



Berkeley Climate Action Plan: Tracking our Progress
Sustainable Transportation and Land Use – Commuter Benefits



Goal: Make public transit more frequent, reliable, integrated and accessible

Performance metrics: Annual average commuter benefit participation

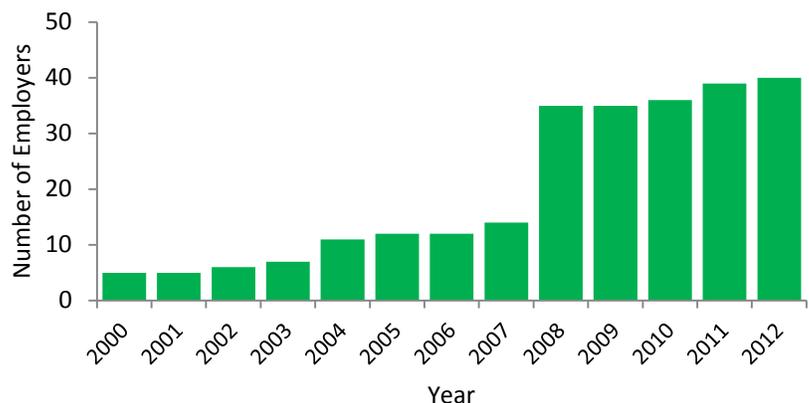
Target: Increase commuter benefit program participation community-wide, including among City of Berkeley employees. Commuter benefit programs provide an incentive for employees to use transit and/or a bicycle for their work commute.

Status: The City of Berkeley Transportation Division, Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (CMA), and 511.org provide several programs designed to help Berkeley residents, students and employees reduce their dependence on single-occupant automobile commuting.

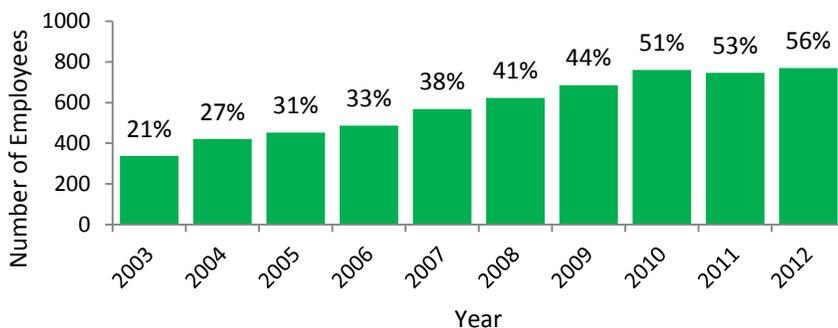
Effective in 2009, the City of Berkeley's [Tax Relief Action to Cut Commuter Carbon](#) (TRACCC) requires employers with ten or more employees to provide a commute program to encourage employees to use public transit, vanpools or bicycles. TRACCC gives employers several options - businesses can offer their employees commuter tax benefits as a payroll deduction, provide a subsidized benefit, or offer a combination of the two. A commute program can reduce business and employee taxes by tapping into federal tax breaks on transit, vanpooling, and bicycle commute expenses. Employers can save up to 9% on payroll taxes, and employees up to 40% on their commute costs.

Another commuter benefit program available to the Berkeley community is the [Guaranteed Ride Home Program](#), provided by the Alameda County CMA. The program guarantees employees a ride home from work when unexpected circumstances arise. Employees can feel comfortable taking public transit, walking, or cycling to work knowing that they will have a free ride home in case of illness, family crisis, unscheduled overtime, or a missed rideshare trip. The program is available to all Alameda County employers and employees free of charge. As of December 2012, there are 40 Berkeley-based organizations actively enrolled in the program.

Guaranteed Ride Home Enrollment - Berkeley Employers



**Commuter Benefit Participation
COB Employees - Number and Percent**



The City of Berkeley also provides commuter benefits to all of its full-time employees. The City partners with AC Transit to offer employees a free **EasyPass** which provides unlimited rides on any AC Transit service. A 2006 report prepared by the City's Transportation Division states that 59% of EasyPass users said they would reduce or stop riding the bus without the EasyPass. Additionally, 20% of City employees that previously drove alone to work now report using AC Transit/public transport as a result of the EasyPass benefit.

In addition to the EasyPass, the City provides full-time employees with **Commuter Checks**. Commuter Checks are vouchers that can be redeemed for transit passes; vanpool costs; or bicycle equipment, repairs, or storage costs associated with the work commute. The City provides a \$20 monthly subsidy for Commuter Checks. Employees can also purchase additional Commuter Checks on a pre-tax basis through an automatic payroll deduction. As of December 2012, 56% of City of Berkeley (COB) full-time employees are enrolled in the Commuter Check benefits program.

Another resource available to Berkeley residents, students and employees is ridesharing assistance provided by 511.org. Ridesharing reduces transportation-related GHG emissions by reducing single-occupancy commuting.

Why are these metrics important? Transportation accounts for over 50% of Berkeley's community-wide GHG emissions. In order for the community to achieve its overall GHG reduction target of 33% below 2000 levels by 2020, transportation related GHG emissions must decrease by approximately 30% by the year 2020. Per the Climate Action Plan, improved access to public transit is a critical component of achieving this goal. The City's experience with Commuter Checks and other transit benefits demonstrates that providing incentives for public transit increases public transit use.

Resources and assistance for community members: Visit the City's [Transportation Division website](#) to learn more about TRACC, Guaranteed Ride Home, 511.org and other related programs.

Data sources and technical notes: Data on the [Guaranteed Ride Home](#) program was provided by program staff. [Edenred](#) and City of Berkeley staff provided data on participation in the City's Commuter Check benefit.

Tracking our progress: Review Climate Action Plan performance metrics at www.cityofberkeley.info/climate