

2011

Capital Region Sustainable Transportation Program Toolkit

[A guide for employers looking to expand
transportation options available to their employees]

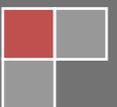


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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed to help employers who are looking to expand their employees' transportation options by providing alternatives to driving alone.

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) in cooperation with the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) is ready and willing to help Capital Region employers who want to achieve the following goals in their business operations:

- ✓ **Increase employee satisfaction, retention and productivity by providing economically feasible transportation alternatives; and**
- ✓ **Operate “green” by addressing the transportation needs of their employees comprehensively.**

These objectives can be achieved by developing an employee transportation program that provides access to alternative modes of transportation. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide guidance on establishing a long-term, sustainable program.

WHY ESTABLISH AN EMPLOYEE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM?

There are numerous benefits that are associated with employee transportation programs. A successful program can:

- ✓ **Increase access for employees who commute from distant areas;**
- ✓ **Improve parking availability by reducing the need for spaces;**
- ✓ **Reduce taxes - for you and your employees. Federal tax law allows employees to use pre-tax income for transportation-related expenditures which in turn reduces labor taxes;**
- ✓ **Reduce employee commuting stress and cost;**
- ✓ **Improve employee retention and recruitment, while reducing recruitment expenses and other personnel expenditures;**
- ✓ **Enhance employee productivity;**
- ✓ **Attract more customers;**
- ✓ **Make your workplace more attractive and functional;**
- ✓ **Avoid business interruptions (due to bad weather, road closures, etc.);**
- ✓ **Improve community relations; and**
- ✓ **Decrease your business carbon footprint making it more sustainable and environmentally friendly.**

In addition to the above-listed benefits, an employee transportation program can entitle businesses to be designated as a “**Best Workplaces for Commuters**” (BWC) employer. The BWC program honors eligible employers with national recognition for providing their employees with commute alternatives. For more information, please visit the [BWC website](#).

TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

To develop a successful employee transportation program, it is often helpful to first survey employees on their transportation needs.

A survey helps determine several important factors needed to design a successful employee transportation program. Questions should seek to identify the following information:

- Current travel modes
- Willingness of employees to try alternative modes of transportation
- Transportation modes of interest
- Work schedules and their flexibility (fixed or flexible)
- Need for vehicle access during the work day (for work or non-work related trips)

Upon survey completion and analysis, an employer can strategically choose from a range of currently available transportation options and benefits.

TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Transit Commuter Benefits

Private employers, non-profit organizations, and public agencies can provide transit commuter benefits to employees, tax-free. CDTA can provide technical assistance in setting up such a program.

NYS-Ride

The [NYS-Ride program](#) is designed for NYS employees to allow their use of pre-tax money to pay for eligible transportation expenses.

Public Transit

CDTA provides local and express bus service throughout the Capital Region, including the cities of Albany, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, and Troy. Schedule information is available at www.cdfa.org, by Google directions, and as an iPhone app.

CDTA is willing to provide limited transit subsidies to businesses whose employees are interested in using CDTA transit services for their daily work commute. In order to receive this subsidy, an employer is required to enroll in the Transit Commuter Benefit program discussed above. Evidence of the enrollment should be submitted to the CDTA contact person in the form of a letter from the employer along with a pre-tax employee enrollment form.

Once the Transit Commuter Benefit program is in place, employees should be encouraged to enroll. Upon enrollment, each employee will become eligible to receive up to two free monthly Swiper passes.

Enrollment in the CDTA [Corporate Program](#) can further increase savings to employees on transportation costs.

Commuter Bus Services

A number of long-distance bus companies provide service to the Capital Region and surrounding counties. They include Adirondack Trailways, Brown Coach, Coxsackie Transit, Northway Express, Schoharie County Public Transportation, and Yankee Trails. The iPool2 website has links to all of their websites for schedules and fares.

Vanpool Program

A vanpool program is a feasible option for those who live outside the transit coverage area. A vanpool consists of 5 to 15 people plus a volunteer driver, who is also a member of the vanpool. The main objective of a vanpool is to provide a door-to-door neighborhood-based transportation service.

Most successful vanpool programs are established under conditions characterized by a lack of traditional bus service. Other factors that make a vanpool program work are trips that are more than 15 miles long, employees with fixed work schedule/shifts, sufficient employer size that allows matching of 5-12 employees from the same residential area, and existing traffic and congestion problems.

