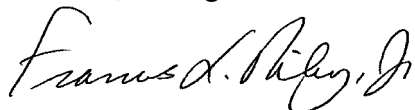


For: FSA and RMA National Office Employees

Metropolitan Transit Promotion Program (MTPP)

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A

Background

A previous FSA/RMA Partnership Council agreement dated September 15, 1998, authorized MTPP Metrochek to be implemented as a 1-year pilot program, beginning in FY 1999.

The Partnership Council recently:

- made Metrochek a permanent program, subject to funding availability
- during its December 14, 1999, meeting, added a Benefits in Lieu of Compensation program for employees to encourage using mass transit, vanpools, or carpools (2 or more) to the fullest extent allowed under IRS regulations.

Note: See subparagraph C for Benefits in Lieu of Compensation definition.

B

Purpose

This notice informs FSA and RMA National Office employees that MTPP is revised as follows:

- Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for transit and parking have been added to the program, effective pay period 10, May 7, 2000
- the Metrochek program is now a permanent program
- **all** employees currently enrolled in the Metrochek program or any employee eligible for the Benefits in Lieu of Compensation must submit an updated FFAS-13 to MSD by COB April 27, 2000

Continued on the next page

Disposal Date January 1, 2001	Distribution All FSA and RMA National Office Employees
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Notice AS-2005

1 Overview (Continued)

B

Purpose (Continued)

- Metrochek Transit Coordinators, HRD, FMD, MSD, and the appropriate units of Departmental Administration will routinely share information about participation in MTPP
 - a training session will be held to explain the revised program.
-

C

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this notice:

Metrochek is a nontaxable, currently \$25, monthly distribution of farecards or the actual cost, if less, paid by the applicable Agency and issued to eligible employees as a Metro farecard.

Benefits in Lieu of Compensation program is a program, under IRS regulations, where employees are eligible to “set aside” from their gross income each month up to the lesser of:

- for transportation, either of the following:
 - \$40
 - actual transportation costs

Note: The law authorizes transit benefits up to \$65 per month; however, employees using mass transit currently receive up to \$25 per month through Metrochek. Therefore, the additional benefit of \$40, now being added to the program, is the remainder of the \$65 authorized by law.

- for parking, either of the following:
 - \$175
 - actual parking costs.

Note: See “USDA NEWS”, September 1999, “Using Public Transit Can Put Cash Back In Our Pockets” article for additional information.

Set aside is similar to the Thrift Savings Plan in that it is reflected on an employee’s Statement of Earnings and Leave (SEL) and gross taxable income is reduced by the Benefits in Lieu of Compensation amount. An employee’s net pay will be slightly increased by reduced taxes being withheld on the smaller gross income amount. Payroll taxes are never paid on the set aside.

Continued on the next page

Notice AS-2005

1 Overview (Continued)

D

Responsible Official

The Chief, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch, HRD, is responsible for implementing and operating FFAS mission area transit promotion programs.

2 MTPP Guidelines

A

Guidelines for Transit Benefits

The Partnership Council has adopted the following guidelines for MTPP.

- Only FSA and RMA National Office employees located in the Washington metropolitan area are eligible to participate.
- All parties agree that to be eligible for MTPP, employees must, as a normal method of commuting, use 1 of the following modes of transportation:
 - a mass transportation system
 - commuter highway vehicle
 - vanpool
 - carpool (2 or more).
- Employees must file a revised FFAS-13 (Exhibit 1) when their normal method of commuting changes for more than 2 weeks.

Examples: Driving alone to the workplace, being on temporary duty at another workplace, or being on leave.

B

Transit Allowances

Monthly MTPP allowances to eligible employees are as follows, up to:

- \$25 distribution of farecards or the actual cost, if less, for the Metrochek program
 - \$40 for transportation costs exceeding any applicable Metrochek disbursement as a Benefit in Lieu of Compensation for additional transportation costs or the actual cost, if less
-

Continued on the next page

Notice AS-2005

2 MTPP Guidelines (Continued)

**B
Transit
Allowances
(Continued)**

- \$175 Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for parking or the actual cost, if less, computed on the basis of 20 workdays per month, for the parking benefit.

See Exhibit 2 for an example of an employee's SEL showing the impact of the maximum Benefits in Lieu of Compensation (\$215) on an employee's bi-weekly pay.

**C
Computing
Parking Benefits**

The Benefits in Lieu of Compensation amount for parking is determined by the amount paid in a typical 20 workday month to park a vehicle.

