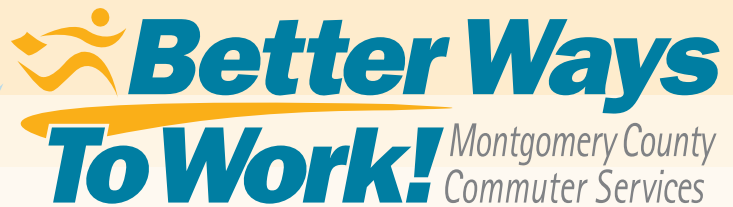




Commuting Solutions

Spring 2004



**Better Ways
To Work!** *Montgomery County
Commuter Services*

Silver Spring to Host National Pedestrian Event

The National Congress of Pedestrian Advocates 2004 comes to the Silver Spring Hilton May 6-8. The event is organized by America Walks, a national coalition of local advocacy groups dedicated to promoting walkable communities. Montgomery County Government's Commuter Services Section (CSS) is one of the sponsors.

The theme for the 2004 Congress--"Walking: Everybody's Business -- Revitalizing People and Places"--conveys the broad appeal organizers are making this year to individuals and organizations concerned with making communities more walkable, according to Bill Smith, Congress coordinator for Montgomery County.

Participants in the Congress will include public health officials, transportation planners, elected officials, and pedestrian advocates from many other backgrounds.

Employers Welcome

Employers will find plenty of food for thought in the program. Businesses of all sizes play an important role in how communities develop--and how walkable and safe they are for employees, customers, and residents.

"The implications (of walkable communities) are profound," observes Smith. "Businesses that encourage physical activity tend to have happier and more productive employees, with less absen-

teism and lower insurance costs. Locating in a walkable community can provide tremendous benefits to a business."

A First for Montgomery County

This will be the first Congress America Walks has held east of the Mississippi, says Smith. He had approached the organization a year and a half ago to encourage consideration of the national capital area as a venue for 2004, "so people from this region could attend and benefit from the networking and training. This kind of training just doesn't exist outside of this Congress."

Montgomery County Executive Doug Duncan is scheduled to deliver the luncheon address on Friday, May 7, according to Smith. In addition, the event program will highlight all the recent pedestrian improvements in downtown Silver Spring, including count-down crossing signals, aids for the visually impaired, and more.

Everyone Benefits

The event's program reflects the principle that walking benefits everybody, notes Smith. "It's a universal good."

Information provided through the annual Congress equips people to work on making their own communities as walkable as possible. "It's meant to be inspirational," Smith adds, "to show people that there are other aspects to this issue, and to help them find information and ideas they hadn't thought about that will help them get around obstacles to walkability."

Details Get program and registration details online at

www.americawalks.org



FDC Reports, Inc. Doing its Share to

Chevy Chase-based FDC Reports, Inc. shows that preparing a traffic mitigation plan (TMP) can be pretty painless. This 100-person publishing business (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Elsevier, Inc., an international publishing group headquartered in Europe) already makes commute assistance an employee benefit. So the TMP simply documents the firm's traffic reduction efforts.

Montgomery County law requires employers located in downtown Bethesda, North Bethesda, Friendship Heights or downtown Silver Spring that have 25 or more employees, to implement a traffic mitigation plan.

"Preparing the TMP was not a burdensome process," says FDC Facilities Manager Jack Kilgallen, "and it works for us. I was able to turn it around in four hours. FDC pretty much already did the things the TMP asked us to do, so it was a really just a question of documentation."

FDC Reports offers \$60 Metrocheks each month to employees who have worked at the company for at least two years. Those with less than two years are eligible to receive a monthly Metrochek worth \$30.

On average, about one-third of FDC's 100 employees participate in the transit benefit program. Another 5-10 employees bicycle to work--some from as far away as 15

FDC employee Jonathon Radow (left, standing) receives his Metrochek from Jack Kilgallen.



miles--weather permitting. "They say that during rush hour commuting by bicycle is almost as fast as by car," notes Kilgallen.

