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The Commuter Information Source for Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia



## TOP EMPLOYER COMMUTER BENEFIT PROGRAMS HONORED

The 19th annual Commuter Connections Employer Recognition Awards, held June 27 at the Washington Marriott at Metro Center, honored three employers as “All-Stars of Commute Programs”, as well as two Employer Services teams.

This annual awards event honors companies that promote sustainable, healthy, and convenient commute options for their employees. Each year companies enter self-nominations in one of three categories.

**Commuter Incentives** reward employees for using alternative means of commuting. **Marketing Programs** promote the merits of alternative commuting. **Teleworking** allows employees to work remotely and dramatically reduce the time and money spent commuting.

“The Annual Employer Recognition Awards recognize and support the important role employers play in promoting commuter transportation alternatives in the region,” said Nicholas Ramfos, Director of Commuter Connections. “Employers that support daily commuting transportation alternatives, such as ridesharing, bicycling, transit, and teleworking help create a better quality of life for their employees. Transportation benefits programs help attract and retain higher qualified employees, improve regional mobility, and reduce harmful emissions.”

### Employer Awards

The annual awards ceremony recognizes area companies that go above and beyond to support commuter programs for their employees. This years winners are:

l to r: Presenter Gwen Wright, Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission; Winner Jennifer Toole, Toole Design Group; Emcee Charles Allen, Councilmember District of Columbia



### Incentives Award – Toole Design Group, Silver Spring, MD

Founded in 2003, Toole Design Group is a leading planning, engineering, and landscape architecture firm that specializes in multi-modal transportation - walking, bicycling, and transit.

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Of the 46 employees working at its Silver Spring headquarters, 41 (89 percent) use alternatives to drive-alone commutes; 31 (67 percent) use public transit; and 10 (22 percent) bicycle or walk to work.

As an incentive for employees to use mass transit, Toole Design offers full-time employees a pre-tax transit benefit up to \$125 per month. Close proximity to the Silver Spring Metro Station, and no subsidized car parking encourages employees to use alternative commute modes. Toole Design provides secure bicycle parking in the garage and on-site showers and lockers. Employees are also provided \$25 toward annual Capital Bikeshare memberships.

Employees who bike or walk to work are rewarded twice a year through the company's Super Human Powered Commuting Incentive, a program which awards participating employees with cash incentives, depending upon the number of trips taken in a given time frame.

To reduce the need for a daily commute, most employees are supplied with laptop computers to enable them to work from home as-needed, or on a case-by-case basis. The company also supports flextime schedules for employees.

The success of Toole Design Group's commuter benefits program has equated to a reduction of 82,000 vehicle miles traveled per year, and a savings of 4,141 gallons of fuel annually by employees.

### Marketing Award – The MITRE Corporation, McLean, VA

The MITRE Corporation is a private, not-for-profit company that operates federally funded research and development centers for the U.S. government. Of MITRE's 3,820 employees in metropolitan Washington, 890 (23 percent) participate in commute alternatives; 279 (7 percent) use public transit; 149 (4 percent) use car/vanpools; 107 (3 percent) bike or walk; and 355 (9 percent) telework five days a week.

MITRE promotes its commute program through weekly employee emails, electronic signage, transportation articles and an intranet page. Employees are provided with commuter links and resources, including an internal message board for car/vanpool users, notices of upcoming events, the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program, and timetables for the company's dedicated Metro and interoffice shuttle. Display tables are regularly set up outside the cafeteria to promote alternative commuting and answer employee questions.

"Commuting in McLean," MITRE's social media site, includes a message board, blog, discussion forum, a calendar highlighting



l to r: Emcee Charles Allen, Councilmember District of Columbia; Winner Nick Amatuzzi, MITRE; Presenter Courtney Menjivar, Wells + Associates

commuter benefits program events and public meetings, and a frequently asked questions page. MITRE promoted Fairfax County's SmartBenefits "Plus50" program, a \$50 pre-loaded SmarTrip® card incentive to encourage employees to try commuting by transit.

In large part due to its marketing efforts, MITRE employees in the Washington D.C. region reduce 6,642,250 vehicle miles traveled per year, and save 335,467 gallons of gasoline annually.

### Telework Award – United Educators, Bethesda, MD

Founded in 1987 as a liability insurance and risk retention group, United Educators (UE) serves nearly 1,300 schools, colleges, and universities across the country. Of UE's 165 employees, 60 (36 percent) use alternative transportation an average of 4 days per week and 105 (64 percent) telework an average of three days per week.

