA has more than doubled in the past decade.

Bruin Commuter Club

Sustainable commuting takes commitment, and UCLA Transportation rewards its commuters with incentives and benefits through its Bruin Commuter Club (BCC). BCC members receive commuter rewards from LA County Metro, emergency ride home services, and

discounted daily parking privileges for those occasions when they need to drive to campus. Those who bike or walk to campus also receive additional mode-specific benefits through BCC. Additionally, members can now take advantage of both bike and transit benefits concurrently to encourage multi-modal sustainable commuting. In 2018, BCC had approximately 7,100 members.

The UCLA Transportation Team

There's much to admire about UCLA Transportation's success. Besides its notably low drive-alone rate, UCLA recently recorded its highest average vehicle ridership on record and has no student waitlist for parking spaces, despite UCLA having the highest undergraduate enrollment in the UC system.

Of course, no strong transportation program is possible without a strong team. UCLA Transportation, which is financially self-supported and receives no funding from the UC system, employs more than 200 full-time staff members and approximately 300 part-time student employees. Because so much of the transportation business is customer-service based, education and professional development within the organization is encouraged through involvement in industry-related organizations, certificate programs, workshops, and continued learning opportunities within the department and through university training programs. In cooperation with UCLA administration, UCLA Transportation recently launched beginner computer training courses

aimed at frontline employees. This new program, which starts with a skills assessment and includes everything from typing to basic Microsoft Excel and Word overviews, gives employees an opportunity to train for higher-level positions or gain skills to help them better navigate the digital world.

Many employees on the department's frontline customer service team are undergraduate students who work as hospital valets, parking attendants, and event support, enforcement, and operations staff. Some of these positions offer the best pay on campus for students and provide flexible work schedules to avoid conflicts with their coursework and other school activities.

Because student employees are often the first point of contact when guests arrive on campus for performances and sporting events, rigorous customer service training is key. Along with taking part in professional development, many students are groomed for supervisory roles, which build valuable leadership skills for life beyond their UCLA experience. UCLA Transportation also works with the campus Career Center to aid student employees in translating their job skills into experiences that will impress future employers.

At UCLA Transportation, employee recognition extends to everyone in the organization. Individual contributions are honored through various awards, as well as employee of the month and year designations. Twice a year, the department hosts employee celebrations as a way to thank the entire team for its commitment and hard work.

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Moving Forward

What's next for UCLA as it embarks on its second century? UCLA Transportation's road map for the coming years includes implementing more sustainable transportation initiatives that provide its customers what they want. With trends indicating a greater shift toward more multi-modal commuting, UCLA Transportation will give commuters the flexibility to choose sustainable transportation while still providing parking on campus when they need it. Bruin ePermit, the university's new virtual parking permit system using license plate recognition, will eventually give commuters the option to participate in sustainable transportation programs while still having access to parking on campus.

And just as the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles heralded the introduction of UCLA Vanpool, the 2028 games planned for LA will lead to new innovations in transportation demand management at UCLA, beginning with the Metro Purple Line subway extension, which will be completed and operational in Westwood Village by 2027.

Due to UCLA Transportation's commitment, sustainable transportation at UCLA is no longer the alternative choice—it's now the preferred choice. In fact, UCLA Transportation recently integrated its Parking Services Unit with its Commuter Services Unit to form "Commuter & Parking Services," reflecting the changing times. As the university enters its second century, UCLA Transportation will remain an innovator and leader in providing sustainable transportation options that support the campus community and surrounding area, making daily life better for Bruins and all Angelenos. ♦



KAREN HALLISEY is senior communications analyst with UCLA Transportation. She can be reached at khallisey@ts.ucla.edu.



MICHAEL SOMMERS is senior marketing analyst with UCLA Transportation. He can be reached at tsommers@ts.ucla.edu.