

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

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Paid for not taking the car to work

Region's best job sites for commuters listed

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P-I REPORTER

Even on Seattle's drizzliest, chilliest mornings, Daniel Hirschstein leaves his new sports car in the garage and pedals through train yards and past petroleum tanks down a narrow industrial path to his lab at Amgen Inc.

"I think that there's too many cars on the road as it is," said the 47-year-old research scientist. "I just came back from L.A., and believe me, I'd hate to see our city turn into something like that, traffic-wise."

His company agrees. That's why every time Hirschstein swings his leg over the bicycle saddle, the biotechnology firm pays him to do it.

Amgen, along with 248 other Puget Sound-area employers, was named a best workplace for commuters today by a coalition led by the Environmental Protection Agency, local non-profits and transit organizations.

The coalition wants benefits such as bus passes and free ferry rides to become as common as health insurance and 401(k) accounts.

Three-quarters of Seattle-area commuters, or 1.13 million people, drove to work alone last year, according to the Census Bureau. If Seattle's population grows as predicted, more than 25,000 extra parking spaces will be needed downtown in the next quarter century, said Steve Gerritson, executive director of Commuter Challenge, a Seattle-based non-profit and coalition member.

"That just isn't going to happen. We don't have the space," he said. "We really have to make some effort here to get people out of their cars."



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Scott Eklund / P-I

Amgen spends slightly more than \$1 million per year encouraging the 800 employees at its Interbay campus and 200 in Bothell to bike, car pool, take the bus or share a van. That averages \$1,000 per employee. The company provides a smorgasbord of free commuter goodies: showers and lockers, onsite bike tune-ups, two bike shelters, ferry and bus rides, emergency cab rides, Flexcars for trips to the dentist and meetings, and a shuttle every 15 minutes to downtown.

The company gives \$50 gift certificates monthly to everyone who bikes, walks or is dropped off. They are redeemable at various stores, including outdoor gear retailer REI. Car poolers get \$25 gift certificates. "People love that REI one," said Amgen spokeswoman Carol Pawlak. "Seattle certainly has a traffic problem and this is a way around it."

Meanwhile, employees who drive pay \$65 a month to park. As a result, two-thirds arrive at work via some method other than driving alone, and 10 percent ride bikes, says Jan Law, who works full time as Amgen's employee transportation coordinator.

Fewer than 1 percent of corporations nationwide qualify as a best workplace for commuters, according to the EPA, which has previously ranked Fortune 500 companies but today recognized Puget Sound employers specifically for the first time.

Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks and the cities of Issaquah, Redmond, Renton and Tukwila made the list. Seattle did not.

"If you just want to look at our core downtown businesses, we would be on it," said Gregg Hirakawa, spokesman for Seattle's Department of Transportation. But many people who work in the city's outlying field offices keep irregular hours and must drive, he said.

To qualify for the list, a business must:

- Employ someone to tell employees about commuter benefits.
- Provide a way for employees to get home in an emergency.
- Offer a key commuter benefit, such as a monthly transit subsidy or a telecommuting program.
- Offer at least three supporting benefits, such as incentives, showers or dry cleaning.

Also, at least 14 percent of employees must participate, says Puget Sound's Best Workplaces for

Joe Parsons, who cycles to work at Amgen from his home on Capitol Hill, puts his bike away in the garage. A coalition of business and government organizations is releasing the first annual list of the Puget Sound's Best Workplaces for Commuters. The list spotlights 249 employers and two districts offering superior commuter benefits to 449,600 employees in the Puget Sound area.

Commuters Coalition.

"You can't force your employees to take the bus or to car pool," Commuter Challenge's Gerritson said. "They may be in locations where public transport doesn't operate."

About 12 percent of Puget Sound's work force car pools and about 23 percent of King County companies have telework programs allowing employees to work from home a couple of times per month, Gerritson said.

It's hard to get people out of cars because they equate wheels with necessity, Gerritson said. Immigrants seem to be leading the change in commuting habits nationally, representing 40 percent of people in large car pools, according to a report this week by The National Academies.

While not every company can afford \$1,000 per head like Amgen, even minor benefits have big impacts on the number of cars on the road, Gerritson said. For example, if every company in Puget Sound allowed employees to telecommute one day per week, traffic would drop approximately 20 percent, he said.

Smaller businesses can buy FlexPasses from the Urban Mobility Group, a non-profit run by the Downtown Seattle Association, King County Metro and the city of Seattle. More than 160 small downtown businesses have purchased the passes, said Carrie Blanco, the group's director.

The cost is \$285 per year per employee and businesses must buy one for every full-time employee, or none at all, she said.

As an incentive for businesses, the federal and state governments offer tax deductions for transit subsidies. But many Seattle-area businesses and commuters don't shun cars to enhance the bottom line, said Janis Hastings, an associate director in EPA's Seattle regional office.

"People look beyond the fact that it's saving them money here," she said. "Hopefully people are connecting it with saving the environment."

