



# Employer Commute Guide



# Introduction

CommuteWISE is here to help employers identify and promote commute options that are reliable, safe, and sustainable. Many workers balance their career with caregiving, pursuing an education, raising a family or other responsibilities. Companies big and small throughout Southeastern Wisconsin recognize that employee transportation is key to recruiting and retaining a satisfied, productive workforce. There is no “one size fits all” approach to employee transportation - programs often include multiple commute solutions based on employees’ needs and what makes the most business sense for your organization.

This guide introduces a variety of commute options, describes key benefits for the employee and employer, and provides ideas for integration into your company. The strategies in this guide, combined with your unique understanding of your organization, equip you to take the next step in your employee transportation program. Not sure where to go from here? Each commute option has a list of ways CommuteWISE can support your business. Contact us at [commutewise@sewrpc.org](mailto:commutewise@sewrpc.org) to start a conversation with our team.

CommuteWISE is an initiative of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), which serves the counties of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha.



# Table of Contents

Transit..... 1

Ridesharing.....3

    Carpool.....3

    Vanpool .....5

Active Transportation.....6

    Bike .....6

    Walk.....8

Ride-Hail .....9

Shuttle..... 10

Alternative Work Arrangements ..... 11

## Definitions

**Active Transportation:** Includes walking, bicycling, wheelchairs and other transportation modes that are humanpowered.

**Non-drivers:** Includes aging adults, students, low-income individuals, those with physical, mental or intellectual/developmental disabilities, those without access to a driver’s license, or those who prefer not to drive.



# Transit

Transit is a sustainable, cost-effective way to get to work. Taking transit to work gives your employees a chance to relax, catch up on email, and avoid the hassle of being behind the wheel. It also has been shown to increase job satisfaction and productivity.

There are over a dozen transit options in Southeastern Wisconsin, from fixed-route bus service to on-demand shared-ride service, depending on the area. Many transit operators have trip online planning tools that can help your employees find the best transit services for their way to work. Sharing transit options with your employees can be the first step towards improving access to your workplace. Coordinating with your local transit agency can be a great way to ensure you're sharing the most recent information and providing helpful input to improve transit services.

When to consider: Urbanized, suburban, and downtown centers where there are transit networks. If your business is not served by transit, the region's transit network can potentially cover a large portion of an employee's commute trip and leave the "last-mile" portion to a ridesharing or ride-hailing service.

## CommuteWISE Tip

**Located in Milwaukee County?** The MCTS Commuter Value Pass offers discounted rides across the entire MCTS route network. The program is cost-efficient, easy to use, and is a great 'first step' in advancing sustainable transportation choices. Employees with a MCTS Commuter Value Pass can take a Lyft home for free in an emergency.

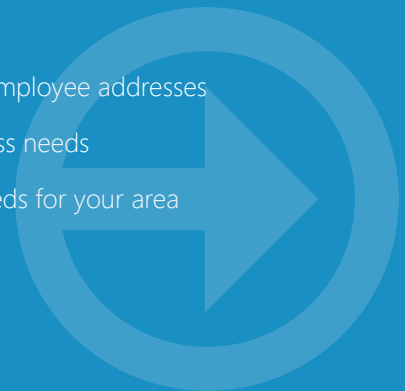


## Get Started

- **Display resources.** Share websites, maps, schedules, or pamphlets to promote taking transit to work. Find out if your transit provider has an app and encourage employees to download it to plan their route and receive updates.
- **Subsidize or discount a transit pass.** Ask your transit provider about a discounted transit pass for commuters. Subsidize the cost of a monthly pass for employees. Offer workers pre-tax transit passes through a payroll deduction. The IRS allows employees to set aside up to \$280/month of pre-tax funds for transit. (*Publication 15-B (2022), Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits*)
- **Create a transit culture.** Share transit information with new hires from day one. Frame your company's transit benefits as health and financial benefits for your staff. Schedule meetings towards the middle of the day to allow transit riders flexible schedules. Get management on board the bus to lead by example. Keep an open dialogue with employees about their commute to ensure they have a reliable way to work each day.
- **Offer an employee shuttle.** Is your worksite over a 10-minute walk from the bus stop? Consider offering an employee shuttle or ride-hailing service to bring employees the last mile. Talk with nearby employers to join forces and share the cost of a shuttle.
- **Be a transit advocate.** Boosting ridership for routes near your business encourages your transit agency to maintain that route. Communicate your shift times with your transit agency. Relay concerns you hear from workers to the transit agency.

