

2020 Edition



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

# Commuter Choice Maryland Maryland Employer Commuter Benefits

## TOOLKIT



Dear Business Owner:

Maryland has the second-longest average commute in the Nation, making it a priority for the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to find opportunities to relieve congestion. One way is to inform commuters about alternative travel options to consider. We can work together to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles on the road, reduce traffic congestion, and improve the quality of life for all Marylanders.

The purpose of this Employer Toolkit is to guide Maryland businesses and organizations to develop and implement a Commuter Benefits Program that encourages employees to consider alternative transportation options as they commute to and from work. The information provided is designed to help you understand how to create a custom program that is not only effective, but suits the needs of your organization and your employees.

Many employers are making a commitment to be more sustainable. Creating a Commuter Benefits Program for your organization can help you achieve this goal. In addition to being recognized as an environmentally friendly and flexible company, we have seen that Commuter Benefits Programs have helped to both attract and retain top talent. Further, many Maryland businesses providing these benefits will be eligible for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, a business tax credit, enabling you to take advantage of 50 percent of these Commuter Benefits, up to \$100 per month per employee.

For additional information or support in developing your Commuter Benefits Program, Commuter Choice Maryland is available to provide complimentary consultations. We aim to provide you with the necessary tools and information to support the decision-making process for your commuter benefits program.

We hope you will take advantage of this exciting time to explore some options for your organization.

Sincerely,



Pete K. Rahn  
Secretary

# CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	4
	About the Commuter Choice Maryland Program	4
	How can we help you?	4
	Contact Commuter Choice Maryland	4
2.	Understanding Commuter Benefits.....	5
	What are commuter benefits?	5
3.	Maryland Commuter Tax Credit.....	6
3.1.	Commuter Tax Credit	6
3.2.	Qualifying for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit	7
3.3.	Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Calculation	8
3.4.	Documentation Required	8
3.5.	Insurance Premiums Tax	8
4.	Federal Payroll Tax-Free Commuter Benefits .....	9
4.1.	Third Party Vendors	10
4.2.	Software Tools	12
5.	Creating a Commuter Benefits Program.....	13
5.1.	Step 1 : Identify an Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC)	13
5.2.	Step 2: Assessing Needs and Setting Goals	14
5.3.	Step 3: How to Administer your Program	14
5.4.	Step 4: Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Benefit	14
5.5.	Step 5: Promote the Program and Enroll Employees	15
5.6.	Step 6: Evaluate	15
6.	Commuter Choice Maryland Additional Information .....	16
	FAQs	17
	COMMUTER CHALLENGES	18
	SUCCESS STORIES	19
7.	Resources/Contact Information.....	21
8.	Templates.....	22
8.1.	Email to Employees	22

# 1 Introduction

## About the Commuter Choice Maryland Program

Diminished productivity, frustration, and lost time are felt by many Maryland employees who experience traffic during their daily commutes. In an effort to ease commuter challenges, the Maryland Department of Transportation (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, ridesharing, vanpooling, walking, biking, teleworking, Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, and alternative work schedules, to enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders.

Visit [CommuterChoiceMaryland.com](http://CommuterChoiceMaryland.com) for more information

## Contact Commuter Choice Maryland

### Commuter Choice Maryland



**Website:** [CommuterChoiceMaryland.com](http://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)

### MDOT MTA Transit Information Center

**Website:** <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/transit-information>  
**Phone:** 1-866-RIDE-MTA (1-866-743-3682)  
**Hours:** Monday–Friday, 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM

### Transportation Resource Information Point

**Website:** <http://www.mdtrip.org/>  
**Email:** [info@mdtrip.org](mailto:info@mdtrip.org)  
**Phone:** 1-877-331-TRIP (8747)

# 2

## Understanding Commuter Benefits

### What are commuter benefits?

Commuter benefits are transportation fringe benefits regulated under 132(f) of the IRS tax code. As of January 1, 2020, federal law allows employers to offer employees up to \$270 per month as a pre-tax deduction or tax-free subsidy to use on transit, vanpools, and qualified parking.<sup>1</sup>

