

How To Guide

For Developing A SMART COMMUTE PROGRAM For Your Work Site



Reduce the Cost and Stress of
Drive-Along Commuting

Step 1: Understanding SMART COMMUTE Programs

What is Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program ?

Many of Westchester County's employers and building owners and managers are realizing that traffic congestion is a growing problem having negative impacts on the business community and our quality of life.

The Westchester County Department of Transportation has developed Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program to alert both employers, building owners and managers and their employees and tenants of various strategies to increase the use of transit and other alternatives in order to help reduce drive-alone commuting.

Over 100 employers are enrolled in the Program and receive free commuting benefits for employees and others traveling to their location, including:

- Transportation Information Fairs that can be held at your work site.
- The \$Commute-n-Save Program\$ that gets employees to work using pre-tax salary dollars, and saves employers on payroll related taxes.
- A Commute Information Rack with restocking service to make transit schedules available at your location.
- Transportation Information Kits for new employees.

For more information about the Program or to become a member, please call (914) 285-4444 or access our website at www.westchestergov.com/smartcommute

What is a "Work Site SMART COMMUTE Program" ?

A "Work Site SMART COMMUTE Program" is an array of strategies implemented at an employment location that are designed to promote and encourage employees or tenants to consider and use alternatives to driving-alone to work.

To be most effective, the program should enjoy management support from the very top. Additionally, a staff person at the work location should be assigned "SMART COMMUTE Program" responsibilities that only needs to be just a part of his or her assigned work.

What are "Commute Alternatives" ?

"Commute alternatives" are the various ways of getting to and from work. Employees at your work site select the way they commute based on their work hours, location of the work site, the nature of their work, the need to do personal errands and, of course, the cost.

Employers can help employees find a "SMARTer" way to get to work with the help of Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program which can provide employees with specific information about transit, carpooling, vanpooling, and other options. Employers can also sponsor programs such as telecommuting, alternate work schedules, a guaranteed ride home program, and incentives to promote "Commute Alternatives".

Why Commute Alternatives ?

Growing traffic congestion threatens our quality of life. Traffic congestion is a major problem nationwide as frustrated businesses and commuters waste an astonishing \$72 billion in fuel and time each year. Traffic congestion can waste energy; delay the delivery of goods and services; result in employee tardiness; create stress; pollute the air and raise the cost of both living and doing business in our County.

Benefits of a SMART COMMUTE Program at Your Work Site

Studies show that employer involvement greatly improves the use of commute alternatives among employees. Everybody wins!

Your Company/Organization wins through:

- ◆ Improved employee productivity
- ◆ Improved morale
- ◆ Easier recruitment and retention
- ◆ Reduced parking and office space needs/costs
- ◆ Reduced absenteeism and late arrivals
- ◆ Public recognition as a good corporate citizen

Your Employees win through:

