

Commute Trip Reduction: Guidance for Washington state agencies

What is Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)?

CTR is the term used for programs designed to reduce the drive-alone rates of people traveling to and from work.

Commute Trip Reduction began in 1991, when it was added to the Washington Clean Air Act. The law directs local jurisdictions to work with major employers to reduce the impacts of employee commuting. The goals of the program are to improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and reduce gas usage. From the beginning, the CTR law called for state government (including higher education) to [take a leadership role](#) in the program.

The intent of the CTR program is to improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and reduce the consumption of petroleum fuels.

Who must have a CTR Program?

All state government worksites in Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater are required to participate in CTR. The [Joint Comprehensive Commute Trip Reduction Plan](#) suggests that these agencies include all of their statewide worksites and employees in their CTR plans.

Outside of Thurston County, both public and private employers are required to create a commute trip reduction plan for worksites with more than 100 employees, if the worksite is located in an [affected urban growth area](#).

What impact does CTR have on Human Resources?

CTR programs may offer information, promotional prizes, incentives, subsidies, preferential parking and other rewards to state employees for using commute alternatives to driving alone. If offered, these may act as a benefit that saves employees money on expenses related to commuting — bus fares, vanpool vouchers, bike maintenance and others. In addition, they:

- Support employee and agency efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Offer a unique benefit to prospective employees. In Thurston County, over 88% of all CTR compliant worksites are state agencies, making the state an employer of choice on this issue.
- Encourage employee wellness through walking and biking commute alternatives.

What does the governor want us to standardize?

Per the [governor's directive 11-18](#), the Office of the State HR Director was directed to create guidance to bring consistency and accountability to a number of areas connected with pay, including commute trip reduction. Some guidance is already [available from the Washington State Department of Transportation \(WSDOT\)](#) (also see table below). We offer the following additional guidance.

The Office of the State HR Director recommends the following practices for administrating CTR plans within state agencies:

1. Include an introduction to your agency's CTR program in the new employee orientation process, including orientation for employees transferring from another agency. This may include a description of CTR rewards and incentives your agency offers, how employees can qualify, and CTR resources available at their worksite.
2. Use [RideshareOnline](#) to track all employee CTR calendars at all worksites. If you require a signed calendar, have employees print and sign their Rideshare calendars.
3. All employees within your agency should be on the *same reimbursement schedule* for incentives and benefits—with the ultimate goal of achieving the same schedule for all state employees. Most agencies use a quarterly schedule.
4. Each CTR compliant worksite must have a designated [Employee Transportation Coordinator](#) to promote and track the program on behalf of management, and to represent the employer to the local jurisdiction. This helps ensure accurate reporting and administration, provides employees with an easy resource for answering their commute questions and shows commitment to an effective CTR policy.

What does a good CTR Program look like?

The best programs:

- Have the support of management throughout the agency.
- Offer equitable benefits to all employees in all locations.
- Pool resources with other nearby employers to develop coordinated parking policies and promote shared CTR events and amenities.
- Designate reserved spaces for carpools and vanpools.
- Start a telework program, or allow flexible work hours.
- Have transportation coordinators participate in CTR networking sessions and other training opportunities.

Conflicting CTR policies at different worksites may generate miscommunication and pose administrative problems. Ideally, all worksites for an agency should administer the CTR program the same way. CTR programs that are aligned and coordinated can better share resources – both with other worksites throughout the state and with co-located agencies. In all cases, make sure that your CTR program supports the business needs of your agency and contact your labor partners if you decide to make any changes.



Even where there are different commute amenities, it is still important to try and provide the same basic CTR benefits.

For example, if one worksite is not located near a bus route, the agency might assume that bus pass subsidies aren't important for employees at that worksite. However, as long as employees can take a bus more than 50 percent of their total commute distance, bus pass subsidies can still be an important CTR offering — particularly if they are available at most other agency worksites.

Finally, low or no-cost options for supporting CTR include [telework](#) and [flexible work hours](#). We would encourage state agencies to consider these programs if they are compatible with your business needs. There are successful models, such as WSDOT's telework program, that can offer a starting point. Not only do these help reduce commute trips during peak hours, but they also provide advantages to employees and the agency. Telework can improve employee productivity, morale, and job satisfaction and can decrease the number of leave hours that employees take, as well as [many other benefits](#). Several employees on the statewide exit survey cited a lack of access to telework and flexible work options as a motivating factor in their decision to leave their current agency. Telework and flexible work hours can become part of your agency's efforts to recruit and retain our most valuable resource — state workers.

For more information about CTR, check out [WSDOT's CTR page](#), the state agency [CTR website](#) and the [Thurston Regional Planning Council's commute page](#), along with the information below. Be sure to review your applicable collective bargaining agreements and contact your labor partners if you are considering making any changes to your existing program.

How can we provide an active and effective CTR program?

There are a variety of resources for developing or improving an agency CTR program:

Action and Benefit(s)	Resource Links
<p>Standardize subsidy and incentive administration between worksites</p> <p><i>Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved sense of fairness for employees Better coordination of CTR resources 	<p>Support and assistance for state agencies</p> <p>Guidelines from WSDOT</p> <p>ETC responsibilities</p> <p>ETC commute resource cheat sheet (PDF)</p>
<p>Begin offering subsidies at a location</p> <p><i>Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve worksite alignment with employee values Offer a unique benefit for prospective employees Meet your CTR goals 	<p>Subsidy help and subsidy tracking guidelines (PDF)</p> <p>Goals and requirements of the CTR program</p> <p>Washington State Department of Transportation CTR page</p>
<p>Take advantage of available services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several services for state agencies are free! Find out what programs are available in your area Help employees find their best commute choice 	<p>SAFE ride program</p> <p>STAR pass program</p> <p>Wheel Options commute contest</p> <p>Tools for Worksites (Thurston Regional Planning Council)</p> <p>ETC commute resource cheat sheet (PDF)</p> <p>Find alternate ways to commute in Thurston County</p> <p>Public Transportation Directory (PDF)</p>
<p>Track commute trip calendars</p> <p><i>Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardize tracking statewide Coordinate carpools and 	<p>Rideshare Online</p>

<p>vanpools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let employees see their impact on emission reduction 	
<p>Consider a parking program (for agencies located off the campus)</p> <p><i>Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages employees to take advantage of alternate commute modes • Demonstrates agency commitment to CTR • Pays for CTR subsidies / incentives / prize drawings • Accounts for opportunity cost of parking 	<p>The importance of parking management</p> <p>Instituting a parking program</p> <p>Begin estimating the true costs of your employee parking</p>
<p>Flexible hours / compressed workweek</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve productivity and morale 	<p>Flexible work guidelines (PDF)</p> <p>Compressed workweek benefits (Thurston Regional Planning Council)</p>
<p>Telework</p>	<p>Telework Guidelines</p> <p>Benefits of telework</p>
<p>Joint Comprehensive Commute Trip Reduction Plan (for reference)</p>	<p>http://ctr.wa.gov/docs/JointCompCTRPlan.pdf</p>
<p>Labor</p> <p>Contact your labor partners for changes affecting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidies and incentives • Parking programs • Flexible work hours & telework • All other mandatory bargaining topics 	<p>http://www.ofm.wa.gov/labor/contact.asp - Labor Relations Office</p>