## CommuteWISE Services

- Identify available transit options based on your worksite location and employee addresses
- Facilitate a connection with your transit provider to discuss your business needs
- Convene a group of employers to discuss workforce transportation needs for your area
- Support for establishing a subsidized transit pass program
- Connect you to last-mile shuttle providers
- Provide tips for creating a transit culture at your workplace





## Ridesharing

Employees who rideshare (carpool or vanpool) save money on commute costs, reduce stress, and build community with co-workers. These benefits may improve company morale and productivity.

## Carpool

A carpool, 2 or more people sharing a ride, can be a valuable benefit for potential employees without reliable transportation or for current employees looking for another commute option.

When to consider: Urbanized, suburban, and downtown centers where there are opportunities to carpool with clusters of employees living in similar areas. Useful for worksites with limited parking, communities experiencing congestion, and in areas with limited transit access.





## Get Started

- **Help staff find a carpool.** Encourage employees to register for CommuteWISE Connect – the free statewide ride-matching platform. Host ride-matching events where employees can learn more about carpooling and find a match. Post a list of interested carpool parties in employee shared spaces.
- **Incentivize it.** Motivate employees through gift certificates, giveaways, or drawings. Tailor the incentives to fit your program goals - like a one-time gas card for newly formed carpools or a regular prize drawing for participants who carpool three times per week.
- **Promote a carpool culture.** Include information about carpooling in the onboarding process. Allow carpool partners to rotate shift schedules together. Recognize that carpools work best when employee schedules are predictable. If unexpected overtime is common at your company, consider a guaranteed ride home (see next).
- **Offer a Guaranteed Ride Home Program.** Cover the full or partial cost of carpoolers taking a taxi, Uber/Lyft, transit, or rental car to get home in an emergency.
- **Dedicate preferred parking spaces.** Designate parking spaces, typically close to the building entrance, for employees participating in carpool.
- **Share information on how to carpool successfully and safely.** Share information to help commuters set up a harmonious carpool. Distribute resources on social distancing and sanitation and health protocols, as needed.

## CommuteWISE Services

- Support your business in setting up a guaranteed ride home or preferential parking program
- Consultation on using the CommuteWISE Connect network, including the creation of a customized workplace network, a setting that allows for exclusive ride-matching between employees within a given business or business district
- Map employee home addresses to identify clusters of employees for carpool participation
- Provide promotional tools and tips for encouraging carpools





# Vanpool

A vanpool is 4-15 passengers sharing a ride and the cost of a vehicle and associated operating expenses. Employers may purchase vehicles and coordinate vanpools themselves or work with a third-party provider.

When to consider: Urbanized downtown centers, small urban and rural areas with limited transit services, or other areas where multiple employers are clustered together (such as business or industrial parks). Vanpool can be a flexible commute solution for worksites with limited parking, clusters of workers on the same schedule who live farther distances from their workplace, or workforces with non-drivers.

## Get Started

- **Help staff form or find a vanpool.** Operate an in-house vanpool program or set up an account a third-party company, like Commute with Enterprise. Host vanpool-matching events where employees can learn more and find a van.
- **Offer a payroll deduction.** Allow employees to purchase vanpool fares through a pre-tax payroll deduction. The IRS allows employees to set aside up to \$280/month for eligible vanpools, defined as six or more people in a vehicle.
- **Offer a Guaranteed Ride Home Program.** Cover the full or partial cost of vanpoolers taking a taxi, Uber/Lyft, transit, or rental car to get home in an emergency.
- **Dedicate preferred parking spaces.** Designate parking spaces, typically close to the building entrance, for employees participating in vanpool.
- **Share information on how to vanpool successfully and safely.** Share information to help commuters set up a harmonious vanpool. Distribute resources on social distancing and sanitation and health protocols, as needed.

## CommuteWISE Services

- Support your business in setting up a guaranteed ride home or preferential parking program.
- Facilitate a connection with Commute with Enterprise or another third-party transportation provider.
- Map employee home addresses to identify clusters of employees for eligible for vanpool. Identify possible pick-up locations, e.g., park and ride lots.
- Provide promotional tools and tips for encouraging vanpools.







# Active Transportation

Employees who commute by walking or biking save money, enjoy schedule flexibility, and help the environment. By building a workout into their daily routine employees reduce their stress and improve their health, which translates into happier, healthier workers.