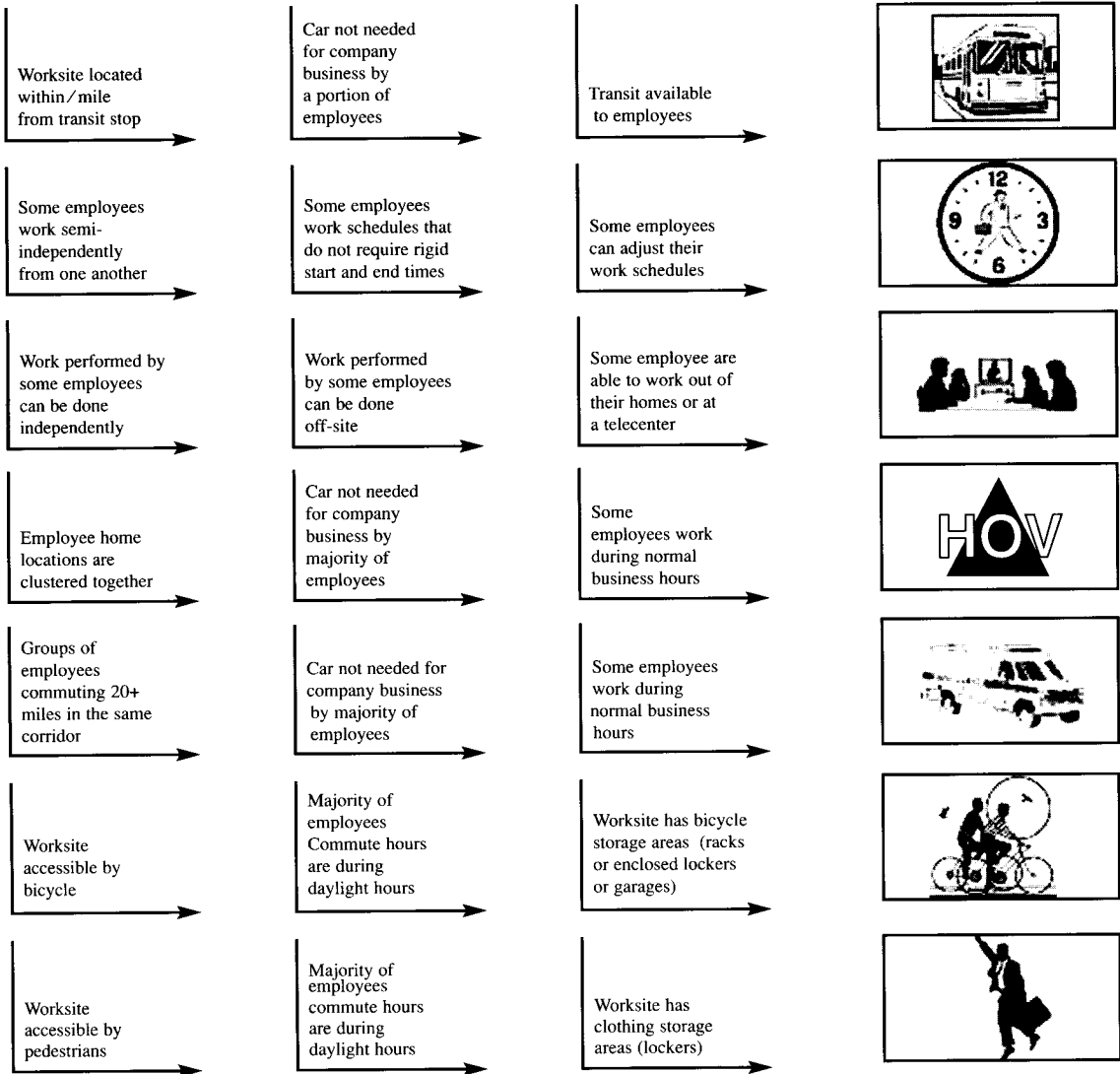
- ◆ Reduced commuting time and expense
- ◆ Reduced wear and tear on personal vehicles
- ◆ Less stress
- ◆ Productive use of time while taking transit or ridesharing
- ◆ Flexible work schedules & arrangements

Our Community wins through:

- ◆ Easier travel on streets and highways
- ◆ Increased economic vitality
- ◆ Economic development benefits
- ◆ Improved overall quality of life

Step 2: Identifying Alternatives to Driving Alone: What's Best for your Work Site?

To identify the best alternatives to drive-alone commuting for your work site, start at the first box, if yes, go to the next box.



Now that you have identified the best commute alternatives for your work site, you need to build your work site SMART COMMUTE Program by: knowing about specific transit and other alternatives available to Westchester commuters; and developing and implementing strategies to maximize use of these alternatives by employees.

Step 3: Learning What's Available in Westchester

TRANSIT

For many commuters, public transit can be the preferred choice. Use of public transit helps employees arrive relaxed and ready to work, free of traffic and driving-related stress. For commuting to work locations in Westchester County, the many transit options listed below may provide a “SMARTer” way to get to work!

◆ **The Bee-Line System** is Westchester’s bus transit network with more than 60 routes. Major service hubs for the system include the White Plains Trans-Center and the downtown areas of Yonkers, Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle. The Bee-Line System primarily serves Westchester County but also includes connecting services to Bronx subways, Metro-North trains, Transport of Rockland’s Tappan ZEEexpress; Connecticut Transit’s I-Bus, and transit from Putnam, Dutchess, and Orange Counties. Among the Bee-Line’s routes are several “shuttle loops” - providing connections to major employment centers and train stations in the County. Bee-Line Para-Transit provides curb-to-curb service for people with disabilities. For more information, call (914) 682-2020 or visit the Bee-Line website at www.beelinebus.com

◆ **MTA Metro-North Railroad** is the second largest commuter railroad in the country, with three lines serving Westchester County: the Hudson, Harlem and New Haven Lines. Metro-North’s hub is Grand Central Terminal in Midtown Manhattan. For schedule, fare or other information, call 1-800-METRO-INFO (638-7646) or visit Metro-North’s website at www.mta.nyc.ny.us

◆ **The TAPPAN ZEEexpress Operated by Transport of Rockland** is a commuter bus service operating Monday through Friday from Rockland County to Tarrytown and White Plains. Call Transport of Rockland at (914) 364-3333 for route, fare, and schedule information and the location of Super Saver Ticket outlets.

◆ **The I-Bus Stamford-White Plains Express Operated by CTTransit** provides service in both directions connecting Stamford and White Plains. Travel time is approximately one half-hour in each direction. Service is provided on weekdays throughout the day. Call CTTransit at 1-888-BUS-RIDE (287-7433) toll-free from area codes 203 and 914 for schedule information, fare options and ticket sale locations.

