



a service of DART First State

Winter 2008

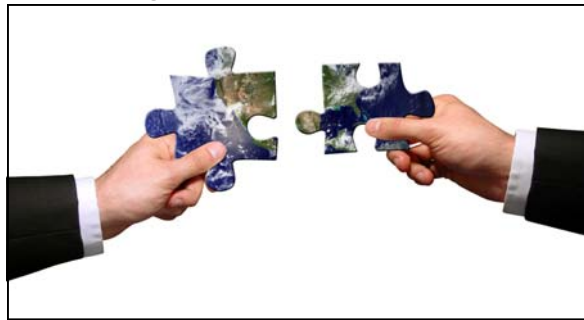
# RideShare Matters

DART's RideShare Delaware program newsletter

## The Connection Between Your Commute and Climate Change

By now, you have surely seen your fair share of media coverage on the Climate Change issue. Whether you agree that we humans are the cause, or that its solely a natural occurring scientific phenomenon remains debated, though it seems somewhat less these days. And regardless, the movement is already underway with 'going green' in every possible facet of life. Certainly going green is inclusive of ridesharing. One thing hasn't changed, however, and that is what rideshare programs like ours and those throughout the world have been actively advocating to commuters and businesses for many years; sharing the ride makes a difference. Among traditional program messaging to the public touting the benefits of ridesharing so we can improve air quality, reduce congestion and save ourselves some almighty bucks while we're at it, the true value of these simple actions has become even more evident—sharing the ride, or cutting vehicle miles traveled can have a positive impact on global warming.

Across the globe, solutions such as increasing fuel efficiency, decreasing carbon intensity of fuels, and reducing vehicle miles traveled are taking center stage to try to address the situation. A recent re-



port within the transportation industry focused on this very subject. What stood out as an important fact as it relates to the first two solutions— increased fuel efficiency and decreased carbon intensity— is that these strategies do not address congestion and public health in their effectiveness, whereas reducing vehicle miles traveled (something that occurs with every rideshare trip taken) does. So, given the opportunity to really make a difference, commuting in a carpool, vanpool, on public transit and especially biking and walking your way to work will provide the single most significant benefit all the way around.

We want to thank all of you who dedicate yourselves to your rideshare arrangement. In the coming months, we hope you will support our ef-

forts to increase the number of ridesharing individuals throughout the state. How can you do this? Simply tell a friend about our service. Plug us into your human resources department or invite us to an upcoming event. Add a link to our website from your company intranet. Any of these ways, and others, can help us meet that goal.

**Thank you for your contribution.**



### NBC's TODAY Show Puts Carpooling Through It's Paces

Sleepy cast members of NBC's TODAY show slid into the back seat of their sedan recently for a televised look at how carpooling can help America save fuel and cut greenhouse gases. As NBC explains: "Al, Matt, Meredith and Ann drive in to work together as part of a new series called TODAY Goes Green, which focuses on the small ways we can be kind to the environment." In addition to their coffee, donuts and fresh-squeezed merriment, the TODAY gang delivered some great stats and helpful exposure about the virtues of 'pooling and transit. Check out the following link to pull up the Jan. 22nd show: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/22777078#22777078>.

### US Mayors Tackling Climate Protection

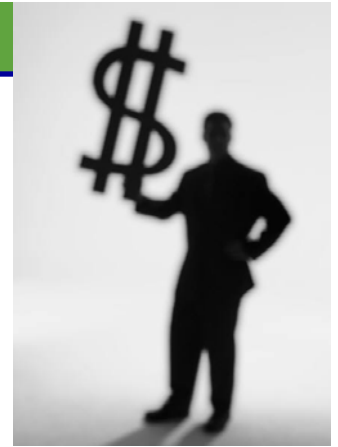
A 2007 report of the US Conference of Mayors outlines strategies undertaken by US cities to conserve energy and other natural resources, acquire clean energy, and adopt products and practices that reduce the greenhouse gas emissions known to contribute to climate change. Initiatives include city government operations but expand to involve city residents and local businesses to conserve. View the report at <http://usmayors.org/climateprotection/list.asp>

**And check out this easy read...** "We paved paradise, so why can't we find any place to park? Because parking is one of the biggest boondoggles -- and environmental disasters -- in (the US)," says Katharine Mieszkowski. <http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/10/01/parking/>

