

January 13, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: SB0210 – Employer-Provided Commuter Benefits – Expansion

Dear Chair Guzzone:

As home to both the Washington region’s metropolitan planning organization, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), as well as its Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, Commuter Connections, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) has a long history of supporting forward-looking transportation plans and mobility solutions including working with employers to provide commute benefit programs to their workers.

The Commuter Connections program along with its local jurisdictions has contributed to employers providing and expanding commute benefits regionwide and continues to seek innovative ways to further motivate employers to assist their workers with programs and incentives to lessen the demand on our roadway infrastructure and improve air quality. The outreach program also encourages employees’ use of alternative commute modes such as ridesharing, transit, telework, bicycling, and walking. Most employers who promote commute alternatives do so for practical reasons associated with the operation of their businesses, but the community as a whole benefits from commute alternatives programs because they help reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and support economic development. For this reason, COG has partnered with local governments in the region to continue to offer programs that encourage the implementation of commute benefit programs at employment sites.

For your reference, TPB would like to share the following information on employers offering commute benefit programs for legislators as they consider efforts to expand employer-provided commuter benefits:

Employer Provided Commute Benefits Lead to Significant Transportation and Emission Impacts:

In a recent regional analysis conducted by Commuter Connections, nearly 2,000 employers representing 630,000 workers that offered premium level commute benefit programs at their worksites such as a qualified transit or vanpool benefit, teleworking, preferential parking for carpools and vanpools, and other commute related incentives helped reduce 85,000 daily vehicle miles of travel, 1.5 million daily vehicle miles of travel, and 145,000 annual tons of CO₂.

Types of Commute Benefits Offered By Employers

In a regional “State of the Commute” survey conducted in 2019 by Commuter Connections, The most commonly offered commute benefit services offered by employers were transit/vanpool subsidies available to 45% of worker respondents, and information on commuter transportation options, available to 26% of respondents. Two in ten (22%) respondents

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said their employer offered services for bikers and walkers and 17% said preferential parking was offered to carpools and vanpools. One in ten (10%) said their employer offered Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH). Carpool subsidies were mentioned by about 8% of employees. Two vehicle-sharing services, bikeshare and carshare membership, were mentioned by 9% and 7% of respondents, respectively. Respondents whose employers offered incentives/support services were asked if they had ever used these services. Overall, 57% of respondents who said commute services were available had used a service. This percentage represented 34% of all workers who were not self-employed. More than six in ten (61%) of all respondents said their employers allowed some telework, either under a formal program (34%) or an informal arrangement (27%). During the pandemic, many area employers turned to telework at unprecedented levels to ensure the safety of their employees and the continuity of their business operations. This trend will likely continue as a recent Commuter Connections survey found that fifty-seven percent of work sites expected to see a long-term increase in teleworking, even when the pandemic is over.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you. If you have any questions, I encourage you to contact COG's Deputy Executive Director of Metropolitan Planning Kanti Srikanth at 202-962-3257 or ksrikanth@mwcog.org.

Sincerely,



Chuck Bean
Executive Director

cc: Kanti Srikanth, Deputy Executive Director of Metropolitan Planning
Nicholas Ramfos, Director, Commuter Connections