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## ***Mercer & Ocean In Motion***

**Getting You from Here to There**

### **It's Not Too Late to Participate in Walk to School Month!**



October 9 is International Walk to School Day and the whole month of October is International Walk to School month, and Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association (GMTMA) is inviting school administrators, educators, students, and families to celebrate this important month with us to help raise awareness of the need to get kids more active,

to improve air quality and public health, and to make it safer for kids to walk to school.

GMTMA offers support for schools in planning events that highlight:

- physical activity among children
- pedestrian and bicycling safety
- traffic and carbon emission reduction
- environmental sustainability

The various activities are intended to advocate and educate, as well as communicate the significance of these issues within the schools and the broader community.

Walk to School activities may include arranging the following:

- a walking theme for a walk: crazy hair day; healthy lunch day; costume day, etc.
- local “celebrity” (mayor, police officer, etc.) walking with the students
- presentations on bicycle and pedestrian safety
- competition with awards for the classes with the most walkers
- walking school bus from nearby neighborhoods
- working walking & bicycling themes into physical education and health classes to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles

Greater Mercer TMA can help schools throughout Mercer and Ocean counties get a program off the ground and get programs registered at [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org). Contact GMTMA today at 609-452-1491 or find us at [www.gmtma.org](http://www.gmtma.org).

## Helping Kids Learn to Bike



On Saturday September 21, GMTMA, in partnership with the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids’ Trenton branch, held a bike rodeo in Trenton. Bike rodeos are clinics designed to help teach kids the importance of riding a bicycle safely and what skills and precautions they need to develop to be safe on their bicycles. We had almost 40 kids participate in the rodeo, each of whom got a bike helmet, learned how to wear helmets properly, and were

taught some basic cycling and road safety skills. We had a great day, in no small part thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers from the Trenton Cycling Revolution, the West Windsor Bicycle-Pedestrian Alliance, the Princeton Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Trenton Bike Exchange, New Jersey DOT, the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion, and graduate students from the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers. We look forward to many more bike rodeos in Trenton and throughout Mercer and Ocean Counties!

## As the Days Get Shorter, Be Safe and Be Seen!

Now that it’s October, the days are getting shorter, and the mornings and evenings are getting darker. And with Daylight Savings Time ending on November 3, it’s going to get a lot darker a lot earlier in the evenings soon. And this means it’s time to be extra careful when you’re on the road – whether you’re driving, walking, or bicycling.

- If you’re driving, be on heightened alert for pedestrians and bicyclists – they’re much harder to see in the dark.
- If you walk or bike, be sure to wear light colored-clothing, which is easier to see in the

dark. Better yet, wear reflective gear or even a light. Lights are particularly important if you're on a bike (both on the front of your bike and the back of your bike).

- Keep your ears open. Wearing headphones means that you can't hear cars approaching. With visibility reduced in the dark, it's critical that you use your other senses to compensate.
- **Stick to paths if you can:** Opt for paths and sidewalks for safety sake.
- **Walk and bike in a group, if possible.** From a visibility and a personal safety standpoint, there is safety in numbers. Walk or bike with a buddy whenever you can.

Safety is a shared responsibility for everyone who uses the road, and we need to make sure we look out for each other!

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## Transit Parity Set to Expire on December 31

Right now, transit use and vanpooling are allowed the same commuter tax benefits as parking; \$245 per month in pre-tax income. But next year, transit and vanpool riders might go back to second-class status, getting just \$125 per month for their commuter tax benefit while parking would remain at \$245.

There are two bills – one in the House (H.R. 2288), and one in the Senate (S. 1116) – that aim to make sure that does not happen, next year, or ever. The House bill -- which was introduced in the House by Reps. Michael G. Grimm (R-N.Y), James P. McGovern (D-Mass.), Peter T. King (R-N.Y.), and Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) – would create permanent parity between the parking and transit/vanpool portions of the transit benefit by setting the monthly caps for both at \$220/month. The Senate bill, S. 1116, introduced by Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) would create parity at the current level (\$245/month).

Parity between the tax benefit for parking and transit riders first became law when the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed in 2009. Parity continued through 2010 and 2011, but Congress let it expire for all of 2012. The fiscal cliff deal early this year saw [a return to parity](#), but these bills aim to make the parity permanent so it does not have to be fought for every single year. The ability to use pre-tax dollars for sustainable transportation is a great way to make sustainable transportation options more useful and economical to the public.

If you are interested in making your voice heard on this issue, you could [write to your Congressperson](#) to let them know how you feel about transit parity.

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