◆ **Poughkeepsie-White Plains Express Bus Operated by Leprechaun Lines** from Dutchess and Putnam counties to the Westchester Medical Center and downtown White Plains. There are frequent trips in both the morning and the afternoon. For more information, call Leprechaun Lines at (914) 565-7900 or (800) 624-4217.

◆ **Orange-Westchester Link - The OWL Bus Operated by ShortLine** offers daily express commuter bus service from Orange County to various locations in Tarrytown and White Plains. There is also a stop at the Nanuet park-and-ride lot at Exit 14 of the New York State Thruway in Rockland County. There are several trips in both the morning and the afternoon. Call ShortLine at 1-800-499-3541 for route, fare and schedule information.

◆ **Putnam Area Rapid Transit (PART)** is Putnam County’s bus transit system, operating five transit routes and the county’s paratransit service for eligible disabled persons. Call PART at (914) 878-RIDE (7433) for route, fare, and schedule information.

◆ **MTA New York City Transit Subways & Buses** - Several MTA bus routes and subway lines make connections with Bee-Line System buses in the Bronx and with the Bee-Line System’s BxM4C in Manhattan. Call MTA New York City Transit at (718) 330-1234 or visit the web site at www.mta.nyc.ny.us for further information. For information on Metro-Card, call 1-800-METROCARD (638-7622).

CARPOOLING

This "SMART COMMUTE" choice reduces the number of cars on the road and in your company parking lot. Sharing a ride can save an employee up to \$1,500 a year by lowering gasoline bills, insurance costs, and car maintenance.

Those who carpool can take advantage of special HOV lanes at the Tappan Zee Bridge toll plaza, for example, to reach their destinations faster and pay reduced tolls. They can choose to read, sleep or chat when they are not behind the wheel.

Carpooling can be encouraged through computerized matching of riders with the same needs and through company involvement in ridesharing programs.

For more information and assistance about helping employees who may be interested in carpooling, call MetroPool's Westchester Representative at (914) 993-0649 or 1-800-FIND-RIDE.

VANPOOLING

Full-size vans and minivans carrying 7-15 passengers are the next step up from carpools. The vehicles may be company owned or leased from a private vanpool company.

MetroPool can provide full assistance to employees within a company who wish to form a vanpool by holding information and organizational meetings. At these meetings, potential vanpool groups are identified, routes are planned and the program and commitment are clearly explained.

To get information and assistance about assisting employees who may be interested in vanpooling, call MetroPool's Westchester Representative at (914) 993-0649 or 1-800-FIND-RIDE.

TELECOMMUTING

With Telecommuting (also called Telework), employees work at home or at a satellite office or telework center near home one or more days a week, instead of commuting to the main office. Telecommuting can

eliminate the commute trip entirely if the employee is working from home. If a nearby telecenter is being utilized, this can significantly reduce the employee's commute time and distance. Employees can be linked to the workplace by computer and modem or simply can do work that requires nothing more than a telephone. Employees can telecommute full-time or just a few days a month. For more information about setting up a Telecommuting program at your work site, contact Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES

An Alternative Work Schedule program (compressed work week, flextime, staggered hours) can be beneficial in a number of ways. It can provide versatility, enabling employees to more conveniently use transit and rideshare options, as well as avoid traffic congestion and transit crowding. It can also be an attractive employee recruitment tool that allows employees to work around childcare or school schedules. Employees tend to view Alternative Work Schedule programs as a highly desirable benefit. For more information about setting up an Alternative Work Schedule program, contact Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444.

BIKING & WALKING

Approximately five percent of the population live within walking distance of their work location and 20 percent live within biking distance. Walking or biking need not be done on a daily basis to be a valuable commute option; indeed, many employees walk or bike only a few days a week during the warmer months of the year. Employers interested in promoting walking and biking can do so by providing bicycle storage, showers and locker rooms, and by allowing employees who walk or bike to dress casually on those days.

The Westchester County Department of Transportation can provide technical assistance to employers interested in improving pedestrian and bicycle access to their work sites. For more information, contact Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444.

Step 4: Choosing The Strategies for Your Program & Knowing Who to Contact for Help

Listed below are a number of strategies that can be used to develop your “Work Site SMART COMMUTE Program”.

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)

A Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program, also known as an Emergency Ride Home program, can significantly increase employee participation in transit use and ridesharing by allaying an employee’s concerns about getting home in an emergency (such as when a child is sick). While it is entirely up to the employer to establish eligibility requirements for a work site’s GRH program, most programs consider such things as the breakdown of a rideshare vehicle, missing a carpool or the last bus due to unscheduled overtime, or sudden illness to be bona fide reasons for using the GRH program.

