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Workplace

Does Your Company Help You Commute?

Tara Weiss 05.19.08, 12:55 PM ET



[In Pictures: More Mileage](#)

As [gas prices](#) creep closer to \$4 a gallon, some employers are trying to ease the cost of commuting to work.

For years, many employers have offered to take pre-tax dollars out of their employees' paychecks to cover the cost of commuting via public transportation. And of course, telecommuting has been growing in popularity for years. Now employers are getting quite creative in helping offset the cost of the commute. In many cases, there's an environmental benefit, too.

Take Ft. Collins, Colo.-based New Belgium Brewing Co. When an employee reaches the one-year mark with the company, they're given a bike and encouraged to ride it to work. No need to worry about messy hair or sweaty clothes--the company provides showers. To date, New Belgium has given bikes to 200 employees, which has cost the company about \$40,000.

[In Pictures: More Mileage](#)

Biking is an option for employees who live close to the office. But it might prove challenging for the average American. The average commute to work is 30 miles, according to Steve Reich, program director at the Center for Urban Transit Research at the University of South Florida. With gas at \$3 per gallon, it costs the average employee more than \$100 monthly to drive to work, he says. Now that gas is closer to \$4, the average employee is more likely to shell out about \$140 monthly just on commuting.

The career search Web site Jobing.com's program *really* helps employees' wallets. Those who meet certain requirements (such as length of time at the company, a good driving record and completion of

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a safe driving course) can get their car completely wrapped with the company's logo. The reward: 100% of the employee's gas is paid for along with a monthly \$500 stipend. The company has an approved list of cars that employees can choose to either lease or buy.

Peter Difilippantonio was one of the first employees to get a wrapped car at Jobing.com. He purchased his Jeep Cherokee in October 2003 and paid it off last year using the \$500 monthly stipend. Since the benefit doesn't end when the car is paid off, he uses that money on [household expenses](#).

Driving around town with his employer's logo was a bit embarrassing at first but the benefits far outweigh that feeling, he says. Unless they're going to a formal event, his family always uses the wrapped Cherokee since the gas is paid for by the boss.

Difilippantonio, general manager of Jobing's Houston office, commutes about 60 miles daily roundtrip. Gas costs between \$250 and \$300 monthly. He pays for it upfront and then submits all of the receipts with his monthly expenses.

"It's an amazing program," he says. "It's like getting a \$20,000 raise before taxes."

There are other benefits, too. He feels an added sense of loyalty toward Jobing.com and he's heard the same from colleagues anecdotally. Having 167 employees driving around with a wrapped vehicle is great advertising. Also, the drivers tend to be more safe since people know where to find them. The benefit is taken away if an employee is caught driving recklessly or being rude on the road.

"There are times when I'd rather roll up in my wife's car," says Difilippantonio. "My wife initially got embarrassed. Then she realized the benefit to my career and also to our bottom line at home."

In Pictures: [More Mileage](#)

Does your company have a way of helping employees with the rising cost of commuting? Let us know by commenting below.

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