

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The Maryland Department of Transportation is a customer-driven leader that delivers safe, sustainable, intelligent, exceptional, and inclusive transportation solutions in order to connect our customers to life's opportunities.



# COMMUTER CHOICE MARYLAND

# Active Commuting Toolkit

*Commuter Benefits for Walking, Running, Bicycling, and Scooting*



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## ABOUT COMMUTER CHOICE MARYLAND

Diminished productivity, frustration and lost time are felt by many Maryland employees who experience traffic with their daily commutes. In an effort to ease commuter challenges, the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) launched Commuter Choice Maryland. Commuter Choice Maryland is a Travel Demand Management (TDM) program that works with employers to maximize traveler choices, and deliver transportation solutions and services that can reduce congestion, conserve energy, protect the environment, and facilitate economic opportunity.



### How can we help you?

We aim to help take the stress out of the daily commute by promoting alternative options to driving alone such as the use of public transportation, vanpooling, walking, biking, teleworking, Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, and alternative work schedules, to enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders. The Commuter Choice Maryland team, in conjunction with local TDM specialists, provide free support to help commuters find their best way to work, and to help employers establish commuter benefits programs that help recruit and retain top talent, meet sustainability goals, and qualify for financial benefits including the Federal Transportation Fringe and Maryland Commuter Tax Credit.

Visit [CommuterChoiceMaryland.com](https://www.commuterchoicemaryland.com) for more information.

### Contact Commuter Choice Maryland

#### Commuter Choice Maryland

Website: [CommuterChoiceMaryland.com](https://www.commuterchoicemaryland.com)

Phone: 410-865-1100

Hours: Monday–Friday from 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Email: [CommuterChoice@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:CommuterChoice@mdot.maryland.gov)

Facebook: [facebook.com/CommuterChoiceMaryland](https://facebook.com/CommuterChoiceMaryland)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/commuterchoicemd3](https://linkedin.com/in/commuterchoicemd3)

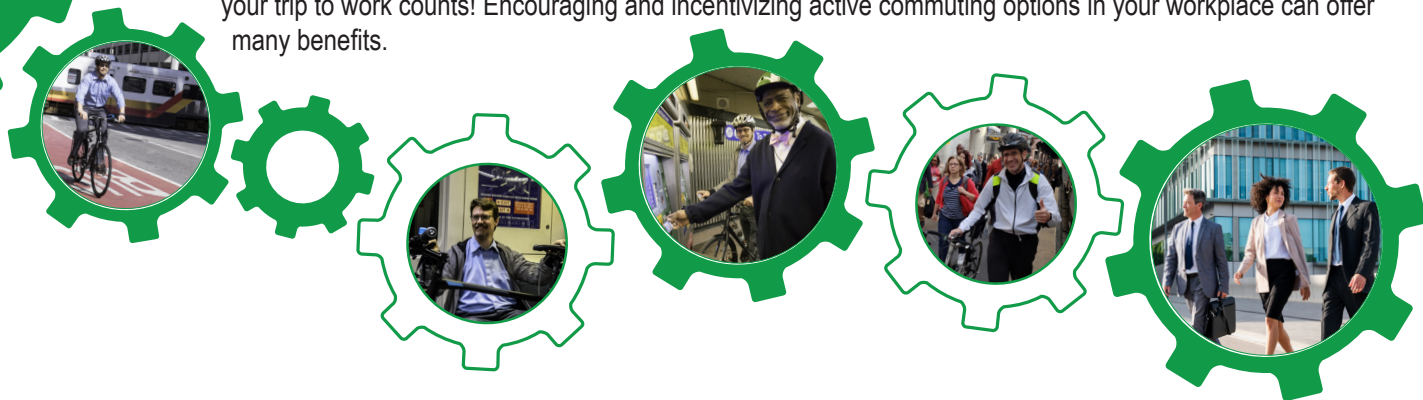




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## WHAT IS ACTIVE COMMUTING?

Incorporating physical activity into the work commute is referred to as “active commuting” and typically involves walking, running, bicycling, and using public transportation. Anything that gets you using your own muscle power as part of your trip to work counts! Encouraging and incentivizing active commuting options in your workplace can offer many benefits.



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## WHY OFFER BENEFITS FOR ACTIVE COMMUTING?

### Support healthy choices and wellbeing.

- Employees who use active transportation options like walking and biking often find it offers them an opportunity to fit some exercise into their day and can boost mood and productivity. Walking offers stress relief, fitness, and mindful eating which together improves one's overall health in both mind and body.
- If it's not possible for employees to bike or walk the whole way, they may still get the benefit of combining these options with another one like transit. For example, many transit stations offer bike parking and most transit operators allow riders to bring their bikes on buses and trains. Employees may also have “first/last mile” solutions, like bikeshare or scooter share options between their home and a transit station or bus stop, or between a park-and-ride lot and work.

### Meet organization sustainability goals.

- Implementing benefits that encourage environmentally sustainable commute options may help contribute to your organization's climate action plan or other sustainability goals and could earn points towards building and organizational certifications.



