

## **TRENDS in Workforce Transportation**

### ***Introduction***

Workforce development agencies, local and regional governments, and employers all work to address workforce transportation needs. As would be expected, there is a whole host of barriers that exist to connect individuals with job opportunities. From job sprawl to poor public transit options, these problems differ across communities and demographic areas.

### ***Understanding changing travel behavior***

Efforts to address transportation needs are transforming to encompass changing travel behavior among the workforce in the United States. From the mid-1950s until about 2007, total vehicle miles traveled increased steadily and at a steep rate. For decades, public policy and cultural trends steered most American families into owning personal automobiles. Over these fifty years, our cities and transportation systems were built to accommodate the mass influx of personal automobile use, which included wide streets, fast expressways, ample parking and sprawling land use patterns—specifically separating housing and jobs.<sup>1</sup>

Commuting patterns have echoed these historical trends. From 1960 to 1990, the percent of people who traveled by automobile to work increased by over 22%, during the same period the percent who chose to use public transportation to get to work decreased by over half.<sup>2</sup> For the last 20 years, about 86% of the U.S. population travel to work by automobile and just 5% use public transportation.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this long term trend, the early part of the 21st century is showing a cultural shift away from auto-only oriented transportation. The seemingly endless increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is experiencing a plateau, and the population is looking for more options to get around, which include walking, biking, public transit, car-sharing and more. Millennials, in particular, are leading this trend. Per capita VMT among 16 to 34 year olds dropped by 23 percent from 2001-2009.<sup>4</sup>

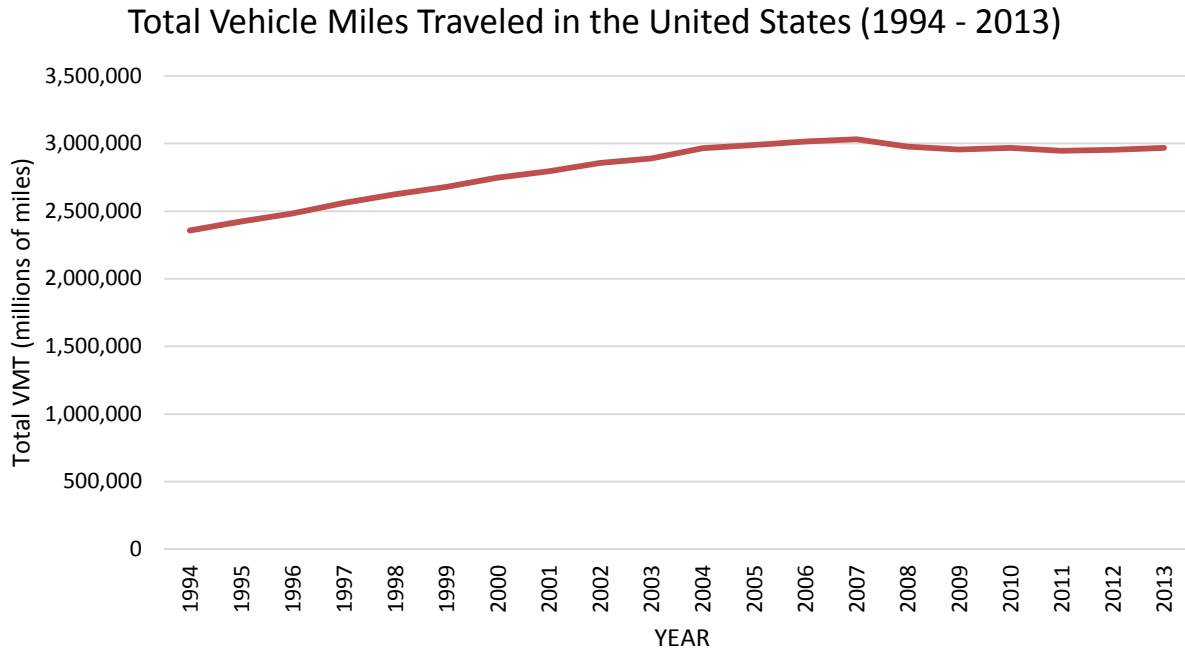
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<sup>1</sup>John M. Levy. *Contemporary Urban Planning*. Eighth Edition. (Pearson Education, Inc.: 2009), 226.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. *Characteristics of the Population*. United States Summary. 1960, 1990, 2010.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. 1960, 1990, 2010.