Employers who offer commuter benefits to their employees may receive many benefits, including, but not limited to the following:

#### Human Resources Benefits

- Improved recruiting and expanded labor pool
- Increased job satisfaction and employee retention
- Reduced stress of commuting
- Supports employee health and wellness
- Increased productivity

#### Financial Benefits

- Reduced parking costs
- Tax savings
- Employees can save up to 40% on their commute by using pre-tax benefits
- Employers may claim the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit for 50% of the eligible costs up to \$100 per employee for providing transit and vanpool subsidies
- Reduced costs of employee recruiting and turnover
- Reduced facility costs

#### Public Relations Benefits

- Positive news coverage
- Improved company image
- Recognized as an environmental leader

#### Corporate Social Responsibility

- Reduced pollution
- Decreased traffic congestion



#### Did you know?

The benefits of Commuter Choice Maryland are multifaceted. Not only will these benefits help your current workforce, they will help your business attract and retain top talent.

<sup>1</sup> Commuter Choice Maryland cannot be offered as part of a cafeteria plan. Cash reimbursements are not allowed for pass purchases through this program (IRS Code Section 132f). Federal and state tax regulations have made it possible for Commuter Choice Maryland to offer employers more commuter benefit options such as the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, which encourage employees to ride MDOT MTA buses, Light Rail, Metro, Marc trains, or qualified vanpools to work, and save money on their commute. These Federal and State tax laws can provide hundreds or even thousands of dollars in annual commute-to-work savings for employees. Employers are also rewarded with special Federal and State tax deductions, State tax credits, and savings on certain payroll taxes.

# 3

## Maryland Commuter Tax Credit

### 3.1. Commuter Tax Credit

Maryland employers, including organizations exempt from taxation under §501(c)(3) or (4) of the Internal Revenue Code, may claim a tax credit for a portion of the eligible costs of providing commuter benefits to participating employees.

The credit may be taken against corporate income tax, personal income tax, state and local taxes withheld (for tax-exempt organizations), or insurance premiums tax. The same credit may not, however, be applied to more than one tax type. The Maryland Commuter Tax Credit is entirely separate from Federal payroll tax savings obtained through employers providing pre-tax or subsidized commuter benefits. Employers can take advantage of both the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit and Federal payroll tax savings for commuter benefits.

Sole proprietorships, corporations, tax-exempt nonprofit organizations, and pass-through entities, such as partnerships, sub chapter S corporations, limited liability companies and business trusts may also claim the tax credit.



## 3 3.2. Qualifying for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit

The credit is applicable to any of the following: Employer subsidized cost of transit for their employees, Employer funded Vanpool Program, Employer funded Guaranteed Ride Home (Emergency Ride Home) Program, and Employer funded Cash-In-Lieu of Parking Program. The workplace must be located in Maryland.



### Employer Funded Cost of Transit

Employers can subsidize the cost of transit for their employees on a publicly or privately-owned mass transit system for travel between the employee's home and workplace. The following transit expenses are eligible: MTA fare media or vouchers used by employees to ride publicly or privately-owned transit systems except taxi services, Local Transit, WMATA system fare media, Company Vanpool programs, Company Guaranteed Ride Home programs, and company Cash-in-Lieu-of-Parking programs.



### Employer Funded Vanpool Program

Employers who provide a vanpool for their employees can qualify for the tax credit if they meet the following requirements:

- Vehicle has a seating capacity of six individuals
- Meet the purpose of transporting employees from their residence to place of employment; and
- Trips must have at least 3 employees being transported together

For more information reference the *Commuter Choice Maryland Vanpool Toolkit*.



### Employer Funded Cash-In-Lieu of Parking Program

An employer may claim the tax credit if they provide a cash allowance to an employee in an amount equal to the parking subsidy that the employer would otherwise pay or incur to provide the employee a parking space.



