

Additional Application Information

As one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM, you agree to work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Best Workplaces for CommutersSM Team to further the goals of the program. By voluntarily signing the attached application form you agree to undertake activities that will provide your employees with the National Standard of Excellence in commuter benefits as defined on the application form.

THIS COLUMN PROVIDES DETAILS AND OTHER EXPLANATORY INFORMATION

1. Designate a primary contact

The primary contact should be the person who is most familiar with the day-to-day operations of your commuter benefits program.

2. Centralize commuter benefit information so it is easy for employees to find and use

Making information about commuter benefits available to your employees is critical to the success of your efforts. Centralizing information about your commuter benefits should be advantageous for your employees—any employee should be able to find information about commuting and commuting options in a single place. You may use a Web intranet site, bulletin board (more appropriate for small firms), an appointed individual who has the information readily available, or any other method that makes it quick and easy for employees to get the information. Multi-site employers may choose to maintain separate centralized information sites for separate work sites.

3. Promote the availability of commuter benefits to employees

As one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM, you agree to effectively and regularly promote the availability of your commuter benefits package to your employees. Regularly means twice or more per year and any time your organization makes changes to your programs or offerings. However, more frequent communication is encouraged. You should communicate in ways that are likely to reach all employees.

4a. Provide access to an Emergency Ride Home (ERH) for employees who do not drive alone to work

Reducing the number of cars that employees drive to work means that there will be employees arriving at work without their own private vehicles. Some employees may feel uncomfortable not having a vehicle at their disposal in case of unexpected events, such as illness of a family member or unscheduled overtime. Providing an ERH (e.g., taxi ride) in limited cases of emergencies or unscheduled overtime has cost-effectively resolved this issue for many employers. You need not provide this service yourself; in some areas other organizations provide ERH services.

4b. Provide at least one of the following benefits:

- Transit or vanpool subsidy
- Telework
- Cash instead of free parking
- Another option achieving demonstrable benefits and agreed to by the Federal Team



Transit or vanpool benefits (such as transit passes or vouchers)

Under this option, the Employer agrees to provide at least \$30.00 per month toward commuting via public transit or vanpool for employees whose actual commuting costs are \$30.00 or more, and they are encouraged to provide up to the IRS monthly limit of \$100. If the employees' commuting costs are less than \$30.00, then the Employer must cover 100% of these costs. EPA will give at least 12 months notice prior to an increase in this requirement.

Telework program that reduces on average at least 6% of daily commute trips

Allowing and encouraging employees to work from home provides benefits to employers and employees while reducing traffic and air pollution. Under this option, the Employer agrees to offer a telework program that reduces the number of commute trips by 6%. This means that for every 100 possible commute trips, six or more are avoided by teleworking. For example, in a 20-day month a 100-person firm has 2000 possible commute trips (20 days x 100 people = 2000 possible commute trips). To achieve a 6% participation rate, employees would work from home to avoid at least 120 of those commute trips (2000 x 6% = 120 commute trips).

Parking cash out of at least \$30.00 per month

Employees may choose to "cash out" the value of employer-provided parking by surrendering their parking spaces and receiving the taxable cash value of at least \$30.00 per month in return. (The Employer also agrees to provide employees at least 75% of the actual saved parking costs—even if it is greater than \$30.00.) The employer may provide a tax-free transit or eligible vanpool benefit up to the IRS allowable tax-free benefit per month instead of taxable cash, or a combination of vanpool/transit benefits and taxable cash. Overall, this strategy works best in locations where parking costs are high (e.g., urban central business districts), when the parking is leased, and when eliminating a parking space can significantly reduce costs to an employer and provide a significant payout to an employee. Where parking is very inexpensive, this option may not be effective.

An equivalent option proposed by the Employer that achieves demonstrable benefits and is agreed to by the EPA Team

Recognizing that different strategies will work for different employers and in different locations, an Employer may propose an alternative option or benefits package, as long as the Employer and the EPA Team can demonstrate together that it will: 1.) reduce the rate at which employees drive alone to and from the work site at least as successfully as other options, and 2.) that employees perceive the option as a significant workplace benefit, on par with the other options (regular telework, \$30 subsidy for vanpool, etc.). Options may include things like vacation leave for carpoolers and comprehensive shuttle services.





