

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

Description

Updated: 1/3/24

Below are the policies and procedures regarding the Employee Commuter Choice Program.

I. Goals

CSUF offers a Commuter Choice Program designed to reduce the number of single occupant vehicle (SOV) trips to the campus. A major part of this effort is aimed at faculty and staff (employees) and designed to help the campus comply with the [Southern California Air Quality Management District \(AQMD\)](#) Rule 2202. The Rule requires employers with 250 or more employees to provide commute options during peak commute hours of 6AM to 10AM which reduces mobile source emissions and to comply with the Federal Clean Air Act. Commute options include carpool, rail, transit, walk, bike and vanpool. A secondary goal of the Commuter Choice Program is to mitigate parking demand and traffic congestion on the main campus.

II. General Regulations

A. Participation Privilege

Participation in CSUF's Commuter Choice program is a privilege and not a right of employment. Transportation Services reserves the right to deny enrollment to anyone who does not meet qualification requirements and/or follow the policies and procedures set forth herein. Participants must comply with the regulations of the programs in which they participate and must practice good conduct in order to retain participation privileges. Failure to comply may result in program disqualification. Depending on the severity of the abuse, the case may also be referred to the appropriate Dean or Vice President.

B. Commute Options

Participants can only register for one Commute Option. The Commute Option is chosen at the time of registration. Commute options are: F/S Commuter Rewards (walk, bike or carpool), E-Pass (OCTA bus), other (non-OCTA) transit pass reimbursement, rail pass reimbursements, or vanpool reimbursement.

C. Other Restrictions

This policy and procedures document may not contain all Commuter Choice program restrictions. There may be other circumstances/situations that arise. Each circumstance/situation will be evaluated and the appropriate decision/action will be determined at that time.

D. Abuse of Incentives

Submitting false claims against the Commuter Choice Program is misuse of state funds and is illegal. Participants who submit false claims are subject to losing their program participation and/or incentive privileges, disciplinary action or criminal prosecution. Depending on the severity of the abuse, the case may also be referred to the appropriate Dean or Vice President.

E. Notification of Status Obligation

Employees are responsible for notifying Transportation Services of changes in employment status, address, and in the transportation mode for which they receive incentives. This includes, but is not limited to parking permit purchases. Only participants who do not own parking permits receive full monthly incentives. See [Participants without Parking Permits section III.C.](#)

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

F. Yearly Commuter Survey

As part of its compliance program, the University is required to submit an annual Employee Commute Reduction Plan to the [AQMD](#). This plan includes details of the campus' Commuter Choice programs and incentives and aggregate data collected from an annual employee commute survey. This survey tracks how employees travel to campus over a five-day (Monday through Friday) period. The survey yields an Average Vehicle Ridership number (AVR) and serves to illustrate the efficacy of CSUF's Commuter Choice programs.

Commuter Choice program participants who are chosen to complete an AQMD commuter survey must complete it true and correct to the best of their knowledge. Participants who do not complete the survey are subject to Commuter Choice program disqualification.

III. Financial Regulations

A. Incentive Payments

Participants can only receive monthly financial incentives from one commute option. The commute option is chosen at the time of registration. Commute options are: Commuter Rewards (walk and bike), E-Pass (OCTA bus), other (non-OCTA) transit pass reimbursement, rail pass reimbursements, or vanpool reimbursement.

B. Taxable Income

Per [Internal Revenue Code, Section 132 \(f\)](#) employers may subsidize the cost (\$120 per month maximum) of employees' commute to work by transit or vanpool only. Transit is defined as rail or bus. All financial incentives received from the Commuter Choice Program (Titan Tender or by check) are considered taxable reportable income and will be reported to the State Controller's Office on a monthly basis. With exception are transit and vanpool subsidies up to \$120 monthly. Tax deductions will be reflected on monthly payroll checks following the date incentives are disbursed.

C. Participants without CSUF Parking Permits

Participants who do not own parking permits are eligible to receive full monthly financial incentives (\$120 maximum).