### Employer Funded Guaranteed Ride Home

An employer may claim the tax credit if they provide immediate transportation for an employee who is:

- Part of an employer funded vanpool; OR
- Takes public transportation to work; OR
- Commutes to work by way of non-motorized transportation such as biking and walking

And meets the following requirement:

- Employee is required to leave work early for an illness or other verifiable reason
- Travel must take place between the employee's residence and place of employment in Maryland

### 3.3. Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Calculation

The business entity may claim a tax credit in an amount equal to 50% of the cost of providing commuter benefits to the business entity's employees and may not exceed \$100 per individual employee per month.

If the credit is more than the state tax liability, the unused credit may not be carried forward to any other tax year.

A tax-exempt organization may estimate the amount of the tax credit for qualifying employees for the tax year. The total amount of the estimated credit should be divided evenly over the number of periods for filing withholding returns (Form MW506). For example, if quarterly returns are required, then the total estimated credit should be divided by four. Each payment to the Comptroller would be reduced by the pro rata amount of the credit.

Alternatively, the tax-exempt organization could apply the credit against the tax on unrelated business taxable income.

More information regarding Federal tax benefits can be found in Section 4 of this toolkit.

### 3.4. Documentation Required

For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2012, the income tax credit is available only on an electronically-filed income tax return for the tax year in which the credit is being claimed. The Form 500CR section of the return must be completed. Form 508CR will need to be attached to form MW 508.

#### State and Local Taxes Withheld

Form MW508CR must be submitted with Form MW508, the Maryland Annual Employer Withholding Reconciliation Report for § 501 (c) (3) and (4) to claim this credit against Maryland income tax withheld. If the tax-exempt entity is required to file the MW508 electronically, then MW508CR must be filed with an amended MW508A as the MW508CR is not available electronically at this time. All other Maryland businesses should file the 500 CRW.

#### Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Registration Form

The [registration form](#) must be completed each time a business applies for the Commuter Tax Credit. The form is available at [CommuterChoiceMaryland.com](http://CommuterChoiceMaryland.com) and can be completed electronically. Employers must re-register annually for this tax credit.

### 3.5. Insurance Premiums Tax

Documentation of the credit shall be maintained by the taxpayer in their files and be made available to the Insurance Commissioner upon request, in accordance with COMAR 31.06.04.03. The documentation should include documents from the agency granting the credit and a list of the names and telephone numbers for the taxpayer's staff who are directly involved in granting the credits. All information shall be retained for a minimum of three years from the date of

# 4

## Federal Payroll Tax-Free Commuter Benefits

Employers are able to offer employees three options for providing Federal payroll tax-free commuter benefits of up to \$270 per month to employees. There are three combinations of providing federal tax-free commuter benefits available to employers: the employer supported option, employee pre-tax, and a combination of the employer supported and pre-tax.



### Employer Supported Option

With the Employer Support Option, employers support their employees' commutes by providing a monthly subsidy for the use of transit or vanpooling of up to \$265 per month, Federal payroll tax-free. As a result, the employee rides transit or vanpooling for a greatly reduced, or in many cases at no cost.

### Employer Pre-Tax

Under the Employer Pre-Tax option, an employee purchases qualifying transit or vanpool fare using a pre-tax salary deduction. The employee's federal, state, and Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes are reduced because of the lowered taxable wages. The employer also saves on certain payroll taxes due to the lower taxable wages.

### Combination Employer Supported / Employee Pre-Tax Option

In the combination employer supported / employee pre-tax option, the employer pays for a portion of an employee's transit costs, while the employee pays for the remaining costs using pre-tax salary deduction. The employer and employees receive benefits provided both in the employer supported and employee pre-tax options.










# 4

## 4.1. Third Party Vendors

The providers listed below offer service options to employers interested in administering financial commuter benefits to their employees. Commuter Choice Maryland does not endorse a particular provider, nor are organizations required to use a provider on this list. Commuter Choice Maryland is not responsible for services provided. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) SmartBenefits service is provided at no-cost to employers. The use of other services does entail a cost.

