

Program honored for excellence in commuting efforts

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By Phillip Giltman

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MARIETTA; One Cobb County community improvement district recently received national honors for its efforts in reducing traffic congestion and making the environment a cleaner and healthier place.

The Commuter Club, a program of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce's Cumberland Community Improvement District, which works to promote alternative modes of transportation in the Cumberland area, received the "Best Workplaces for Commuters" award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a recognition designed for organizations, businesses and districts that meet national standards of excellence in commuter benefits.

The Cumberland-Galleria office market is the first community in Georgia and only the second in the United States to earn this special business district designation from the EPA.

"The efforts of Commuter Club and the Cumberland CID provide a powerful example of an effective public-private partnership that allows the private sector to leverage its resources and creativity for the good of the entire community," said U.S. Rep. Johnny Isakson (R-east Cobb). "I'm proud to see a Cobb County community being honored nationally for its efforts to reduce congestion, improve air quality and create more great workplaces for commuters."

Malaika Rivers, executive director of the Commuter Club, said the six-year initiative provides commuter benefits to about 70,000 employees in the Cumberland-Galleria area of Cobb County.

Suzanne Rudzinski, director of EPA's Transportation Division, said, "the entire Cumberland office market qualifies for the unique 'Best Workplace for Commuters' District Designation, because of the exceptional package of commuter services offered through Commuter Club."

The EPA's "Best Workplace for Commuters" initiative was unveiled in September 2002 with the San Francisco Bay Area as the first pilot city to kick off the campaign.

Ms. Rudzinski said with the entire Cumberland-Galleria office market being named as a "Best Workplace for Commuters" District, metro Atlanta now surpasses every city in the nation, including New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, for having the highest number of participating employers offering some form of approved commuter benefit.

"We know that Atlantans who commute at peak travel times spend 75 hours a year; almost two full work weeks; stuck in traffic," said Tad Leithead, CID chairman. "The business leadership of the Cumberland-Galleria market has worked aggressively through Commuter Club to give employees and visitors more options for getting to and from their jobs."

To qualify as one of EPA's "Best Workplaces for Commuters," employers must provide at least one primary benefit, such as discount transit passes and three secondary benefits such as carpool matching, consolidated work schedules and reduced-cost parking for carpools and vanpools.

For details on how commute options can improve your commute or benefit an employer's bottom line as well as its community presence, call Malaika Rivers with the Commuter Club at (770) 859-2331.



Tad Leithead (L), Chair of Commuter Club/CID, stands with Commuter Club's Program Coordinator Kathryn Dyksterhous and Georgia-Pacific vanpool driver Ted Peyron in front of Georgia-Pacific's offices in Wildwood.