Many employees still drive to work.

While the company does subsidize employee parking spaces, it asks employees with less than two years' seniority to pay \$2 a day to park.

"Some just don't have easy access to transit," explains

Kilgallen. Moreover, some of

those employees have to attend outside meetings and thus require independent mobility. The recent addition of car sharing programs to the Friendship Heights area may make it possible for those employees to consider alternatives in the future.

"We have reporters and editors whose job is gathering and writing hard news," says Kilgallen. The company publishes a variety of daily, weekly and monthly newsletters focusing on regulatory, legislative and policy issues in the health care area, with particular emphasis on the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors.

"The company was founded in 1939. We relocated from the National Press Club building in downtown Washington about 20 years ago," he adds.

FDC Reports is located just two blocks from the Friendship Heights Metro station. "We have a fairly young staff, and many want to live where they can use (Metro's) Red Line," Kilgallen observes. "So Metrochek is a very popular program here. Usage varies each month, but we have 34 Metro riders currently."

The company was persuaded to launch its commute benefits program eight years ago. "Employees actually drove the process," Kilgallen recalls. "Employees came to us and asked for it in 1996, and that's when we approached the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority about purchasing Metrocheks."

Subsequently, Montgomery County created its Super Fare Share program, which shares with employers the cost of offering transit benefits. Companies pay only one dollar per month per participating employee during the first year of the five-year program, while the County pays up to \$64 per month for each participating employee. For the remaining four years of the program the County matches the employer's contribution each month, up to the \$65 per month level. The program offers up to \$20,000 per year to any one employer.

"Super Fare Share is exceptional," says Kilgallen, "because it helped cut costs by reducing the number of parking spaces subsidized by the company. The program is invisible to our employees, but it certainly is not to management."

In addition to offering transit benefits, FDC Reports assists its bicycle commuters. "We provide showers and bike racks," explains Kilgallen.



F-D-C Reports, Inc.

Required Strategies of a Traffic Mitigation Plan (TMP)

- Contact person designated to receive and distribute information
- Information on transit/pooling/other commute alternatives distributed /posted regularly (furnished by the Transportation Management District (TMD))
- Facilitate TMD staff presentations to employees and HR/Admin staff on commute info/alternatives on periodic basis
- Guaranteed Ride Home Promotion (free regional program offering emergency rides)
- Annual Commuter Survey distributed to employees (short survey of transportation provided by the TMD)
- ADA information provided (transportation services for people with disabilities)
- Permanent display area for TMD-provided bus schedules and other transportation information
- Compile information on yearly TMP activities and submit brief annual report

Trim Traffic

Voluntary Strategies of a Traffic Mitigation Plan (TMP)

Other actions outlined in the company's TMP include:

- Posting information on transportation services in the employee break room
- Holding an annual benefits seminar in the fall, which includes a display on commuter assistance
- Providing Guaranteed Ride Home Program brochures to employees along with their monthly Metrocheks
- Distributing an annual commuter survey to all employees
- Providing disabled employees with information about the regional MetroAccess program and Montgomery County's Same Day Access program
- Installing a transit map and brochure rack in employee break room
- Maintaining a file on the promotion and implementation of the company's traffic mitigation strategies and submitting a brief report annually
- Sending the company's employee transportation coordinator to attend occasional County-sponsored commuter services meetings and workshops
- Attendance at occasional free CSS-sponsored meetings/workshops permitted for designated contact person
- Information on commuting alternatives provided to new employees (TMD can provide materials and/or attend orientation)
- Free or reduced-cost parking for car/vanpools offered to employees
- Bike amenities at worksite, such as bike racks or showers
- Alternative work schedules: flextime, jobsharing, compressed work week
- Tax-free monthly transit subsidies provided to employees, including Super Fare Share, Fare Share and Metrochek
- Maryland State Commuter Choice tax credit for employers
- Pre-tax payroll deduction for transit costs offered to employees
- Transit passes/tokens offered for purchase at worksite (at full or reduced price)
- Subsidize employee parking and transit equally (if employee parking is currently subsidized, offer equal subsidy for transit costs)
- Ozone Action Days participation (regional program to alert people to dangerous air quality days)

