NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS
EMPLOYER
TRIP
REDUCTION
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Contacts and Resources
The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is a voluntary association of, by, and for local governments, and was established to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, and coordinating for sound regional development. NCTCOG’s purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint decisions.

NCTCOG serves the 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered around the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth (DFW). NCTCOG has over 230 member governments including 16 counties, numerous cities, school districts, and special districts. Since 1974, NCTCOG has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area. The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is the policy body for the MPO. The RTC consists of 43 members, predominantly local elected officials, overseeing the regional transportation planning process. NCTCOG’s Transportation Department is responsible for support and staff assistance to the RTC and its technical committees, which comprise the MPO policy-making structure.

Ten counties in the North Central Texas region do not meet federal air quality standards for the pollutant Ozone. Ozone is the result of the combination of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sunlight. Light-duty passenger vehicles are the region’s most significant contributors to NOx emissions, and as North Texas continues to grow, both air quality and traffic congestion challenges grow with it. Therefore, encouraging regional drivers to reduce the number and frequency of trips taken and to use low-emitting and clean passenger vehicles are both important components in the strategy to achieve federal air quality standards and manage congestion.
Travel Demand Management

NCTCOG’s Travel Demand Management (TDM) Program markets alternative forms of transportation to DFW commuters. TDM efforts are being implemented in both urban and rural areas across the DFW area in order to reduce traffic congestion; to improve air quality by reducing air pollution; and to increase efficiency of the transportation system. Some TDM programs currently being implemented in the DFW region include a Regional Employer Trip Reduction (ETR) Program, the Regional Vanpool Program, park-and-ride facilities, and Transportation Management Associations (TMAs). A TMA is a formal organization of businesses and local governments dedicated to solving local transportation concerns of large employers.

Employer Trip Reduction Program

NCTCOG’s Regional ETR Program is designed to reduce employee commute vehicle trips through the marketing and implementation of TDM strategies such as rideshare programs (carpooling and vanpooling), telecommuting and flexible work-hour programs, transit, bicycling, and similar strategies. This educational program is aimed at private and public employers in the region with 100 or more employees. Employers are assisted with program education and recruitment, program setup and maintenance, and data collection and reporting of results.

A main task of NCTCOG’s ETR Program is assisting major employers with the formation of company-specific ETR programs. Employers are encouraged to designate an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) for the company. The ETC serves as a point of contact for employees that are interested in exploring alternative commute options. The ETC also acts as a liaison between the company and NCTCOG in the administration of the program. NCTCOG will provide support to the ETC and employers by offering marketing materials, ETC training and education, administering employee surveys to better determine what programs will work best at that work site, and providing information on tax credits and other incentives from which the employer may benefit.
The purpose of this ETR Manual is to guide you and your employees, or co-workers, towards better options for a more economic, cleaner, and stress-free work commute. Your participation will aid in alleviating roadway congestion and improving our region’s air quality. We encourage you to share this manual with others, develop a plan that works best for your company, and designate an ETC to manage the plan. Please note that we are here to make sure your plans run smoothly and effectively. Let us know of any assistance you may require for your trip reduction program, and we would be glad to help. In reading this, you will find that there are many tools for alternative commuting available in North Texas, so let’s work together in getting more single-passenger vehicles off the road!

Benefits to Your Company
The implementation of a company-specific ETR program can provide benefits such as:
1. Decreased demand for parking spaces
2. Reduced employee tardiness and absenteeism
3. Expanded labor pool
4. Enhanced public image
5. Low-cost benefit to employees
6. Increased employee satisfaction
7. Reduced employee stress
8. Increased employee productivity
Take a chance and try a commute mode besides driving alone. Link up with a co-worker for the early morning commute. Make some new friends in a vanpool. Get in a small workout with a bike ride commute to work. Make a music playlist to enjoy on a bus trip to the office. There are plenty of opportunities in our region to fit the needs of commuters. In this section we will delve into each available alternative in more detail.

**Carpool**

Carpooling involves two or more people commuting to and from work together in a private vehicle. Those involved in the carpool can determine who will drive, establish schedules, and discuss possible payment for gas and maintenance. Employers can encourage employees to carpool by offering incentives such as preferred parking at work and a guaranteed ride home in case of an emergency to minimize their worries. There are also free ride-match services accessible to you in North Texas which will be explained in the next section.

Overall, carpooling can be beneficial to all those involved. This alternative commute allows employees to take advantage of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and receive a discount on managed lane facilities during the peak periods, potentially reducing commute time, saving gas money, and arriving to work more relaxed.
Vanpool

Vanpools include 6 to 15 commuters who reside in the same area and commute to work offices near one another. The cost of the vanpool is divided amongst the number of commuters, and emergency rides home are offered to those involved as well. Guaranteed rides home are included to alleviate any possible fears you may have about not having a vehicle to get around, should a serious situation arise.