If you prefer to establish your commuter benefits in-house please consult the IRS Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits for current laws related to offering commuter benefits.



Service Provider	Website	Contact
	<a href="http://wmata.com/business/smartbenefits/">wmata.com/business/smartbenefits/</a>	202-962-2784 smartbenefits@wmata.com
	<a href="http://AccrueSolutions.com">AccrueSolutions.com</a>	678-885-7283 info@accruesolutions.com
	<a href="http://AsiBenefits.com">AsiBenefits.com</a>	559-256-1320 clientservices@asibenefits.com
	<a href="http://Amben.com">Amben.com</a>	1-800-499-3539 support@amben.com
	<a href="http://MyAmeriFlex.com">MyAmeriFlex.com</a>	844-423-4636 info@myameriflex.com
	<a href="http://BenefitResource.com">BenefitResource.com</a>	866-996-5200 x264 info@benefitresource.com
	<a href="http://BenStrat.com">BenStrat.com</a>	603-647-4666 sales@benstrat.com
	<a href="http://CommuterDirect.com">CommuterDirect.com</a>	703-228-7433 questions@commuterdirect.com
	<a href="http://DiscoveryBenefits.com">DiscoveryBenefits.com</a>	877-765-8810 employerservices@discoverybenefits.com

## Service Provider

## Website

## Contact


 Edened Commuter  
Benefit Solutions

[CommuterBenefits.com](http://CommuterBenefits.com)

 800-532-2828  
[sales@commuterbenefits.com](mailto:sales@commuterbenefits.com)


Flex Today

[FlexToday.com](http://FlexToday.com)

559-432-6800



P&amp;A Group

[PAdmin.com](http://PAdmin.com)

1-800-688-2611



Payroll Systems

[Payroll-US.com](http://Payroll-US.com)

 925-939-6214  
[info@payroll-us.com](mailto:info@payroll-us.com)


Smart Benefits

[WMATA.com/  
SmartBenefits](http://WMATA.com/SmartBenefits)

 202-962-2784  
[smartbenefits@wmata.com](mailto:smartbenefits@wmata.com)

## QTB Services

QTB Services Swipe 'n Save

[QTBServices.com](http://QTBServices.com)

 516-794-1953  
[info@qtbsservices.com](mailto:info@qtbsservices.com)

 Sterling Health Services  
Administration

[SterlingHSA.com](http://SterlingHSA.com)

 800-617-4729  
[customer.service@  
sterlingadministration.com](mailto:customer.service@sterlingadministration.com)

 TASC (Total Administrative  
Services Corporation)

[BeneSyst.com](http://BeneSyst.com)

800-422-4661



The Advantage Group

[EnrollwithTAG.com](http://EnrollwithTAG.com)

 877-506-1660  
[inquiries@enrollwithtag.com](mailto:inquiries@enrollwithtag.com)


VitaCommute

[VitaCommute.net](http://VitaCommute.net)

 877-506-1660  
[inquiries@enrollwithtag.com](mailto:inquiries@enrollwithtag.com)


WageWorks

[WageWorks.com](http://WageWorks.com)







 866-602-3887  
[help@vitamail.com](mailto:help@vitamail.com)

# 4

## 4.2. Software Tools

A range of potential software tools exist to help you facilitate company ride matching for vanpools and carpools and manage employee incentives.



