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COMMUTER CONNECTIONS[®]

A SMARTER WAY TO WORK

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



VIRGINIA MEGAPROJECTS INTRODUCE CONGESTION SOLUTIONS TO COMPANIES

A package of major transportation infrastructure improvements in the Tysons Corner area has led to temporary but significant traffic disruptions. Collectively known as the Virginia Megaprojects, the improvements are meant to ultimately help reduce traffic congestion. Major projects include High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane construction on nearby interstates, as well as the extension of Metrorail through the area. As construction of these projects has ramped up, efforts by Virginia transportation officials to mitigate traffic backups have shifted into high gear.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation (VDRPT) teamed up to coordinate efforts. One of their primary strategies to improve mobility is to work with Tysons-area employers and commuters.

Virginia Megaprojects officials set up a special group of transportation experts to provide direct outreach on how workers in the affected construction area can best get around during the construction period, explains Steven Titunik, communications director of Virginia Megaprojects. Going back to spring of last year, the outreach has already connected with nearly half of the approximately 135,000 employees who work in the Tysons Corner area.

“Using a combination of employer meetings, seminars, events, e-mail alerts, phone calls and other outreach efforts, companies can communicate with employees regarding available transportation options that best suit their

commuting needs,” says Titunik. Capitalizing on the free outreach assistance available, employers in the area are developing tax-free, customized SmartBenefits[®] plans; providing ridematching services; starting or enhancing telework programs; and introducing flextime or other alternative work day schedules.

Discovering Choices

“Employees discover they have transportation choices,” says Titunik. The transportation experts help commuters learn about traffic-reducing methods and practices, such as carpooling,



HOT Lanes and Dulles Rail construction

Photo by Trevor Wrayton VDOT

vanpooling, bicycling, teleworking, or flexible work schedules. Such choices not only offer escapes from Tysons traffic during this significant period of infrastructure development, they also empower employees to live “greener” lifestyles.

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Photo by Trevor Wrayton VDOT

Beams go up for HOT Lanes project at I-66 and the Beltway

Titunik says 200 large employers in the affected project area have been targeted to receive the free assistance. “On average, the team works with anywhere from four to eight employers a week at no cost to the company.” The team works with each employer to craft a plan that reflects its business needs and organizational culture.

“We incorporate solutions that range from ‘a la carte’ options to comprehensive strategies,” explains Titunik. The steps include: holding an initial meeting, listening and fact finding with the employer to identify employee needs, addressing the employer’s expectations and establishing next steps.

Metro Delays SmartBenefits® Changes

The IRS announced new rules that would require employers to separate transit and parking benefits provided to employees. Metro and other transit agencies around the nation have wrestled with the practical complexities of implementing the regulations. Metro requested and was approved for an extension of its original January 1, 2010 deadline to comply with the IRS mandate. Officials now have until January 1, 2011 to make modifications to Metro’s SmartBenefits® program that will allow employers to better manage transit and parking benefits. For more information visit www.wmata.com and click on the SmartBenefits® icon.

Listening to Employers

“At each step, listening to the employer is key,” notes Titunik. “We need to understand the nature of the employer’s business, and offer the option of facilitating a transportation survey among its employees. The survey provides useful insight about employee commute methods and patterns, which can help us recommend solutions best suited to the employer and employees.”

Another important factor: the level of CEO support at the workplace. “Generally, when CEOs or other high level executives are involved on the front end, the process moves more rapidly,” explains Titunik. Employers typically designate an essential liaison, often from their human resources or facilities department, to coordinate the gathering of key information.

Regardless of how employees get to work, Titunik emphasizes that encouraging employees to take the free Connector shuttle bus to get around Tysons for shopping, lunch, errands or business appointments is a great way in which employers can help reduce traffic congestion in the area.

“We see employers embracing new transportation options as a way to attract and retain employees in small and large ways, ranging from telework to alternative work schedules to supporting transit,” says Titunik.

Communication is Vital

How can employers make the most of the resources provided through Virginia Megaprojects? “Communicate, communicate and communicate,” Titunik advises. “Keep employees informed and be mindful of where the construction is heaviest and how it is affecting their morale and work.” Employers can also sign up for the Virginia Megaprojects weekly updates and share them via intranet or e-mail. The web site www.vamegaprojects.com also provides daily lane closure and related details. “Sharing this information is a key component,” says Titunik. “Empowered employees can make informed decisions on their commutes.”