Involvement in a vanpool lets employees benefit from possible commute time reductions, meet new people in the vanpools, minimize stress, and more. Employers benefit from this commute mode also by potentially reducing overcrowded employee parking lots. The Regional Vanpool Program is operated by Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), and Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T). Contact the transit agencies or NCTCOG staff listed on the last page of the manual for assistance in joining a vanpool.
Transit (Rail and Bus)

One of the best ways to minimize vehicles on the road (helping with both air quality and traffic congestion) is to take the bus and/or rail. The three largest providers of our region’s mass transit system are Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), and Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T). DART’s service area is nearly 700 square miles and includes a broad range of services such as 130 bus routes, 72 miles of light rail transit, and paratransit services. DCTA’s service area is nearly 160 square miles and includes regional connector bus service, local fixed-route bus service, and rail services on the A-train between the cities of Denton and Carrollton. The T’s service area is 350 square miles and includes fixed-route bus service, express bus and/or Rider Request services. The Trinity Railway Express (TRE) is a joint commuter rail service provided by DART and The T. Each agency offers a variety of rider passes that meet the needs of individual commuters or employers interested in annual employer pass programs. Representatives from these transit agencies are available to assist commuters and employers by providing more information on service options. Please visit each agency’s website for more information.

Additionally, free transportation options are available in limited areas of Dallas and Fort Worth. These options are great for a quick lunchtime or weekend excursion:

**Dallas**
- DART D-Link – offering free service in Downtown Dallas, Monday through Saturday. The bus runs every 15 minutes.
- M-Line Trolley – offering free service seven days a week, along McKinney Avenue.

**Fort Worth**
- Molly the Trolley – offering free service that travels along a route from Fort Worth Convention Center to Sundance Square. It operates seven days a week with the trolley arriving every 10 minutes.
  More information: http://the-t.com/MollytheTrolley.aspx
- Burnett Plaza Lunch Line – offering free service that serves Burnett Plaza, Sundance Square, and more. The bus operates Monday through Friday, every 15 minutes from 11 am to 2 pm.
  More information: http://the-t.com/BurnettPlaza.aspx
Biking and Walking

Biking and walking as alternative commute choices are both cost effective and great for personal health. Utilizing these commute modes (along with mass transit, if necessary) to get to and from work will make for more economical and healthy trips. In addition, the majority of buses now have bike carrier racks to make biking to the office easier. Bikes are also allowed on light rail transit and the TRE, and many of the stations and transit centers have bike racks, bike lids, and bike lockers available too. There are plenty of pedestrian walk-paths and sidewalks to give a sense of comfort and safety when choosing to walk to work as well. If you are looking to promote active lifestyles, along with financial and environmental savings amongst employees, these two alternatives may be the right choices for your company. More information on existing and future bicycle and pedestrian trails can be found on the NCTCOG BikeWeb at www.nctcog.org/bikeweb.

Please note that bike share stations are available in various locations throughout Fort Worth that employees may rent for their alternative commute or lunchtime outing:

**Fort Worth B-Cycle** – offering affordable bike rentals at numerous station locations; 24-hour, 3-day, 7-day, and 30-day passes may be purchased. Long-term memberships are also available.

More information: [https://fortworth.bcycle.com/](https://fortworth.bcycle.com/).
Telecommuting, Compressed Work-Weeks and Flexible Schedules

Telecommuting provides the opportunity to work from home or a remote location close to home. Existing technology allows this alternative commute to be efficient, easy, and effective. In fact, some employees have proven to be more productive while telecommuting, making this commute mode a potential benefit for employers and a positive experience for your company. Along with working from home also comes potential cost savings for companies due to the decreased need for more office space and parking spaces. Telecommuting also does not have to be an every day option for employees. Telecommuting once or twice a week can still produce positive results.

Compressed work-weeks and/or flexible schedules can also prove beneficial to your company. Both typically involve working outside of the standard 8 am to 5 pm timeframe. Common examples of compressed work-weeks include a 4/10 schedule - working four 10-hour days with one day off per week; and a 9/80 schedule - working 80 hours in a two-week period over nine days instead of 10. Another option is to work four 9-hour days with one-half day off per week.

A flexible schedule involves employees having staggered shifts (ranging from 15 minutes to two hours apart) or flexibility in arriving and departing from work. Employers should consider adopting these options if telecommuting is not possible in your industry of work. All of these options assist in the effort to decrease rush hour congestion.
TryParkingIt.com is a website developed to assist commuters in meeting their alternative commute wants, concerns, and needs. The site consists of ride-matching services for both carpool and vanpool, along with biking, walking, and transit partner matching, and the ability to log your commutes for reporting purposes and rewards.

