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04. Grow Employer Mobility Programs



Solution 4.0

Excessive roadway congestion creates unreliable trip conditions that negatively impact employees and employers by restricting access to jobs and the region's rich amenities. Drive-alone trips are a major contributor to traffic congestion, with most excessive and damaging congestion occurring during morning and evening weekday work commute periods. Mobility to and from worksites represents the largest contributor to congestion during these periods.

43 percent of Washington area metro 2016 State of the Commute survey respondents have changed jobs or residence due to their commutes, and 63 percent made commuting the only factor considered in their decision to accept a job.

Many employers provide employer mobility programs for their employees, such as offering pre-tax transit passes and alternative work schedules, or promoting carpools and vanpools, which can provide cost savings by lowering employers' parking costs while also increasing the attractiveness of employment for current and potential workers. If implemented at scale at employer sites throughout the region, these programs can achieve large reductions in congestion, improve access to worksites for a wider set of potential workers, reduce costs associated with gasoline, and mitigate environmental impacts from the transportation sector.

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If a core set of employer mobility programs was adopted by all employers in the Capital Region, models estimate that nearly 1.5 million daily vehicle trips could be eliminated,¹ with Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) estimating that the Washington metro area alone could reduce congestion by 24 percent.² To put this impact into perspective, the I-95 express lanes handle 30,000 vehicle trips a day.³ Even small reductions in the number of vehicle trips can significantly improve congestion. During the recession in 2008, national vehicle miles traveled (VMT) decreased by just 3.6 percent, but congestion was reduced by 30 percent in the nation's 100 most congested areas.⁴

Both the public and private sectors have key roles to play in creating regional, consumer-oriented employee mobility programs that successfully reduce the region's congestion. Private companies can lead by implementing game-changing programs—and the public sector could enhance the effectiveness of their scarce resources to encourage greater use by the private sector.

CAPITAL REGION PERFORMANCE

The disjointed implementation of employer mobility programs at work sites and the programs offered by transportation agencies in the Capital Region make it challenging to achieve the large reductions in congestion that similar programs have achieved elsewhere. The programs offered by the various jurisdictions create a maze that employers and employees in the region must navigate to determine what they might be eligible to receive based on their home and work locations. A variety of employer mobility programs exist across the Capital Region—some of which are supported with limited funding by Maryland, the District, and Virginia; metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); local jurisdictions; transportation management associations (i.e., associations that provide mobility programs in a particular area, such as a commercial district, medical center, or industrial park); as well as employers. These patchwork public programs and policies are not always coordinated, providing a disincentive for large employers with sites in multiple jurisdictions to leverage these resources. It also does not track with the daily lives of our workforce:

between home and work, one in two Capital Region commuters cross a county boundary and one in five cross a state boundary in trips between home and work.⁵

If all employers in the Capital Region adopt a uniform set of core employer mobility programs, models estimate that the region could reduce nearly 1.5 million daily vehicle trips.⁶ With expert guidance from leading employers, stakeholders, and Virginia Tech researchers, the Partnership has identified a set of core employer mobility programs proven successful at reducing drive-alone rates, which include:

- Offer pre-tax transit benefits
- Establish telework programs
- Choose transit-accessible site location
- Provide secure bike parking for employees
- Host annual transportation fairs
- Designate an Employee Mobility Programs Coordinator

By focusing public investments on the employee mobility programs that most effectively reduce drive-alone trips, our region would achieve even further reductions in congestion. Establishing regional evaluation tools—including performance metrics and regional surveys—would allow the region to better devote limited resources to the programs offering the greatest congestion reduction and drive-alone trip reductions. In addition, streamlining how employers engage with public sector employee mobility programs will encourage more employers to leverage these cost-effective public resources.

ACTIONS

- Challenge the region's employers to implement game-changing commuter programs to enhance talent attraction and collectively reduce congestion during peak travel periods
- Enhance the effectiveness of public commuter programs to increase their use by private employers—to complement an expanded employer commitment

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CITATIONS:

1. Virginia Tech analysis of employer mobility programs using a model that deploys the Land Distributing Activity (LDA) Method.
2. An Assessment of Regional Initiatives for the National Capital Region: Technical Report on Phase II of the TPB Long-Range Plan Task Force. National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, December 2017. <https://www.mwcog.org/file.aspx?D=fyBRBNQUuDN48QEXRc3bNHLp8ytrsSEVcg%2fTMPrzu7g%3d&A=NYyETN4WuxQWWYImU6a2FRzM83OmR9W9kAJRDxObZ6l%3d>.
3. Versel, David. "More roads won't solve traffic on I-95 in Northern Virginia." Greater Greater Washington. <https://ggwash.org/view/32922/more-roads-wont-solve-traffic-on-i-95-in-northern-virginia>.
4. "Implementing Complete Streets: Complete Streets Ease Traffic Woes." Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-congestion.pdf>
5. Partnership analysis of U.S. Census American Community Survey.
6. Virginia Tech analysis of employer mobility programs using a model that deploys the Land Distributing Activity (LDA) Method.

COLLAPSE ^

ACTION 4.1

Challenge the Region's Employers to Implement Game-Changing Commuter Programs to Enhance Talent Attraction and Collectively Reduce Congestion During Peak Travel Periods



Solution 4.0

MOBILITY PRIORITIES

Connect the Super-Region

High

Improve Consumer Experience

Very High

Ensure Equitable Access

Low

Integrate Innovation

Medium

WHAT

Employers, collectively, can lead the Capital Region to improve its transportation system by implementing minimal-cost or no-cost employer mobility programs. Implementing these mobility programs at scale throughout the region can achieve large reductions in congestion in the near term. This will also increase the attractiveness of employment for current and potential workers as well as increase access to jobs for a wider range of the region's workforce.