## Federal Tax Benefits.. Is Your Employer On Board?

Federal tax benefits are available through use of employer-offered IRS Section 132(f) Qualified Transportation Benefits. These benefits provide a tax benefit to employers, and employees save too! Employers can offer them in one of the following ways:

- **Employer-Paid Transportation Benefits.** Employers can pay for their employees to commute by transit or vanpool, up to a limit of \$115/month. With this arrangement, employees get up to \$115 in a tax-free transportation benefit. Employers get a tax deduction for the expense and enjoy savings on payroll-related taxes. Employers have found that providing transportation benefits offers significant savings over offering the equivalent dollar value to employees in the form of a salary increase.
- **Employee-Paid, Pre-Tax Transportation Benefits.** Employers can allow employees to set aside up to \$115/month of pre-tax income to pay for transit or vanpooling. Employers save money overall since the amount set aside is not subject to payroll taxes. Employees save money, too, since the amount of an employee's salary set aside for transportation benefits is not subject to income tax, up to the specified monthly limits.
- **Shared-Cost Transportation Benefits.** Employers can share the cost of transit or vanpool costs with employees- and everyone can receive valuable tax savings. With this approach, employers can provide a portion of the cost of taking transit or vanpooling as a tax-free benefit and allow the employee to set aside pre-tax income to pay for the remaining amount of the benefit (up to the specified limits).
- **Parking Cash-Out.** Employers can offer their employees the option to "cash out" of their existing parking space. For example, if Company A subsidizes parking for their employees at \$60/month, a parking cash-out program would allow employees to choose from the following options: (1) keep the parking space worth \$60/month, (2) give up the parking space and receive \$60 extra each month in taxable salary, or (3) receive \$60/month in tax-free transportation benefits to pay for transit or vanpooling. Cash-out programs often work best for employers that pay separately for parking and for organizations with parking shortages or plans to expand parking facilities.



There are a number of Federal Agencies offering commuter benefits programs. Visit the following website to learn more or give us a call for help.

[Federal Workforce Transportation \(Transit & Vanpool Benefits\) – General Information](#)

- Executive Order 13150 – Federal Workforce Transportation <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/eos/eo13150.html>
- Executive Order 13150 – FAQ (Federal Transit Administration Website): [http://www.fta.dot.gov/2171\\_6016\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.fta.dot.gov/2171_6016_ENG_HTML.htm)

### Commuter Connection — Drivers Seeking the Right Partner!

As much as we try, sometimes finding the right partner just takes a little longer for some of our participants. Typically, this is due to a remote work location or unusual work schedule but it could be other factors. Here we feature two participants who are still actively searching for someone to call a carpool partner:

Our first featured commuter, Richard Reeves, is looking for a partner to share the commute from Avondale, Pennsylvania to Dupont Barley Mill located at Rt. 141 & Lancaster Pike in Wilmington. Richard gets an early start in the morning due to the fact that he works from 6am until 3 pm.

Victoria Jones is our second featured commuter traveling to New Castle from Mullica Hill, New Jersey each day. She is looking to share the driving and is willing to meet someone along the way. She travels either Rt. 322 to I-95, or uses King's Highway to get to her job at BayShore Ford on DuPont Highway. Victoria's hours are from 7:30 am until 4 pm Monday thru Friday.

Contact our staff member Lisa Yeager at [yeager@pbworld.com](mailto:yeager@pbworld.com) if you fit this commute or if you want to be featured in a future article.

## [www.ridesharedelaware.org](http://www.ridesharedelaware.org) Upgrade Shows Increased Activity

Since our updated website launched in mid-October, we've been seeing a steady increase in web activity as well as monitoring the results of our on-line surveys.

**Web Activity**— Visits to the site have nearly doubled in the past several months while the total hits has just about tripled. And, while most visitors do not accept cookies (meaning we can't track their frequency to our site), of those who do, half are new visitors and the other half are returning visitors.



**Entry Pages**—The top five landing pages are the home page (67.80%), the online application (6.68%), our Promotions page (4.39%), the Public Transit page (2.07%), and our Calendar of Events page (1.75%).

### And the on-line Survey says...

- Based on feedback from our program participants alone, 55% or more rate our new look 'very well done' as it

relates to content, ease of navigation and overall design.

