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TUNE UP YOUR COMMUTER BENEFITS WITH A CLEANER RIDE TO WORK!

BEST Workplaces for CommutersSM

Triangle
Region

NEWSROOM

Click on the title to view the complete article:

BICYCLING

"How To Survive Road Hazards."
All-Star website, 2007.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

"Groundbreaking New Analysis: Public Transportation Saves \$6,200 Per Household, 1.4 Billion Gallons of Gasoline."
American Public Transportation Association (APTA) website, 1/9/07.

SPECIAL REPORT

"Scary Oil Statistics From The U.S. Treasury" *High Tech Magazine Online, 2/21/07.*

COMMENTS?

Suggestions, comments, or changes to newsletter can be sent to sminker@tjcog.org

We would appreciate your feedback!

If you would like to discontinue receiving this newsletter or change the designated recipients in your office, please email sminker@tjcog.org

POSITIVE CHANGES TO THE BEST WORKPLACES FOR COMMUTERS PROGRAM



As the Triangle Best Workplaces for Commuters Program Coordinators, we are happy to continue to work with you all on making the most of your BWC designation. Although we are all disappointed to hear that Federal budget cuts have eliminated EPA's future

administration of the Best Workplaces for Commuters Program, you all seem very confident that Triangle Best Workplaces for Commuters will do a good job taking over that responsibility. We are in a very good position to transition into being the regional BWC program administrator starting October, 2007.

Discussions are also taking place for consideration of BWC to become a statewide program, eventually to be taken over by the State of North Carolina Department of Transportation. We will keep you informed of progress made in that direction.

We hope to have a seamless transition, with no noticeable difference to you as BWC employers and we are transferring all USEPA data to our regional BWC Program. The national standard of excellence will be upheld and the integrity of this program will proceed uncompromised. We thank you for your understanding and patience during this transition period, and will continue to provide the service you've come to expect.

So, enjoy the Triangle Best Workplaces for Commuters Spring, 2007 Newsletter. We enjoy reporting helpful information as well as highlighting all of your commuter achievements throughout the year. Thanks for your continued support of commuter choices in the Triangle.

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FEATURED BWC EMPLOYER: BLUE CROSS and BLUE SHIELD, NORTH CAROLINA

This month, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) is highlighted for the unique benefit of “**Blue University**,” a program through which employees can pursue a college or graduate degree right on site. Employees order a low cost, gourmet dinner at the company’s concierge, and then walk right to their class without ever leaving the building. That saves time, gas, money, and earns employees a degree. Employees receive additional time off once they obtain their degree.



BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina

Workout Facilities: BCBSNC also provides a variety of ways that employees can be sure to get those well-needed workouts without having to drive to the gym. They offer:

- 👉 Onsite volleyball and basketball courts
- 👉 Outdoor spinning classes
- 👉 “**Club Blue**” - their fully equipped indoor fitness center with locker room
- 👉 Onsite walking trail

BCBSNC really goes the extra mile to avoid unnecessary travel, which contributes to air pollution, wastes valuable time, and can add to employees’ stress levels. By offering their employees substantial onsite amenities, employees can be less stressed, while also living life to the fullest and being able to handle their personal and family responsibilities without detracting from their work hours. On-site amenities include:

1. “**Bright Horizons**” on-site backup childcare
2. Gourmet cafeteria for healthy, balanced meals
3. Common area web access
4. Dry cleaning, movie drop, and film developing
5. On-line shop & swap where employees can buy and sell their cars, electronics or other used items
6. Audio conferencing to avoid unnecessary travel between sites for meetings

You can’t beat that for convenience! Thank you, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, for your exemplary efforts to improve the quality of life for your Triangle employees.

Triangle BWC Employers at a Glance

USEPA:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency walks the low emissions talk. In addition to using carpools and vanpools to help reduce congestion and air pollution, the Agency has two electric vehicles for facilities maintenance at its RTP campus. Throughout the four building campus, which covers 133 acres, the entire area is easily accessible on a single charge for the day.

The biggest advantage of using the electric vehicles is that they have proven reliable, low maintenance, and of course, emissions-free for the required low-speed, short distance trips necessary throughout the campus. They are stored overnight and charged on-site on the main loading dock of one of the buildings. The maintenance staff prefers the electric vehicles to move around campus without having to wait for the shuttle bus, and is proud to be helping the environment.

In the seven years they have been using the vehicles, the EPA has already seen a return on their investment through low purchase price and maintenance costs. The EPA hopes to set the example for other campus-based organizations throughout the Triangle and RTP.



Electric Vehicles are provided for facilities maintenance at the EPA RTP campus for low maintenance, emissions-free transportation.

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Triangle BWC Employers at a Glance

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Cato Research, Durham, NC:

Carpooling is an alternative commute option for many Cato employees and they have found a unique way to optimize their driving partner matches. At their regular commuter luncheons onsite, employees are seated at tables according to where they live. They get a chance to get acquainted and decide if they would like to carpool together. In the meantime, an interactive carpool map is on display with names of the people who live in a given location (with prior permission) for convenient coordination of travel plans.

