



Clean Commute Chronicle

February 2009

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Bicycle Commuter Benefit

There is now a bicycle tax benefit offering up to \$20 per month to cyclists, beginning this year. Employers may reimburse employees, tax free, for "reasonable" expenses related to their bike commute, including equipment purchases, bike purchases, repairs, and storage if the bicycle is used as a "substantial part" of the commuter's trip to work for the month. If you already receive another commuter tax-free fringe benefit (like a Commuter Check or EcoPass), you can not receive this subsidy. As a result, multi-modal commuters unfortunately do not qualify. Employers must set up their own system to administer, however here are some guidelines from Accor Services (the company helping to administer the bicycle commuter checks) that will hopefully clear up any confusion that has been expressed by the bicycle community.

1. Accor will have a product specifically for bicyclists called the Commuter Check for Bicycling voucher. In the future there may also be a debit card, but for the time-being their sole offering will be a voucher.
2. The voucher will be available for customers nationwide beginning in March 2009, exclusively through Accor's online ordering platform at www.commutercheck.com.
3. The maximum value will be \$20; vouchers will be valid for 13 months and will have the same security features as the current transit vouchers.
4. These vouchers will be able to be used for the purchase of bicycles, bicycle accessories, maintenance, and storage. Bicycle accessories include pumps, locks, racks, lights, and safety gear but does not include clothing and food products such as energy bars.
5. Accor has an official position on the interpretation of the benefit regarding the use of pre-tax dollars for this program. They are working with their partners through legislation and/or the IRS for definitive guidance on this issue.

If you have any additional questions about the benefit please contact Stuart Baker at (510) 649-1061 of Accor Services and he should be able to help you further.



Rider Alerts!

Rider Alerts let you know about temporary bus detours due to road construction, parades, etc., as well as upcoming service changes. Visit CATA's website for a complete list of all bus detours and changes.

If you are not always near a computer and would like to receive up-to the-minute announcements

regarding only the CATA routes that you regularly ride, you may create a user account and register to receive rider alerts via email or text. Simply click on the "My Account" button on the CATA homepage to create your own log-in. Once you register, you will receive these timely alerts via your cell phone or Blackberry.

If you have any questions, feel free to visit www.cata.org or call 394-1000 for more information.

Featured Commuter of the Month



After 30 years of participating in a carpool or vanpool, traveling daily from Kalamazoo to Lansing, this month's featured commuter has been able to save a significant amount of money, as well as wear and tear on his vehicle. John is an experienced Clean Commuter who knows what it takes to keep a ride sharing situation successful.

"I think our success stems from the fact that we don't make side trips, are very reliable, and predictable. We have had pretty uneventful carpool experiences, and when you think about it, that is what you want in a carpool" states John. However, this group had at least one eventful experience one evening.

"On the way home we hit a deer near the Turkeyville exit. Not wanting to waste the meat, the driver gutted the deer and placed it on a plastic sheet in the trunk. We stopped by the State Police post to report the incident and get it tagged. When the trooper filling out the paperwork went to exit his post and examine the deer, it was raining. He eyed the weather in disgust, turned around, and said "I guess when you see one dead deer, you have seen them all." He handed us the tag and went back inside" tells John.

John's Kalamazoo carpool currently consists of 4 people, traveling Monday thru Friday, but they have had up to 8 people carpooling together, requiring the use of 2 cars. The group rotates drivers and vehicles on a daily basis, in order to split up the long commute. But the daily carpool experience, although long, is worth it to everyone in the carpool since they all love living in the Kalamazoo area.

In addition, most of the Kalamazoo poolers participate in the Clean Commute Program's ERH service. Their motivation is simple. They know that unexpected events in life can come up, and CATA's ERH service helps make those situations a little less stressful.



Designing Lansing's Walking & Bicycling Network

If you are interested in learning more about helping to make Lansing more walkable and bikeable, please make an effort to attend a *Walk and Bike Lansing!* Creating a walking and cycling network that serves all Lansing residents and neighborhoods is a major objective of *Walk and Bike Lansing!*

This organization was formed as a campaign to engage and mobilize Lansing residents, businesses, and others to join together to help make Lansing a walk and bike-friendly city.



Contact Us

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Other Alternative Transportation Providers

MichiVan: 800-VAN-RIDE

EATRAN: 517-543-3040

Clinton Transit: 800-800-5938

TCBA: www.biketcba.org

Designing Lansing's Walking & Bicycling Network *(continued)*

This group is holding a series of sessions to get your ideas and input on the planning process.

Attend one of these March 2009 sessions, and help design Lansing's sidewalk, trail, bike lane, crosswalk, and other non-motorized improvements. A light meal and childcare services will be provided during all of these sessions.

Tues. March 3: 6-8 p.m., North Precinct Gym, 740 May St.

Wed. March 4: 6-8 p.m., Gier Center Gym, 2400 Hall St.

Thurs. March 5: 6-8 p.m., Hill Center Maples Room, 5815 Wise Rd.

Sat. March 7: 1-3 p.m., Grace United Methodist, 1900 Boston Blvd.

To RSVP or to receive more information, please call (517) 214-5684 or email jessica@walkbikelansing.com. You may also visit www.walkbikelansing.com.

Carpools Looking for More Riders



- Ann Arbor-Lansing
- Ann Arbor-East Lansing/MSU
- Brighton-MSU
- Charlotte-Lansing
- Corunna/Bancroft-Lansing
- Durand/Corunna-Lansing
- Durand/Perry-MSU
- Jackson-Lansing
- Eaton Rapids-Lansing
- Eaton Rapids-East Lansing/MSU
- Novi-Lansing
- Owosso-East Lansing/MSU
- Owosso-Lansing
- Portland/Eagle-West Lansing
- Portland/Ionia/Eagle-MSU
- Saginaw/Flint-East Lansing/MSU
- Spring Arbor/Jackson-Lansing

Vanpools Looking for More Riders

- Ann Arbor-Lansing
- Brighton-Lansing
- Highland/Novi/Brighton-Lansing
- Howell-Lansing
- Ionia/Saranac-Lansing
- Jackson-Lansing
- Lennon/Flint-Lansing
- Milford/Southfield-Lansing
- Southfield-Lansing

Contact Clean Commute Options by calling (517) 393-7433 or email cleancommute@cata.org for more information on how to join these carpools.