

# Additional Application Information

*This document provides explanatory information to help you complete the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> application.*

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## 1. Tax-free transit benefits

Under this option, you agree to provide at least \$30 per month toward commuting via public transit to each employee whose actual transit cost is \$30 or more (we encourage you to provide up to the IRS limit of \$110 per month). If your employee's transit commuting cost is less than \$30 per month, then you must cover the full amount.

You may also provide vouchers that employees exchange for transit passes. Transit passes include unlimited ride passes, tokens, farecards or tickets.

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## 2. Tax-free vanpool benefits

Under this option, you agree to provide at least \$30 per month toward commuting via vanpool to each employee whose actual vanpool cost is \$30 or more (we encourage you to provide up to the IRS limit of \$110 per month). If your employee's vanpool commuting cost is less than \$30 per month, then you must cover the full amount.

You may also provide vouchers that employees exchange for vanpool services. A vanpool is any highway vehicle carrying at least seven adults (including the driver) primarily between their residences or common pick-up locations and the workplace. You can run your own vanpools or hire an outside contractor to provide vanpool service

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## 3. Telework

Allowing and encouraging your employees to work from home benefits both your company and your employees while reducing traffic and air pollution. The benefits of teleworking include reduced office space requirements, increased employee productivity and decreased use of sick leave.

Under this option, you agree to offer a telework program that reduces the number of commute trips by at least 6 percent. 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 2,000 possible commute trips (20 days x 100 people = 2,000 possible commute trips). To achieve a 6 percent reduction, employees would work from home to avoid at least 120 of those commute trips (2,000 possible commute trips x 6 percent = 120 commute trips avoided).

#### **4. Cash in lieu of employer-provided parking (Parking cashout)**

When you provide this benefit, your employees may choose to “cash out” the value of employer-provided or employer-subsidized parking. In exchange for the parking spot, you provide your employee a taxable cash payment, or a tax-free transit or eligible vanpool benefit up to \$110 per month, or a combination of tax-free transit/vanpool benefits and taxable cash. You agree to provide your employee at least 75 percent of the actual saved parking costs, even if it is greater than \$30 per month.

Although any employer that pays for or subsidizes parking can offer parking cashout, this strategy works best in locations where parking costs are expensive (e.g., urban central business districts), when the parking is leased, and when eliminating a parking space can significantly reduce costs to you and provide a significant payout to your employees. Where parking is very inexpensive, this option may not be effective.

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#### **5. Proposal for Alternative Primary Benefit**

Recognizing that different strategies may work better in different locations, you may propose an alternative option or benefits package. Working in conjunction with the Center for Urban Transportation Research, you must demonstrate that this option 1) reduces the rate at which your employees drive to work alone at least as successfully as the other primary benefits, and 2) is viewed by your employees as a significant workplace benefit. Options may include things like comprehensive shuttle services and very aggressive and successful ridesharing.

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#### **6. Supporting Benefits**

- Active membership in a Transportation Management Association (TMA) or participation in a voluntary regional air quality program (e.g., Spare the Air, Air Awareness, SEQL, Clean Air Coalition) or another employer-based commuter program
- Active 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
- Ridesharing or carpool matching, either in-house or through an outside organization
- Pre-tax transit subsidy deducted from employee paycheck
- Pre-tax vanpool subsidy deducted from employee paycheck
- Transit benefits of less than \$30 per month (or less than the full cost if less than \$30)
- Vanpool benefits of less than \$30 per month (or less than the full cost if less than \$30)
- Cash in lieu of an employer-provided parking spot in an amount less than \$30 per month (or less than 75 percent of the actual parking benefit)
- Shuttles from transit stations, either employer-provided or through a local TMA or similar service provider
- Parking at park-and-ride lots or vanpool staging areas
- Provision of real-time (i.e., intelligent) commuting information
- Preferred parking for carpools and vanpools