BEST WORKPLACES FOR COMMUTERS

The best workplaces for commuters, according to Puget Sound's Best Workplaces for Commuters Coalition:

4culture, Seattle

5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle

Advanced Computer Solutions Ltd., Seattle

Aetna, Seattle

Alaska Airlines, Seattle

Alliance Data Systems, Seattle
American Heart Association, Seattle
Amgen, Seattle
Amicus Law Group,PC, Seattle
Anchor Environmental, LLC, Seattle
AttachmateWRQ, Seattle
Attenex Corp., Seattle
Badgley Phelps & Bell, Seattle
Badgley-Mullins Law Group,PLLC, Seattle
Barry Kaimakis DDS, Seattle
Benefit Administration Co., Seattle
Berger/Abam Engineers Inc., Seattle
BHC Consultants, Seattle
Black Lowe & Graham,PLLC, Seattle
Blue Frog Mobile, Seattle
Brown and Caldwell, Seattle
Building Owners and Managers Association, Seattle
Callison Architecture Inc., Seattle
Cancer Research & Biostatistics, Seattle
Capital One, Federal Way
Carter and Burgess, Seattle
Cascade Land Conservancy, Seattle
Cascade Natural Gas Corp., Seattle
Cascadia Law Group, Seattle
CB Richard Ellis, Seattle
CBRE Melody, Seattle
Century Square, Seattle
Chef'n, Seattle
Chicago Title Insurance Co., Seattle
Children's Hospital & Regional Medical Center, Seattle
Christensen O'Connor Johnson Kindness PLLC, Seattle
Cigna, Seattle
City of Bellevue
City of Issaquah
City of Redmond
City of Renton
City of Tacoma - Public Works/Environmental Services
City of Tukwila
Clausen Law Firm PLLC, Seattle
ClearPoint, Seattle
CleverSet Inc., Seattle
Coldwater Creek, Seattle
Collins Woerman, Seattle

Columbia Bank, Seattle
Columbia Tower Club, Seattle
Commerce Bank of Washington, Seattle
Community Transit, Everett
Continental Reporting Service Inc., Seattle
Corr Cronin Baumgardner & Preece LLP, Seattle
Cosse International Securities, Seattle
Coughlin Porter Lundeen, Seattle
Cowan Miller & Lederman, Seattle
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Seattle
DiMartino Associates, Seattle
Discovery Institute, Seattle
DKS Associates, Seattle
Downtown Seattle Association, Seattle
Dr. Kegel's Office, Seattle
Easter Seals Little Eagles, Seattle
Ecology & Environment Inc., Seattle
Eddie Bauer, Redmond
Ederer Investment Co., Seattle
EDS, Federal Way
Entranco Inc., Bellevue
EnviroIssues, Seattle
eProject, Seattle
ERA Care Communities, Seattle
EvergreenBank, Seattle
Exbiblio, Seattle
Expedia Inc., Bellevue
Federal Aviation Administration - Northwest Mountain Region, Renton
FileNet Corp., Kirkland
Financial Security Group, Seattle
First Choice Health, Seattle
Flexcar - Seattle, Seattle
Foote Cone & Belding, Seattle
Fox's Gem Shop, Seattle
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle
Frontier Bank, Seattle
Genie Industries, Redmond
Genworth Financial, Seattle
Geomatrix Consultants Inc., Seattle
Global Energy Concepts, LLC, Seattle
GM Nameplate, Seattle
Goodrich Aviation Technical Services Inc., Everett
Gordon & Polscer, L.L.C., Seattle

Greater Redmond TMA, Redmond
Green Tree Childcare Center, Seattle
Greenfield Advisors LLC, Seattle
Group Health Cooperative, Seattle
Guido Perla Associates, Seattle
Hamlin and Associates, Seattle
Harbor Properties, Seattle
Harborview Medical Center, Seattle
Heller Ehrman LLP, Seattle
Heritage House at the Market, Seattle
Hewitt Architects, Seattle
Holland America Line, Seattle
Honeywell, Redmond
Integrated Benefits, Seattle
Intel Corp., DuPont
Intercontinental Insurance Services, Seattle
Jones & Jones Architects & Landscape Architects Ltd., Seattle
Joshua Green Corp., Seattle
Kinetic Books, Seattle
King County Bar Association, Seattle
Korry Electronics, Seattle
KPF Consulting Engineers, Seattle
Laidlaw Transit, Seattle
Laird Norton Tyee, Seattle
Legal Foundation of Washington, Seattle
LeGros Buchanan & Paul, Seattle
LeSourd & Patten, P.S., Seattle
Levy von Beck & Associates, P.S., Seattle
Linville Ursich, PLLC, Seattle
LMN Architects, Seattle
Makers Architecture and Urban Design, Seattle
Mattei Companies LLC, Seattle
McIntyre & Barns, PLLC, Seattle
Microsoft Corp., Redmond
Mikkelborg Broz Wells & Fryer, Seattle
Minor & James Medical Clinic, Seattle
Montgomery Purdue Blankinship & Austin, PLLC, Seattle
Morisset, Schlosser, Jozwiak & McGaw, Seattle
Nature Conservancy, Seattle
Neuhaus Chocolates, Seattle
Nielsen Shields PLLC, Seattle
Nintendo of America Inc., Redmond
Nordstrom Inc., Seattle