### Did you know?

According to a 2017 study, walk commutes were associated with lower risks of cardiovascular disease.

(Celis-Morales et al, [link](#))



Maryland  
Green  
Registry

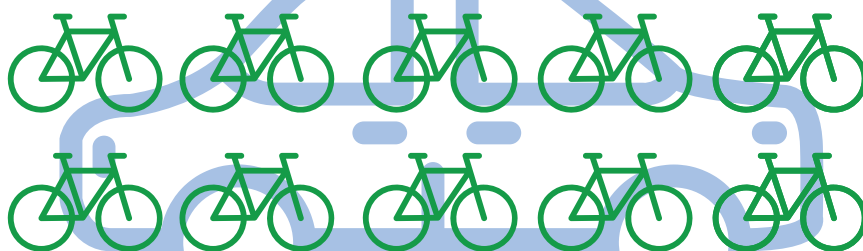






### Everyone can save money!

- Using bikes, scooters, running, or walking to work usually costs significantly less than driving, and offering financial incentives for employees to be active commuters can help them try these options if they hadn't before and help them sustain the routine.
- How much does parking cost your organization? Reducing the need for physical parking spaces could benefit your organization financially by allowing it to free up demand for clients and lead to additional cost savings if your organization pays for on-site or near-site parking.
- Employers who offer qualifying subsidies for active commuting may be eligible to claim 50% back (up to \$100 per employee per month) with the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit.



### Earn recognition as a leader in providing commuter benefits.

Become a Commuter Choice Maryland Employer Partner and your organization will be recognized for its leadership in providing commuter benefits to our statewide audience through our website, social media, webinars, and newsletters. It's easy and free to enroll: [www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner).



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## BUILD AN ACTIVE COMMUTER PROGRAM

### What active commuting benefits qualify for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit?

Employers who subsidize employees' commuting costs for walking, running, biking, and using scooters may be eligible to claim the Commuter Tax Credit. Eligible costs include:

- Shoes and reflective gear for walking and running commuters
- Bicycle gear and accessories (helmets, hydration packs, bottles with cages, spare tubes, patch kits, tire pumps, tire levers, bicycle multitools, bike shoes, bike gloves, saddle bags, reflective accessories, and locks)
- Bicycle maintenance
- Bikeshare and scooter share memberships



Thermo Fisher Scientific Bikeshare

### More ways to support and encourage active commuting:

Offering subsidies to help employees offset their costs is just one way to create a workplace that encourages and supports active commuting. Here are some more ideas:

- Install bike parking – bike racks are low-cost options, but covered bike racks, bike lockers, and indoor bike parking are great ways to help bike commuting employees feel secure. There are many bike parking design options that accommodate all types of spaces and needs. If providing physical bike parking isn't an option, allow employees to bring bicycles inside – this can be the easiest and most cost-effective approach!



- Sponsor a bike share station or designate parking for dockless scooter and bike system parking.
- Install space for lockers, change rooms, and showers for employees who walk, run, or bike commute. Look to indoor areas that could be converted for these purposes or get creative with outdoor self-contained options. Or, check with a local fitness center to ask if they offer discounted or shower-only memberships for active commuters.
- Offer other on-site amenities like bike repair stands and tools; invite local bike shop mechanics to provide on-site bike tune-ups and repairs or lead workshops. Support your walking and running commuters in creative ways like inviting professionals to conduct gait analysis or therapists to offer chair massages.
- Make car share options available so active commuters can attend off-site meetings, complete work tasks, or even run errands without needing a personal vehicle.
- Initiate a bike and/or walking program to offer team building among employees and improve the organization's health.
- Provide maps that show biking and walking routes in the region and share electronic resources such as the [MDOT Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress \(LTS\) map](#) which illustrates how bikeable a roadway is for people of varying cycling abilities.
- Get involved in annual events like Bike to Work Week, Bike to Work Day, and Walktober.



UMD College Park Bike Racks



### Don't forget about Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)!

Employees who walk, bike, use transit, or share the drive to work at least twice per week may be able to use the free GRH program to access six free rides home from work per year for personal or family illness and unscheduled overtime. Visit [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org) to determine if your company is located in the free GRH service area. If not, consider starting your own GRH program – these costs may also be eligible for the Commuter Tax Credit.

### Active commuters can earn big rewards with incenTrip!

The free incenTrip app helps Maryland commuters identify commuting options, and logging biking or walking commutes earns more points that can be redeemed for cash and other rewards like gift cards and SmarTrip credit. Download the app from your Apple or Google Play store and learn more at [www.mdot.maryland.gov/incenTrip](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/incenTrip).





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## IMPLEMENT YOUR ACTIVE COMMUTING PROGRAM

Before you get started, we encourage your organization to join the Commuter Choice Maryland Employer Partner program for free guided assistance at any point in the program development. Complete our brief enrollment form at: [www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner).



Surveying your team is a great first step to gauge interest by your employees in these options and gives them an opportunity to describe their needs to overcome any barriers to participating.



