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# Aspen Daily News

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## EPA lauds Aspen for getting around

**By Troy Hooper**  
**Staff Writer**

The city of Aspen will receive a high environmental honor today that will make it the only municipality in the nation to be designated as one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters District.

Officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency flew into Denver on Monday to recognize 149 of the state's employers – eight of which are in Aspen – that qualify for the federal agency's list of best workplaces for commuters. The list, which is being compiled in Colorado for the first time, commends employers for offering benefits to employees who use alternative transportation and for districts that provide a variety of transportation alternatives and incentives.

"Less than 1 percent of all employers in the nation qualify for this," EPA program manager Robin Snyder said Monday. "This is the first time we're doing a list in Colorado and it is the only state in the nation that we're doing a list for that is statewide because there is so much potential here when you look at the number of transportation programs that are out here, from the Cross Town Shuttle in Aspen to Boulder's Hop Skip and Jump."

Only four localities in Colorado qualified for the Best Workplaces for Commuters District: the city of Aspen, Downtown Boulder, FlatIron Shopping District in Broomfield and Stapleton Area in Denver. Overall, 32,000 commuters in those districts benefit from alternative transportation programs. The city of Aspen is the only district comprised entirely of one municipality to receive the honor.

The other employers in Aspen to be recognized as the best workplaces for commuters in the state are Aspen Club & Spa, the Aspen Skiing Co., Aspen Sports, Design Workshop, the government of Pitkin County, Sandy's Office Supply, Stay Aspen Snowmass and Wells Fargo.

In all, 90,000 employees across the state benefit from employers who offer commuter benefits, according to Snyder. The Denver metro region has the 10th-longest rush hour delay in the country, which computes to each commuter getting stuck in traffic for 62 hours a year, she said.

To qualify for the state's best workplace for commuters honor, organizations must provide: at least one primary commuter benefit, which can include a monthly transit/vanpool pass subsidy,

cash in lieu of free parking or a significant telecommuting program; at least three supporting commuter benefits, which can include benefits such as carpool/vanpool incentives, lockers/showers for bikers or walkers, incentives for living near work or onsite amenities such as day care; a central point of contact for information, who actively informs employees of available commuter benefits; and access to an emergency ride home program.

"The organizations on Colorado's Best Workplaces for Commuters list are committed to saving their employees time and money, while reducing congestion and pollution," Shepard Nevel of the Denver Regional Council of Governments said in a prepared statement. "More employers in Colorado are recognizing the importance of offering commuter benefits. Fewer cars on the road means substantial savings for employees and a cleaner and healthier Colorado."

By receiving the designation, employers have access to program and trademark materials that distinguish them from their competitors and may help in the ability to recruit and retain employees, Snyder noted.

"Aspen is obviously a special place in a lot of ways but the fact that it is in the only city in the United States that has had the whole city designation is a significant achievement," she said.

"For the average household, the cost of commuting is something like 13 percent of the annual average income. Employer programs like these can offset that cost and they are really providing value to Aspen commuters."

The best workplaces for commuters' awards are conferred upon by the EPA and a number of Colorado, transportation, human resource, business and environmental organizations.

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