Successful vanpools are usually actively supported by employers who offer at least one incentive to use the program. Incentives offered by an employer can include preferred parking spaces for vanpool participants, options to advertise the program to find and attract additional matches for a vanpool program, and vanpool subsidies.

VPSI, Inc. provides vanpool services in the Capital Region. They can be contacted at 1-800-VAN-RIDE or jesse.kafka@vpsiinc.com.

Guaranteed Ride Home

Guaranteed ride home programs work as a "safety net" to take the worry out of ridesharing. Many people are reluctant to switch their commute mode from single occupant vehicles because they are afraid of being "stuck" if an emergency arises, or if they have to work late. Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) takes the worry out of ridesharing because it guarantees a low-cost ride home under these situations.

A free Guaranteed Ride Home program is offered through CDTA to commuters who carpool, vanpool, take the bus, walk, or bike to work at least twice each week. To use the program, commuters need either a valid CDTA Swiper (monthly bus pass) or a Guaranteed Ride Home registration number, attained by registering at www.iPool2.org. Program limits are no more than 2x/month and 6/year.

Ride-Matching Services

iPool2 (www.ipool2.org) is a free online ride-matching service. It also provides information about regional transit services, park and ride lots and the

Guaranteed Ride Home program. Finally, iPool2 allows individuals to track their commute methods each day and calculate emissions and health benefits. Employers can create their own mini home pages to encourage participation and calculate cumulative environmental benefits from worksite participation.

LINK Program

This program allows commuters to connect from any of the area's long-distance commuter buses (Adirondack Trailways, Brown Coach, Coxsackie Transit, Northway Express, Schoharie County Public Transportation, and Yankee Trails) to CDTA buses for free. In order to use this program a commuter needs to ask for a LINK ticket when paying a fare on one of the commuter buses (www.ipool2.org/links.aspx).

Park and Ride Lots

Approximately 40 park and ride lots in the Capital Region and surrounding counties provide convenient space to leave vehicles to be able to carpool, vanpool, or take a bus the rest of the way to work. The iPool2 website contains a list of all lots with a photo, the address, physical characteristics, the number of spaces, and any available transit service.

Assistance with Transportation Options

- **Technical Support** – technical support for developing and implementing a vanpool program, as well as assistance using the iPool2 website.
- **Survey Assistance** – assistance developing and implementing employee surveys, as well as analyzing and interpreting the survey results.
- **Informational Support** – identify various information sources, such as the ride-matching website, bus schedules, etc.
- **Transit Training** – CDTA can provide assistance to educate employees about transit services available to them, as well as the fare structure and fare media through an experienced staff of travel trainers. Travel trainers can provide assistance in trip planning and schedule reading.

Get Recognition!

Upon initiation of a TDM program, eligible employers can receive the “Best Workplaces for Commuters” designation.

Best Workplaces for CommutersSM is an innovative program that provides qualified employers with national recognition and an elite designation for offering outstanding commuter benefits, such as free or low cost bus passes, strong telework programs, carpool matching and vanpool subsidies. Employers that meet the [National Standard of Excellence](#) in commuter benefits—a standard created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—can get on the list of Best Workplaces for Commuters. (www.bestworkplaces.org)

Need to Know More?

For more information about this toolkit, please submit an inquiry via the Capital Moves [contact form](#).

Appendix

Sample Transportation Survey

The survey is anonymous. Your answers in this survey will not commit you to taking the bus or any other alternative mode of transportation. Survey results will only be used for planning purposes.

1) What is your current or usual commute mode?

- Drive Alone
- Take the bus
- Carpool
- Vanpool
- Bicycle to work
- Walk to work

2) How often do you usually take a bus?

- Never
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- 3-4 times a week
- 4-5 times a week
- Every day

3) What hours do you normally work?

- 8:00-4:00 8:00-5:00 8:30-5:00 Other:_____
- 8:00-4:30 8:30-4:30 9:00-5:00

Are your work hours flexible? Yes No

4) How often do you use your car for personal or work business during the workday?

- 1-2 times per week everyday never (go to question 6)
- 3-4 times per week occasionally

5) If you travel during the mid-day what are your major destinations?

6) Would you consider any of the following travel modes?

- taking a CDTA bus to/from work
- taking non-CDTA bus to/from work (please specify: _____)
- carpooling
- vanpooling
- bicycling to work
- walking to work

7) If there was a fee (for example, \$XXX) for a vanpool service, would you consider taking it? Yes No

8) In order to help us better understand your travel needs please provide us with the following information:

Your Zip Code: _____ Town you commute from: _____