



## Commuting during COVID-19

COVID-19 has radically changed commuting habits, with increases in remote work adoption and changes to road infrastructure and transit service to allow for physical distancing. Move Minneapolis challenges businesses to take this opportunity to implement permanent sustainable commute solutions. From front-line retail employees to high-rise office workers, everyone deserves a sustainable and COVID-19 safe commute option.

Now is a great time for businesses to do their part by rethinking and reimagining their commuter benefits. Here are some tips to commute the Move Minneapolis way.

### Nothing better than biking

It's summer! **Promote biking** as a COVID-19 safe and healthy commute option. You might be surprised at how quickly your workforce begins covering 5 or more miles to work on bikes if you support it. Take the following steps:

- Offer ample secure bike parking in a convenient location.
- Offer hand sanitizer and a hand-washing station in bike facilities and clean these facilities often.
- Keep showers and locker rooms open for freshening up – it's hot outside. Install bulk shampoo, conditioner, and body wash dispensers in showers and fill them with high-quality products.
- Give all employees, including the security guard and janitor, at least a \$100 monetary incentive to dust off and tune up the bikes in their basements or garages.
- Even out any cash benefits you offer drive-alone commuters by offering as much or more to cyclists (and walkers or transit users.) After all, they're saving you money on health insurance and absenteeism.
- Create a little friendly competition by providing fun prizes for bike commuters, like bike lights or small gift cards.
- Take your bike benefits to the next level by purchasing or leasing a fleet of electric-assist bikes. Encourage your employees to check them out for a sweat-free, long-distance green commuting solution.

### Boost your telework practices

When COVID-19 hit Minnesota in March, every non-essential business that could pivoted toward full-time remote work. Telework has been shown to increase productivity and work satisfaction. If you're thinking about a return to the office, consider how much of what we view as normal office culture has changed in the last three months. Take this time to reassess. This means that you will:

- Brush up your telework policy.
- Make sure your employees have the right equipment, from technology to chairs and desks. It wouldn't be good to have a workers' comp claim from an employee who only works from their couch!
- Double down on telework by creating an executive-level telework director position.

- Certify your managers and HR team in telework best practices with Best Workplaces for Commuters: <https://www.bestworkplaces.org/training/earn-your-telework-certificate/>

### Vanpool – now's the time to act!

As your company rethinks its mobility benefits, don't forget to think about the little-known Metro Vanpool program, operated by Commute with Enterprise. At an average of \$110 per month per rider, it's less expensive than a monthly parking contract. And at a minimum of 5 people per vanpool, this option can be a great COVID-19 commute solution to keep group interactions small. As an employer you can help:

- Commit to forming one or more vanpools (we can help you!)
- Organize employees who live near each other.
- Offer a vanpool subsidy (similar to a subsidy for transit or parking). Move Minneapolis suggests a full subsidy to all essential workers, such as grocery store clerks and nurses.
- Provide a parking space in a premiere location and at an unbeatable price (free!).

### It's easy and inexpensive to carpool

This has been the biggest recession since the Great Depression. Parking is a big expense for both employees and employers. Now is a great time to rethink parking subsidies and put these funds towards sustainable commute modes (see above on biking and vanpooling). According to AAA, cars cost owners almost \$10,000 annually and that's *before* parking costs are included! Carpooling is an easily attainable commute solution that has immediate environmental benefits and can help employees be car-lite or car-free. Savvy employers will:

- Discontinue drive-alone parking contract subsidies.
- Promote carpool parking at the ABC Ramps (only \$20/month!) or in Minneapolis municipal ramps (\$99/month).
- Up your carpool game by rewarding carpoolers with \$50 gas cards.

### Transit – essential workers, for now

[More information](#) is coming out to show the risk of transmission on transit has not been established. Nevertheless Metro Transit has implemented special precautions including (rear door entry, distancing and requiring masks). However, at this time, buses and trains are reserved for essential workers. If you're a downtown office worker, stay tuned on when you can return to your awesome transit commute. (But keep teleworking!) Do your part with these actions:

- Don't spread unsubstantiated rumors about viral transmission on transit or anywhere else. Look for peer-reviewed studies before making assumptions.
- Keep track of the latest recommendations by bookmarking this webpage: <https://www.metrotransit.org/health>.
- Show a little transit love by recording a message of appreciation, posting it on Twitter or Instagram, and tagging [@MetroTransitMN](#) and [@MoveMpls](#).