D. Participants with CSUF Parking Permits

Participants who own a parking permit are eligible to receive 25% of monthly financial incentives (\$30 maximum).

IV. Eligibility

Permanent full-time or part-time state, ASC/ ASI employees are eligible to participate in the CSUF Commuter Choice Program. Employees must be part-time or more in an appointment that exceeds six months (7.5 teaching units per academic year for faculty, Unit 3). Teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and student assistants are not eligible. If an appointment cannot be verified using People Directory/CMS, an employee will be asked to provide employment verification by submitting a copy of their appointment letter/contract or a memo from their Human Resources Department.

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

V. Application Process and Registration

A. Registration

To register, employees must complete a Commuter Choice Registration online application. Applicants must provide home address, work location, employment status and other general information. Registrations received before the 15th of the month, upon program approval, may start claiming incentives that month (example: registration forms received January 1st -15th, may claim incentives in January. Registrations received January 15th - 30th, may claim incentives in February).

B. Evaluation

Eligibility will be determined using the criteria specified in [section IV.A](#). Transportation Services will evaluate and approve or deny the applicant. If an appointment cannot be verified using People Directory/CMS, an employee will be asked to provide employment verification by submitting a copy of their appointment letter/contract or a memo from their Human Resources department. If further information is required, or the applicant does not qualify for program enrollment, the applicant will be notified using the e-mail address they provided.

C. Enrollment Confirmation

Once the application has been approved, a confirmation email will be sent confirming program enrollment.

VI. Tracking and Monitoring

A. Maintaining Program Eligibility

Participants are to login through the portal to the Commuter Tracking System (CTS) to record their how they traveled to campus on monthly tracking forms. This applies to all commute options (Bike / Walk / Carpool Rewards and Rail / Transit / Vanpool Reimbursement programs). Participants must commute using their selected mode of transportation at least 70% of the workdays determined by their work schedule to receive rewards/reimbursements and qualify for the supplementary Commuter Choice Program incentives (GRT, Infrequent Need/Inclement Weather permits, etc.). Tracking forms must be submitted before the 5th calendar day of the following month.

B. Tracking Forms

Participants must record their daily participation through the portal on the CTS website. This applies to all commute options (Bike / Walk / Carpool Rewards and Rail / Transit / Vanpool Reimbursement programs). Tracking forms are open for online submission between the 15th of the current month to the 5th of the following month. Tracking forms must be received by the fifth calendar day of the following month. Late forms will not be accepted, no exceptions. Claims on tracking forms must be true and correct. Participants cannot claim rewards/reimbursements on the days Infrequent Need or Inclement Weather permits are issued (see [section VIII.A and B](#)). Program disqualification will result if a participant reports false information (see [Abuse of Incentives section II.D](#)).

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

C. Valid Days to Claim Incentives

Incentives/reimbursements will only be paid out for Monday through Friday scheduled work days. Incentives/reimbursements will not be paid for weekend trips or on days the campus is officially closed (this includes days when personal time must be used during the December holiday break). Participants must commute using their selected mode of transportation at least 70% of the workdays determined by their work schedule to receive incentives, reimbursements and to qualify for the supplementary Commuter Choice Program incentives (GRT, Infrequent Need/Inclement Weather permits, etc.).

D. Tracking Form Reminders

Transportation Services will make every effort to send monthly courtesy electronic mail messages reminding participants of tracking form due dates. **It is the participant's responsibility to send in tracking forms by deadline** (see [section VI.E](#)) **in the event courtesy electronic mail messages are not sent or not received by participant.**

E. Reimbursements/Commuter Rewards

All reimbursements and reward requests will be reviewed and approved by Parking & Transportation senior staff. Check requests will be submitted to Accounts Payable for processing. Participants should allow 6 weeks for processing. Commuter Rewards are reported to the State Controller's office as taxable income. See [Taxable Income section III.B.](#)

VII. Commute Options

A. Commuter Rewards Program

Participants who walk or bike to work, and do not own a parking permit may earn \$2 per day. Participants who walk or bike to work, and own a parking permit may earn 50 cents per day. Commuter Rewards are disbursed monthly in the form of a check or direct deposit. Sign up for direct deposit through the [Travel Direct Deposit Form](#).

