

Tips to Combat High Gas Prices

Commute option programs and services in communities around the country give tips, find information, and ultimately save money for travelers. Depending on the region or area, Transportation Management Associations or Organizations (TMAs or TMOs), transit authorities, rideshare agencies, or public private partnerships offer locally targeted programs to educate and assist commuters and employers in finding alternative commute options. Many of the programs encourage periodic changes or promote behavior changes or options for commuting. They also serve as emergency preparedness and business continuity tools.

Commute option programs frequently offer:

- ☞ Help in finding people to start vanpools or carpools
- ☞ Training for employers and employees on formal teleworking programs
- ☞ Instant travel time and route information
- ☞ Instruction on logistics and structural aspects of forming a vanpool
- ☞ Advertising and public relations on benefits of commute options
- ☞ Outreach and education to employers, schools, and the general public
- ☞ Financial assistance for individuals or employers to initiate these options.

What can employees do?

- ☞ Telework from home. Computer, cell phone, and high speed internet technologies allow for increased work productivity at home.
- ☞ Share the ride and save expenses by carpooling with friends, family or co-workers.
- ☞ Arrange a flexible work schedule, such as working 80 hours in 9 days; 40 hours in 4 days; 36 hours in 3 days; or adjusting your arrival or departure schedules.
- ☞ Employees may set aside up to \$105 per month in pre-tax dollars for the purchase of transit passes or vanpool fares.
- ☞ Take advantage of employer or regional programs that subsidize vanpools.
- ☞ Ask your employer for available transportation benefits, access to flexible work schedules, or a directory of work colleagues who might be carpool or vanpool matches.
- ☞ Bike or walk to work and create a more-healthy lifestyle.
- ☞ Take public transportation, such as the bus or subway.

What can employers do?

Employers offer commute assistance programs to their employees for their own bottom line: they use programs and benefits as recruitment, retention and productivity enhancements for their employees; often can save on parking infrastructure; and reduce traffic at a worksite. Specifically, employers can:

- Partner with local transit agencies, vanpool providers, TMAs, and rideshare agencies to educate employees to take advantage of commute assistance programs. VCTC 805/642-1591 x 119
- Provide incentives, subsidies, or rewards to employees using commute options.
- Offer pre-tax savings on transportation assistance to employees (Section 132 (f) of the tax code.) Employers may underwrite their employees' transit or vanpool commuting costs, up to \$105 per month in pre-tax contributions, saving the employer payroll taxes.
- Offer flexible work schedules including compressed work weeks such as working 80 hours in 9 days; 40 hours in 4 days; or 36 hours in 3 days or staggered arrival and departure times.
- Provide assistance in finding riders for employee carpools and vanpools. www.commutesmart.info
- Establish preferential parking spots for vanpools and for carpools.
- Supply bike storage lockers and showers for cyclists.
- Provide on-site facilities and amenities to avoid day-time trips, including food services, drycleaning, day-care, hair care, car care and banking.
- Supply appropriate technologies and training for teleworking programs.
- Utilize travel options and telework programs to prepare for natural and man-made emergencies and for business continuity.

What can individuals do?

- Combine trips to the grocery store, dry-cleaning, doctor, or school; shop online.
- Ride the train to the airport, stadium or concert.
- Carpool to events with friends or family or take public transportation, if available.
- Use neighborhood carpools or school buses for students.
- Ask your employer for commuter tax benefits and financial assistance or flexibility with work arrangements.
- Keep you car tuned and drive responsibly.



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