## Bike

Biking can be an attractive commute choice for employers promoting a healthy, sustainable work environment.

When to consider: Employers can encourage employees to bike in any location. Everyone has different comfort levels for trip distance and bicycle infrastructure (e.g., riding on a protected path vs. a striped bike lane).

***CommuteWISE Tip: Promote bike-share as a simple, affordable option for employees.***

### CommuteWISE Tip

**Located in Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, or West Allis?** A Bublr Bikes station might be nearby! CommuteWISE can help identify possible bike-share trip opportunities, and help you consider benefits such as a discounted Bublr pass.

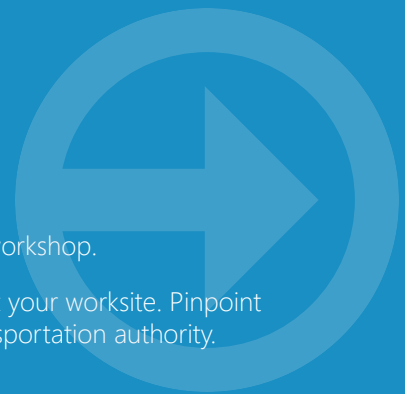


## Get Started

- **Share information.** Display resources such as maps, brochures, and event flyers to encourage biking to work.
- **Gamify it.** Use gamification to encourage employees to bike. Tag on to established events such as Wisconsin Bike Week, May is Bike Month, or Cycle September. Plan “Try It” days to support first time bike commuters.
- **Make your workplace bike-friendly.** Install an onsite bike repair kit. Provide secure bike parking. Provide showers or lockers as a convenience for employees who bike to work. Unable to provide on-site facilities? Offer a discount to an off-site gym with shower facilities as a part of an overall wellness benefit. Allow bike commuters to have flexible schedules so they can shift their commute outside of peak travel times.
- **Encourage biking together.** Promote finding a Bike Buddy on the CommuteWISE Connect network. Biking with a co-worker boosts riders’ confidence in trying new routes and adds security in case of an emergency. Experienced riders may enjoy mentoring new riders.
- **Host a bike workshop.** Hold workshops to address topics like route planning, bike maintenance, or winter commuting. Consider a hands-on workshop for topics like maintenance or safe cycling.
- **Offer a Guaranteed Ride Home Program.** Cover the full or partial cost of bike commuters taking a taxi, Uber/Lyft, transit, or rental car to get home in an emergency.

## CommuteWISE Services

- Identify safe, convenient, connected bike routes for employees.
- Consult on becoming a bike-friendly workplace.
- Connect you with informational resources or a skilled cyclist to lead a workshop.
- Conduct a site assessment to inventory existing bicycle infrastructure at your worksite. Pinpoint improvements that your business can advocate for with your local transportation authority.





# Walk

Walking is healthy, sustainable, and practical for short commutes. Walking is also the first and last leg of a trip for an employee who takes transit. Let CommuteWISE work with you to promote a walk-friendly work environment. CommuteWISE can conduct a walk audit around your business or business district to identify barriers and optimize a safe, convenient walking commute.

When to consider: Urban/Inner suburbs. Everyone has different comfort levels for trip distance and pedestrian infrastructure.

## CommuteWISE Tip

Not all employees live close enough to walk to work, but you can still promote walking at your workplace.

Once your employees have clocked in, walking can be a great way to keep them energized and productive. Conduct walking meetings, organize walk-at-lunch groups, and encourage employees to walk, when possible, for off-site lunch gatherings or meetings.



# Ride-Hail

Partnering with a ride-hailing company such as Lyft or Uber is one way to address the “first and last mile” trip portion between existing public transportation services and the workers’ homes and workplaces. Other uses for ride-hailing include emergency rides home or getting a non-driving worker to/from work in a pinch. Using Lyft, Uber, or another shared ride service is flexible and convenient, but drivers may not be available in all locations in the region.

When to consider: Urbanized, suburban, and downtown centers are typically where ride-hailing will be the most available and reliable. Business or industrial parks may also benefit from using ride-hailing as a last mile solution.

## Get Started

- **Promote ride-hailing as part of a multimodal commute.** Encourage employees to consider using a ride-hailing service to access transit or to travel the last leg of a trip to the workplace.
- **Join forces with nearby businesses.** Reach out to other businesses in your area or district to discuss workforce mobility constraints and possible partnership opportunities for using ride-hailing to get employees to work.
- **Create Guaranteed Ride Home partnership.** Contract with a ride-hailing service for Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program that gives employees who rely on carpool, vanpool, transit, cycling, or walking to work peace of mind and reassures commuters that, if needed, a ride home will be available.