- 67% have referred our program to others.
- Combined, 90% indicate that they plan to or may be frequent visitors to our site to obtain program information.
- Survey takers not yet registered with the program rate the Cost of Commuting and Personal Vehicle Wear and Tear as the top two factors for considering use of non-drive alone commute methods.
- Most, 56%, think that Employers have the biggest influence on encouraging use of non-drive alone commute modes followed by the Government at 39%.
- 42% cite the DART First State/DelDOT websites as their primary transportation information resource followed by the internet and then radio.

### Your Comments...

- "I've been fortunate not to have to use the emergency ride home benefit yet. My friends have and they had positive feelings about the whole process. Thanks for offering this very valuable service!"
- "Updates by email are consistent and clear. Appreciate you sending me the "latest" news on programs offered by DART."
- "Excellent, emails are answered right away, customer service is wonderful."
- "I appreciate being part of RideShare. You provide an extraordinarily useful service to those of us who commute daily (especially those of us from out of state). Thank you."

### Your Questions...

Q: How do I update my program record? A: Since we are not yet interactive with our program, meaning you can't access our database to make your changes, you have two options: you can contact our office directly at 1-888-RIDE-MATHC or complete the online application,. If the latter, you should simply select the 'Update my Record' checkbox so that we know what we need to do on our end.

## Web Poll Results

Here's what you've told us since we launched our Web Poll feature in October:

If available in the near future, how interested would you be in utilizing an interactive tool to conduct your own search for a rideshare partner as well as to update your commuter profile?

Very	65%
Somewhat	23%
Would not utilize	12%

Does your employer actively promote transportation options at your work-site?

Yes	65%
No	30%
Unsure	5%

Do you utilize real time traffic resources to help navigate your commute?

Sometimes	67%
No	33%

What brought you to the website today?

Find a rideshare partner and cut driving costs	29%
Need ride to work	41%
Guaranteed Ride Home benefit	18%
Obtain information	12%

Would you ride DART public transit on Sunday if available?

Yes	72%
No	28%

## **"Spring Into a Green Commute" is the theme of RideShare's spring promotion**

In the coming months, invite your friends to register with DART's RideShare Delaware and to carpool, vanpool, ride the bus, bike or walk to work with you. Not only is ridesharing to work an environmentally-friendly (and cheaper) way to go, but if you encourage your friends and co-workers to register with RideShare Delaware, you'll all be entered into a drawing to win some great prizes. To add a little more incentive for your efforts, every new person who joins RideShare and mentions your name when they register will increase your chance of being a prize drawing winner.



As you do your part to help your friends and the environment, we'll do our part by searching for those they can share the commute with, and of course, providing them with their emergency ride home benefit once they qualify. It's a total win-win for everyone, including Mother Nature.

Registration is easy and only takes a few moments, whether it's through our on-line application at [www.ridesharedelaware.org](http://www.ridesharedelaware.org) or by calling our toll-free number at 1-888-RIDE-MATch. To be eligible for prizes, registrations must be made between March 1, 2008 and May 31, 2008.

**Congratulations** goes to Vanessa McNeill. Ms. McNeill was the 100th person to take our on-line survey and was rewarded with some Rideshare goodies as a token of our thanks. And a special 'congratulations' to those 25 participants who changed



their commute from a drive alone mode to a non-drive alone commute mode during our fall promotion. Four lucky participants were awarded some great gifts including Denise Daniel, Nancy Smith, Arlene Collier and Robert Webb. Thanks to all!

### **Other things to come...**

#### **Sunday Bus Service in Delaware?**

That's right... it appears that DART First State will be taking steps to initiate pilot Sunday service in New Castle County and Saturday service in Kent County. Details on start dates and routes that will be in operation are forthcoming.

#### **Are We on Your Spring Calendar?**

DART's Rideshare is scheduled to be at several upcoming Earth Day and Green events in the coming months. *Are we on your calendar?* If not, we should be. Contact our office to let us know how we can supplement your worksite environmental education efforts with information about our free programs and services!

