



## Easy Riders

### Apple Firms Vie To Improve Workers Commutes

By BILL SANDERSON

Some bosses will do anything to get people to show up for work - even if it means letting them stay at home.

LexisNexis, which operates databases of media articles and legal decisions, set up account manager Michael Carle's Manhattan apartment with a business phone line, a high-speed Internet hookup, and a color printer/copier/scanner/fax device.

Carle's company yesterday made an Environmental Protection Agency list of New York-area firms that give employees the most help commuting - or, in Carle's case, not commuting.

"I choose what location I want to work from - home or the office," Carle said.

New York-area commuters can sure use the help.

A Census Bureau study released in February found that our commutes are the worst in the country - an average 38.4 minutes each way, each day. That adds up to two weeks of our lives each year.

Companies are easing employees' commuting pain by subsidizing mass-transit rides, giving preferred parking to car poolers, or offering shuttle-bus service between train stations and work sites.

But a few companies go the extra mile.

Washington Mutual Bank tries to assign employees to branches near their homes, Verizon lets employees show up fewer days if they work longer hours, and the Environmental Defense Fund offers bike commuters special parking and showers.

Some big institutions, like Columbia University and New York-Presbyterian Hospitals, subsidize housing for thousands of employees so they can walk to work.

Carle lives in a two-bedroom Upper East Side apartment with his wife, their 14-month child and a dog.

He says it's a roomy home by Manhattan standards - but Carle still had to set up his office in the living room.

He could work in the firm's Midtown offices - but LexisNexis makes it easy for those who'd rather not commute.

"They provide the money so you can go ahead and purchase comfortable home-office furniture," Carle said.

"Some people work better in an office setting, and some people work better at home by themselves. It's really the best of both worlds."

#### Commuting facts:

- \* Only 34 percent of Americans believe driving is the ideal commute.
- \* 24 percent of Americans would like to walk to work.
- \* 59 percent of New Yorkers rate their commutes as "easy."
- \* 80 percent of New Yorkers want cleaner subways, buses and trains.
- \* Terrorism fears have compelled 12 percent of New York commuters to change their habits - mostly by giving up the subway.

*Source: WageWorks Commuter Culture Survey, 2003*

\* New York area workers' average commute time: 38.4 minutes.

#### By borough:

- \* Bronx: 41.8 minutes
- \* Queens: 41.4 minutes
- \* Staten Island: 41.2 minutes
- \* Brooklyn: 39.9 minutes
- \* Manhattan: 29.4 minutes

#### In nearby counties:

- \* Nassau County: 34.1 minutes
- \* Suffolk County: 32.0 minutes
- \* Westchester County: 32.0 minutes
- \* Rockland County: 31.6 minutes
- \* Hudson County, N.J.: 29.7 minutes
- \* Middlesex County, N.J.: 29.7 minutes
- \* Bergen County, N.J.: 28.5 minutes
- \* Essex County, N.J.: 27.7 minutes
- \* Union County, N.J.: 26.5 minutes

*Source: Census Bureau 2002 survey.*