4c. And, three or more additional options from this list—or as proposed by the Employer and agreed to by the EPA Team

Note: Employers with fewer than 20 employees may choose to provide only one

1. Active membership in a Transportation Management Association (TMA) or similar organization; participation in a Spare the Air or other regional air quality initiative
2. Membership in a local ozone awareness program, in which you agree to notify employees of expected poor air quality and suggest ways that they might minimize polluting behaviors
3. Ridesharing or carpool matching, either in-house or through a local or regional agency
4. Pre-tax transit or vanpool benefits
5. Parking cash out less than \$30.00 per month or less than 75% of the actual parking benefit
6. Shuttles from transit stations, either employer-provided or through a local TMA or similar service provider
7. Parking at park-and-ride lots or vanpool staging areas
8. Provision of intelligent (i.e., real-time) commuting information
9. Preferred parking for carpools and vanpools
10. Reduced parking costs for carpools and vanpools
11. Employer run vanpools or subscription bus programs
12. Employer assisted vanpools
13. Secure bicycle parking, showers, and lockers
14. Electric bicycle recharging stations
15. Employee commuting awards programs
16. Discounts and coupons for bicycles for bicyclists or shoes for walkers
17. Compressed work schedules
18. Telework
19. Lunchtime shuttle
20. Proximate commute (where employees work at locations closer to their homes)
20. Incentives to encourage employees to live closer to work
21. On-site amenities (e.g., convenience mart, dry cleaning, etc.)
22. Concierge services
23. Participation/membership in a carsharing program
24. Other options as proposed by the Employer

5. Exceed a minimum level of employee participation
-14% non-SOV
or
- 1.12 AVR/AVO

One of the primary goals of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM program is to recognize employers that provide their employees with a package of commuter benefits that meets a National Standard of Excellence. In addition to providing an excellent package of benefits and in order to maintain the integrity of the concept of Excellence, the qualifying work sites must meet or exceed a minimum performance level for employee participation. That performance level is that on average at least 14% of employees should not





be driving alone to work (the average commuting behavior for non-MSA areas in the U. S.). Alternatively, employers may exceed an average vehicle ridership (AVR) or average vehicle occupancy (AVO) of 1.12. Employers agree to meet the performance level within 18 months of joining and continuously after that. The EPA Team strongly encourages you to surpass this performance benchmark.

6. Report program progress and success to EPA

To help measure the success of the program, we ask you to annually confirm your continuing participation in the program and provide an update on the status of your program to EPA. EPA will also conduct periodic annual surveys of small random samples of participating employers to find out how commuter benefits are affecting the commuting choices of your workforce. No employer will be surveyed two years in a row. If you are already gathering data comparable to our survey for a separate reporting requirement, we will accept that data in lieu of the survey.

Will this agreement change?

Yes. The EPA Team will make changes to the Application Form as changes in the market dictate. However, participants will be provided with plenty of notice prior to any substantive changes and may choose to continue or discontinue participation at any time.

What is a work site?

A work site is not necessarily an individual building, but is defined by the transportation environment within which it is located. For instance, several buildings on a corporate campus may be considered a single work site. Similarly, spaces in two buildings in the same urban core may be considered a single work site. Also, several locations all in the same rural county, even if widely separated but in the same transportation environment, may be considered a single site. On the other hand, even if locations are in close proximity but are in distinctly different environments, they should be considered separate work sites. For instance, an office near a rail station may only be a few miles from a suburban office not well served by transit. These should be considered separate work sites for purposes of this initiative. You may join at only one work site, at all of your work sites, or anything in between, provided that each work site meets the requirements of the program.

For how many work sites may I apply?

You may apply at only one work site, at all of your work sites, or anything in between, provided that each work site meets the requirements of the initiative.





Can different work sites offer different commuter benefits?

Yes. The actual package of benefits that is offered to employees will likely differ from site to site, depending on the commuting needs and available transportation options at each. Because of the varying transportation environments, you will need to provide individual reports for each registered work site.

How do I add additional work sites?

You may apply new work sites to the Application Form at any time by notifying the EPA Team and providing information about the new sites.

How do I submit applications for multiple work sites?

On the second page of the Application Form is space for work site information. To apply for more than one work site, please contact the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM Information Request Line at 888 856-3131 or e-mail at <bwc@epa.gov>.

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