Users simply create a profile and state their ridesharing or alternative commute preferences. TryParkingIt.com will then match them with others that have similar work routes and schedules. When a carpool or vanpool match is located, the user can e-mail a request through the website or receive text notifications on found matches. TryParkingIt.com users can also log their alternative commutes and view a report on their commute activities that tracks money saved, calories burned, work trips reduced, and other categories. Users earn points towards G.R.E.E.N. (Give, Receive, Expand, Effect, North Texas) Rewards for recording their alternative commute trips. More information on Try Parking It G.R.E.E.N. Rewards can be found on page 25.

TryParkingIt.com allows designated ETCs or employer administrators to manage their own employer sub-site. This allows employers to take advantage of the following features:
- Custom portal viewed by company employees only
- Custom portal text, logo, and layout editing rights for employer administrators
- Inclusion of employer-specific incentives and contests

Your company’s appointed ETC will have the ability to collect all employee’s logged trip reports for multiple uses, such as: reporting environmental impact (emission reductions), moving towards a greener workplace, possible company benefit programs, and more.

It is important to note that TryParkingIt.com also features other resources from transit agencies and from NCTCOG’s Travel Demand Management homepage, to support you in any alternative commute mode you may choose. Encourage employees to sign up and begin trip-logging and ridesharing today.
DFW Connect-A-Ride.com, similar to Try Parking It, connects commuters in North Texas. However, this particular website can meet more of your casual carpooling needs. For instance, if you’re in need of a quick ride home from work on a particular day, you can see which drivers are near and willing to carpool with you instantly in our real-time ridesharing feature. The site is mobile accessible and once you send out a request, your message will immediately go to the user’s registered e-mail inbox. Create your profile today to see available drivers are near you or to view the passengers you would be willing to offer a ride to. Once matched, meet at a local park-and-ride lot, then utilize the HOV or managed lane facilities for a relaxed trip to your destination.
Helpful Suggestions

Brown Bag Lunches

One option to consider regardless of company location is Brown Bag Lunches. Brown Bag Lunches consist of employees packing their lunch to eat at work, versus driving to a restaurant. In addition to saving money, this option reduces emissions that would come from driving to and from lunch every day. Employers may also consider rewarding employees who consistently “brown bag” their meal by offering a food truck or catering service occasionally at work. However, if employees must leave the office during the lunch hour, encourage the use of commute alternatives such as carpooling, biking, walking, and transit. Although lunchtime travels are often short-distance trips, choosing a mode other than driving alone will support improving air quality and congestion issues.

Emergency Ride Home

With all of the commute options and programs above, an Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program is a necessity. Offering emergency, or guaranteed, transportation can encourage all employees to try alternative commutes. If an employee is in need of a last minute ride because a carpool had to leave work early, or a family member is ill, then the ERH program brings comfort knowing that the employee will not be stranded. Taxis, shuttles, vans, and more can be a part of the program at the discretion of your company. An ERH service is included in the Regional Vanpool Program; however employers are encouraged to establish an ERH Program as well to complement employer-specific alternative commute programs.
Marketing

NCTCOG staff can come to your office to present and further explain alternative commuting and the topics of this manual to your company. We would love the opportunity to attend upcoming health and wellness events, coordinate a lunch and learn, or meet with your human resources department to attain an active and effective alternative commute program at your place of employment.

We want to help you establish and market an alternative commute program at your company. If you are in need of Try Parking It posters, fliers, or other print materials to make available at your company, please contact us and we would be glad to provide you with any of the appropriate resources we have available.

Incentives/Rewards

As briefly mentioned in the Try Parking It section, ridesharing and logging commutes on the website will allow employees to take advantage of various rewards. With every logged alternative commute, users earn points that can be used to enter contests or redeemed for G.R.E.E.N. rewards and giveaways. Registered employer administrators may also contribute their own rewards to TryParkingIt.com, which can be viewed and obtained by the specific company’s employees only. We feel all users should be rewarded for committing to improving air quality and decreasing congestion. Having an alternative commute program in place at your company can also prove to be very rewarding in other aspects outside of Try Parking It. The designated ETC can organize outings for the commuters, prize drawings for top commuters, and more. The ETC could also work with company managers and the human resources department to put a casual dress day in place for commuters, give extra vacation time, have an awards luncheon, or establish other benefits. The possibilities truly are endless in making alternative trips fun, rather than a burden. All of these examples can inspire your employees to try something other than driving alone, which can contribute to fewer company parking issues, improved air quality and traffic congestion, and an increase in employee morale.