STUDY RATES WASHINGTON A BETTER REGION FOR WALKING

Reassuring news for your employees that walk to work: Walking to work and other destinations in the D.C. metro area is safer than in 31 other locales in the U.S. with populations of more than 1 million people, according to a recent study by Transportation for America.

Thanks to a combination of history and pedestrian safety priorities in this region, walking can more often be done on sidewalks and dedicated paths compared with many other areas of the nation. The study notes that communities largely designed prior to World War II, before the car-oriented superhighway era, such as Washington, D.C. and some of its suburbs, tend to include significantly greater accommodations for pedestrians.



U.S. cities that sprouted later often favored automobile traffic over pedestrians, and their rate of pedestrian fatalities has reflected that difference. The Washington region ranked far lower on the Pedestrian Danger Index (PDI) than, for example, several major metro areas in Florida.

The metropolitan D.C. region had a comparatively low PDI of 57.2. The four regions with the highest PDI were Orlando-Kissimmee (221.5), Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater (205.5), Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Pompano Beach (181.2), and Jacksonville (157.4). The 12 most dangerous metro areas in the nation all had PDIs exceeding 100.

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Interested in Promoting Walking to Work to Your Employees?

Walking is a great way for your employees to commute while getting some exercise. Below are some common sense tips for walking to work that you can pass on to your employees:

- Be legal. Use sidewalks, crosswalks, and signaled/signed intersections. Use signal push buttons and wait for “walk” signals. Look left, right, and then left again and over your shoulder to watch for vehicles before crossing.
- Be smart. Never insist on the right of way, even if the signal says “walk” or the light is green. Motorists must yield to pedestrians, but you don’t want to find out too late that an errant driver was distracted, distressed or simply disobedient. Stay out of the way until you know the driver sees you and yields to you. This goes double for trucks and buses; they’re heavier and take longer to stop.
- Be visible. Consider the general lighting conditions on your route and wear reflective or at least lighter-colored, easy-to-see clothing. Consider carrying reflective wrist or leg bands in your pocket or purse so you can easily slip them on before you walk.



- Be aware. Keep your eyes and ears open. Stay alert. Watch particularly when crossing private driveways or traversing parking lots. Expect the unexpected.
- Be protected. Wherever possible, pick routes that have some kind of barrier between you and passing traffic—like parked cars, low walls or security bollards. If you’re walking to a bus stop, be sure to stay well back from the curb until the bus stops and opens its doors.



Winter's chill will eventually give way to temperatures that beckon more bicyclists back to two-wheeled commuting. And there's no better way to celebrate the return of spring than by joining with other cyclists for Bike to Work Day.

This year's event, cosponsored by Commuter Connections and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), will take place on Friday, May 21, 2010. It caps off the end of National Bike to Work Week when tens of thousands of cyclists participate in Bike To Work Day events throughout the U.S. With 8,000 participants, the D.C. area sports one of the largest Bike to Work Day celebrations in the nation.

The best part of the day starts first thing in the morning on May 21 when over two dozen "pit stop" events will be held offering a fun way for cyclists and supporters to rally together and get the day off to a rolling start. Plenty of food, prizes, and enthusiasm will be on hand to praise two-wheel commuters for their dedication.

Registered pit stop participants will get free T-shirts, refreshments, and have a chance to win great prizes such as bicycle commuting gear. A few lucky commuters will even win a free high-quality bicycle! The event invariably attracts lots of media attention, and local elected officials play prominent roles in presenting awards and recognizing cyclists.

Pit stops are tentatively scheduled in Washington D.C. at Buzzard Point, Freedom Plaza, and Nationals stadium; in Maryland: Bethesda, Bowie, College Park, Frederick, Hyattsville, Indian Head, North Bethesda, Rockville, Silver Spring and White Oak; and in Virginia: Alexandria, Ballston, Burke, Crystal City, Fairfax, Fairfax City, Herndon, Leesburg, Manassas, Merrifield, Reston, Rosslyn, Springfield, Sterling, Tysons Corner and Vienna.