1. Commuter Rewards Regulations

- Riding any type of gas powered bicycle does not qualify as "bike".
- Riding the bus and walking to campus does not qualify as a "walk".
- Participants can only receive monthly financial incentives from one commute option. See [Incentive Payments section III.A.](#)
- Tracking forms are required. See [Tracking Forms section VI.B.](#)
- Eligible Commuter Rewards participants may request Inclement Weather and Infrequent Need daily parking permits. See section [VIII.A and B.](#)
- Commuter rewards are reported to the State Controller's office as taxable income. See [Taxable Income section III.B.](#)
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

B. Carpool Parking Program

Carpool parking is available in Faculty/Staff 3-hour spaces all day with a semester or payroll deduction permit and a free supplemental carpool permit. Transportation Services will only issue one supplemental carpool permit to each carpool group. At a minimum, one participant from each carpool group must own a paid faculty/staff parking permit. Each employee in a carpool group that owns a maximum of one

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

CSUF parking permit will receive \$1 for every day they carpool to campus. Employees in a carpool group that own more than one CSUF parking permit will receive 50 cents for every day they carpool to campus.

- **Expiration and Renewal Process**

Carpool Permits will be issued on a semester basis. Carpool permit renewals are the responsibility of the participant. Renewal information will be sent to the participant prior to the expiration date. Participants are required to review their records and are responsible to submit any changes.

- **Review Process**

Carpool permit renewals are not automatic. All requests will be reviewed to ensure that the participant continues to meet program eligibility requirements.

- **Carpool Parking Probation**

Carpool participants who have not met program requirements, specifically failure to submit tracking forms, will not be issued a new carpool permit. Participants will be placed on “probation” for three months and must reestablish themselves in the program by submitting tracking forms during their probationary period. Renewal requests will be evaluated once the probationary period is over.

- **Carpool Parking Regulations**

- A minimum of two Faculty/Staff employees must be carpooling to campus together.
- Employees must live at least 2 miles away from campus, within a close proximity of each other or commute to campus along the same route (carpooling at least 50% of the commute). Picking up employees at a train station does not constitute a carpool.
- Two or more faculty/staff employees must be in the vehicle when parking as a carpool.
- Participants may not park all day in the 3-hour spaces on days they do not carpool.
- Carpool permits will not be issued if any individual in a carpool group owns a special parking permit.
- A valid virtual CSUF semester/annual parking permit and a supplemental carpool permit are required.
- Eligible participants may request Infrequent Need daily parking permits. See [section VIII.A.](#)
- **Tracking forms are required.** See [Tracking Forms section VI.B.](#)

- **Enforcement**

- Parking & Transportation staff will enforce 3-hour parking spaces to ensure all program regulations are being followed.
- Parking tickets will be issued to vehicles parked in 3-hour spaces and exceeding the posted time limit without a valid carpool permit. Participants will be responsible for parking tickets issued to expired carpool permits.
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

C. OCTA Employer Pass (E-Pass) Program

Currently employed faculty and staff may ride OCTA to and from work at Cal State Fullerton at a 100% subsidized rate with the E-Pass program. Employees swipe their pass through the fare box inside the bus, and the fare is paid by Parking & Transportation Services on all local routes.

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

1. E-Pass Distribution

Employees who do not own a semester/payroll parking permit may fill out the Faculty/Staff Bus Pass (E-Pass) Application on the Parking & Transportation website. E-Pass applications take 2-3 business days to process. The E-Pass is valid for one year and will expire on the last day of May.

