



Employer Case Study

Commuter Benefits Program

Employer

Horizon/McDonalds

North Bethesda, MD

Background

Horizon is an owner-operated management company with nine McDonald's franchise restaurants and 325 employees. The transit benefit program started with five restaurants in Montgomery County, Maryland, and now includes three in Washington, DC, and one in Northern Virginia. Horizon has a significant, below-average turnover rate of 35 percent, compared to 150 percent, which is regular for its industry.

Situation and Solutions

Horizon started offering transit benefits to employees shortly after getting into the McDonald's franchise business and learning from the North Bethesda Transportation Center about programs offered by Montgomery County Commuter Services and the State of Maryland. Taking advantage of the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, for its restaurants in Maryland, Horizon provides free SmarTrip transit cards

to employees at half of the cost to the business.

Dedicated to ensuring staff can maximize that benefit, Horizon also developed a transit-aligned work schedule (TAWS) system which allows store managers to accommodate employees' public transportation schedules when planning and assigning work hours.

Employees receive a monthly transit subsidy of up to \$50 (\$25 for part-time employees), administered through the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (Metro) SmartBenefits system. Most employees (63 percent) take advantage of the transit benefits.

Horizon offering transit benefits to its employees was an obvious choice to implement because it allowed employees to easily commute to work using Metrobus, Ride On and other local bus options, and Metrorail. Approximately two-thirds of the staff, 178 full-time and 28 part-time, commute using the transit benefits Horizon offers. Each month, Horizon automatically "tops up" the cards for employees to use to

get to work, meaning the company only pays for the trips their employees take.

Other Sustainable Successes

Horizon achieved recognition as a leader in sustainability programs, including being the first McDonald's franchise in the country to achieve Level One certification by the Green Restaurant Association. The company was also recognized by Green Business Certification Inc.

Impacts and Future

In the past few years, Horizon employees have reduced 1,071,000 annual vehicle miles and saved 48,682 gallons of gas while using sustainable modes of travel during their commutes to work.

The advantage of the transit benefits is that it is a great benefit that the staff sees every day. Horizon reports that these transit benefits can help employers meet retention goals. For instance, when employees are asked what keeps them at Horizon/McDonalds, they say the two main reasons are paid time off and SmartBenefits.

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