Bike to Work Day draws regular bicycle commuters, recreational riders and novices to pedal to work. Employees can ride alone, make new cycling friends at a pit stop, or tag along with larger groups of bicyclists in a number of organized bicycle convoys. The various convoys are lead by seasoned volunteers and travel through many different areas of the region, providing support and direction along the way. Local organizers strive to make the day fun and comfortable for all.

Organizing Tips for Your Own Work Site Bike to Work Day Rally

- Appoint a coordinator.
- Budget for food and prizes.
- Publicize, publicize, publicize...through email, Intranet, online social marketing tools (like a blog or Twitter), a company newsletter, payroll insert, fliers, etc.
- Hold a breakfast event for Bike to Work commuters.
- Consider a Bike to Work Day challenge to a neighboring employer or within departments.
- Offer prize drawings, and recognize people for the longest distance biked, oldest/most interesting bicycle, bicyclist who came from transit station farthest from work, etc.
- Inform employees about the company's provisions for bicycle parking, changing and shower facilities.
- Get free copies of the "Biking to Work in the Washington Area" guide and Guaranteed Ride Home program registration brochure from Commuter Connections at (800) 745-RIDE.

For more information on how to incorporate bicycling into your employee commute options program, go to commuterconnections.org or contact Commuter Connections at 800-745-RIDE to request a free on-site briefing on bicycling to work.



The Pedestrian Danger Index dates back to the 1990s. Researchers at the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership developed the benchmark “in order to establish a level playing field for comparing metropolitan areas based on the danger to pedestrians,” according to Transportation for America. “The PDI corrects for the fact that cities where more people walk on a daily basis are likely to have a greater number of pedestrian fatalities, by computing the rate of pedestrian deaths relative to the amount of walking residents.”

The PDI also reveals communities where pedestrian safety is a real priority, and where it isn't. Although the Washington metropolitan area clearly has more work to do, our region's

focus on walkability and safety has provided for a much better pedestrian environment on the whole than the majority of other major metropolitan areas in the U.S.

“Walking to work safely is an option for a lot more people in this region compared to other parts of the country,” observes Commuter Connections director Nicholas Ramfos. “Parts of our region offer ideal walking conditions, while a lot more attention is required to make walking safer and easier in some areas. That's just a reality. But leaders in many of our communities can justifiably feel proud of the progress they've made in enhancing our region's overall livability.”



A TRIP THROUGH TYSONS...

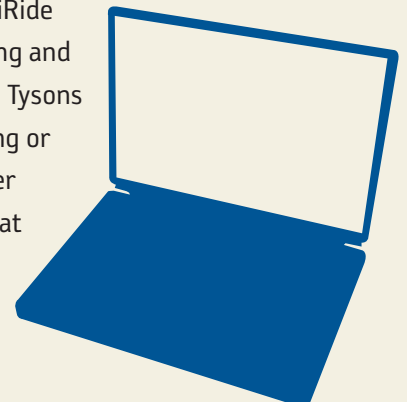


Thanks to funding from Virginia Megaprojects, the launch of express bus service from Woodbridge, Virginia, to Tysons Corner via OmniRide recently occurred. The Wi-Fi-equipped buses depart Woodbridge Monday through Friday from 6:10 a.m. to 8:05 a.m., with return trips running from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The Wi-Fi is free. The express bus fare is half-price through mid-May, making the introductory fare only \$3.00 each way, if using cash, or only \$2.40 with a SmarTrip card®. Fares will increase in mid-May to the regular OmniRide rates. Have your employees check out www.prtctransit.org for details.

Here's more good news: Once your employees get to Tysons on the Wi-Fi-equipped express bus for half-price, during lunch they can head off in search of their favorite lunch specials via the free Tysons Connector shuttle. This lunchtime shuttle serves two routes, and buses come by every 10 minutes between 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. each weekday. Employees in the Tysons area can visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector and click the Tysons Connector icon for maps and more.