Northwest Airlines Inc., Seattle
Northwest Defenders Association, Seattle
Nyhus Communications LLC, Seattle
O'Connor Consulting Group, LLC, Seattle
Office Lease, Seattle
Ogden Murphy Wallace, PLLC, Seattle
OMD, Seattle
Open Interface North America, Seattle
Oracle Corp. USA, Bellevue
Otak, Seattle
Overlake Hospital Medical Center, Bellevue
PACCAR Inc., Bellevue
Paladino & Company Inc., Seattle
Par3 Communications, Seattle
Paragon Investment Management, Seattle
Parametrix Inc., Kirkland
Parker Services Inc., Seattle
Parsons Brinckerhoff Inc., Seattle
Patrick A. Fleege, DDS, Seattle
Philips Medical Systems/Philips Ultrasound, Bothell
Pierce Transit, Lakewood
Pogo Linux Inc., Seattle
Porter, Kohli & LeMaster, P.S., Seattle
Premera Blue Cross, Mountlake Terrace
Princess Tours, Seattle
ProBusiness Services of Washington, Bothell
Program for Appropriate Technology in Health - PATH, Seattle
PRR, Seattle
Puget Sound Business Journal, Seattle
Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, Seattle
Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle
R.W. Beck, Seattle
RA Bench, Seattle
Rafel Manville, Seattle
REI, Kent
Ridolfi, Seattle
Rogers & Norman Inc., Seattle
Romax Inc., Seattle
Ross & Associates Environmental Consulting Ltd., Seattle
Russell Investment Group, Tacoma
Mellon Analytical Services, Tacoma
Safeco Insurance, Redmond
Sasquatch Books, Seattle

Savitt & Bruce LLP, Seattle
Schlosser Geographic Systems, Seattle
Seattle Biomedical Research Institute, Seattle
Seattle Chapter 13, Seattle
Seattle Infant Development Center, Seattle
Seattle Metropolitan Magazine, Seattle
Seattle-Northwest Securities Corp., Seattle
Security Properties, Seattle
Seed IP Law Group, PLLC, Seattle
Simpson Tacoma Kraft Co., Tacoma
SMR Architects, Seattle
Snohomish County, Everett
Soha & Lang, P.S., Seattle
Spacelabs Healthcare, Issaquah
Sparling, Seattle
Sprague Israel Giles Inc., Seattle
Starbucks Coffee Co., Seattle
State Farm Insurance, Dupont
Stevens Pass Ski Area, Skykomish
Stewart Title Guaranty, Seattle
Swedish Medical Center, Seattle
Symetra Financial, Bellevue
Tacoma Public Utilities, Tacoma
The Boeing Co., Everett
The Myers Associates PC, Seattle
The Myers Associates, PC, Seattle
The Seattle Foundation, Seattle
Therapeutic Associates, Seattle
Thomas S. Maring MD, Seattle
TKG Consulting Engineers, Seattle
Trillium Publishing, Seattle
U. S. Bank, Seattle
U.S. Department of Labor, Seattle
U.S. EPA Region 10, Seattle
Unico Properties Inc., Seattle
University of Washington, Seattle
University Village, Seattle
USI Northwest, Seattle
UW Physicians Network, Seattle
Verdiem Corp., Seattle
Verizon - Washington, Everett
Verizon Wireless, Bellevue
Visions Northwest, Seattle

Vulcan Inc., Seattle
Wachovia LLC, Seattle
Washington Appellate Project, Seattle
Washington Capital Management, Seattle
Washington Community Reinvestment Association, Seattle
Washington Court of Appeals, Seattle
Washington Department of Social and Health Service, Seattle
Washington Mutual, Bothell
Washington Protection Advocacy System, Seattle
Washington State Attorney General's Office, Seattle
Washington State Bar Association, Seattle
Washington State Department of Ecology, Olympia
Washington State Department of Human Rights Commission, Seattle
Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, Olympia
Washington State Department of Transportation, Olympia
Washington State Department of Transportation, Seattle
Washington State Department of Transportation, Tumwater
Wechsler Becker LLP, Seattle
Weyerhaeuser Co., Federal Way
WhitePages.com, Seattle
Widemile, Seattle
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC, Seattle
Winterbauer & Diamond PLLC, Seattle
Wohlman & Toschi Inc., Seattle
Wurts & Associates, Seattle
Yarmuth Wilson Calfo, PLLC, Seattle
Zillow Inc., Seattle
Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership, Seattle
ZymoGenetics Inc., Seattle

MORE INFORMATION

For more commuting resources, visit www.bwc.gov.

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