The region's leading employers, including the companies comprising the Greater Washington Partnership, should accept the Employer Mobility Challenge—in which each company provides a uniform set of Core Employer Mobility Programs for all employees and adopts no fewer than two additional Innovative Employer Mobility Programs not currently deployed by the company. The Partnership's employers alone cannot create the scale needed to meaningfully reduce drive-alone trips in the region to bring down congestion. The Partnership calls upon the region's public and private employers to accept the Employer Mobility Challenge. Only together will we create the scale needed to transform our region's mobility outcomes.

The Washington Gas & Light company's telework program has allowed employees to eliminate more than 57,000 trips and receive, on average, the equivalent of nearly two days paid time off per quarter by foregoing commutes on days they telework. The program has helped employees avoid driving more 1.5 million miles and save more than 70,000 gallons of fuel since 2010.

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EMPLOYER MOBILITY CHALLENGE

CORE PROGRAMS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer pre-tax transit benefits • Establish telework programs • Choose transit-accessible site location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide secure bike parking for employees • Host annual transportation fairs • Designate an Employee Mobility Programs Coordinator

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a compressed work schedule • Provide discounted or free transit passes • Increase access to transit and nearby amenities through shuttle, bike, and scooter share services • Allocate preferential parking spaces for car and vanpools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create corporate carshare and rideshare accounts • Charge for parking • Provide a parking cash-out program • Partner with technology companies to assist employees with commute planning

WHY

While important, large road or transit capital projects that can reduce congestion and enhance mobility outcomes can take years to deliver—delaying benefits at a large cost to the public. One way employers can directly reduce congestion is through employer mobility programs, which deliver cost-effective, near-term results.

Leading employers throughout the country are making innovative employer mobility programs a business priority to both boost the bottom line and enhance the attractiveness of the company to a talented workforce. Nationally, 33 percent of employers surveyed reported offering employer mobility programs through benefits, incentives, or services to reduce drive-alone rates and encourage transportation commute options such as transit, carpools, vanpools, biking, and walking.¹ Sixty-one percent of those offering programs stated that their main reason for offering these programs is to attract and retain talented workers.² Of those organizations reporting offering non-drive-alone incentives, 56 percent offer free or reduced transit passes and 31 percent offer carpool and vanpool incentives.³

With expert guidance from leading employers, stakeholders, and Virginia Tech researchers, the Partnership has identified successful core employer mobility programs and innovative employer mobility programs proven by leading employers throughout the country to deliver significant reductions in commuting drive-alone rates. By accepting the Challenge, employers can provide greater consistency to employees and scale high-impact innovative commuter programs. Since employers choose which two innovative programs to commit to, the business community has the flexibility needed to adapt to unique worksites while challenging each other to reduce congestion in the region.

The Employer Mobility Challenge is estimated to eliminate 1.5 million vehicle trips daily in the Capital Region

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EXPAND TO LEARN MORE 

ACTION 4.2

Enhance the Effectiveness of Public Commuter Programs to Increase Their Use by Private Employers—to Complement an Expanded Employer Commitment





MOBILITY PRIORITIES

Connect the Super-Region

High

Improve Consumer Experience

Very High

Ensure Equitable Access

Low

Integrate Innovation

Medium

Solution 4.0

WHAT

Mobility solutions¹ aimed at creating behavioral change that reduces drive-alone trips are often supported by public entities such as local counties and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) through the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. The Capital Region offers employers and employees a variety of these programs. Establishing a clear, unified regional approach to public investments in employer mobility programs would allow the Capital Region to scale its most cost-effective solutions and achieve larger reductions in congestion, while improving access to worksites for a wider set of potential workers.

However, even the largest employers with the greatest resources are sometimes discouraged from leveraging public employer mobility programs due to the lack of a "one-stop shop" containing information for all state, regional, and local programs. While Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) conducts a random-sample survey of residents in the Washington metro area every three years,² the Capital Region as a whole lacks frequent standardized surveys to collect comparable travel data. Establishing regional evaluation metrics and data collection methods would be supported by standardized surveys and ensure public investments focus on mobility solutions with the biggest impact on reducing congestion. In addition, streamlining engagement with the public sector would encourage more employers to leverage cost-effective public resources—enhancing the likelihood the program results in an employee opting for a different commute.

CAPITAL REGION COMMUTE MODE SHARE, 2016

	CAPITAL REGION	BALTIMORE METRO	WASHINGTON METRO	RICHMOND METRO
Drove Alone	71%	77%	66%	82%
Carpooled	9%	8%	10%	2%
Public Transportation	11%	6%	14%	2%
Walk/Bike	4%	4%	4%	2%
Worked at Home	5%	4%	5%	5%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey

WHY

Many employers and regions throughout the country are establishing innovative employer mobility solutions and seeing cost-effective results. The State of Washington has achieved a decrease in drive-alone trips of 40 percent since 1996.³ However, the Capital Region's patchwork of mobility programs and other investments have failed to achieve significant impacts on traffic congestion. In fact, from 2013 to 2016, the Capital Region's drive-alone rate remained steadily above 70 percent—with 82 percent of all commuters driving alone in the Richmond metro area, 77 percent driving alone in the Baltimore metro area, and 66 percent driving alone in the Washington metro area. All these rates remained unchanged during the time period.⁴

Currently, the Capital Region lacks the standard program evaluation tools used by leading regions across the country. A uniform set of performance metrics could assess the public's investment in mobility programs. A region-wide employee survey⁵ could serve as a benchmark for mobility services adoption throughout the region and allow for a return on investment to be calculated for a broader set of employer-led mobility solutions. Improving how we evaluate mobility programs will allow the region to better devote limited resources to the programs offering the greatest congestion reduction.

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