Example: Employee pays \$5 per day to park at Metro stop. The parking benefit would be \$100 for the month (\$5 x 20 workdays).

Employees should be aware this is an IRS program and, therefore, Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for parking may be subject to IRS audit.

3 Action

**A
Employee Action**

All current MTPP participants and any FSA or RMA National Office employees seeking to participate in the program, shall complete and submit the revised FFAS-13 to 1 of the following Metrochek Transit Coordinators by COB April 27, 2000.

Location	Metrochek Transit Coordinator
South Building	MSD, RCS, Room 1406-So Bldg., STOP 0564
L Street	HRD, OD, Suite 5200, L Street, STOP 0590
Park Office Center	FMD, Room 1132, POC, STOP 0581

Note: Obtain the revised FFAS-13 from the u:\wpforms directory.

Continued on the next page

Notice AS-2005

3 Action (Continued)

B

Metrochek Transit Coordinator Action

Once FFAS-13's have been received, Metrochek Transit Coordinators shall:

- review and approve or disapprove the applications
 - notify individuals of eligibility status
 - submit approved FFAS-13's to HRD for processing Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for transportation, parking, and Metrochek.
-

C

HRD Coordinator Action

Once FFAS-13's have been received, HRD shall:

- input Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for transportation and parking into the system
- transmit to NFC for processing.

Note: Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for transit and parking will begin on May 7, 2000 (pay period 10), or the next pay period FFAS-13 is received by HRD. Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for transit and parking will not be retroactive.

4 Contacts

A

Benefits in Lieu of Compensation

Direct any questions or comments about the Benefits in Lieu of Compensation for transportation and parking to Charles Soisson, HRD, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch, STOP 0595, at 418-9000.

Continued on the next page

Notice AS-2005

4 Contacts (Continued)

**B
Contacts for
Metrochek
Farecards**

Contact the following Metrochek Transit Coordinators if there are any questions or comments about Metrochek farecards.

Location	Contact
South Building	Terry Martz at 202-720-3135 or Arlene Hicks at 202-720-3407
L Street	Bonni Goeddel at 202-418-8953
Park Office Center	Crystal Njoku at 703-305-1403

**C
Program
Continuation**

All employees should recognize that continuing the Metrochek portion of MTPP is dependent on available funds within the FSA and RMA budgets. FSA and RMA will review the availability of funds as part of its annual budget process. If a change in MTPP is warranted, FSA and RMA shall provide the Union with a written statement describing the proposed changes.

FSA and RMA reserve the right to suspend the Metrochek portion of the program upon the announcement of reduction-in-force or furlough actions that may be necessitated by budget or ceiling constraints or other constraints beyond the control of FSA and RMA.

Example of FFAS-13

REPRODUCE LOCALLY. Include form number and date on all reproductions

FFAS-13 (04-19-00) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services METROPOLITAN TRANSIT PROMOTION PROGRAM APPLICATION (See Reverse for Privacy Act)	1. Agency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FSA <input type="checkbox"/> RMA <input type="checkbox"/> FAS
	2. Pay Period 12

The Metropolitan Transit Promotion Program is open to all FSA and RMA Headquarters employees located in the Washington Metropolitan Area, and all FAS employees. If at any time during your participation in the program, you no longer meet eligibility requirements, you must notify your Metrochek Coordinator listed below. If your mode of transportation changes, you must complete another application and submit it to your Metrochek Coordinator. The maximum Metrochek benefit per eligible employee will be \$25.00 per month for FSA and RMA, and \$30.00 per month for FAS employees, GS-11 and below, or the amount that is equal to the actual cost, if less.

PART A - EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

3. Name and Home Address of Employee Kaulin Rose 123 Main Street Anytown USA 12345		4. Social Security Number 123-45-6789	5. Badge No. 1234
		6. Room Number 1406-S	7. Mail Stop 0564
8. Office/Division/Branch MSD-RCS	9. Grade 12	10. Telephone Number (Area Code) (202) 555-6666	11. Fax Number (Area Code) (202) 555-7777

