

The environment

Local employers honored

Five Aspen employers, including local governments, have been singled out for recognition by the federal Environmental Protection Agency for promoting use of alternative transportation by their employees.

The Aspen Club and Spa, Aspen Skiing Co., Aspen Sports, Pitkin County and the City of Aspen were among 173 employers from 29 states to become charter members of the EPA's Commuter Choice Leadership initiative.

The new program recognizes employers who successfully promote alternative transportation. To earn the Commuter Choice status, employers must meet the EPA's standards of excellence.

These include having a designated transportation coordinator at the workplace, a centralized location for transportation information, subsidized employee bus passes, emergency transportation for workers who use alternative transportation, and at least three additional measures from a varied "menu" of transportation benefits.

All of Aspen's chosen employers belong to the Transportation Options Program, a city-sponsored networking group. As TOP members, they receive free emergency taxi service for workers, free transportation display boards, frequent construction alerts and a voice in city transportation issues.

"Employers in many metropolitan areas have commute programs because it's required by law," said the EPA's Jeffra Rockwell. "But in Aspen, they're doing it on their own — and that's really progressive."