Decide the active commuting benefits will be offered to employees. Determine the logistics of administering the subsidies, including whether the program will be administered in-house or using a third-party administrator, how employees will apply for and receive the subsidy, and the supporting documentation needed.



Pick a date to announce and kick-off the new commuter benefits options.



Develop materials that explain the benefits offered and how employees may apply for or use them, including digital content for webpages, intranet sites, and digital screens, and hard copy materials to distribute to employees or display around your building. Remember to promote these benefits during employee recruitment and onboarding.



Launch the program – make it fun and engaging with a kick-off group bike ride or walk, offer information sessions, and promote the new benefit throughout the year!



Plan on regular surveys and evaluation of the new program.



Start filing for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit if eligible.



Register as a Commuter Choice Maryland Employer Partner to receive statewide recognition through our newsletters, webinars, social media, and website: [www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner)





**BUSINESS PROFILE**

**WHERE TRANSPORTATION MEETS VALUES: THE YAKABOD STORY**

*Pictured Above: The Yakabod team at the 2019 Tour de Frederick.*

In early 2018, Yakabod, a software development company, moved into its new headquarters in downtown Frederick, MD. The location, in a renovated red-brick warehouse steps from Carroll Creek, was perfect for the dynamic and growing company, offering them a space tailor-made for their collaborative approach to software. There was only one problem: "We wanted our employees to feel connected to downtown Frederick, to be able to walk around there and get lunch," says co-founder and CEO Scott Ryser. But many employees found that the core of downtown was just a bit too far away.

To solve this problem, Yakabod looked to a solution that it knew its employees would embrace: bicycles. "We're active and adventurous," says Ryser, "and many of us enjoy biking outside of work." Yakabod already sponsored a team in the Tour de Frederick, an annual cycling event benefiting the local Boys and Girls Clubs. A number of their employees participated in the annual Ride to Work Day. Additionally, many of their employees would get together after work or on the weekends to ride on one of the many bike trails around Frederick.

Yakabod started small: they bought a few inexpensive cruiser bicycles and let all Yakabod employees borrow them free of charge. The cruiser bikes were an instant hit. Yakabod employees started borrowing them to get lunch and run errands and found that they were a great way to avoid sitting in traffic around town. For a few employees, the cruiser bikes even served as an introduction to biking as a form of regular exercise and recreation. "It wasn't a big step to buy a few bikes," Ryser says, "but it had a big impact for our employees."

"We make software that helps people collaborate, so it didn't make sense to us to be in a suburban office park somewhere... we wanted to make it easier for our employees to explore the city so we bought bikes," -CEO Scott Ryser

The bikes have also proven to be a boon for Yakabod's employee recruitment efforts, as Ryser puts it: "The bikes contribute to our vibrant office culture, which attracts great talent. The people we're looking to hire want to work here." But more importantly to Ryser, it all fits naturally with Yakabod's values. "We make software that helps people collaborate, so it didn't make sense to us to be in a suburban office park somewhere... we wanted to make it easier for our employees to explore the city, so we bought bikes." To Ryser, the choices Yakabod made seemed like an obvious and clear fit for the kind of employees the company wanted to attract and the kind of business that Yakabod's leaders wanted their company to be. "The adventurous, active culture we have as a tech startup, it comes naturally to us, it's who we are," Ryser says.

Yakabod's executives believe that many companies can learn from their experience. For Yakabod, bicycling fit neatly into the company's values and mission. Rather than seeing cycling as a solution for every business, they see it as a solution that worked for them and encourage every company to think about the transportation solutions that best fit with their own values. The key lesson, Ryser says, is to "be authentic. If it feels like a manufactured thing, your employees won't do it."

Business Profile

Featured Employer Success Story: Yakabod



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## HOW CAN MY ORGANIZATION CLAIM THE MARYLAND COMMUTER TAX CREDIT?

For-profit businesses, 501c3, and 501c4 employers with a physical location in Maryland may be eligible to claim back 50% of the cost of the subsidies they provide to active commuting employees for qualifying purchases through the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit. Once you start offering qualifying commuter subsidies to your employees, follow these two easy steps to claim the tax credit:

1. Visit [www.onestop.md.gov](http://www.onestop.md.gov) and complete the Commuter Tax Credit form outlining the total amount of subsidy provided and a monthly breakdown of qualifying commute options and subsidy amounts provided to employees.\*
2. Once the form is approved, file it with the annual business tax returns. The Commuter Tax Credit may be claimed against the state personal income tax, corporate income tax, or insurance premium tax.

More information on the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit is available at:

[www.mdot.maryland.gov/mdcommutertaxcredit](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/mdcommutertaxcredit)

\*Employers are not required to submit receipts or other backup documentation as part of the Commuter Tax Credit claim form but should keep good records of the qualifying subsidies they provide to their employees during the year and their method for calculating the amount of tax credit claimed in case an audit is performed.







7201 Corporate Center Drive, Hanover, Maryland 21076  
Local: (410) 865-1000  
Toll Free: (888) 713-1414  
Maryland Relay TTY: (800) 735-2258

