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Fiscal cliff deal raises transit tax benefit

Congress reached a deal on the “fiscal cliff” early this month, and transit customers and vanpoolers got some relief. The final bill included a provision that raised the federal transit tax benefit to \$240 a month.

Previously, the maximum commuting cost that transit customers could claim as tax deductible was \$125 per month, well below the \$240 that car commuters could claim to offset monthly parking costs.

Unfortunately, the new level for the federal transit tax benefit is only temporary and will expire at the end of 2013 unless Congress extends it.

Learn more [here](#) or check with your tax adviser.

We'll help you enhance your commuter benefits

Start the new year off on the right foot! If your organization wants to enhance or revamp its commuter benefits program, we can help. We have programs and services for companies of all sizes – from 10 to 10,000 employees.

We will support your efforts to help commuters save money and reduce traffic congestion through our transit pass programs, ridesharing services, recognition and incentive programs, telework programs and more! Because employers have unique needs, we provide custom solutions for our clients.

Among the transit pass programs we offer:



Metropass

With Metropass, your employees gain access to deeply discounted, unlimited ride transit passes (stored value is required for some Northstar fares). Metropass is available to companies with 10 or more

participants.



Go-To Cards

If you have fewer than 10 employees interested in transit benefits, your organization can use convenient online administrator tools to distribute and add value to Go-To Cards for your employees. Options include Fares Direct (with a minimum monthly order of \$500) or My Fare Card List (manage up to 100 Go-To Cards and pay with a credit card).

Ready to take the next step? Contact your [employer outreach specialist](#) today!



Active transportation choices are good for your health!

Need an easy way to help your employees to stick to their New Year's resolution about getting more exercise? Encourage them to make transportation choices!

Bicycling, walking or riding the bus or train can help commuters get closer to the 30 minutes of physical activity recommended for heart health, plus it'll reduce stress.

Here's a great example. A year after a light rail system in Charlotte, N.C., began operating, commuters who took the train to work regularly were more than 6 pounds lighter than those who drove, researchers found. Read more about the study [here](#).

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Is the Commuter Challenge on your radar for 2013?

It's not too early to start thinking about ways to incorporate the Commuter Challenge in your plans for 2013.

The Commuter Challenge is a fun, easy way to encourage your employees to try smarter ways of getting to work. Starting in April, commuters can take the challenge and be entered in a grand prize drawing for replacing drive-alone trips and instead take the bus or train, bicycle, carpool, walk, telework or vanpool.

Check with your company's Green Team or wellness coordinator and brainstorm ideas for employee involvement in this year's campaign. Start planning commuter fairs or employee events now so you're ready when the campaign begins this spring.

Get recognized for your efforts. If you plan to expand your organization's involvement with Commuter Challenge this year, keep track of your accomplishments and consider applying for a [Commuter Choice Award](#) in 2013!

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Stay informed about I-494 road construction

As part of its outreach efforts, Commuter Services sends email alerts about road construction projects taking place in the I-494 corridor.

Employers can sign up to receive updates by contacting Melissa Madison at Melissa@494corridor.org.

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