Because most GRH programs work on a voucher system (where arrangements are made with a transportation provider for billing), usage can be easily tracked. This can also discourage abuse since employees know that their usage is recorded. An alternative is to ask employees to pay the provider for the ride home and be reimbursed later. In either case, what is surprising to most employers is how little a GRH program is actually used. It is a remarkably effective and cost-efficient program for promoting the use of transit and ridesharing. A turn key GRH program that Westchester employers can join is available through MetroPool, Inc. For more information, contact MetroPool’s Westchester Representative at (914) 993-0649 or 1-800-FIND-RIDE.

The \$Commute-n-Save\$ Program (TransitChek)

Commuters can save up to \$2,000 a year by using pre-tax dollars for commutation costs if they are getting to work by bus, rail, ferry, subway or eligible vanpool! For more information, contact Westchester’s SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444 and ask about \$Commute-n-Save\$, or access our website at www.westchestergov.com/smartcommute

Management Support/Positive Attitude

This is an in-house requirement for any program to succeed. High-level management support helps to ensure employee confidence in a commutation program. Also, the manner in which a new program is conveyed can be the difference between success and failure. Maintaining an enthusiastic, helpful attitude is the best way to present potential commute alternatives to employees. Remember, Westchester’s SMART COMMUTE Program is voluntary for employees as well as employers, so employees should never be pushed into changing commute modes.

Parking Management Strategies

Parking strategies can be structured to provide incentives to employees who carpool or vanpool, or to encourage the use of transit. Measures can include parking charges, preferential parking for car and vanpools, reduced parking costs for car and vanpools, and reduced parking supply. For more information and to explore possibilities at your work site, contact Westchester’s SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444 or access our website at www.westchestergov.com/smartcommute.

Incentives/Awards/Recognition

Incentives reward an employee’s choice to use a commute alternative. Incentives may be small or large and may include TransitChek vouchers, preferred parking, free lunches, movie passes, oil changes, car wash coupons, days off, gift certificates, etc.

Most people enjoy being recognized for their efforts. A simple way to maintain employee participation in using commute alternatives is to reward them with certificates or awards of some kind for regular participation over an extended period of time. Employees can also be recognized in company newsletters, through designations such as “Commuter of the Month,” where the employee’s picture is posted in a common area, or an annual recognition lunch or picnic.

On-Site Facilities/Services

Provision of facilities like bike racks and showers and services such as postal, dry cleaning pick-up/delivery, banking, food services, sundry shops, direct payroll deposit, shoe repair pick-up, etc. will help eliminate the need for employees to drive alone. Local businesses are often willing to make arrangements with employers or building managers to provide these types of services.

Trip Planning Service for Individuals

Your employees can receive an Individual Trip Plan for their commute. This Trip Plan details specific transit routes or other options. If appropriate, transit timetables are sent out with the Plan. To access this service, contact Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444.

Ride Matching & Vanpool Organizing Assistance

You can host and schedule a meeting to bring MetroPool's Westchester Representative to your work site! Employees can learn more about car and vanpooling, and on-site assistance can be provided in matching and organizing interested participants. Call MetroPool in Westchester at (914) 993-0649 or 1-800-FIND-RIDE.

New Employee Commute Information Kits

You can obtain a supply of New Employee Commute Information Kits to distribute to newly hired staff by contacting Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program at (914) 285-4444. These kits contain detailed information about transportation services available to Westchester commuters as well as free "try transit" bus tickets that can be used on any route of the Bee-Line System.

Employer-provided Shuttles to/from Transit Stops

If the distance between your work site and nearby transit is too great for most people to walk, your organization may want to consider offering employees a shuttle (usually a van) to/from nearby transit stops or stations. A company-owned vehicle may be used for the serv-

ice, or it may be contracted with a private bus operator. A list of private shuttle providers is available through Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program by calling (914) 285-4444.

Marketing Your Program

There are a host of ways to market your "Work Site SMART COMMUTE Program" including the following: newsletters, posters, e-mail bulletins, fliers, transportation fairs, display racks, award events, etc. Upon your request, Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program can provide you with the two turn key services noted below. Just call (914) 285-4444.

◆ Transportation Information Fairs - A

Transportation Fair at your work site will be tailored to your location and may be as big or as small as you like. You may want to combine the Fair with another event, such as a Health Fair, Environment Day, or Site-Services Day. A representative from Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program will attend along with representatives from appropriate transportation providers. Tables will be set up in a common area of your work site, usually during lunch hour, and employees can learn about their commute options in a casual atmosphere. Westchester's SMART COMMUTE Program will provide posters to promote the Fair prior to the selected date and will set-up on the day of the event. To encourage attendance, employers often provide refreshments. It's that simple. It's fun! It's a valuable benefit! **It's Free!**

◆ Commute Information Racks - Commute

Information Racks are display units, large or small depending on your needs, that are filled with transit schedules and other commute brochures appropriate to your work site. Keeping your rack stocked and up to date is simple. This also, is a **free service!**