In the early 2000s, recognizing the impact of time demands on employees, UE began offering telework to improve employees' work/life balance and increase the firm's ability to attract new

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l to r: Presenter Nina Madoo, Nina Madoo Consulting; Winner June Stacey, United Educators; Emcee Charles Allen, Councilmember District of Columbia



hires. For those who telework, UE hosts quarterly meetings and “brown bag lunches” every other month to review telework best practices and program challenges. Employees who are eligible for telework are supplied with a computer, dual screens, printer, and are reimbursed for phone/internet charges. In an effort to encourage participation by all top-performing staff, UE extended its telework program to include both hourly and part-time workers.

Teleworking has led to many positives at UE, such as a low turnover rate, increased productivity, and improved work/life balance. UE’s honor-based system builds trust between employees and the company. The reduction of in-office staff allows UE to capitalize on lower overhead for office space.

As a result of its telework program, United Educators has shown a reduction of 1,092,100 vehicle miles traveled per year and employees save 55,167 gallons of gasoline annually.

### Employer Services Awards

Also honored were two organizations in the Commuter Connections network that work to foster employer partnerships and provide support to employers for commute benefit programs.

### Employer Services Organization Achievement Award – District Department of Transportation / goDCgo

As part of the Sustainable DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2014, the District of Columbia Council passed a Commuter Benefits Law which requires businesses with 20 or more employees in the District to offer either an employee-paid pre-tax benefit, an employer-paid direct benefit, or employer-provided transportation as of January 1, 2016.



l to r: Emcee Charles Allen, Councilmember District of Columbia; Winner Marina Budimir, District Department of Transportation; Presenter Timothy Lovain, Councilmember City of Alexandria

To help employers prepare for the impending law, goDCgo staff conducted a series of educational seminars throughout 2015, and developed a comprehensive toolkit. The toolkit presented an overview of compliance requirements and how the new law would be enforced. The seminars provided an opportunity to inform employers about how the new law makes it easier for their employees to choose sustainable, affordable, and healthy options to get to work.

In conjunction with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, an average of one seminar was held per month. In addition, webinars and other events took place. Approximately 500 employer representatives have been reached through these various events.

### Employer Services Sales Team Achievement Award – Arlington County Commuter Services

During the past year with nine full time sales representatives, over 7,500 contacts were made with employers in Arlington, and 397 meetings were held. As a result, the Employer Services Program added 12 new high-impact clients to expand their total list of significant employer commute programs to 73. Arlington’s staff attended employer transportation fairs and commuter events last year, as well as conducted seminars and workshops. Selection of the 2016 Sales Team Achievement award recipient was based on information provided by the Employer Services sales teams as part of their required monthly reports to COG/TPB, and through on-going database verifications.



l to r: Emcee Charles Allen, Councilmember District of Columbia; Winner Larry Filler, Arlington County Commuter Services; Presenter Timothy Lovain, City of Alexandria Councilmember

For more information on Commuter Connection’s Employer Recognition Awards, go to [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org).

## CHANGE THINGS UP FOR CAR FREE DAY!

Leave your car behind and go car free on Thursday, September 22, 2016. Join millions of people around the world during international Car Free Day!

Car Free Day encourages everyone, not just commuters, to take the pledge to bicycle, walk, telework, use transit, or go “car-lite” by sharing a ride. Commuter Connections hopes that by sampling travel alternatives, participants may begin to use such methods more frequently.

Participants are encouraged to go car free to work, as well as for other travel needs. Take transit to the movies, walk to a restaurant, ride a bicycle to the park, share a ride to a special event. There are many ways to get out of your car or share a ride.

The regional event, sponsored by Commuter Connections, offers those who take the pledge at [www.CarFreeMetroDC.org](http://www.CarFreeMetroDC.org) the opportunity to win great prizes, such as SmarTrip cards loaded with Fare value, Capital Bikeshare annual memberships and much more.

For more information on Car Free Day in the Washington region, to take the pledge, and to get help promoting Car Free Day to your employees, visit [www.CarFreeMetroDC.org](http://www.CarFreeMetroDC.org) or call (800) 745-RIDE.

How can you support Car Free Day to your employees?

