

Partnering to Promote Veterans' Use of Shared Rides

Part of the *Transportation for Our Military Series*

This brief, which is part of a series focusing on the transportation needs of veterans and their families, presents short- and long-term suggestions about how employers and the transportation community can collaborate to improve veterans' access to transportation options. It examines how transit and ridesharing programs can benefit veteran employees struggling with transportation issues. By promoting local partnerships, Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative grantees and other veterans service organizations can play a proactive role in promoting shared ride options among veterans and other employees in the communities they serve.

Veterans transitioning to civilian employment may be unfamiliar with transit and other ridesharing opportunities in the communities where they now live and work. Employers and transportation providers can partner to encourage newly hired veterans and jobseekers to use these services. As usage of these alternative services increase, veteran drive-alone rates will decrease, leading to lower commuting costs for them, greater flexibility for military/veteran families with only one vehicle, and reduced congestion within communities.

Employers and local transportation providers can partner to facilitate veterans' commutes in the following ways:

- Displaying transit maps and schedules, including information about reduced or free fares for which veterans may be eligible, in companies' common areas. Similar information can also be included in employee orientation packets designed for newly hired veterans.
- Including commuting information in company newsletters, e-mails, and websites. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services hosts a transportation web page containing information for veterans and military families living in the state. The site includes links to local transit, shared ride, and targeted transportation programs throughout the state.
- Sponsoring public transportation agency exhibits at veterans' job fairs where local businesses are recruiting.

Transportation providers can partner with employers to identify transit stops near their business so applicants can learn about the most direct and affordable commute.

- Coordinating between transit agencies and local community service organizations to provide transportation for veterans to local job fairs. In Louisville, Kentucky, the Transit Authority of River City takes small groups of jobseekers to job fairs via its Job Hunter bus. The bus, scheduled through the Department of Employment Services and local community groups, picks up jobseekers at designated locations, transports them to employment fairs, and returns them to their original pick-up location.
- Encouraging employers to sponsor a veteran employee survey, implemented through the local transportation management organization or their own human resources department, to learn about employee commuting patterns and needs and then sharing that information with local providers. Because of their familiarity with transit services, ridesharing, and other options, transportation providers are a valuable partner in responding to issues emerging from the survey.
- Having employers distribute names of transportation providers that support employees with disabilities along with information about how those employees can connect to those services.
- Encouraging transit providers to keep local businesses informed of transit route changes or service disruptions so they can share that information with employees who may be impacted by the changes.

For more information

Did you know? Across the nation, transportation providers and organizations serving veterans are working together to improve access to transportation for veterans and their families. To learn more about these state and local Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiatives and get involved, visit www.fta.dot.gov/veterans.

Read more about Joblinks' resources to support local partnerships in helping veterans, active duty service members, and their families access employment and other destinations through transit and ridesharing strategies.

Share your stories with us: The perspective of veterans and active duty service members is especially welcome. Visit <http://bit.ly/JoblinksVeterans>.

The Joblinks Employment Transportation Center connects communities with transportation-to-work solutions. Visit us at www.solutionstogether.org.

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Strategies

Take Steps to Support Ridesharing for Veteran Employees

Ridesharing by car or van is another cost-effective, convenient choice for veteran employees that can yield benefits for employers by ensuring employees have a reliable, consistent way to get to work. Businesses can help promote ridesharing through the following means:

- Encouraging veteran and non-veteran employee participation in new or existing shared ride options such as carpools and vanpools
- Implementing the commuter tax benefit for all employees. This federal tax incentive, which can offset some transportation costs, applies to employees, including veterans, who commute to work via vanpool or public transit.¹ Employers can implement the program with assistance from their tax professional or third-party benefit administrator.
- Designating a staff member to act as the contact person for employees on commuting issues, often known as an employee transportation coordinator or workplace ambassador. This individual can talk with veterans and other company employees to educate them about existing options, help identify carpool or vanpool mates based on location, and coordinate with local transportation providers to implement responsive solutions.
- Distributing information about guaranteed ride home programs² offered by local transit agencies to veterans and other employees. Such programs encourage employees to use options other than their private vehicle (e.g., carpool, transit, cycling, walking) to get to work by guaranteeing them an emergency ride home any time unforeseen circumstances arise.
- Becoming part of the local transportation planning process. By informing transportation providers and planners of current and forecasted business needs (e.g., large influx of employees, changes in shift times), businesses can help the transportation community plan future services accordingly.

¹ For additional information about the commuter tax benefit, see "Employee Commuter Benefits: A Boost to Your Company's Bottom Line," <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anviewer.asp?a=1451&z=5>.

² For additional information about Guaranteed Ride Home Programs, see "Guaranteed Ride Home Programs: Good Employees, Employers and the Environment." <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anviewer.asp?a=1463&z=5>.