PART B - GENERAL INFORMATION

12. Are you named on a worksite parking permit with USDA or any other Federal agency. (Please Check) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <u>1/</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No																									
13. How do you commute to work? (Check all that apply)	14. Please indicate below how many trips taken per average week.																								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>MORNING</th> <th>EVENING</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Carpool</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vanpool <u>2/</u> - Please provide name of Vanpool Company →</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Commuter Bus <u>2/</u></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Commuter Train <u>2/</u></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metrorail</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metrobus</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other →</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		MORNING	EVENING	<input type="checkbox"/> Carpool			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vanpool <u>2/</u> - Please provide name of Vanpool Company →	4	4	<input type="checkbox"/> Commuter Bus <u>2/</u>			<input type="checkbox"/> Commuter Train <u>2/</u>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metrorail	1	1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metrobus	1	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Other →		
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<input type="checkbox"/> Commuter Train <u>2/</u>																									
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metrorail	1	1																							
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metrobus	1	1																							
<input type="checkbox"/> Other →																									
15. What is your current Total Monthly Fare Cost (Do not include parking fees in calculating fare). \$ 84.20	16. What is your Monthly Parking Cost? \$ 45.00																								
17. Name and Location of Parking Facility	18. Which Commuter Station do you depart from? Anacostia Station																								

PART C - BENEFITS REQUESTED

19. Metrochek (Per month) \$	20. Tax Free Transit Benefit (Per Pay Period) <u>3/</u> \$	21. Tax Free Parking Benefit (Per Pay Period) <u>3/</u> \$
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PART D - EMPLOYEE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that I am employed by The Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency or Foreign Agricultural Service and am not named on a worksite carpool parking permit with USDA or any other federal agency. I will use this benefit for my regular daily commute to and/or from work, and will not transfer it to anyone else. In addition, I certify that the monthly transit benefit I am receiving does not exceed my average monthly commuting cost (based on a 20 day month commute). This certification concerns a matter within the jurisdiction of an agency of the United States and making false, fictitious, or fraudulent certification may render the maker subject to criminal prosecution under Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001, civil penalty action providing for administrative recoveries of up to \$5,000 per violation, and/or agency disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal.

22. Employee Signature /s/ Kaulin Rose	Date 04/09/XX	PLEASE RETURN YOUR APPLICATION TO: ATTENTION MTTP COORDINATOR South Building - Stop 0564 Park Office Center - Stop 0581 L Street - Stop 0590 South Building - Stop 1028 (FAS employees only)
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PART E - AGENCY USE ONLY

23. Signature of Approving Official /s/ Mary C. Nicholas	Date 04/09/XX
24. Type of Action (See reverse) <input type="checkbox"/> Start <input type="checkbox"/> Stop <input type="checkbox"/> Change	25. Application Status <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved (See reverse)

1/ If you are named on a worksite carpool parking permit with USDA or any other federal agency you cannot participate in this program.
2/ This commuting method must be a member of the MTTP.
3/ Tax free transit and parking benefits must be converted from per month to per pay period basis by multiplying the monthly amount by 12 and then dividing that amount by 26. For example, the computation for an employee eligible for \$40.00 per month tax free transit benefit would be: (\$40.00 X 12 = \$480.00 - 26 = \$18.46). \$18.46 is the amount for block 20. A similar computation is done in block 21 to convert the parking benefit from a per month to per pay period basis.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotype, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Example of FFAS-13 (Continued)

FFAS-13 (04-19-00) Reverse

26. Reason for Stop or Change

27. Reason for Disapproval

NOTE: This information is solicited under authority of Public Law 103-172 and 105-178. Furnishing the information on this form is voluntary, but failure to do so may result in disapproval of your request for a public transit fare benefit. The purpose of this information is to facilitate timely processing of your request, to ensure your eligibility, and to prevent misuse of the funds involved. This information will be matched with lists at other Federal agencies to ensure that you are not listed as a carpool participant or a holder of any other form of worksite carpool parking permit with USDA or any other Federal agency.

Example Showing Impact of Benefits in Lieu of Compensation

A

Example

The following example shows the changes in gross and net pay for an employee who qualifies for the maximum Benefits in Lieu of Compensation under MTPP. Actual numbers will vary based on the employee’s applicable tax rates and their actual transportation and parking costs.

Note: To obtain the maximum benefit, eligible parking expense must be \$8.75 per day or more.

CODE	ITEM DESCRIPTION	HOURS		AMOUNT			
		P/P		P/P5		P/P6	
01	Regular	80	00	2,120	69	2,120	69
5205	Transit Benefits					215	00
61	Annual Leave						
62	Sick Leave						
66	Other Leave						
****	**PAY PERIOD HOURS & GROSS PAY**	80	00	2,120	69	1,905	69
77	FEDERAL TAX EXEMPTS M00					323	23
78	ST TAX MD EXEMPTS 015					92	67
****	*****TOTAL DEDUCTIONS*****					416	90
****	*****NET PAY*****					1,703	79
						1,746	38