



# MassCommute Newsletter

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## MassCommute and MassRIDES Working Together

MassCommute and MassRIDES (the state's rideshare agency) met and agreed to enhance our working relationship. The economies of scale engendered by this new level of collaboration are expected to provide both organizations with added resources for TMA members and commuters throughout Massachusetts.

Andrea Leary, MassCommute's Managing Director, and Kay Carson, MassRIDES' Project Manager, initiated the meeting with staff of both organizations getting to know one another and sharing ideas for improving transportation demand management in the state. Both organizations are excited about the partnership and MassCommute looks forward to collaborating with MassRIDES.

### WHO WE ARE

MassCommute is a coalition of Massachusetts Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) that leverage public and private funds to increase participation in ridesharing and other commuting alternatives to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality across the state.

MassCommute is dedicated to advancing the mission of TMAs and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) in Massachusetts and seeks to increase public awareness of key transportation issues while promoting a wide range of TDM measures throughout Massachusetts. Visit us at:

[www.MassCommute.com](http://www.MassCommute.com)

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### What's New with Massachusetts' TMAs

**A Better City TMA** (Boston Downtown and Back Bay) launched a Twitter Feed (<http://twitter.com/ABCTMA>) to broaden its reach to members and the general public. Using the feed to promote TMA programs and services and post news items and traffic advisories, ABC TMA is conducting a Commuter BINGO contest to increase the number of Twitter followers. In October, ABC TMA hosted a lunchtime walking series led by WalkBoston, for more than 50 people through the Boston Common, South End, and Rose Kennedy Greenway.

The **Charles River TMA** (Cambridge) welcomed its new President, Treasurer and Secretary this fall. Many thanks go out to the former volunteer Board Officers, especially former President David Fuller, who has served CRTMA since 2000.

The **Junction TMO's** (Andover/Wilmington) Bike-2-Work program saw another record setting year with the number of participating bicyclists growing to 36 in 2009, and the number of miles biked to work increasing to 20,334. By leaving their cars at home, JTMO bicyclists collectively achieved a new high in greenhouse gas reductions of 8.7 metric tons in 2009.

The **Merrimack Valley TMA** (Andover) assisted member Putnam Investments with the relocation of over 400 employees from Franklin, MA to Andover. This resulted in dozens of Putnam employees registering for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program and other incentives.

The **North Shore TMA**, which includes the cities of Salem, Danvers, Beverly, Peabody, and Lynn, has seen growing interest in its programs and services despite the tough economy, and anticipates that enhanced recruitment efforts will increase membership in this newly established TMA.

At **Seaport TMA** (South Boston Waterfront), its most recent advocacy efforts resulted in the successful completion of the Boston Harborwalk along Dorchester Avenue and the Fort Point Channel. As the lead advocate and primary liaison between the Massachusetts Highway Department, Boston Redevelopment Authority, general contractors and area abutters, Seaport TMA pushed for regular updates to ensure the construction schedule was adhered to; demanded improved safety around the construction site; and remained persistent that the project be completed before the winter months.

At **TranSComm** (South End and BU Medical Center), new bike racks were installed throughout the campus, and bike commuters who forget their bike locks can now borrow one from the TranSComm office at no fee. Earlier in the fall all employees who picked up their MBTA passes were invited to guess how many Hershey Kisses were in a festive glass pumpkin for a chance to win the jar of candy.

## Go Green \$ave Green Gets Big Results!

From July 1st through September 30th, MassCommute coordinated and hosted “**GO GREEN/\$AVE GREEN**,” our newest effort to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

TMA's across Massachusetts encouraged their members to try a variety of alternative commute modes for traveling to and from work. Participants registered on-line at [www.masscommute.com](http://www.masscommute.com) and were eligible to win a variety of prizes for logging their alternate commute each day.



**By the end of September, 948 commuters participated, and their combined efforts saved nearly 290,000 pounds of CO2 in just three months – that’s the equivalent of taking 25 cars off the road for an entire year!**

In order to encourage participation, prizes were raffled off among participants who logged their alternative commutes at least once during the promotion. The number of entries for the grand prize was equal to the number of times a participant logged their commute. Six commuters won their choice of a \$50 gift certificate and one lucky commuter won the grand prize: a trip for two to Newport, RI, including lodging, a \$100 gift card for dinner and a \$100 gift card for transportation costs.

### Vanpooling: A Benefit for Employers and Employees



In these tough economic times, employers are looking for ways to retain good employees and improve the bottom line. Over the years vanpooling has become a cost-effective benefit that not only helps improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion – but can save money for both you and your employees. Did you know that vanpooling ...?

- **Improves employee productivity and morale by:**
  - offering valuable tax savings
  - lowering commuting costs
  - alleviating average commuting times and stressful driving conditions
- **Expands your labor market and bolsters employee recruitment and retention by** making your worksite more accessible to potential employees who live far away
- **Reduces parking requirements** and the costs of maintaining or building parking facilities
- **Enhances your public image by** providing an employee benefit that is good for the community and the environment and helps you qualify for prestigious recognition as one of the ***Best Workplaces for Commuters***.

**But what about the bottom line?** Generally, any money that you pay to an employee is subject to tax. However, employees may now exclude from their gross income commuting costs incurred for vanpool charges (or transit passes) up to \$230 per month, and an additional \$230 for commute related parking expenses. These qualified pre-tax deductions enable employers to save on payroll taxes, since such taxes are paid on the reduced employee gross income. Employees also save, because they are using pre-tax dollars to pay for their commute. Additional incentives/subsidies are available through MassDOT’s Commuter Assistance Program, MassRIDES, and through your local TMA.

**The “bottom line” is that vanpooling can be a win-win for everyone!**

**For more information about vanpools in your area or to learn how to start a new vanpool, please contact the vanpool provider, VPSI, Inc. at 781-937-0071 or call your local TMA.**