

# ***Mobility Alternatives Program***

## **Information for Employees**



***Making Commuting  
Easier and Healthier!***

Clean Air Council



 Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission



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## Letter from Clean Air Council

Dear Fellow Commuter,

As a member of the Philadelphia-area workforce, you are likely familiar with the aggravation of the daily commute to and from work. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Philadelphia-area residents who drive to work have one of the longest commutes in the country. Aside from being stressful, driving can be unhealthy for you because it contributes to poor air quality. In 2004 alone, the Philadelphia area experienced a total of 166 unhealthy air quality days. These facts contribute to a lower quality of life for area residents. Thankfully, however, commuters can take advantage of a number of transportation options to make their commute both *easier* and *healthier*.

Clean Air Council has prepared this packet for you to learn about many of the commuting options available to commuters in the Philadelphia area. Some of these options, such as TransitChek, provide financial incentives to use public transit while others, such as Share-a-Ride, make it convenient and fun for you to share your commute. If you are an employer, the options listed here offer a simple way to boost a benefits package, employee morale, and a company's bottom line. If you are an employee, the options listed here can make it possible for you to save money and make your commute less stressful. Employers and employees should communicate with one another about promoting these programs that reduce commute stress, and promote worker health and productivity.

Clean Air Council is partnering with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to provide this information to you through the Mobility Alternatives Program, or MAP. Please take a moment to read through this packet, and if you have any questions, feel free to visit the MAP website at <http://www.cleanair.org/Transportation/map.htm> or call Clean Air Council at 215-567-4004, ext 119.

Happy Commuting!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph Otis Minott", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Otis Minott, Esq.  
Executive Director, Clean Air Council

## MAP: Mobility Alternatives Program Information for Employees

All of the below MAP programs require some action by employers. If you would like your employer to implement any of the below programs, share the above information with them. If you have any questions, get in touch with a [MAP contact representative](#). A MAP representative can also work with your employer to establish any of the programs listed below.

### TransitChek

TransitChek is a commuter benefit program that employers offer to their employees to help pay for the cost of commuting to work on transit. Employees can receive up to \$230 per month (\$2,760 per year) in TransitCheks for transit or eligible vanpooling services and, additionally, up to \$230 per month for parking associated with using public transit.

Many companies offer TransitChek through a **pre-tax payroll deduction**, which means that they allow you to set aside up to \$230 pre-tax dollars (your salary before taxes are taken out) to pay for your transit commuting costs each month. You may also do the same for your parking expenses. Money set aside for transit is exempt from federal income tax and FICA taxes, and can amount to savings of several hundred dollars per year!

One of the main reasons that companies sign up for TransitChek is because commuters like YOU ask for the program. Let your human resources department know that you take transit to get to work and that you'd like for them to look into signing up for TransitChek.

Here are some important things to know about using your TransitCheks:

- TransitCheks are issued in \$15, \$20, \$21, \$30, \$35, \$60 and \$65 denominations.
- You cannot use your TransitChek on the bus or train to pay for your ride; you must redeem it in advance to purchase tickets, tokens or passes.
- TransitCheks are accepted at most authorized transit sales outlets. Contact your transit system for sales outlet locations.
- If you purchase a ticket that costs more than the value of your TransitChek, you pay the difference. Alternatively, if you buy a ticket less than the value of your TransitChek, you will not get change back, so plan your purchase carefully.
- Pay close attention to the expiration date on your TransitChek. TransitCheks not used within the 13-month validation period will not be accepted or replaced.
- You can redeem up to five TransitCheks at one time.
- Handle your TransitCheks with care. They will not be replaced if lost or stolen. Nor will they be accepted or replaced if they have been tampered with, worn or torn.
- Contact your employer first regarding any problems with your TransitChek voucher.

For more information about TransitChek, visit

<http://www.transitcenter.com/Employees/>

### **Share-A-Ride**

The Share-A-Ride program is a free service that matches commuters with other commuters who live or work close by to each other. Share-a-ride facilitates carpools, vanpool groups, and transit services. By sharing the ride, you can save money on gas and car maintenance costs and reduce the stress of your commute by commuting to and from work with others. The program is still new, but as more people join the more opportunities there will be for everyone! Even employers can get on board by locating matches for their employees!

To participate, click here:

[www.dvrpc.org/SAR/x\\_delete/signup.htm](http://www.dvrpc.org/SAR/x_delete/signup.htm)

For additional information, visit:

[www.dvrpc.org/sar/](http://www.dvrpc.org/sar/)

### **Park and Ride**

Park and Ride (P&R) lots are areas specifically dedicated for use by commuters to park vehicles while using public transit or participating in carpools or vanpools. They serve as natural meet-up spots for commuters participating in carpools or vanpools, such as through Share-a-ride. Park and Ride lots provide adequate space and a convenient location for drivers to leave their cars while sharing the ride to work or taking public transit. They also alleviate community opposition to on-street parking problems, as well as commuters' fears toward on-street parking. Park and Ride locations are visibly designated with signs.

Official P&R lots include:

- Clearly marked paved lots or gravel areas specifically designed or designated by state or local transportation officials; maintained by state or local government.
- Lots associated with transit stops, often maintained by the transit company and for use by transit riders only.