Service Provider	Website	Contact	Description	
	Carpool World	<a href="http://CarpoolWorld.com">CarpoolWorld.com</a>	1-800-328-2672	CarpoolWorld is a website that provides free real-time trip-matching services for regular commuters and occasional travelers, as well as for group services.
	Commutifi	<a href="http://Commutifi.com">Commutifi.com</a>	720-242-6358 info@ecommuter.org	Commutifi combines commuting data and behavioral economics to create commuter scores that are used to develop strategies that make commuting faster, more sustainable, and cheaper.
	eCommuter	<a href="http://eCommuter.org">eCommuter.org</a>	781-895-1100	eCommuter is an employer-based program designed to encourage the use of alternative commuting options by working with employers to establish custom commute programs, suggest incentives, and recruit and retain employees.
	Luum	<a href="http://Luum.com">Luum.com</a>	info@luum.com	Luum provides employers alternative, responsible, and sustainable commute solutions through collaboration and innovation.
	RideAmigos	<a href="http://RideAmigos.com">RideAmigos.com</a>	516-864-3189	RideAmigos is a cloud-based commuter management platform that provides interactive tools and programs for regional, employer, and campus commuter networks to enhance mobility and cut costs.
	Rideshark	<a href="http://RideShark.com">RideShark.com</a>	516-864-3189	Rideshare provides customizable services for government agencies, corporate offices, and campuses to incentivize commute changes using multi-modal matching, trip logging, incentives, commuter challenges, and more.

# 5

## Creating a Commuter Benefits Program

When developing your commuter benefits program, it is imperative to strategize on important values, on what works best for your employees, and on what works best for your work site location. To support the development of your commuter benefits program, the following steps are recommended to ensure program effectiveness:

1. Identify an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC), which could be part of an existing position
2. Assess your needs and set goals
3. Determine how to administer your program
4. Complete the Maryland Tax Credit registration and appropriate forms (annually)
5. Promote the program to your employees (annually)
6. Evaluate (annually)



### 5.1. Step 1: Identify an Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC)

Identifying an ETC will aid in getting your commuter benefits program developed more quickly and efficiently. The ETC will have the influence to coordinate and get management approval of commuter benefits and ensure employees are aware of their options.

- Some common ETC's include: Senior Employees, Human Resources Representatives, Sustainability or Facility Managers.
- The ETC will serve as a liaison to staff in the workplace to implement, promote and administer the worksites' commuter benefits program.
- Depending on the size of organization, putting together a team of enthusiastic employees to support the ETC's efforts can be useful.

## 5

## 5.2. Step 2: Assessing Needs and Setting Goals

Your next step is to analyze employee commute needs and desires and conduct a site assessment to better understand the existing conditions, benefits, and policies. You should contact your local Maryland Rideshare Coordinator or contact Commuter Choice Maryland directly to request assistance with this step. Our qualified professionals will help you do the following: With this information you can identify your workplace sustainability goals.

### Meet with a TDM Specialist or Commuter Choice Maryland

- At an initial meeting with your commuter assistance program, review workplace goals to determine how transportation can support and help to meet those goals. These goals may range from attracting new talent, employee retention, and reducing parking congestion.

### Conduct a Site Assessment

- Have the ETC complete a site assessment form through Commuter Choice Maryland to review nearby options, needs of employees, and existing commuter benefits.

### Conduct and Analyze an Employee Survey

- Employee surveys should be conducted to understand current employee transportation patterns and their desires for additional benefits. Commuter Choice Maryland or your TDM specialist can share a sample survey and work with you to customize it for your worksite and develop an implementation plan. Our professionals can also analyze this survey results for you.

### Create an Employer Transportation Plan with Goals

- Once the survey results are available, your local commuter assistance program will develop a set of transportation recommendations designed to fit within your organization's budget. We'll discuss these recommendations with you and refine them into an employer transportation plan. Each employer transportation plan should include goals (e.g., increasing employee commute satisfaction, reducing parking needs) for your worksite.

## 5.3. Step 3: How to Administer your Program

Decide if you will administer your commuter benefits program in-house or hire a third-party administrator.

- Consult with your payroll or accounting team to determine which option is most feasible for your organization.
- Contact vendors for program options and pricing specific to your organization's needs. The vendor you choose will help you through the rest of the process. Refer to Section 4.1 of this document for a list of third party vendors.
- Set up payroll deductions if needed.

## 5.4. Step 4: Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Benefit

You may claim a tax credit for a portion of the eligible costs of providing commuter benefits to participating employees. The tax credit is 50% of the cost of providing commuter benefits up to a maximum of \$100 per month for each employee.