- Informing new employees of the firm's transit subsidy program and providing Metro information to assist them in transit planning
- Providing free parking to employees who carpool or vanpool
- Offering employees pre-tax payroll

deduction to reduce transit pass costs for amounts over the subsidy level.

- Treating employee parking and transit subsidies equally

For more information about traffic reduction efforts at FDC Reports, Inc., e-mail Jack Kilgallen at j.kilgallen@elsevier.com.

Bike to Work Day Celebrates Two-Wheeled Commuting May 7

As winter's chill recedes into memory, commuters have a great opportunity to celebrate the arrival of warm-weather commuting season. Bike to Work Day is Friday, May 7, and communities around the region will hold morning "pit stops" to give bicyclists a great way to kick off the event.

Cyclists will gather at the pit stop of their choice for breakfast, entertainment, dynamic speakers and chances to win bicycles and other prizes. Then they'll pedal to work in convoys of two-wheeled camaraderie.

Whether you have employees who are dedicated bicycle fans, or just a little curi-

ous about the possibility of occasionally riding to work, encourage them to drop by a pit stop for a little morning refreshment and some info about bicycle commuting.

Pit stop locations in Montgomery County will include: Bethesda, College Park, Gaithersburg, North Bethesda, Rockville (Red Brick Courthouse and FallsGrove Multi-Modal Center), and Silver Spring (One Discovery Place and Summit Hills Apartments).

Pit stop information is subject to change, so visit www.waba.org, or call 202-628-2500 for exact locations and times.



Ride On Considers Fare Changes

Montgomery County is exploring the possibility of fare changes for the Ride On bus system. The County held a public forum April 19, 2004, to discuss the proposed changes. It had also called for written, faxed, or e-mailed comments about the proposed changes to be submitted by close of business on that date.

- Effective January 1, 2005, Ride On 20-Trip Tickets with an expiration date of September 30, 2005, will be available for purchase.
- Thereafter, 20-Trip Tickets would be issued with usage periods of at least three months and a maximum of nine months.



Proposed Fares

Base Fare

The base fare for Ride On buses could increase by a maximum of 15 cents, from the current fare of \$1.20 to a new fare of \$1.35.

20-Trip Tickets

- Ride On 20-Trip Tickets could go from their current \$13 up to a maximum of \$22.
- All undated Ride On 20-Trip Tickets will expire on December 31, 2004.
- Effective July 1, 2004, Ride On 20-Trip Tickets with an expiration date of March 31, 2005, will be available for purchase.

Ride About 2-Week Pass

The Ride About 2-Week Pass could go from its current \$12 price up to a maximum of \$14.

Youth Cruiser Pass

The monthly Youth Cruiser Pass could increase from its current \$10 rate up to no more than \$14.

Free Transfers

Transfers between bus systems—for example, from Ride On to Metrobus—would continue to be free.

Elderly and Disabled

Similarly, fares for elderly and disabled patrons would continue at their current rate of one-half the peak period fare all day.

For the latest fare information, call 240-777-RIDE, or visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

PROPOSED FARES	Current	Proposed Maximum*
Ride On bus	\$1.20	\$1.35
20-Trip Ticket	\$13	\$22
Ride About 2-Week Pass	\$12	\$14
Youth Cruiser Pass	\$10	\$14

* New fares will be no more than the maximum shown and may be less. Final decisions will be made before July 1, 2004.

Edited by Laura Chin

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Montgomery County website:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/commute

For assistance call
(301) 770-POOL (7665) or visit the

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