No need for Tysons Corner workers to pile into a car and head out toward a restaurant or shopping excursion anymore. They just hop the Tysons Connector and shuttle off in comfort to their destination, then shuttle back when they're ready. With Prince William County's OmniRide express service in the morning and evening, and Fairfax County's Tysons Connector for mid-day grazing or shopping, more Tysons Corner workers can leave their cars at home every day.



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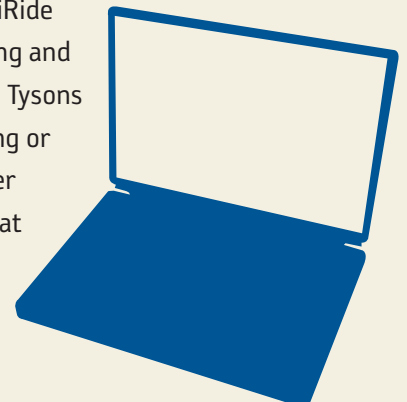


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For subscription information or to change your mailing address,
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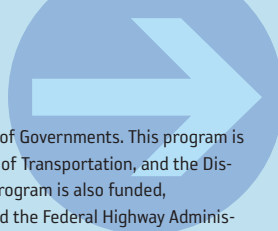
For information or to change your mailing address, contact Commuter Connections at 800.745.RIDE, or 202.962.3213 (TDD). We invite your comments and suggestions. Please send to:

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or e-mail us at nramfos@mwkog.org.

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EMPLOYEES CARPOOL. GET MONEY. REPEAT.

Your employees could be eligible to get paid just for carpooling! If you have employees who currently drive alone to and from work in one or more of the following corridors they may apply to participate in the 'Pool Rewards program. The corridors include: the Beltway (I-495) from Bethesda to Tyson's Corner, the Beltway from MD-295 to I-270, and I-395 from Washington, D.C. to Northern Virginia, using the 14th Street Bridge. Participants can receive up to \$130 in a 90-day period. Have your employees visit commuterconnections.org and click on the "Pool Rewards" logo for further rules and details.

'POOL REWARDS



FEDERAL ETC UPDATES

Employee Transportation Coordinator

SERVING THE MOBILITY NEEDS OF AMERICA'S DEFENDERS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS ABOUND FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EMPLOYEES AT THE PENTAGON AND IN LEASED FACILITIES IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION.

If the Pentagon were a country, Brian Higgins, PhD, PE, would be one of its diplomats. As Special Assistant for Environment & Safety, he emphasizes that many others in the Defense Facilities Directorate of the Department of Defense (DoD) Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) help serve the mobility needs of some 65,000 people.

These include military personnel, civilian employees, contractors, and visitors in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Military Services, Defense Agencies, and DoD Field Activities.

The WHS motto, "We Serve Those Who Serve," confirms that customer service is a top priority, with DoD employees spread out over nearly 16 million square feet of office space in the region.

A shuttle bus system, coordinated by Lisa Passagaluppi and managed by the Military Services, connects riders on official business with most WHS-managed properties and Metro stations so they can leave their cars parked—reducing peak period traffic while also facilitating mobility throughout the day. For locations and schedules of the 14 bus routes, employees can access secure websites with their common access cards.

WHS and Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) encourage employees to reduce single occupant vehicle commuting by providing commuter benefits for transit and vanpool riders who meet eligibility requirements, designated parking for qualified carpools and vanpools, and comprehensive online and offline information about commute alternatives. They disseminate routine information via Building Council meetings, Building Circulars, a computerized network of InfoNet kiosks, various electronic newsletters, and the *Pentagram* weekly newspaper. Emergency information can be broadcast by InfoNet screens, pop-up messages on computer monitors, and "Big Voice" speakers.

Ms. Passagaluppi and her staff organized the first two



transportation fairs in 2008 and 2009. They brought representatives on-site from numerous mobility organizations, including Commuter Connections, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and local jurisdictions."The first fair in the Pentagon Conference Center attracted hundreds, and the second fair in the Center Courtyard attracted thousands,"recalls Higgins. The third Fair will take place in the Courtyard on May 26, 2010.

Additional options for DoD employees are the Pentagon Motor Pool, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Maryland Transit Administration's MARC Train Service, Commuter Connections' Guaranteed Ride Home Program, and WMATA's MetroAccess Paratransit Service. Many commuters ride motorcycles, and increasing numbers use bicycles. The Pentagon Renovation Program shares bicycles among offices and job sites.