- Complete the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit registration form available at [CommuterChoiceMaryland.com](http://CommuterChoiceMaryland.com).
- Complete forms MW508CR and MW508 for § 501 (C)(3) and (4) or all other business file the 500 CRW with your Maryland tax return.

# 5

## 5.5. Step 5: Promote the Program and Enroll Employees

To ensure that employees are aware of the commuter benefits available to them, use the following steps to promote your program and to increase employee enrollment:

- Step 1** Create an enrollment process and payroll deduction authorization form if needed.
- Step 2** Contact Commuter Choice Maryland to obtain promotional and information materials for distribution to employees.
- Step 3** Distribute promotional materials regarding the commuter benefits available and how to enroll to employees.
- Step 4** Send out company-wide emails, display benefit information in shared spaces on the work-site (e.g. lunch room, break room, HR), and/or distribute information with paychecks.
- Step 5** Include commuter benefits information in new-hire orientation packets.
- Step 6** Host a commuter benefits fair or meeting to share information with employees.
- Step 7** Encourage employees to sign up for the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program. Visit our partner Commuter Connections at <https://www.commuterconnections.org/> to register and learn more.



## 5.6. Step 6: Evaluate

To determine the effectiveness of your commuter benefits program, use the following steps to track employee participation and to re-evaluate your program on an annual or bi-annual basis:

- Generate monthly reports that provide insight into usage.
- When new benefits are released be sure to have before and after data (which can be obtained through annual employee surveys) to compare and determine impact.
- Do this for all commuter benefits offered, including alternative work schedule telework participation.

# 6

## Commuter Choice Maryland Additional Information

Looking for additional information to kick-start your commuter benefits program? Check out these additional resources on our website, [commuterchoicemaryland.com](http://commuterchoicemaryland.com):

- Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Quick Reference
- Telework Toolkit
- Vanpool Toolkit
- Relocation Checklist
- Encouraging Active Commuting



## FAQs Looking to go above and beyond on your Commuter Benefits?



### Try Transit Campaign

Campaigns that encourage employees to try transit, even just for a week, can be very effective in encouraging a change in one's commuting choices. Changing behavior and lifestyle patterns can be difficult but having encouragement to try a new method of getting to work could be the jumpstart a person needs to make a lifestyle change.



### Developing a Company Vanpool

Providing employees with resources on how to locate and participate in a vanpool program, as well as flexible working schedules that make vanpooling a viable option can provide employees with the necessary tools and options to make vanpooling fit within their daily commute. For more information reference the *Commuter Choice Maryland Vanpool Toolkit*.



### Preferential Carpool & Vanpool Parking

Preferential parking includes dedicated parking spaces allotted only to vehicles used for carpooling or vanpooling. Preferential parking is typically located close to the workplace entrance and under shelter. Reserving the best parking spots encourages employees to join a carpool or vanpool, which will reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles at a workplace and the overall need for additional parking. Employers who provide cash to employees in-lieu of subsidized parking may be eligible for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit (Refer to Section 3).



### Carshare

The availability of carshare at or near a workplace can be very important for those who commute to work using transit. Having the option to rent a vehicle can serve as a major convenience to those who access their workplace without a car but may still need one to attend things such as off-site meetings.



### Bike, Helmet, & Lock Purchasing Assistance

Providing monetary assistance, whether partial or full, for the purchase of bikes, helmet, and bike locks is a great way to encourage bicycle commuting among employees. Since the cost of acquiring a bike and the proper equipment for it can be a barrier to some, employer assistance for these items can have great impacts.



### Workplace Commuter Challenge

Workplace commuter challenges are friendly competitions between employees, workplaces, and even cities to encourage employees to leave their cars at home and instead take alternative forms of transportation to work.