<sup>4</sup>Benjamin Davis, Tony Dutzik and Phineas Baxandall. “Transportation and the New Generation: Why Young People Are Driving Less and What It means for Transportation Policy.” Frontier Group and U.S. PIRG Education Fund. April 2012.



Data Source: Federal Highway Administration

Experts point to a whole host of reasons for this shift including a preference toward other modes for environmental, health, or economic reasons; population growth in urban areas; and the concept that people have simply reached the maximum amount of time they are willing to spend in traffic every day. Michigan residents spend an average of 24 minutes traveling one-way to work. In some counties, including Livingston, Lenawee and Hillsdale, travel averages are higher at 32, 26 and 25 minutes, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

Increasingly, our workforce is requiring and demanding more options to get to work; workforce agencies, employers, and communities are following their lead. Access to transportation is no longer only a matter of providing a service to the workforce, but also a workforce attraction and retention issue. Practices in places throughout the country, led by local, regional and state government; workforce development agencies; and employers themselves focus on filling gaps in the workforce-transportation connection, and building a more robust, multi-modal system to improve competitiveness.

Solutions to workforce-transportation barriers must respond to specific needs of the workforce, employers, and the community. This means that solutions must consider the community characteristics, workforce demographics, and the industry in which they are looking to address.

### ***Trends***

A clear trend in responding to workforce-transportation needs is collaboration. When key stakeholders—workforce agencies, employers, transportation providers, and planners—work together to understand problems, pool resources, and combine capacities, solutions are more easily accessible and more broadly

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<sup>5</sup> U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. 2006-2010.

impactful. In many of the “best practices,” listed throughout this report, employers take the lead to provide services which range from transit pass subsidies to providing high-end shuttle services for employees. However, many of the examples listed can be transferred for use by workforce development agencies, transportation providers, other government entities, or a combination of stakeholders. In fact, when these institutions take the lead to initiate a solution, the result is often a systematic approach that provides benefits for many more residents and employers.

## **Best Practices**

### **Local, Regional and State Government Initiatives**

**Project Name:** Green Line Light Rail Line

**Partners:** Minneapolis, MN; St. Paul, MN; Metro Transit

The Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area—known as the “Twin Cities” within the region—is a model for talent attraction, workforce retention, and economic development in the Midwest. The metro area has an unemployment rate of 4% and is frequently ranked among the top ten in lists of best cities for Millennials.

A combination of good regional policies has led to the Twin Cities’ economic success; however, experts point to investment in public transportation as one of the most transformative tools the region has used to attract talent, provide access to its workforce, and catalyze sustainable job creation. Specifically, the new Green Line, a light rail transit line connecting downtown Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul, connects people of all income levels and racial and ethnic backgrounds to plentiful and diverse job opportunities along the corridors diverse set existing and newly developing, organizations, and institutions job opportunities. Since the project commenced, the corridor has seen over \$2.5 billion in development with special attention paid to supporting affordable housing and small businesses through special financing and other programs initiated by the local, regional, and state government.

Arguably one of the most important decisions of the project came when finalizing the light rail route and stations. At the project’s inception, many community stakeholders were not supportive of the project due to its familiarity with many highway projects that had divided neighborhoods and hindered accessibility. Three additional stations were added to the central portion of the corridor, serving African American and Southeast Asian residents who live in those neighborhoods, many of whom commute to the two urban cores.

The Green Line opened in spring of 2014 and has surpassed its ridership projections by over 35%--serving over one million riders per month.

#### *Sources:*

Hargreaves, Steve, and Dominic V Aratari. "How the Twin Cities Got Transit Right." CNNMoney. Accessed April 20, 2015.

Maher, Amanda. "Investing In Urban Economic Development: How the Twin Cities Are Getting It Right." Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. November 7, 2014. Accessed April 18, 2015.

**Project Name:** getDowntown Program

**Partners:** Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, City of Ann Arbor

The getDowntown program is the result of a partnership between the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA), the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA), and the City of Ann Arbor. The getDowntown program provides commuting programs and services to employees and employers in downtown Ann Arbor.