For additional information, visit

[www.dvrpc.org/transportation/commuter/map/parkandride.htm](http://www.dvrpc.org/transportation/commuter/map/parkandride.htm).

### **Emergency Ride Home**

The Emergency Ride Home service is a "safety net" for commuters who share their ride to work (carpool, vanpool, transit) on a regular basis. In the event of an unexpected personal or family emergency or illness, unscheduled overtime, or if the regular ride home is not available for certain reasons, registered commuters are provided with a free ride to home, their car, or to the place of the emergency.

To enroll, visit:

<http://www.dvrpc.org/asp/erh/signup.htm>

For additional information, visit

<http://www.dvrpc.org/MobilityAlternatives/erh.htm>

### **Telecommuting**

By instituting a telecommuting policy, companies help reduce vehicle travel to and from work, save on office space and overhead, AND offer a more flexible workday schedule for some of their employees. While not for everyone, telecommuting may make it more convenient for some employees to fulfill workday time commitments, and to work from home instead of taking sick days. Many employees who prefer a more flexible work schedule may find this option attractive. It is up to companies to determine which positions and which employees are eligible, as well as how frequently each employee can exercise this option.

If you are interested in telecommuting, share information with your employer and ask your co-workers to share information as well.

For additional information, visit:

[www.dvrpc.org/MobilityAlternatives/Telecommuting.htm](http://www.dvrpc.org/MobilityAlternatives/Telecommuting.htm)

### **Promoting Transit**

If the employment site is close to transit, there may already be many employees utilizing this convenient and low-stress commute option. Buses, trains, subways, and trolleys all move over 400,000 people a day in the Delaware Valley.

However, even if the worksite is convenient to SEPTA, PATCO, or other transit services, the company's employees may not be aware of when or where the bus or train operates, or how to use transit services. Employers can assist their employees by becoming familiar with the transit services available and passing that information on to employees.

Information about SEPTA services and schedules can be found at [www.septa.org](http://www.septa.org).

Information about PATCO services and schedules can be found at [www.ridepatco.org](http://www.ridepatco.org).

For additional information about promoting transit, visit:

<http://www.dvrpc.org/Transit/>

### **Employee Incentives**

Some creative employers have developed ways to reward those employees who share their commute, and especially those who use carpools and vanpools, which are not eligible for TransitChek. By working with local retail, restaurant, and service businesses, they have arranged for certain employees to receive discounts or freebies when they prove they have been sharing their ride to work. Other employers offer preferential parking to employees who use carpool or vanpool, an attractive incentive with virtually no cost to the employer.

For additional information, visit:

<http://www.transitcenter.com/Employees/>

### **Flexitime**

Research has shown employees are more likely to consider shared commutes when a flexible work schedule is instituted. Flexitime allows employees to alter their arrival and departure times slightly to accommodate commute schedules. For example, although official hours may be 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., employees may be allowed to arrive between 7:30 to 9 a.m. and leave between 4 and 5:30 p.m. That doesn't mean employees get to set the hours! In most cases, employees cannot flex their schedule on a daily basis, but must make a long-term commitment to a regular schedule. The ultimate goal of a flexitime policy is to allow employees to arrange a commute schedule convenient to train schedules or to accommodate carpool and vanpool options.

For additional information, visit:

<http://www.dvrpc.org/MobilityAlternatives/Schedules.htm>

### **Compressed Work Week**

Compressed work weeks help reduce the number of vehicles arriving to the worksite during the week in a way much different from flexitime. This option allows employees not affected by collective bargaining to condense the hours they work into fewer days, thus increasing the length of the work day, but decreasing the number of days spent at the work site.

For additional information, visit

<http://www.dvrpc.org/MobilityAlternatives/Schedules.htm>

### **Bicycle/Walking Facilities**

In order to encourage employees who are able to walk or bicycle to work, employers should consider installing such essential features as bicycle parking/storage and shower/locker facilities. Standard bike racks can be installed with little effort and at low cost; higher quality storage may require greater investment. Shower or changing facilities may also benefit additional employees who would like to work out over lunch, and this supplementary function may help justify installation of these accommodations.

### **Shuttle Services**

This service can be established by using rented shuttles or through informal carpools or vanpools. To keep costs down, a company can provide rush-hour service only, at no cost or at a small fee to employees. This option becomes most cost-effective when several companies in the same vicinity pool their efforts and money to serve more employees. If there is a large market for this type of service, it may be beneficial to speak with a MAP contact or a representative from the local transit provider about extending regular service or offering an official shuttle service.

### **Accommodating Childcare Schedules**

Daycare is an increasingly important issue with working parents, and is often the main reason given for not sharing the commute to work. Accommodating working parents is one way to attract and retain employees.

### **Additional Information**

If you have any additional questions about the Mobility Alternatives Program, you may contact Clean Air Council at (215) 567-4004, ext. 119.

### **Resources**

Clean Air Council: [www.cleanair.org](http://www.cleanair.org)

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Committee: [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)

Philadelphia City Planning Commission: [www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)