

Guest voice: Alternative transportation for your employees

From public transit to vanpooling: There are a multitude of options

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A top green initiative your company can do to significantly reduce its environmental footprint is to provide alternative transportation programs, benefits and incentives to your employees. Implementing employee carpools, bike to work, public transit and telework programs all support the goal of having fewer cars on the road.

Vehicles on the road now account for at least 25 percent of the CO₂ emissions nationwide, according to the Federal Highway Administration. By driving two days less per week, the average person can save about 143 gallons of gasoline and keep about 2,778 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere in a year.

Not only is alternative transportation good for the environment and reducing our nation's reliance on foreign oil, there are other advantages to the company and the employees as well. Studies show alternative transportation programs improve employee productivity and retention. The average working American weekly spends nine hours behind the wheel. If employees spend less time driving, it allows them to do other activities and tends to reduce their overall stress from hectic, time-consuming and traffic-jammed daily commutes.

Alternative transportation programs also save money by reducing the cost of gas, car maintenance and toll fees for the employee. It also alleviates costly parking fees and the need for companies to find additional parking. Employers and employees can also save on taxes. The Transportation Equity Act, or Commuter-Choice Tax Benefits, allows employers to provide tax-free transit, vanpool and parking benefits to employees.

Here are some alternative transportation programs to consider implementing within your company:

Carpool or vanpool

A company carpool is when two or more people share a car ride to and from work. A vanpool usually has seven to 10 people within one vehicle. Employers can help employees form carpools/vanpools through coordinating rideshare matching. Rideshare matching identifies other colleagues who live near each other with similar schedules. Erideshare.com is an online

community that matches people within an area to carpool and is a good resource for smaller companies with fewer employees.

Bike to work

Another way to reduce mileage and encourage employee health and fitness is to promote a bike-to-work program. To start a bike-to-work program, post bike route maps in a prominent location in your office such as the kitchen or copy room. Arrange for safe and secure bike parking at your office facility. The Bicycle Commuter Act was added to the U.S. bailout bill and will provide a \$20 tax credit per month to employers of bike commuters. The credit is intended to go toward adding provisions for bike commuters, like racks and locker rooms. In June, Colorado Bike Month is celebrated with bike-to-work programs occurring throughout the state. Bicycle Colorado (www.bicyclecolo.org) usually provides event listings online for Colorado Bike Month.

Public transit

Encourage your employees to use public transportation. Some companies offer as an incentive subsidized bus and rail passes. Designate someone in your office who can facilitate finding public transit options for your employees. For public transportation options in Colorado, visit the American Public Transit Association (www.apta.com).

Telecommuting

Provide your employees the option of telecommuting or working from home one day a week. When launching a telework program be sure there are clear guidelines and policies in place. Educate your remote workers on effective communication and how to utilize their system tools effectively.

For more information about company commuter programs the EPA (www.epa.gov) has published Commuter Program Guides for employers. Commuter Choice (www.commuterchoice.com) is a program that connects employers and service providers in their local areas who can also assist implementing alternative transportation programs.

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