



Massachusetts
Department
of
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

fact sheet

The Massachusetts Rideshare Program: Commuting Options for Cleaner Air

Emissions from automobiles are a major source of air pollution and are one of the largest contributors to ground-level ozone or *smog*. Emissions from automobiles include *nitrogen oxides*, *volatile organic compounds*, and *carbon monoxide*, which are sources of smog-causing pollution.

Smog affects everyone, but some people are more sensitive to its impacts than others. Smog can cause increased susceptibility to respiratory infection and affects children, people who work or exercise outdoors, and people with respiratory diseases. Even the healthiest of us can find it harder to breathe on smoggy days.

Automobile emissions are also a source of several other pollutants including *carbon dioxide*, *methane*, and *nitrous oxide*, contributing to *climate change*; and *particulate matter*, a key component of *regional haze*.

Improving air quality and reducing traffic

There are more cars, minivans and SUVs being driven more miles on our roads than ever before. In Massachusetts alone, more than 4 million passenger vehicles are driven more than 50 billion miles each year.

Not surprisingly, this causes gridlock during rush hour. As a result, it takes longer for commuters to get to work or school and home again. So, promoting commuting options is about more than cleaner air. It's also about faster, easier commutes.

Through the Massachusetts Rideshare Program, businesses and educational institutions promote incentives that reduce the number of vehicles on our roads while improving air quality.

What does my organization need to do?

The Massachusetts Rideshare Regulation (310 CMR 7.16) requires many businesses with 250 or more commuters and educational facilities with 1,000 or more commuters¹ to develop commuter option programs.

As part of this process, businesses need to:

- Survey current commuter patterns
- Set goals for reducing drive-alone commute trips by 25%
- Offer incentives to commuters to try switching their commute
- Review changes in commuter patterns and file annual reports

By reducing drive-alone trips, businesses help Massachusetts reduce air pollution, traffic congestion, and spending on road construction and repair projects.

Commuter option programs can also help boost employee job satisfaction, reduce demand for on-site parking facilities, and produce tax advantages for businesses.

¹ For educational facilities, the term *commuters* means employees and students.

Even if a business is not subject to the Rideshare Regulation, reducing drive-alone trips and promoting transportation alternatives can help everyone in Massachusetts breathe and travel easier.

Does Promoting Commuting Options Really Make a Difference?

Yes it does. Over the past several years, Massachusetts businesses have reported that over 28,000 commuters have eliminated over 140,000 drive-alone commute trips each week. Promoting commuter options is a “win-win” strategy benefiting businesses, employees, and the environment. Besides tax savings to businesses, most commuters report that they would consider changing their commute and would prefer to work for an employer who offers commuting options.² This all adds up fewer emissions from automobiles causing air pollution.

For more information

To find out more about how your business can make a difference by implementing a commuter options program:

- Visit:

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/air/approvals/ridesh02.htm>

or

- Contact:

Massachusetts Rideshare Program
One Winter Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(617) 292-5663

In addition, MassRIDES, a service of the Executive Office of Transportation, offers travel options assistance to employers and commuters. Visit <http://www.commute.com> or call 1-888-4COMMUTE (1-888-426-6688) for carpool/vanpool matching and assistance with promoting other commuter services.

How can I make a difference to improve air quality?

- Take public transportation
- Use a carpool or vanpool whenever possible
- Drive less by combining several personal errands into one trip
- Minimize idling and engine warm-ups
- Perform routine vehicle maintenance
- Drive a fuel-efficient vehicle
- Walk or bike; you will prevent air pollution and get some exercise at the same time.

Massachusetts Department of
Environmental Protection
One Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108-4746

Commonwealth of
Massachusetts
Mitt Romney, Governor

Executive Office of
Environmental Affairs
Robert W. Gолledge Jr., Secretary

Department of
Environmental Protection
Arleen O'Donnell, Commissioner

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alternate format by calling our ADA
Coordinator at
(617) 574-6872.



² For studies on commuter behavior, visit the USEPA Best Workplaces for Commuters web site at www.bwc.gov/about/facts.htm.