## CommuteWISE Services

- Identify potential bus routes and stop locations that could serve as pick-up/drop-off locations for a ride-hailing service.
- Convene meetings with your organization or a group of employers to discuss workforce transportation needs for your area and how ride-hailing can help.
- Consult on programmatic details of a Guaranteed Ride Home program, including employee eligibility, program duration, and budget.
- If a business is using the CommuteWISE Connect platform, employers can set up a GRH program that allows employees to request a ride, certify the nature of the emergency, and receive a voucher through the website.



# Shuttle

A shuttle program offers employers a highly customizable transportation solution. Fixed-route shuttles operate on a predetermined route and schedule. On-demand shuttles allow users to request a ride within a specified area. Shuttles may also provide “last mile” transportation between transit stations and participating businesses. The benefits of a shuttle program are reliability and the opportunity for riders to relax during the commute. Some drawbacks are that shuttle programs are typically costly and administratively intensive.

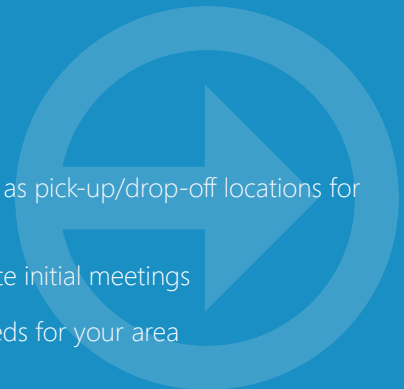
When to consider: Suburban, small urban, and rural areas. Industrial parks, business districts, hospital campuses, and construction companies are among the many kinds of employers using shuttle companies for year-round or seasonal purposes in the region. This strategy may be particularly valuable for non-drivers, opening employment opportunities that otherwise would not exist.

## Get Started

- Survey commuters. If you are considering making the financial and operational investment in a shuttle service, begin by surveying employees to gauge how many riders might be interested.
- Outline your goals. Know what you are trying to accomplish with your shuttle program. Are you looking to attract a new workforce? Are you hoping to improve retention? Are you trying to alleviate parking demand on a busy campus? Understanding your goals will help determine the shuttle structure and justify your budget.
- Consider a contract with a third-party transportation provider. There are several third-party service providers that are available to operate shuttle services in the region. They may also be available to provide marketing and administrative support to lessen the burden for your HR department.
- Join forces with nearby businesses. Reach out to other businesses in your area or district to discuss workforce mobility constraints and possible collaboration opportunities for operating a shuttle.
- Market the program. Create a robust campaign to let employees know about the service to grow ridership. Include shuttle information in new hire orientation packages.

## CommuteWISE Services

- Map employee home addresses to identify routes and riders
- Identify park-and-ride lots, bus stops, and parking lots that could serve as pick-up/drop-off locations for shuttle service
- Make connections with third-party transportation providers and facilitate initial meetings
- Convene a group of employers to discuss workforce transportation needs for your area







# Alternative Work Arrangements

Offering alternative work arrangements can be mutually beneficial for your business and its workforce. Employees benefit from a flexible schedule that allows them to work around peak-commute hours and off-site appointments, while employers benefit from a workforce that is more productive and satisfied.

## Remote Work

- The pandemic made remote work more common for some companies or certain conducive positions. If this is the case for your business, consider making a long-term change that allows employees to work from an alternate location one or more days per week. Remote work often improves productivity and helps to recruit and retain valuable employees.

## Flexible Scheduling

- Allow employees to arrive or leave work at different times. It is especially helpful for avoiding rush-hour traffic and accommodating off-site appointments such as doctor visits. Flexible work schedules also help workers adjust their schedule to better match with transit schedules or carpool groups. Flex scheduling is associated with reduced stress levels, reduced absenteeism, and increased job satisfaction.

## Compressed Scheduling

- Allow employees to work longer hours over a shorter number of days. A compressed workweek cuts employee commute time and costs which improves job satisfaction and reduces parking demand at worksites.

## CommuteWISE Services

Company-wide scheduling policies and remote work agreements can help maintain worker accountability and productivity. New guidelines and policies can be distributed in benefits packets, new hire orientations, and more. CommuteWISE's consultative services can help determine which elements should be included in your policy.