In addition, Cato is launching their second annual Ozone Action Lunch Bunch, in conjunction with ozone season (starting in May). A kick-off lunch is accompanied by a presentation about the dangers of high ground level ozone and ways to avoid it. Employees may choose to receive ozone alert forecast emails, and on high ozone days, can “pool” their lunch orders and have it delivered. People rotate to make a single trip to pick up lunch for all participants at a local eatery. It’s a great way to help keep traffic down, minimize ozone effects and traveling out in the heat—all with no additional cost to the company.



Cato Research encourages carpooling through regular commuter luncheons to match prospective riders.

FAQ:

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS? LET US KNOW AND WE’LL GET THEM ANSWERED.

Q: Is gas included in the vanpool fare?

A: Yes! TTA leases the driver a van, pays for all insurance and maintenance, and gives the van a gas card.

Q: Will it be less expensive for me to ride a van pool than driving to work?

A: To ride in a typical 75 mile roundtrip vanpool would cost about \$72/month. Remember, the vanpool driver's commuter is FREE!

The cost per month for each vanpool rider is calculated by multiplying the total number of miles their van traveled that month by 49 cents per mile and then dividing that by the number of people in the van. [Ex: (x)miles/month x \$.49/12 people]

Vanpoolers’ price per mile stays the same no matter how expensive gas gets. And with gas prices projected to rise above \$3 per gallon this summer, vanpooling becomes even more cost effective, especially combined with the financial savings from reduced maintenance costs on your personal vehicle.

FAST FACTS:

 According to the 2005 Urban Mobility Study, each year, congestion created from commuting to and from work causes 3.7 billion hours of lost productivity, costing employers 92 million work weeks, and the nation \$63.1 billion in wasted time and fuel.

Other things you can do to reduce the atmospheric impacts of harmful emissions: (www.climatecrisis.net)

1. Drive less. Each mile NOT driven saves a pound of carbon dioxide, a common greenhouse gas.
2. Replace light bulbs with CFL’s (compact fluorescent light bulbs); each bulb replaced saves 150 pounds of carbon dioxide annually.
3. Take the junk out of your trunk. Hauling an extra 100 pounds in your vehicle reduces fuel economy by up to 2 percent.

TIME, MONEY AND ENERGY SAVING TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUTE

Americans spend an average of 47 hours per year sitting in rush-hour traffic, and those in the Triangle Region spend 27 hours.

A typical commuter who switches from driving alone to using commuter alternatives saves more than \$800 a year in transportation expenses according to Connie Ruth in "Commuter Benefits: Employers Get the Green Light." (Employee Benefits Digest, Jan. 2003. Report in Vol. 40).

Here are a few tips to help you save time, money and energy:

Be prepared:

Save time in the morning and reduce your stress by preparing the night before so you can be ready to walk out the door in the morning.

Have your children help prepare for themselves to save you valuable time and teach them responsibility.

Make healthy choices:

Packing your own lunch to save you from having to drive to lunch and also give you control of what you eat and portion size.

Walk up the stairs, to a distant bus stop, or park far and walk to your destination especially if it is difficult finding time to exercise otherwise.

Be efficient:

Trip chain to schedule all errands and activities, both professional and personal, in the same trip, and on a route that doesn't back track or take you out of your way. "Trip chaining" can also reduce emissions and allow your car to run more efficiently by keeping your engine warm.

Source: Dr. M. A. Matria, CLC, PCC, www.Commuter-Assist.com

Source: www.earthcarenc.org



Testimonials: Hear what local BWC's have to say!

2 Plus, Cary, NC: "2Plus, Inc, a national non-profit transportation consultant firm, prides itself on having a virtually exclusive telework workforce, which was the primary benefit which designated us as a BWC employer. With the aid of secure technologies and a virtual infrastructure, our full time staff is able to work remotely from the comfort of their homes in several NC cities, and a handful of other states. The telework culture plays a notable role in job satisfaction and worker retention among our staff.

Despite our physical distances, many of our staff have developed friendships beyond the typical co-worker camaraderie. This is a testament to our leadership and the tools that we have been given to operate effectively in a virtual office setting."

*Brent Hodges
Managing Editor of Corporate Publications
2Plus, Inc. Cary, NC*

BASF Corporation, Research Triangle Park, NC:

"Best Workplaces for Commuters (BWC) encourages alternative commuter practices that make the world a better place today and for future generations. BASF Corporation is doing its part to be a responsible global citizen and is honored to be one of the Triangle region's BWC companies. BASF has facilities to accommodate employees who run or bike to work as well as transit pass subsidy. On-site amenities are also offered to minimize driving and maximize efficiencies for both the employees and the business. Services offered include oil changes, auto detailing, and dry cleaning pickup and delivery."

*Melinda J Storicks, C.P.M.
Site Services Specialist, BASF Corporation*