



Pictured Above: MDE employees cycling and carpooling, commuters using the shared Montgomery Park Shuttle, and the ATG walking group. All photo credits: ATG members.



EMPLOYER PROFILE

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT'S ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION GROUP

Some organizations may have one or two employees that help share commuting information, but the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has a whole volunteer team that helps promote sustainable commute options to their colleagues!

The Alternative Transportation Group (ATG) at MDE is comprised of approximately 30 employees across the organization who volunteer their time and energy to help make transportation options easier, safer, more enjoyable, and sustainable. Ten years ago, a former MDE employee started the ATG with the goal of creating an alternative transportation culture at the department. Now, the group is chaired by Nicholas Zahn and meets monthly to discuss opportunities to get involved with transportation initiatives, programs, and projects happening on and near the multi-tenant campus at the historic Montgomery Park Business Center. Located in South Baltimore, the campus is accessible by foot and by bike, adjacent to the Gwynns Falls and Carroll Park bike paths, near two MARC train stations, and directly served by two BaltimoreLink local bus routes and the Montgomery Park private shuttle.

The list of commuter benefits and amenities for MDE employees is extensive and includes:

- Free Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) services including local bus, commuter bus, light rail, and subway;
- Undercover bike parking near the building's main entrance;
- An on-site gym that offers free showers and lockers; and
- Telework and flexible scheduling for many employees.

Being part of a multi-tenant location offers additional benefits to commuters including:

- A food court;
- Electric vehicle charging stations;
- Designated, preferential carpool parking spaces; and
- A free shuttle that offers morning and afternoon connections between Montgomery Park and other major transit hubs in Baltimore City.

The ATG does many things to promote these commuting options, benefits, and events that encourage using sustainable transportation: they maintain a location in a common area of the building to distribute commute program information and printed bus schedules; maintain an email list and intranet site with information on the Montgomery Park shuttle, commuter resources, and transportation-related events; and connect with new employees during orientation. The ATG hosts events for MDE staff throughout the year to promote cycling, walking, transit, and ridesharing to work. They lead MDEs participation in regional, statewide, and national events like Bike to Work Week, Walktober, and the National Alliance of Mental Illness' (NAMI) NAMIWalks. According to ATG Member, Jennifer Miller, several MDE employees participated in a monthly bike ride challenge, logging bike rides each day



The ATG promotes the Montgomery Park Shuttle, transit options, and active commuting to MDE employees!



Left: Premium carpool parking space that is raffled to all participating carpool groups every 90 days.

Middle: Carpool parking signs and permits administered by ATG for all Montgomery Park tenants.

Right: MDE's 2021 Cycle September award presented by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council.

and encouraging others to ride. The top participating employees received prizes and commemorative plaques.

Being an employer in a multi-tenant building can sometimes make it challenging to implement commuter programs, but the ATG members have successfully collaborated with the Montgomery Park Property Management on several transportation initiatives. Their coordination has helped to continue expanding the number of electric vehicle charging stations for MDE fleet vehicles along with building tenants and external visitors. The ATG also promotes the Montgomery Park Shuttle and is planning new ways to increase awareness as MDE employees return to working on-site more frequently. Another successful element of their collaboration is the preferential carpool parking program. ATG member Sharon Guida manages

the carpool parking permit system for MDE employees. When ATG requested to add carpool parking spaces for their employees, the Montgomery Park Property Management asked if the program could be opened to the other tenants in the building. The ATG agreed and Sharon reported that the program has drawn interest and participation from employees of other tenant employers. The carpool parking spaces are now concentrated in one of the four parking areas, but there is one carpool parking space located in the most convenient parking lot (typically reserved for guests) that is raffled off to carpool participants to use for 90 days. A great incentive for sharing the drive to work!

In addition to promoting sustainable transportation options, the ATG also advocates for accessibility improvements around Montgomery Park, including working with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to increase crossing times at the main roadway pedestrian crossing, and providing input on nearby bike lane designs to improve safe access for cyclists. The ATG also participates in the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee's pedestrian subcommittee. The ATG is also actively engaged with the local community; members of the group lead lunchtime walks for MDE staff to become more familiar with the surrounding areas (including the local farmer's market!) and have made good connections with the residential groups in Pigtown and Friends of Carroll Park on a variety of shared community and transportation interests.

Like many employers, maintaining connections with MDE colleagues and reaching new employees has been a challenge throughout COVID, but as in-person orientation sessions resume, the ATG expects to have more opportunities to meet new employees and share commuting resources. This fall, the ATG is also planning an event to re-engage with the entire organization and raise awareness of the shuttle, transit, and additional commuting resources available to them.

Commuter Choice Maryland is thrilled to recognize MDE as our newest – and first Maryland State Agency – Employer Partner. By promoting commuting options that reduce drive-alone trips, the initiatives from the ATG help to support MDE's mission "to protect and restore the environment for the health and well-being of all Marylanders." If your organization offers and promotes commuter benefits or would like free assistance to start or expand your program, contact Commuter Choice or join the Employer Partner program online at: www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner/



Pictured above: The ATG leads lunchtime walking groups year-round to help MDE employees connect with the surrounding community.