## HIGHLIGHTING

# COMMUTER CHALLENGES

Commuter challenges are campaigns, usually lasting a week to a month, that offer prizes or other incentives for participants who choose a mode of transportation other than driving alone for their commute. Challenges may be individual or team-based. Many employers run multiple challenge programs in a year, each centered around a different mode. For instance, May might have a cycling challenge to coincide with Bike to Work Day, while November has a carpooling challenge. Other companies run commuter challenges all year round. Prizes often include gift cards, company swag, or other products. It's common for events, such as picnics or parties to be held to promote the challenges or reward challenge winners.

Commuter challenges are great for both employers and employees: they can help promote camaraderie, boost morale, strengthen professional relationships, help employees save money on commuting, and motivate employees to get more physical activity through active commuting. There are a variety of software tools that can help employees find alternatives to driving and track commuting modes and distances, including some of the tools listed in Section 4.2.

Here are a few challenges that you or your employees might be eligible to join, or they may inspire you to start your own:



The League of American Bicyclists sponsors the National Bike Challenge every year, and anyone can register for free. For every commute made on a bicycle during the month of May, the commuter gets one entry into a prize drawing. Prizes in the most recent Bike Challenge included trips to the Grand Canyon and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>



The University of Maryland at College Park offers students and staff incentives for sustainable transportation through its Smart Commute digital platform. The platform helps participants find sustainable commute options, including transit and bike routes, and also tracks how participants get to and from campus each day. For each sustainable trip a participant takes, they earn rewards points that they can exchange for prizes such as headphones and water bottles.<sup>2</sup>



Montgomery County Commuter Services runs a commuter challenge every October for people who work in Bethesda, North Bethesda, Friendship Heights, or Downtown Silver Spring. Participants register in teams of three to five and provides a pedometer to each participant. Individuals are entered into prize drawings based on the number of steps they log each week, and the teams that log the most steps overall are entered into a drawing for a grand prize.<sup>3</sup>

For more information about commuter challenges, or for help in starting one at your company, contact the TDM Specialist in your area.

<sup>1</sup> League of American Cyclists, National Bike Challenge, available at: <https://www.lovetoride.net/usa/prizes?locale=en-US>, as of March 20, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> University of Maryland, Transportation Services, available at: <https://transportation.umd.edu/sustainable-transportation>, as of March 20, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Patch.com, "Montgomery County Commuter Challenge Expands to Silver Spring," available online at: <https://patch.com/maryland/silver-spring/montgomery-county-commuter-challenge-expands-to-silver-spring>, as of March 20, 2019.

## HIGHLIGHTING

# SUCCESS STORIES



Working from home benefits employer, employees, and customers.

### SMECO Plugs into Teleworking

The Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) uses teleworking to ensure they can provide top-notch customer service 24-7. Since 2007, SMECO has allowed eligible employees, including their Customer Care team, to work from home up to three days a week. Power outages can happen at any time of day or night, and when they do, affected customers need to be able to get in touch with their utility. “If we are having outages and we need to get our people on the phones,” says Senior Vice President Joe Trentacosta, “when they work from home, we can get them on the phones within a matter of minutes.” SMECO’s telework program started in 2007 with a single employee. Seeing that employee’s productivity remain unchanged when they teleworked gave the company the confidence to support and expand the program. Employees are provided with a “thin client,” a small computer that allows employees to connect remotely to SMECO’s network, and SMECO covers the cost of phone and internet service for remote employees. SMECO has found that the telework option helps with employee recruitment and retention, as well. The program has also helped keep Maryland’s environment cleaner, saving 378,000 vehicle miles traveled and nearly 15,750 gallons of gasoline.



Sharing a ride proves to be a safe bet for employer and employees.

