

Inside Lane

IN THIS EDITION

- [Give us your feedback](#)
- [Qualified transportation fringe benefits unchanged in 2010](#)
- [We'll help you promote transportation options](#)
- [Employer Spotlight](#)

NEWS LINKS

- [Express buses return to Marquette, 2nd avenues](#)
- [New Roseville Park & Ride opens](#)

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- [Safe bus stops after dark](#)
- [Smart riding tips for winter weather](#)
- [Your commuter transportation solution partners](#)

FORWARD

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Give us your feedback

It's a new year, and we'd like to hear from you! Let us know what you think about *Inside Lane* and how we can help you start or expand commuting programs at your worksite. Go to the survey [now](#).

Qualified transportation fringe benefits unchanged in 2010

Tax-free limits for employees participating in employer-sponsored commuter benefits programs have not changed for 2010, according to the [IRS](#).

The limit for pre-tax income remains at \$230 per month in transit passes and vanpooling benefits and \$230 per month in employee parking benefits.

Under the tax code, employers may continue to reimburse bike commuters up to \$20 per month tax free for expenses related to their commute by bike.

The IRS has provided a one-year extension on [Revenue Ruling 2006-57](#) which is related to the use of smart cards or debit cards to provide qualified fringe benefits (see [Notice 2009-95](#)).

Federal commuter tax benefits are available through Section 132 (f) of the federal tax code. Contact your corporate counsel or tax adviser for more details.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

We'll help you promote transportation options

Do you need help promoting your commuter benefits program this year? Are your employees looking for more information about commuting options?

We're here to help! We can work with you to set up a commuter fair, where our representatives can discuss transportation options with your employees and answer questions. Promotional items and brochures make fairs a popular option.

Another possibility is to offer commuter information during open enrollment benefit fairs, wellness fairs or environmental events at your company. We can staff a table to help promote taking transit, van- or carpooling, biking, walking or telecommuting.

Here are some other tips to help engage your employees:

- Use posters and other promotional materials to announce your events or encourage commuting options
- Include profiles in your company's newsletter or intranet site to highlight employees who have made big changes in the way they get to work
- Provide displays such as ZIP code maps to show employees how many co-workers live near them who are interested in car- or vanpooling
- Arrange a ZIP code party, where employees who live near each other can meet before they start sharing the ride
- Offer fun prizes to employees who commit to driving alone less often

Need more ideas? Contact your [employer representative](#) today!

[BACK TO TOP](#)



Employees from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis commuted by bicycle to a local restaurant as part of the organization's TravelBetter program.

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

What began as an informal challenge between a small group of Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) employees who wanted to improve their health by bicycling to work in the summer has turned into an annual communal activity at the Minneapolis-based nonprofit.

The program, called TravelBetter, started eight years ago and has grown to include tenants in nearby offices. Through TravelBetter, IATP employees are encouraged to pledge to try an alternative commuting option – and not only on bicycle – a certain number of days each summer.

Participants are divided into teams and track their progress by placing stickers on a chart. Social events and individual and team awards promote participation and friendly competition.

Other commuter benefits IATP provides its employees include covering the full cost of transit passes. The organization also expanded the amount of bicycle parking and installed shower facilities in its building.

IATP, a research and advocacy organization that promotes fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems, was recognized for its TravelBetter campaign in November by winning a Commuter Choice Award for exceptional company involvement.

“At IATP, a core part of our mission is to promote sustainable systems and choices,” said Candace Falk, human resources director and coordinator of IATP’s TravelBetter program. “It’s important to us that our employees are able and encouraged to live out this ethic in their daily lives, and that our actions and choices as an organization follow this commitment to sustainability.”

[BACK TO TOP](#)