- Reduced parking costs for carpools and vanpools
- Employer-run vanpools or subscription bus programs
- Employer-assisted vanpools
- Employer-provided membership in a car sharing program (visit [www.carsharing.net](http://www.carsharing.net) to learn more)
- Secure bicycle parking, showers, and lockers
- Electric bicycle recharging stations
- Employee commuting awards programs
- Discounts and coupons for bicycles for bicyclists or shoes for walkers
- Compressed work schedules
- Telework that reduces commute trips by less than 6 percent
- Lunchtime shuttle
- Proximate commute (where employees work at locations closer to their homes)
- Incentives to encourage employees to live closer to work
- Incentives to encourage employees to use alternative transportation (e.g., additional vacation time)
- On-site amenities (e.g., convenience mart, dry cleaning, etc.)
- Concierge services
- Other options that you may propose

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#### **7. Emergency Ride Home (ERH)**

Providing an emergency ride home (ERH), such as a taxi ride, is a cost-effective way to help your employees choose to leave their cars at home. An ERH program provides employees who commute via transit, carpool, or vanpool with transportation home in the event of a personal emergency or unscheduled overtime. Although some run their own programs, others participate in programs administered by rideshare organizations, transportation management associations, or transit agencies.

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#### **8. Central point of contact**

Your central point of contact should be the person most familiar with the day-to-day operations of your commuter benefits programs. It is the person your employees know to contact for information about the commuter benefits you offer.

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#### **9. Centralize information**

Making information about your commuter benefits available to your employees is critical to the success of your program. Centralizing this information so your employees know where to go to find information about commuting and commuting options may be done in whatever way that makes the most sense for you and your employees. Examples include a Web-based 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. If you have more than one work site, you may choose to centralize information at each location.

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**10. Promote benefits**

You agree to effectively and regularly promote the availability of your commuter benefits package to your employees. Regularly means two or more times per year and any time your organization makes changes to your program or offerings. More frequent communication is encouraged. You should communicate in ways that are most likely to reach all employees.

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**11. Use BWC logo**

Once you are accepted as one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters, you will receive the program logo. We encourage you to promote your designation, both internally and externally, by using the logo in press releases, job ads, newsletters, annual reports and on your Web site.

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**12. 14% participation**

One of the primary goals of Best Workplaces for Commuters is to recognize organizations that provide their employees an excellent package of commuter benefits. As part of the concept of excellence, qualifying work sites must meet or exceed a minimum level of employee participation. This level is at least 14 percent of employees not driving alone to work. As one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters, you agree to meet or exceed this performance level within 18 months of joining. Fourteen percent is the average non-drive alone rate for all the non-metropolitan areas in the United States. We strongly encourage you to surpass this minimum performance benchmark.

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**13. Annual update**

We ask you to annually confirm your continuing participation in the program by providing us a brief update on your program and your current contact information. This is usually due on the anniversary date of acceptance into the program. You will be sent a reminder.

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**14. Random survey**

Periodically, the Center for Urban Transportation Research will conduct surveys of small random samples of Best Workplaces for Commuters to find out how commuter benefits are affecting the commuting choices of your workforce. No organization will be surveyed two years in a row. If you are already gathering data comparable to our survey, we may be able to accept that data in lieu of our survey.

## Information for Employers with Multiple Worksites

**Must all of our worksites meet the National Standard of Excellence before we apply for Best Workplaces for Commuters?**

No. You can become one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> by applying for any or all of your worksites that meet the *National Standard of Excellence*. We encourage you to apply for all worksites that qualify.

**How do I apply for multiple worksites?**

You may use the standard online application form, which is set up to accommodate information about the worksites you want to designate as Best Workplaces for Commuters. Once you indicate the number of worksites you are applying for, the form will prompt you for information about each one.

If you are unable to use the online application, you can fill out the PDF format version of the Application with the worksite information. If you need more room, you may use additional sheets.

**How do I decide which worksites to combine on a single application?**

Each application should include worksites that meet the following criteria:

- 1) The worksites must meet the National Standard of Excellence AND
- 2) The worksites must be located in the same metropolitan area AND
- 3) The worksites offer the same primary commuter benefit AND
- 4) The worksites have the same primary contact

If you have other worksites that do not meet these conditions, please submit a separate application for them.

**Can different worksites offer different commuter benefits?**

Yes, an effective commuter benefits package is likely to differ from site to site depending on the location, the commuting options available, and your employees' needs. Please submit separate agreements for worksites with different primary commuter benefits.

**How do I add additional worksites later?**

You may add additional worksites at any time in a couple of ways. You may submit a new application for these worksites or you may contact us and we will add the information about the additional worksites to your existing record.