### The Dollar-a-Day Commute

With a staff of 3,000, Maryland’s Live! Casino and Hotel is one of the biggest employers in the state. It is located along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, one of the country’s most congested corridors. Live! never closes, meaning that it needs employees to be able to safely and easily get to work at all hours. These factors are why Live! worked with their county’s Rideshare Coordinator and Enterprise Rideshare, a leading vanpool provider, to start their vanpool program. Enterprise took the lead in promoting the program to employees, placing ads around the facilities and conducting outreach to team members. Enterprise also helped Live! develop a financial model for the service, figure out where the need for vanpooling was highest, and take advantage of the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit. They started with the overnight shift, when infrequent bus service made the commute most difficult, and getting from home to the bus stop meant those employees had to walk a mile late at night. Vanpooling cut the cost of their commute to a dollar a day, and travel times went down by one to two hours each way. Not only did this improve employees’ quality of life, it also reduced turnover: while overnight shift turnover had been over 50%, Live! found that none of the vanpool users left the company. Live! is now looking at expanding their vanpool program to cover daytime shifts as well.



## HIGHLIGHTING

# SUCCESS STORIES



University  
commute  
options make  
the grade.

### Commute Options for Life in the City

Morgan State University (MSU) prides itself on not just being located in Baltimore, but on being heavily engaged with the City, leveraging it as an urban laboratory to enrich learning and research. MSU's National Transportation Center (NTC) not only studies ways to manage transportation demand, it also helps implement its ideas in Baltimore and on its own campus. NTC was involved when BaltimoreLink's Silver Line provided the first-ever direct link between the university and downtown Baltimore, surveying the campus to choose the best location for the route's terminus. MSU provides a variety of other commute options, as well: It launched a telework policy in 2015. It provides on-campus Zipcars. It also has bike racks throughout the campus, and has installed showers in new buildings to promote bicycle commuting. These options have helped its employees be more productive. "I find I can stay more focused on my tasks when I telework," says NTC Project Planner Anita Jones. "These policies benefit both the University and employee." These travel options have also helped solidify MSU's role as an anchor institution in Baltimore.



# 7

## Resources/Contact Information

### **Commuter Choice Maryland Website:**

[www.commuterchoicemaryland.com](http://www.commuterchoicemaryland.com)

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

Phone: 410-865-1100

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/commuterchoicemd](http://www.linkedin.com/in/commuterchoicemd)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/commuterchoicemaryland](http://www.facebook.com/commuterchoicemaryland)

### **Commuter Connections**

Website: <https://www.commuterconnections.org/>

Email: [ridematching@mwcog.org](mailto:ridematching@mwcog.org)

Phone: 1-800-745-RIDE (7433)

### **Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)**

Website: <http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/>

Email: [mdotcustomerservice@mdot.state.md.us](mailto:mdotcustomerservice@mdot.state.md.us)

Phone: 410-865-1000

### **Maryland State Highway Administration and MDOT Transit**

**Administration** Website: <https://www.roads.maryland.gov/Home.aspx>

Phone: 1-800-323-6742

### **MDOT Transit Administration**

Charm Pass

Website: <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/charmpass>

Phone: 410-539-5000

Toll Free Phone: 1-866-RIDE-MTA (1-866-743-3682)

### **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)**

Website: <https://www.wmata.com>

Phone: 202-962-1234

### **WMATA SmartBenefits**

Website: <https://www.wmata.com/business/smartbenefits/>

Email: [smartbenefits@wmata.com](mailto:smartbenefits@wmata.com)

Phone: 202-962-2784

# 8

## Templates

### 8.1. Email to Employees

**Subject: Rethink your commute**

Dear **[Organization Name]** employees,

We are excited to outline all the commuter benefits to make your commute easier, cheaper, and stress free. We have partnered with Commuter Choice Maryland to help you be aware of the sustainable modes of traveling to and from work.

Explore the Commuter Choice Maryland Commuter page for more information about services available through the state. Some of these include:

- **[List commuter benefits provided by organization]**

The benefits that are available through **[Organization Name]** include:

**[organization benefits i.e. Bike parking, transit benefits, showers, lockers, telework options, parking cash out, etc.]**

For more information on taking advantage of any of these services please reach out the Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC): **[Contact Name and Email]**

Sincerely,

**[Name]**



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