#### **"Please Won't You Be My RideShare Partner"**

Our staff recognizes the time constraints that prevent many commuters from getting to a meeting during their workday to learn more about our programs and services. To better serve you, we will be holding RideShare Information Meetings after work at locations near you very soon. This will be a great opportunity to meet your fellow interested neighbors and learn how you can start a new commute in a relaxed, casual atmosphere. Dates, times and locations are to be announced.



## Join us when RideShare's Adopt-A-Highway Activities Hit the Road Next Month!

**DART's RideShare Delaware is extending an open invitation for you to join us as we embark on our first of three Adopt-A-Highway clean up events!** Our first clean up day is scheduled for March 15th at 10am as we tackle Old Baltimore Pike at Route 273 in New Castle County.

Along with it being a rewarding experience, our staff has plans to make this fun as we serve up refreshments and t-shirts to all who participate, as well as provide raffle prizes and more. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) will provide the clean up materials including trash bags, gloves, and safety vests, and you, our participants, will provide the manpower (along with our staff, of course!) We will meet at Faith City Church near the Christiana Mall.

Each time a volunteer is seen walking down a Delaware roadside, someone, somewhere, is reminded of our shared responsibility to preserve and protect the landscape. This sense of responsibility put into action is the heart of the Adopt A Highway Program. Each year, thanks to the efforts of dedicated sponsors throughout the state, cleaning Delaware gets a little easier. Join the staff of DART's RideShare Delaware and more than 600 other groups, organizations and individuals as we band together to keep Delaware's roadways clean of litter.

***If you'd like to join us, you must register in advance and no later than March 7th. Registration information be found on our website or you can call our office directly.***

### **FREE Workshops Scheduled for Kent County, "How Commuter Transportation Programs Meet the Call of the Employer, Employee and the Environment"**

Employee transportation affects an employer's bottom line and for this reason employers need to learn how to be competitive and strategic when recruiting and maintaining their workforce. At the same time, employees are seeking less costly and easier ways of getting to work. We have the tools needed to meet the needs of both while easing the demand on our environment.

DART's RideShare Delaware is pleased to offer this well-received 3-part series of **free workshops in Kent County** after a successful run in New Castle County last fall. The workshops are designed to educate participants on what types of transportation programs and services exist locally and nationally, the benefits they provide, how they work, and, how DART's RideShare can help you put them to use at your place of business. **Who should attend?** HR reps, facilities or property managers or anyone responsible for managing current or future employee transportation demands at the worksite.

All three workshops will be held at the Dover Public Library from 10am until 11am on the following dates: **March 25th**, April 28th and May 28th. Visit our website to obtain registration information or call our office. Seats are limited so register now! *Sussex County dates are forthcoming and will be posted to our website soon!*

**Share the ride to work.  
You'll save money.  
You'll help save the planet.**



**It doesn't get any Greener than that.**

**1-888-RIDE-MATCH \* [www.RideShareDelaware.org](http://www.RideShareDelaware.org)**

#### About DART's RideShare Delaware

DART's RideShare Delaware has been serving Delaware employees with their commute needs since 1997. Funded with a combination of Federal Congestion, Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) and State dollars, the goal of the program is to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles (SOVs) traveling on Delaware's roadways, thus improving our Air Quality. RideShare works in partnership with local and regional agencies towards meeting Federal Air Quality Standards. The RideShare program is operated under DART First State, Delaware's transit agency, and offers free ridematching services for commuters working in Delaware as well as free assistance to Delaware employers interested in establishing employee commuter benefits programs. RideShare also offers an emergency ride home benefit for registered commuters actively ridesharing to work; vanpool services; and, free carpool matching for parents of Delaware school students. RideShare Delaware is administered by Parsons, Brinckerhoff and the office is located in downtown Wilmington, Delaware. RideShare's programs and services cover the entire State of Delaware.



a service of DART First State

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#### RideShare Delaware

919 N. Market Street  
Suite 411  
Wilmington, DE 19801  
1-888-RIDE-MATCH  
[www.ridesharedelaware.org](http://www.ridesharedelaware.org)

#### Have You Moved? Changed Jobs? Started RideSharing? Do You Have E-mail?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions or have other changes to report, [you need to contact our office immediately](#). These types of changes require us to update your personal record and could affect your matchlist results. Please call us or visit our 'Participant Page' on-line to provide us with your updates or contact us toll-free at 1-888-RIDE-MATCH (743-3628). We welcome your comments.