WHS provides a Customer Assistance Center on the Pentagon Concourse, just inside the Metro Entrance Facility in Room 2E122, as a one-stop shop for information, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday-Friday. Wall racks contain brochures on many topics and services. WMATA staffs a Customer Service Center in the Pentagon Transit Center.

Ms. Alexis Olmsted of DFD manages the DoD Transit Subsidy Program in the National Capital Region. More than 33,000 DoD commuters receive tax-free fare media in amounts equal

Continued on back

SERVING THE MOBILITY NEEDS OF AMERICA'S DEFENDERS

Continued from front



Pentagon Transit Center bus platforms beneath canopy shelters

to their personal commuting costs (excluding parking), not to exceed \$230/person/month. The benefit applies to both mass transit and qualified vanpool participants. Caveats apply: employees with subsidized parking have to surrender their parking permits in order to receive a transit pass; and those who get transit passes can't ordinarily be counted as part of a DoD carpool for

purposes of qualifying for a parking pass.

DoD also provides options for eligible employees to work flexible schedules, or to avoid travel by teleworking. Depending on an employee's duties and management support, such options may include: a compressed work schedule (nine days on and one day off during a two-week timeframe); flextime (arriving and leaving either earlier or later than usual); or telework (working from home, or from a remote location like a regional telework center). All these options are subject to approval and oversight.

"It's becoming more common," observes Higgins. "The challenge is that many DFD people must be here to operate and maintain the buildings and serve our customers. Much work can't be done remotely, but people telework where they can by phone, Blackberry, and laptop. Some of our people commute from a sizable distance, so it saves wear and tear on them, too. Telework and work schedule options save commuting time, save energy, reduce emissions, and cut down on parking demand."

Parking management and enforcement are key responsibilities of PFFPA's Pentagon Police Department. Ms. Tonya Tobe

manages the Pentagon Parking Office for PPD. The Pentagon Reservation has nearly 8,000 parking spaces allocated to tenant agencies and government vehicles in North and South parking lots and along Army-Navy Drive. Individuals do not pay to park on the Pentagon Reservation. Each agency pays rent depending on the amount and type of building space it uses. The rent includes parking. Parking spaces are assigned depending on many factors: handicapped spaces with accessible routes are closer to the building; seniority may determine distance to area parking; and military rank or civilian leadership position may come with reserved parking.

The Pentagon Transit Center was completed in 2002 to balance security imperatives with access to buses and Metrorail's Blue and Yellow lines. The facility offers 24 covered bus platforms and nearby taxi stand, kiss and ride drops, and parking for the Pentagon Memorial.

Managing mobility for a dynamic, multi-mission, 24/7/365 workforce requires WHS-DFD to be both systematic and collaborative. Shuttles have to reliably run on time. Information has to be accessible and up-to-date. Parking management and commute benefits programs must be administered consistently. The size and scope of the operation requires a team approach by dozens of individuals, from leadership to support staff to motor pool drivers. To plan for the future, DFD's Martin Mamawal and the Army's Transportation Engineering Agency are developing a comprehensive Transportation Management Plan for WHS-managed facilities.

The future promises more challenges and changes. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decisions will result in the relocation of many people from leased facilities, including 6,400 to new Mark Center buildings at I-395 and Seminary Road. Ms. Passagaluppi heads a focus group that will revise the shuttle bus system accordingly.

DFD points of contact are Brian.Higgins@whs.mil, Lisa.Passagaluppi@whs.mil, Alexis.Olmsted@whs.mil, and Martin.Mamawal@whs.mil. PFFPA point of contact is Tonya.Tobe@pfpa.mil.

These websites help DoD employees stay informed about mobility options:

- DoD Shuttle Bus Program: www.whs.mil/DFD/Info/DoDTransportation.cfm
- NCR Transit Subsidy: www.whs.mil/DFD/Info/NCRTransitSubsidy.cfm
- Pentagon Parking Program: www.pfpa.mil/services/pp.html
- Carpool Slugging: www.slug-lines.com/PM_lines/Pentagon.asp