E-Pass Regulations:

- The E-Pass must be used for its intended purpose to reduce single occupancy vehicle commutes to the campus. Passes are nontransferable, and E-Pass holders must use their E-Pass for trips to and from the campus. Fraudulent use may result in the pass being suspended or revoked, and may also result in the user being barred from eligibility to receive an E-Pass in the future.
- Restrictions apply to rail riders using OCTA to and from local train stations. Please show the Metrolink pass, not the E-Pass, to board the OCTA bus from the train station for free. See [Rail Program section VII.F](#) for details.
- E-Passes will not be replaced. Card holders must purchase a new pass directly from OCTA.

D. E-Pass/Commuter Choice Program

Employees using E-Pass may join the Commuter Choice program and be eligible for the supplementary Commuter Choice incentives (GRT, Infrequent Need permits, etc.)

1. E-Pass/Commuter Choice Regulations

- Restrictions apply to rail riders using OCTA to and from local train stations. See [Rail Program section VII.F](#) for details.
- E-PASSES WILL NOT BE REPLACED. CARD HOLDERS MUST PURCHASE A NEW PASS DIRECTLY FROM OCTA.
- Participants can only receive monthly financial incentives from one commute option. See [Incentive Payments section III.A](#).
- **Tracking forms are required.** See [Tracking Forms section VI.B](#).
- Eligible participants may request Infrequent Need daily parking permits. See [section VIII.A](#).
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D](#).

E. Metro/Transit Pass Reimbursement Program

Participants who live in LA County, riding Metro buses (Metro routes 4 & 460) that operate into Orange County or connect with OCTA buses receive a reimbursement for their commute to CSUF. Eligibility for reimbursement will be contingent upon use of OCTA bus routes providing direct service to CSUF for that month of reimbursement. E-Pass ridership logs will be used to verify transfers.

1. Other Transit Systems

Participants who live outside Orange County and use Foothill Transit, Laguna Beach Municipal Transit, Long Beach Transit and Riverside transit connecting with OCTA bus routes that provide direct service to CSUF, may be reimbursed \$19 to \$75 (the cost of an Metro monthly pass).

Participants who do not own a parking permit receive a 100% reimbursement up to \$75.

Participants who own a parking permit receive a 25% reimbursement up to \$19.

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

2. MTA/ Transit Reimbursement Regulations

- For Metro, applicants must live in LA county or city serviced by Metro.
- For other transit agencies, applicants must live outside Orange County.
- Other transit systems must be approved by Transportation Services.
- Bus Pass reimbursement/tracking form and expired bus pass copy (not receipt) must be turned in no later than the 5th day of the month after the month.
(Example: January pass reimbursements must be submitted no later than February 5th).
Late reimbursement/tracking forms will not be processed. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** See [Tracking Forms section VI.B.](#)
- Participants can only receive monthly financial incentives from one commute option.
See [Incentive Payments section III.A.](#)
- Eligible participants may request Infrequent Need daily parking permits. See [section VIII.A.](#)
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

F. Rail Reimbursement Program

Participants commuting to campus by rail (Metrolink and Amtrak) may receive a reimbursement. Participants who do not own a parking permit receive a 100% reimbursement (\$120 maximum). Participants who own a parking permit receive a 25% reimbursement (\$30 maximum)

1. Transportation To and From Train Stations

Metrolink rail commuters receive no-cost transportation to and from local train stations on OCTA bus lines by showing their rail pass when boarding an OCTA bus. E-Pass should not be used by Metrolink commuters to and from local train stations. Metrolink commuters using E-Pass as transportation to and from local train stations may be deducted the E-pass fare from their monthly reimbursement. This does not apply to Amtrak commuters. There are no restrictions to use E-Pass during the weekday (during lunch, errands).