Tax Benefits

Take advantage of tax savings by participating in alternative commutes. Tax Code 132 (F) allows employers to deduct a set amount per month per employee for transit and vanpool fees, qualified tax-free parking, and qualified bicycle commuting months. Three ways to reap this benefit include the employer and employees sharing the costs; employers setting up a pre-tax account; or the employer covering the entire amount.

More information: http://www.nctr.usf.edu/programs/clearinghouse/commutebenefits/
Cleaner Vehicle Options

Drive Green for Business

Any time employees are driving vehicles for business purposes – whether as part of a company-owned fleet of light-duty passenger vehicles, a company-wide vehicle lease program, or for business travel – NCTCOG can provide support and resources to help your organization make the cleanest vehicle choices possible. Contact NCTCOG for assistance with:

• Adopting company-wide commitments to reducing travel emissions.
• Renting the cleanest available vehicles for business travel in or out of the region.
• Offering SmartWay® Elite vehicles, (vehicles certified by the EPA as the cleanest on the market), or alternative fuel vehicles, (AFVs) – as part of company vehicle lease programs. Details about SmartWay Elite vehicles can be found through the EPA’s Green Vehicle Guide.
• Hosting special, participatory events for employees and managers to learn about and experience AFVs.

Workplace Charging and Electric Vehicles

NCTCOG encourages local employers to offer workplace charging and to make the commitment public through the National Workplace Charging Challenge available from the US Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. By joining this free challenge, employers can create a profile on the DOE website, share initial milestones and success stories, and provide an annual program status update - all of which can help increase public sustainability portfolios.

Adoption and use of electric vehicles (EVs) can be encouraged by offering on-site charging options at places of employment. Workplace charging is an important feature for EV owners since their vehicles can charge, or “fill up,” while being parked at work. Multiple groups benefit from workplace charging including employees, employers, and the surrounding community. Benefits of workplace charging include:

• Employer Benefits:
  — Positively affects recruitment and retention by acting as an employee benefit while helping employees with transportation needs.
  — Contributes to a “green corporate image” and enhances the company brand as socially and environmentally responsible.
  — Cost savings for converting company cars to EVs, since operating and maintenance costs are lower than conventional vehicles.
• Employee Benefits:
  — Builds range confidence and reduces range anxiety, or the fear that the EV battery will run out mid-route.
  — Enables employees with long commutes or without access to home charging to purchase EVs.
• Community Benefits:
  — Improves the quality of life of a community by reducing local air pollution.

Contact NCTCOG staff for resources about EVs and charging equipment, or for assistance getting started in offering this benefit or joining the Workplace Charging Challenge.
The North Texas Green Parking Program

One great way to help improve air quality in the North Texas region is by driving an AFV. The North Texas Green Parking program seeks to provide an additional incentive for drivers of AFVs by providing preferred parking spots at businesses in the region. This allows businesses to show their support of air quality initiatives by providing these spaces to their customers, as well as providing an incentive to their employees who drive AFVs. NCTCOG works with area businesses to obtain and install the 12” x 18” white and green signs. Enforcement of the program, if desired, is left up to the individual organization. The signs are tracked via iPhone app and website created by JUXT, which also includes locations of alternative refueling and route mapping capabilities. A list of eligible vehicles can be found online at www.DFWCleanCities.org/greenparking or by searching for the Clean Cities AFV Buyer’s Guide. We have signs available in PDF format so employers may print as many as needed. This program will help bring awareness to alternative fuel vehicles which can lead to improving air quality in North Texas.

More information about the North Texas Green Parking Program or other AFV initiatives, visit the DFW Clean Cities website or contact cleancities@nctcog.org.
PREFERRED PARKING

ALTERNATIVE FUEL VEHICLES
Contacts and Resources

Please contact NCTCOG staff about your company’s upcoming events, to schedule a lunch time booth or presentation, to receive marketing materials, and more. We also ask that you consider establishing an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) that we may contact regarding alternative commute efforts. Also, feel free to contact your local transit agencies for more information on bus routes, trains, and the vanpool program. Please visit our program websites at the links provided below.

NCTCOG Travel Demand Management and Employer Trip Reduction:

TDM Program
TDM@nctcog.org / 817-695-9245
www.nctcog.org/TDM

Try Parking It
www.tryparkingit.com

Transit Agencies (Transit, Rail, and Vanpool):

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)
DARTVanpool@dart.org / 214-747-7433
www.dart.org

Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA)
info@dcta.net / 972-221-4600
www.dcta.net

Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T)
tweb@the-t.com / 817-336-7433
www.the-t.com

Additional NCTCOG Program Websites:

Air North Texas
www.airnorthtexas.org

Biking and Walking
www.nctcog.org/bikeped

DFW Clean Cities
www.dfwcleancities.org

DFW Connect-A-Ride
www.DFWConnectARide.com