

WORKFORCE MOBILITY TEAM

Commuter Benefit Strategies for Employers

Commuter benefits are intended to support employees that do not have access to a vehicle or choose to use alternative methods of travel to work. These strategies can help employees avoid congestion, construction delays, and the hassles and expense of driving. In addition, they can be an effective employee recruitment and retention tool for companies of all sizes and help reduce the demand for and costs associated with employee parking. The following list of selected strategies provides highlights of key commuter benefits that your workplace may choose to offer.

EMPLOYEE TRANSPORTATION INCENTIVES

Commuter Incentive Programs

Incentive programs encourage employees to try alternative commuting options by offering awards such as gift certificates, preferred parking spaces for carpoolers, giveaways, and drawings. The award programs can be promoted through outreach events, social media, advertising, and employer engagement activities.

Transit Pass Subsidy Programs

Many transit operators offer discounts on monthly transit passes for employers in their service area, which can be promoted as a benefit for employees to help defray the cost and stress of commuting. The Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) offers Commuter Value Pass (CVP) smartcards that can be purchased at a discount and are good on all MCTS routes.

Cash-Out of Employee-Paid Parking

This program encourages employers who currently provide free or subsidized parking to offer employees a choice to keep a parking space at work, or to give up the parking space and accept a cash payment equivalent to the employer's cost of providing that parking space.

Pre-Tax Incentives

Employees and employers are eligible for federal tax relief, also known as qualified transportation fringe benefits under the federal tax code (Section 132(f)), which allows employers and employees to deduct the expense of transit passes, vanpool fares, and/or commuter parking fees.

Emergency Ride Home Programs

These programs cover the cost of an emergency ride home for employees who regularly commute to work using something other than a single occupancy vehicle if an employee experiences a change of schedule, an illness, or a family emergency. MCTS and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) offer emergency rides home through their respective programs.

Carpool and Bike Buddy Matching

The State of Wisconsin's RIDESHARE program offers a free online ridematching and bike buddy matching program for employees. The interactive website (rideshare.wi.gov) provides employees an instant picture of commuting match opportunities and immediate email contact with potential matches.



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TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Shuttle Bus Service

Shuttle buses provide last mile transportation between transit stops and participating businesses. One example is the Shuttle Bug Program, which is a public-private partnership between businesses and transit operators in suburban Chicago that serves nearly 1,000 daily riders and 30 companies on 13 routes.

On-Demand Services

Similar to shuttle buses, a partnership with Lyft or Uber can provide last mile transportation between specific geographic areas, while also providing the convenience of arranging rides on short notice. Both Lyft and Uber offer services tailored for businesses that allow employers the ability to set up an account to schedule rides between agreed-upon locations and arrange payment.

Contract Transit Service

An employer may contract with a private bus operator or with a public transit agency to operate special transit routes or to supplement service to their location. These arrangements for additional bus service typically require assurances that a given number of riders will use service.

Vanpools

Vanpools, carrying up to 15 passengers with similar travel patterns, can be effective in areas with limited public transportation and long-distance commutes. An employer can actively manage vanpools or simply promote them as an option for their employees.

