



EConnections - A Greener Way To *Comm*unicate

Failure to Extend Transit Commuter Benefits Will Favor Drivers



Employees who ride public transportation will face increased commuting costs if Congress does not act to extend the transit commuter benefit by the end of the year, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). This will in effect create a disparity in the federal tax code in favor of the car driver.

In addition, this increased commuting cost will hit the very workers who may need it the most, according the association. APTA says that 70% of those who rely on public transit have household incomes from \$15,000 to \$99,000 a year, according to its latest demographic survey of riders.

Legislation to temporarily establish parity between parking and transit/vanpool benefits at \$230 per month per commuter was extended under the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act through 2011. However, the transit/vanpool portion of the benefit will revert to \$125 per month when the provision expires at the end of the year while the parking benefit increases to \$240.

“Should Congress allow the transit commuter tax benefit to decrease, it will result in a clear bias in the federal tax code against transit use,” said GMTMA Executive Director Cheryl Kastrenakes. “Given the congestion on our roads and the state of the economy it is critical that disincentives to transit are not created.”

Advocates are calling on Congress to act now to permanently extend the maximum transit commuter tax benefit to the level equal to the parking tax benefit.

“If the transit commuter benefit is allowed to expire, both transit riders and the employers that offer the benefit will see an increase in their payroll taxes,” said Kastrenakes.

Contact your [representative](#) and tell them to support the commuter transit benefit.

Care To Provide A Ride?

Tis the season to celebrate our good fortune and share the holiday spirit with others. Why not help a senior in our community by giving the gift of mobility? Greater Mercer TMA's RideProvide transportation service for seniors and visually impaired adults is one way to help others. It's easy to do, simply visit the RideProvide website at www.Rideprovide.org ([click here](#)) and follow the directions for donations. By donating to RideProvide, you'll not only help a senior in need, but you'll also be eligible for a tax deduction!



Greater Mercer TMA Membership Renewal

Why wait for the ball to drop! Renew your Greater Mercer TMA membership today by

confirming that you care about the region's mobility issues by [clicking here](#). Again this year, we will let you choose the area of TMA activities you wish to support. If you don't wish to pledge your support online at this time by clicking the link above, watch for your membership information in the mail.



Avoid The Holiday Rush On The Roads

This holiday season don't join the masses on the road – ride transit instead to your holiday celebrations, entertainment and shopping. There are many transit options available in our area, below are some resources and services to check out:

To Plan Your Trip:

[Hopstop](#) - find connections within and between major U.S. cities. Hopstop offers eco travel routing for Washington, D.C., New York, New York Metro North, Long Island, New Jersey, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Using a combination of local metro, buses, Amtrak, and walking, you can plan a route that requires no automobile usage whatsoever this holiday season.

[Google Transit](#), provides route-planning options for finding transit links to, through and from our entire state as well as the region and other U.S. cities.

Transit Agencies – all of the area public transportation service providers have online trip planning tools on their websites. Check them out – before you go out.

Public Transportation Service Providers

[NJ TRANSIT](#) - offers service on a network of trains, light rail, and buses that travel all over the state, New York City and Philadelphia. NJ TRANSIT has added extra service for the holidays, including an increased number of New York-bound trains on select lines and buses to New Jersey malls through December 23.

[SEPTA](#) – provides regional rail and bus service throughout the greater Philadelphia area, with service to the Philadelphia Regional Airport and connections with NJ TRANSIT services. Some additional bus trips have been added to accommodate extended Mall hours.

[Path](#) – Visiting lower Manhattan over the holidays or maybe Jersey City is your destination to visit Liberty Science Center? Ride NJ TRANSIT's NEC line and connect to a Path train from Newark Penn station.

[MTA](#) – If you're traveling to New York City or beyond, take advantage of the multi-modal service the MTA provides with its subway, buses and regional rail service to get you where you want to go.

More Transportation Options and Excursions

Have a big group to transport? Or, maybe you'd prefer to let someone else do the driving on a special night out. Consider chartering a bus from [Starr Tours](#) or [A1 Limousine](#), or a limousine from the latter. Both service providers also offer package tours/trips to area attractions, shows and sporting venues.

Enjoy friends and family this holiday season without the hassles and dangers of traffic, road rage, and accidents – ride transit. If you need help planning your transit trip, call Greater Mercer TMA at 609-452-1491 or send us an [email](#).

Online Polls

Last month, we asked:

Do you think the Commuter Benefit is important to encourage use of transportation options?

- 50% - Yes, very important
- 43% - Yes, it could make a difference
- 0% - I'm not sure
- 7% - No, I don't think it makes a difference

This Month's Poll Question

Will you be riding transit services more during the holidays?

[Vote Here](#)

Happy Holidays From Greater Mercer TMA



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