2. Rail Reimbursement Regulations

- Rail reimbursement/tracking form and rail pass copy (not receipt) must be turned in no later than the 5th day of the month. (Example: January pass reimbursements must be submitted no later than February 5th) Late reimbursement/tracking forms will not be processed. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** See [Tracking Forms section VI.B.](#)
- Participants can only receive monthly financial incentives from one commute option.
See [Incentive Payments section III.A.](#)
- Eligible participants may request Infrequent Need daily parking permits. See [section VIII.A.](#)
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

G. Vanpool Program

Participants using 3rd party vanpool services (Enterprise) may be reimbursed up to \$120 for their monthly vanpooling cost:

- Participants who do not own a parking permit receive up to \$120 reimbursement each month.
- Participants who own a parking permit \$30 reimbursement each month.
- For the first three months of vanpooling, participants may receive up to \$120 a month regardless of their permit ownership status.

1. Vanpool Regulations

- Participants can only receive monthly financial incentives from one commute option. See [Incentive Payments section III.A.](#)
- Eligible participants who do not own a parking permit may request up to 2 complimentary Infrequent Need Daily Parking Permits each month that will be issued virtually. See [section VIII.A.](#)
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)
- Tracking forms are required. See [Tracking Forms section VI.B.](#)

2. Commuter Choice Supplementary Programs

A. Infrequent Need Parking Permit Regulations

Registered participants who do not own a parking permit may login and request up to two Infrequent Need Parking Permits each month.

- There is a maximum of two "Infrequent Need" permits per month- **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- Permits cannot be accrued or redeemed for cash.
- Participants cannot claim Rewards/Reimbursements on the days a permit is issued.
- To obtain a permit, eligible participants must login to the Commuter Tracking System, create a permit, and it will automatically be issued virtually.
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

B. Inclement Weather Parking Permit Regulations

Registered walkers or cyclists who do not own a parking permit may login and request a virtual Inclement Weather permit on days where rain, extreme heat, or air quality prevents cycling or walking to work.

- Participants cannot claim rewards/reimbursements on the days an Inclement Weather permit is issued.
- To obtain an Inclement Weather permit, eligible participants must login to the Commuter Tracking System, create a permit, and it will automatically be issued virtually.
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

Commuter Choice Policies & Procedures

C. Guaranteed Return Trip (GRT)

In the event of an unexpected personal emergency or illness during scheduled work hours, registered participants can receive immediate transportation at no cost. The GRT Program contracts with Lyft. The GRT Program is available to all Commuter Choice **registered participants**.

1. A GRT Emergency is defined as

- Becoming ill at work.
- A member of an immediate family becomes ill or is injured while the employee is at work. "Immediate family" is defined as a close relative residing in the immediate household of the employee.
- A supervisor requires a participant to work past their regular working hours and a carpool or vanpool partner(s) have left. Participants must be notified of emergency / unexpected overtime on the same day the overtime has to be worked.
- If a carpool driver has to leave unexpectedly during the day, leaving a participant without a ride home.

2. A GRT Emergency is not Defined As

- Personal errands
- Non-emergency or prescheduled appointments/meetings/events/doctor visits
- Voluntary overtime
- Public transportation disruptions or delays for any reason
- Termination/lay-offs
- A ride to work
- Business travel
- Inclement weather
- Any trip where alternate transportation could be arranged in advance
- Mechanical breakdown of carpool or vanpool
- In place of a loaner/replacement vanpool vehicle
- If vehicle is towed, impounded, or cannot be accessed because of police activity

3. Arranging Service

- Participants must call the Transportation Services line (657) 278- 4699.
- If Transportation staff is not available, participants may take Uber/Lyft and can be reimbursed at a later time.
- Participants must send Uber/Lyft receipt to cservices@fullerton.edu within 1 week scheduled ride. **Late receipts will not be accepted.**

4. GRT Regulations

- Maximum usage: 4 times or \$200 per fiscal year.
- Using GRT due to a late or missed train is not allowed.
- Participants using GRT for situations not defined above will be invoiced cost of the service.
- Participants who do not follow the program regulations are subject to program disqualification. See [Abuse of Incentives section II.D.](#)

Questions? Contact the Commuter Services Team at cservices@fullerton.edu or (657)278-4699.