The highlight of the getDowntown program is the go!pass. The go!pass is available to all downtown Ann Arbor employees free of charge through generous financial support from the DDA and a \$10 fee paid by their employer. The pass provides unlimited public transit use, discounts at downtown businesses and other commuter services. The pass is a component of the broader getDowntown program which provides commuting programs and services to downtown Ann Arbor employees to make biking, walking, car sharing and public transit more accessible and fun.

According to the getDowntown website, there are 457 employers that participate in the go!pass program and about 4,000 individuals who have a go!pass. While the program is offered to those who work downtown, go!pass holders are able to take AAATA buses free of charge all over the Ann Arbor area — with many commuting from Ypsilanti and other outlying communities.

Program staff frequently have businesses tell them the go!pass helps them retain and attract high quality employees because either the employer can't afford to pay for parking or because their employees would rather use public transportation than drive.

Other services provided by the getDowntown program are listed below.

- The Commuter Challenge: an online commuting competition where businesses compete against one another for the highest number of alternative commutes
- Bike locker rentals
- Carshare service through Zipcar
- Free commuting assistance and materials

*Source:* Get Downtown. Accessed April 21, 2015. <http://www.getdowntown.org/>.

**Project Name:** Washtenaw Avenue Transportation Demand Management Strategy

**Partners:** Smart Growth America, ReImagine Washtenaw (Washtenaw County), Partnership for Sustainable Communities Program, Michigan Sense of Place Council

Transportation demand management (TDM) is an approach to address transportation system efficiency by encouraging and enabling the use of non-single occupancy vehicle (SOV) transportation. TDM can take on many different forms which can include increasing transit availability or efficiency, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, providing incentives, re-vamping land use patterns to increase accessibility, and educating people about the benefits of non-SOV commute options. Typically, TDM programs aim to reduce congestion during peak hour travel times without expanding roadways and by moving more people during non-peak hours.

Through a partnership between Smart Growth America, the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities Program, the Michigan Sense of Place Council, and Washtenaw County, the Washtenaw Avenue Transportation Demand Management Strategy was created. The Strategy is an analysis and action plan for implementing TDM along the Washtenaw Avenue corridor connecting the City of Ann Arbor, Pittsfield Township, Ypsilanti Township, and the City of Ypsilanti.

Institutions and municipalities along and on either end of the Washtenaw Avenue corridor were already participating in a variety of TDM programs and activities when the strategy was developed. The following list summarizes some of those programs.

- Parking management
- Bicycle parking
- Bike locker rental
- Campus bus services
- Carpool coordination
- Bicycle lanes
- Bike share service

Based on existing TDM programs and services, and an analysis of need and gaps, the Washtenaw Avenue Transportation Demand Management Strategy outlines the following actions for TDM enhancement.

1. Adoption of employer-specific TDM practices, such as:
  - adopting a joint statement of commitment among the county and major employers and institutions,
  - appointing an in-house TDM coordinator at major employers and institutions, and
  - developing and implementing individually appropriate and effective TDM strategies.
2. Host a TDM focused internship program at Washtenaw County which:
  - would be funded part time by the county and educational institution stakeholders,
  - define a meaningful work plan, and
  - select an intern to complete the work.
3. Model MDOT Complete Streets policy with shared local and statewide outcomes and appropriate performance measures by utilizing design options that meet economic revitalization and transportation objectives; and documenting the process, outcomes and performance measures to be used as a model throughout the state.
4. Create a predictable and consistent long-term TDM policy for the corridor, including establishing an authority to ensure long term success and monitor the impacts on the corridor.

*Source:* "Washtenaw Avenue Transportation Demand Management Strategy." Michigan Livable Communities Demonstration Project, 2013.

**Project Name:** Commute Trip Reduction Program

**Partners:** Washington State Department of Transportation, Local Governments, Employers

The Washington State Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program is one of the largest, longest running, and most successful commute trip reduction programs in the United States. Enacted by the Washington State legislature in 1991 and managed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

and local governments, the program works with employers to encourage their workers to reduce single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips to reduce emissions and minimize peak-hour congestion. The program uses a wide variety of transportation demand management (TDM) tools to reach its goals.

The CTR program has a board comprised of individuals appointed by the Governor, and works closely with local jurisdictions, regional transportation planning organizations, transit agencies, and employers to craft the program's requirements and goals based on legislative mandates. CTR programs across the state work with more than 1,050 worksites with 530,000 participants and have accounted for a 30,000 weekday morning trip reduction, reduced traffic delays by 8 percent, reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 69,000 metric tons, and conserved millions of gallons of gasoline.