- Let them know about it! Download a poster at [www.CarFreeMetroDC.org](http://www.CarFreeMetroDC.org).
- Let them know about available regional resources that can help them go car free at [www.CommuterConnections.org](http://www.CommuterConnections.org)
- Encourage your employees to take the pledge at [www.CarFreeMetroDC.org](http://www.CarFreeMetroDC.org) and let them know about the available raffle prizes.
- Help your employees see how getting out of their car on the weekends can translate to the workday.
- Hold inter-department or inter-office participation challenges.



There are many great local events happening during the month of September – great for practicing going car free or car-lite! Check out events at [www.carfreemetrodc.org/prizes-promotions](http://www.carfreemetrodc.org/prizes-promotions).



**67%** of carpoolers ride with just one other person

Source: 2013 Commuter Connections State of Commute Report - Commute Patterns

## NAVIGATE SAFETRACK WITH COMMUTER CONNECTIONS!

We are more than half way through Metro’s SafeTrack schedule of 15 “surges”.

SafeTrack is an accelerated track work plan to address safety recommendations and rehabilitate the Metrorail system to improve safety and reliability. SafeTrack accelerates three years worth of work into less than one. The plan significantly expands maintenance time on weeknights, weekends, and midday hours and includes "Safety Surges" lasting between

one and six weeks for major repairs and upgrades in needed parts of the system.

[www.wmata.com/rail/safetrack.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/rail/safetrack.cfm)

Local leaders are encouraging Metrorail riders to think ahead. “It’s never too early to begin planning for remaining shutdowns and single-tracking scheduled to affect certain stations and lines”, said Commuter Connections Director Nicholas Ramfos.

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“Start testing out your various alternatives now, and be prepared when the surge hits your area”, he said.

Commuter Connections' services provide Metro riders with a multitude of travel options. From help with ridesharing, teleworking, biking, walking, and other ways to get around the region, Commuter Connections can help your employees reduce the impact of the Metro track disruptions. Also, Commuter Connections offers methods for you to survey your employees to help put together a SafeTrack Plan for your worksite.

Ramfos suggests residents sign up for ridematching, which provides employees with an online or printable list of others who live and work nearby. “Commuter Connections not only provides help with van/carpool ridematching, but also denotes the closest transit stop locations, Park and Ride lots, and bicycling information.” said Ramfos.

Another valuable resource for your employees is Capital Bikeshare which is offering a \$2 special rate for single trips under 30 minutes, during SafeTrack work. According to the District Department of Transportation, Capital Bikeshare is experiencing record ridership. Weekly ridership is up from 31 percent to 59 percent higher, compared to 2015, on routes that are affected by the SafeTrack surges.

For more information on travel options and services to prepare for SafeTrack, visit [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org).



## A NEW CASE STUDY IN COMMUTING - LEIDOS

Every day, employers turn to Commuter Connections for help starting, or growing, their commuting programs. Employers realize that offering commute benefit programs can help increase recruitment and retention and improve the quality of life for employees.

Through case studies, Commuter Connections shares tips on what tactics have worked for certain employers throughout the Washington region. The newest case study released showcases Leidos' Transit Incentive Program.

Formed in 2013 to provide scientific, engineering, systems integration, and technical services for government clients,

Leidos moved over 1,000 employees from the SAIC campus in McLean to Reston. With this move, they faced the daunting task of finding commute options for their employees. Fortunately, SAIC offered excellent commuting benefits and Leidos was determined to retain those benefits during and after their relocation. The expansion of flextime and compressed work weeks have benefited employees whose commutes were greatly affected by their relocation. With the expansion of Metrorail's Silver Line, the transit benefit has helped employees who ride transit to the worksite. A free shuttle service from the Wiehle Avenue Metro enables employees to use transit seamlessly to the worksite.

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National Capital Region  
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For subscription information or to change your mailing address,  
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Commuter Connections is a program of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and is funded by the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and U.S. Departments of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration, under MAP-21.

For information or to change your mailing address, contact Commuter Connections at 800.745.RIDE, or 202.962.3213 (TDD). We invite your comments and suggestions. Please send to:

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 Printed on recycled paper

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## A New Case Study in Commuting - Leidos

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The impact of Leidos' commuting benefits have resulted in a decrease of single occupant drivers to its Reston headquarters by 27 percent. Over 20 percent of employees telework and over 30 percent participate in the transit benefit.

Visit [www.CommuterConnections.org](http://www.CommuterConnections.org) to read the full Leidos case study and case studies for the National Academies of Science, and Host Hotels & Resorts, Inc., click on Employers, Commuting Solutions.

If you have a story to share, please let us know about it at 800 745-RIDE.

