

Transit Subsidy Frequently Asked Questions

Q-1: What is the new limit on the transit subsidy and when did the transit subsidy increase take effect as a result of the American Recovery and Economic Stimulus Act of 2009? Will the increase in transit subsidy funds to employees be awarded on a retroactive basis?

A-1: The new limit is \$230 per month (from \$115 per month). The increase took effect on March 1, 2009. The increased transit subsidy funds will be retroactive to March 1, and the new limit will take effect for current subsidy awards on June 1.

Q-2: How will the Transit Subsidy Program Manager know how much I should receive up to the higher subsidy amount on June 1?

A-2: Everyone who submitted new applications in February should have listed their actual costs for commuting on their application, even though the amount requested was limited to \$115 per month. The Transit Subsidy Program Manager has calculated the higher amounts (up to \$230) for each employee and transmitted the updated information to Metro before May 15, so that SmarTrip® cards will receive the higher transit subsidy beginning June 1. *To close the loop on paperwork, employees should correct the transit amounts requested to the higher amount up to the \$230 limit and initial the changes on their February applications and trip planners with the Transit Subsidy Program Manager Keith Hipp in the Office of Facilities Management, Room 414-D (202-708-4712), if they are eligible for the increased funds, before June 15.*

Q-3: What should I do if I'm entitled to retroactive transit funds?

A-3: We are working on a procedure to handle this. It will require eligible employees to submit their actual costs of commuting during the period of retroactive payments. Office of Finance staff will handle the retroactive award of funds through the payroll system. We will issue an email with more details on the payroll credit of retroactive tax-free funds.

Q-4: What should I do if I did not submit a new transit subsidy application in February or did not list my actual costs on my new application?

A-4: For employees who did not get their higher subsidy amount in June, employees should file new applications and trip planners with Keith Hipp if they are eligible for the increased funds. Retroactive funds will be processed through the Office of Finance payroll system for March through June, and the new transit subsidy rate will take effect on July 1.

Q-5: Who is eligible for a transit subsidy?

A-5: Federal employees who commute via Commuter Bus, Metro transit, MARC train, Vanpool, and VRE.

Q-6: Am I eligible for a transit subsidy if I am a part-time employee?

A-6: Yes.

Q-7: Am I eligible for a transit subsidy if I am a contractor?

A-7: No, contractors are not eligible, only federal employees are eligible for this benefit.

Q-8: Am I eligible for a transit subsidy if I am a teleworker?

A-8: Yes, however your transit subsidy must be adjusted to subtract your telework days from your regular work schedule each month. *This may be accomplished by deducting funds corresponding to the telework days projected for the month from the funds initially posted to your SmarTrip® card when downloading the transit subsidy award at the Metro Fare Card machine at the beginning of each month.*

Q-9: How do I handle periods of vacation, or any other workday when I don't commute by mass transit when collecting my transit subsidy funds for that month?

A-9: You may only collect transit funds for actual commuting expenses. Time spent in leave status means that there are no commuting expenses to be subsidized. Accordingly, you must deduct the expenses for those days from your subsidy collection if that results in your receipt of more than your actual cost. *This may be accomplished by deducting funds corresponding to the vacation days projected for the month from the funds initially posted to your SmarTrip® card when downloading the award at the Metro Fare Card machine at the beginning of each month.*

- Example 1: Your average commuting expenses by Metro rail/bus are \$11.50 per day, totaling \$230 per month (based on a 20 day month). If you take a one week vacation, you should deduct \$57.50 from the amount initially posted to your SmarTrip® card when you collect your monthly funds at the Fare Card machine, and receive \$172.50 for that month.
- Example 2: Your average commuting expenses by Metro rail/bus are \$15.00 per day, totaling \$300 per month. You are entitled to a subsidy of \$230 per month. If you take a four day vacation you should not deduct any funds from the amount initially posted to your SmarTrip® card when you collect your monthly funds at the Fare Card machine, and receive the usual \$230. *(Your actual commuting costs were \$240, which exceed the subsidy cap of \$230.)*

Q-10: How much of a subsidy am I eligible for if I have an AWS schedule?

Q-10: You are eligible for \$230 or actual expenses, whichever is lower. An 8 hour schedule is eligible for expenses for 20 commuting days per month. A 5-4-9 schedule is eligible for 18 days per month. A 4-10 schedule is eligible for 16 days per month.

Q-11: What happens if I miscalculated my commuting costs for the month and end the month with excess funds on my SmarTrip® card?

A-11: The easiest way to make adjustments to your subsidy for reduced actual cost is to deduct the funds remaining on your card from the award amount for the next month when using the Metro Fare Card Machine. The machine allows you to lower the amount initially posted to your card prior to finalizing the “add benefits” transaction.

Q-12: Can I receive a transit subsidy if I am in a carpool?

A-12: No. You can get a commuter subsidy or subsidized carpool parking as a carpool member. You cannot receive both. The application forms contain a certification to that effect by the recipient.

Q-13: How do I apply for the transit subsidy?

A-13: The transit subsidy application form is located on the Intranet under *Forms*, Application for Transit Subsidy Benefit Form. The trip planner is located at www.wmata.com. All applications must be signed by your immediate supervisor, and submitted along with the trip planner to Keith Hipp.

Q-14: When does my transit subsidy begin?

A-14: Employees who submit applications before the 15th of each month will be entitled to the subsidy on the first day of the following month. Employees who submit applications after the 15th of the month will be entitled on the first day of the month after the month following the date the application was submitted.

Q-15: What happens if I lose my SmarTrip® card?

A-15: You must take reasonable care of any SmarTrip® card (or other fare card) provided by the agency and, depending on the facts and circumstances, the loss, damage, or destruction of the card could be an administrative offense resulting in disciplinary or adverse action. For a replacement card contact Keith Hipp.