The CTR program focuses its work in the most congested areas of the state, prioritizing employers with 100 or more full-time employees. CTR staff work with employers to develop and manage individualized programs based on goals adopted by their communities. Employers frequently offer a variety of opportunities for workers to participate that match their goals, worksite requirements, and overall employee culture. Programs often encourage telecommuting; provide benefits as incentives for participation; provide bicycle-friendly infrastructure such as bike parking, storage, personal lockers, and showers; provide partially or fully subsidized transit passes; carpooling programs; and flex-time work schedules. Employers report back to the CTR program staff and consistently work to adjust programs and provide education and assistance to employees as needed.

The program is funded by a combination of state funding, federal tax incentives, state tax credits for employers that participate, and by employers themselves. According to the program website, businesses invest \$18 for every taxpayer dollar that goes into the program.

*Source:* "Commute Trip Reduction Program." Washington State Department of Transportation. 2015. Accessed May 21, 2015.

### **Business / Employer Best Practices**

**Project Name:** Transit Tax Benefit Program

**Partners:** Barnes Jewish and St. Louis Children's Hospital and St. Louis Regional Transit

The Transit Tax Benefit Program is a business-initiated program in St. Louis, MO. Through this program, the Barnes Jewish and St. Louis Children's Hospital provides transit pass subsidies for employees, which can be voluntarily deducted through payroll before taxes. Passes are purchased on a monthly basis with a \$20 subsidy covered by the hospital. Over 50 percent of employees participate in the program, with many who travel from the edge of the metro area. In addition to the transit pass subsidies, the hospital provides shuttle service between local transit stations and the hospital for both employees and patients.

Along with transit pass subsidies, the employer also offers participants the following benefits.

- A guaranteed ride home in the case of emergencies
- Free shuttle service

- Ridesharing coordination
- Secure bicycle parking and showers

The hospital partners with the local transit agency to offer transit-related events which provide the agency an opportunity to connect with employees, share information such as schedule changes and simply answer questions for employees. Hospital officials say the program showcases their dedication to environmental consciousness which has contributed to positive employee recruitment and retention.

*Source:* "Success Stories of Employer-Sponsored Transportation Programs."  
Transportation to Work: A Toolkit For The Business Community. August 1, 2012. Accessed April 17, 2015.

**Project Name:** Duke Energy's Transit Subsidy Program  
**Partners:** Duke Energy and Charlotte Area Transit System

Duke Energy, with locations in Charlotte, NC; Cincinnati, OH; and Houston, TX, participates in the Internal Revenue Service Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit program, which allows the company to offer transportation subsidies for qualified employees. The program began in the company's Charlotte location where employees had an average commute time of 40-60 minutes daily.

The program began over ten years ago when the company began offering monthly bus passes and 10-Ride bus passes for a small portion of its workforce that required transportation assistance. In August 2006, the company began offering a \$50 monthly subsidy toward the purchase of transit or vanpool passes—covering the full cost of those services. In just two years, transit use by eligible employees increased from about 0.5% to 16%. When the Charlotte Area Transit System began new light rail service, which employees could utilize using their transit passes, participation in the program increased to about 30 percent.

In fact, feedback from users of the program was so positive in Duke Energy's Charlotte location, the company expanded the program to its Cincinnati and Houston locations. Along with the Transit Subsidy Program, the company also offers several other transportation benefits listed below.

- Complimentary parking for carpools and vanpools that meet criteria outlined by the program
- Bike parking and access to shower facilities and lockers
- Online resources where employees can review the program guidelines, learn about updates, and coordinate rideshare opportunities

Due in large part to these transportation benefits, Duke Energy was named a "Best Workplace for Commuters" by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation attracting workers who increasingly look for employers championing clean air and sustainability practices.

*Source:* "Success Stories of Employer-Sponsored Transportation Programs."  
Transportation to Work: A Toolkit For The Business Community. August 1, 2012. Accessed April 17, 2015.

