

## Editorial:

# Driven to reduce driving

Smoggy summers have long been a good reason for North Carolina to try to reduce the volume of cars on its highways. As air polluters, cars are right up there, even with advances in emissions control technology and requirements for emissions testing.

Now that federal agencies are threatening to withhold highway money, it's late for a state campaign to help people reduce their driving -- but not too late.

In 1980, the average North Carolinian drove less than 20 minutes to work. Nowadays, Tar Heels drive an average of 24 minutes. And there are more cars on the road. Not only are those trends bad for the air, but drivers are more likely to spend time sitting in traffic. When employers evaluate possible locations for doing business, traffic enters into the quality-of-life part of the decision.

The state Department of Transportation wisely admits that it can't build roads fast enough to solve all the traffic problems and offers a new approach. DOT is starting a three-year effort to recruit employers to help cut down on solo commuting.

There will be a statewide Best Workplaces for Commuters list, similar to the Environmental Protection Agency's national list. Employers who make that list must offer, among other things, a commuter benefit, such as the opportunity to work from home or a public transportation subsidy. What's more, DOT plans to create an office to help employees find alternative transportation.

Even with the best commuter program, it will make sense to cut down on development sprawl and move ahead with other smart-growth measures, if it's clean air and more jobs we want. North Carolina, battered on both fronts, does well to attack this problem with all its creative powers.