**Project Name:** Microsoft Corporation Transportation Benefits and Connector

**Partners:** Microsoft Corporation

Microsoft, based in the Seattle, WA area, has been dedicated to providing access to transportation for their employees since 1994 when they first began offering free transit passes. The transit pass program is funded in part because employers qualify for up to the maximum allowable monthly benefit amount for the Qualified Tax Benefit.

In 2007, Microsoft created the Connector program. The Connector program consists of 48 buses that provide transportation to and from work for over 3,000 employees each day. The buses are equipped with Wi-Fi and power outlets.

Employees are also eligible for a free One Regional Card for All (ORCA) card, administered by King County Metro, which provides unlimited rides on seven regional transit agencies. Thirty-eight percent of Microsoft employees use “alternative transportation” to work. Microsoft’s human resources department has indicated that these transportation benefits play a vital role in the company’s ability to attract and retain talent.

*Source:* "Success Stories of Employer-Sponsored Transportation Programs."  
Transportation to Work: A Toolkit for The Business Community. August 1, 2012. Accessed April 17, 2015.

### **Workforce Agency Success Stories**

**Workforce Agency Name:** Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas (Workforce Solutions)

**Project Name:** Highway 6 to Success

**Partners:** Workforce Solutions, Waco Transit, McLennan Community College, Texas State Technical College, Sanderson Farms, Falls Community Hospital

Workforce Solutions, in the Waco, TX area, implemented a transportation project to address an on-going problem with their clients—access to the Waco transit system by residents of an adjacent rural county, Falls County. Falls County is characterized by residents with low-household income, high unemployment and low educational attainment.

When Sanderson Farms, a large food processing company, planned to move into the Waco metro area and required 1,200 new employees, the main barrier to entry for the company was workforce mobility. To address this gap, Workforce Solutions began the Highway 6 to Success program in 2007 using a Federal Transit Administration Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant through the Texas Department of Transportation. The grant required a local match which came from Workforce Solutions, technical colleges in the area, a local hospital, local banks, and several municipalities who saw a benefit to bringing Sanderson Farms to the area.

Highway 6 to Success is a circular bus service that runs along Highway 6 into five rural communities in the Waco region. Riders can then make a free transfer to Waco Transit’s fixed route system to access jobs, education and training opportunities, other public services and connect to intercity bus services.



Waco residents can board Highway 6 to Success to access Sanderson Farms. Highway 6 to Success provides more than 1,000 trips per month with about half of those going to or from Sanderson Farms.

*Source:* "Texas WIB Invests Time, Energy & Expertise in Job Shuttle Project." Joblinks Employment Transportation Center. 2010. Accessed April 21, 2015.

## **Miscellaneous**

### ***Telecommuting***

The advancement of digital communications technology has created a new solution to workforce transportation barriers: telecommuting. As of 2012, about 2.6% of all employees telecommuted as their principle means of transportation to work. Emerging technologies continues to increase employer participation and, in turn, the portion of workers who telecommute. According to the 2012 American Community Survey, telecommuting has grown by nearly 80% since 2005, with increases every individual year. A breakdown of telecommuters by class of worker is listed below.

- Federal employees: 3.3%
- Private sector non-profit employers: 2.9%
- Private sector for-profit employers: 2.6%
- State government workers: 2.4%
- Local government workers: 1.2%

In addition to those who telecommute multiple days per week (listed above), it is estimated that about 25 million workers telecommute on a less frequent basis, or at least one day per month. Telecommuting numbers do not correlate with congestion levels, but rather follow industry and workforce-culture trends in a region. Among the largest metro areas, the San Diego metro area has the highest concentration of telecommuters at 4.2%, while metro Detroit has the lowest at 1.8%. In fact, in 25% of the largest metro areas in the U.S., more workers telecommute than use public transit as a principle means of transportation to work.

Of course, telecommuting is an option only compatible with certain jobs; however, it is estimated that about 50% of the U.S. workforce has a job that would be compatible with telecommuting at least part of the time. Research has suggested that well over half of U.S. workers would like to telecommute at least part of the time. Telecommuting is a tool that employers increasingly use to address lack of access to transportation, insufficient parking, and is offered considered an employee benefit.

According to Global Workplace Analytics, telecommuting saves employers about \$11,000 per year and workers themselves anywhere from \$2,000 to \$7,000.

*Source:* Lister, Kate. "Latest Telecommuting Statistics." Global Workplace Analytics. 2013. Accessed May 21, 2015.

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