

COMMUTERS TRUST

Report: 2020 Program. City of South Bend



COMMUTERS TRUST

Report: 2020 Program. City of South Bend

COMMUTERS TRUST TEAM

Aaron Steiner, Director

Lynn Wetzel, Operations Lead

Jack Jacobs, Program Manager

Jamison Edwards, enFocus Fellow



The Problem

Transportation insecurity is defined as the inability “to regularly move from place to place in a safe and timely manner because one lacks the resources necessary for transportation.”¹

We know that transportation insecurity impacts many of our neighbors in South Bend: lack of mobility is a top barrier to employment in our region.

Unreliable transportation not only makes it hard to get to work, it can cause financial strain, stress, and wreak havoc on personal relationships. Such transportation challenges plunge workers and their families into a vicious cycle of underemployment and exhaustion.

Job insecurity caused by unreliable transportation has wide-ranging, negative impacts for the region, and employers acutely feel these effects. Lack of transportation means missed shifts, late arrivals, and frustrations among staff and managers. This in turn leads to high turnover, challenges with recruitment, and lost productivity.



1. Gould-Werth, Alix, Jamie Griffin, and Alexandra K. Murphy. 2018. "Developing a New Measure of Transportation Insecurity: An Exploratory Factor Analysis." Survey Practice 11 (2). <https://doi.org/10.29115/SP-2018-0024>.



About Us

Who is Commuters Trust?

Commuters Trust aims to establish sustainable transportation benefit programs funded primarily by contributions from partner organizations, participants, and other private sources. We envision programs that provide our region's transportation-insecure residents with solutions that help them reliably get to work.

Our Ride Guarantee program launched in 2019 with two employers, and has expanded to include over 400 participants at six regional employers.

In 2020, we doubled down on efforts to serve our community in this crisis moment.

As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic settled on the community, we expanded our programs and undertook new projects aimed at supporting safe transportation options and gainful employment, including offering Ride Guarantee to workforce training participants, launching a bike-matching program, and piloting contactless mobile bus ticketing on Transpo.

2018

- City of South Bend tests idea of transportation-as-a-benefit program with 2 local employers
- City is selected as a Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge winner, receives \$1M to create transportation-as-a-benefit program

2019

- Commuters Trust launches Phase 1 of Ride Guarantee program in September, offering discounted Lyft rides and Transpo bus pass
- 235 participants enrolled, 3,200+ discounted rides provided in first 4 months

2020

- In March, Ride Guarantee Phase 1 ends and Phase 2 launches; program adds digital bus pass and carpool reimbursement options to Lyft discounts
- 2 new employers join Ride Guarantee Phase 2 during summer 2020
- Commuters Trust tests Uber with new workforce development partners WorkOne and Goodwill, providing rides to their clients 418 participants enrolled, 3,500+ discounted rides provided in total in 2020

3

local employers
partnered with in Phase 2

418

participants enrolled
Jan - Dec. 2020

1,332

Transpo rides
cumulative, Jan - Dec. 2020

2,203

Lyft and Uber rides
cumulative, Jan - Dec. 2020

\$4.89

Average ride subsidy
Jan-Dec. 2020

Contactless mobile bus tickets: Transpo has offered South Bend and Mishawaka residents a reliable way to get around for decades, but to board the bus you needed a paper bus ticket or cash. In October, Commuters Trust partnered with Transpo to launch a system-wide mobile ticketing pilot program to make access to Transpo cashless, contactless, and convenient.

Local Employer Partners



Transportation Providers



Phase 2 Offering: Mar. - Dec. 2020

CT RIDE GUARANTEE

Lyft: Two \$1 rides and eight \$5 rides per month*

Transpo: Unlimited free rides

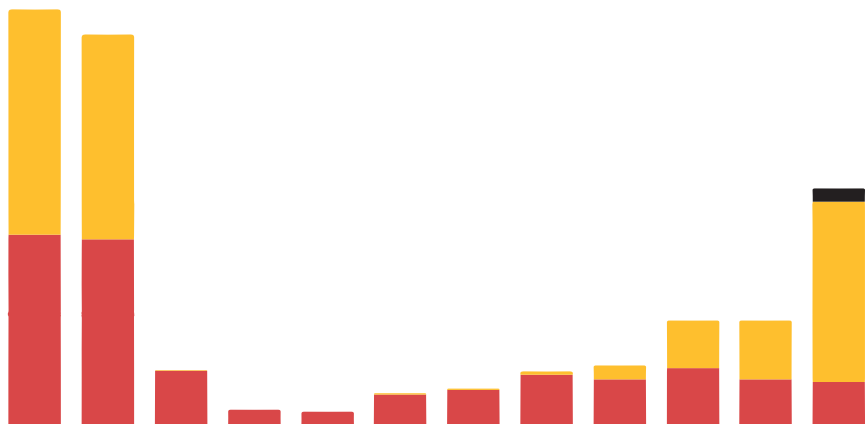
Carpool Reimbursement: Up to 50¢ per mile for drivers, 25¢ per mile for riders on rides to and from workplace using smartphone app

*Lyft discounts only apply on rides to/from workplace

2020 Year in Review

Covid-19 left a big mark on our program. The pandemic slowed our progress in expanding Ride Guarantee across the region. Our transportation benefits all rely on shared modes, and with concerns about safety, we slowed promotion of the program while we evaluated the risk involved in taking a rideshare or bus ride.

While many of our participants are essential workers who cannot work remotely, some of our employer partners implemented furloughs, shutdowns, or reductions in schedule which all decreased the need for our program. The data clearly reflects this slowdown in our program starting in early 2020: we saw an 85% ride volume decrease between March and February. However, we continued to see usage and need for our program grow in the second half of the year and into 2021.



Phase 2 Ride Data
January to December 2020

Uber ■ Transpo ■ Lyft ■

The data shows mixed results from our 2020 efforts. In 2020, the City worked with researchers from the Pulte Institute for Global Development at the University of Notre Dame to study program impacts of interest to our partners, including impacts to employee attendance. In the first four months of our program in 2019, we reported a decrease in absences for participants—a key metric of interest to local employers. In 2020, however, the data is mixed. Across three employers measured in 2020, there was no statistically significant change to rates of absenteeism or tardiness. However, data shows our participants worked 10% more hours per month after enrolling in Ride Guarantee, typically due to working extra shifts. Continued analysis in 2021 will help us better assess the quantitative impacts of our program on attendance.

Our carpool program had no use. Our carpool reimbursement program was intended to help individuals with chronic transportation needs commute to work on cost sustainable mode. We launched our carpool reimbursement program two weeks before Covid shutdowns began in our region, so, in the interest of safety, we delayed and reduced promotion of this program. Despite Covid, we concluded that our carpool reimbursement program couldn't overcome resistance to individual behavioral change: it's extremely difficult to convince someone to build a carpool network when they and their coworkers are, for the most part, already stable commuters. We decided in late 2020 to discontinue this benefit given its lack of use.

Automating to scale efficiently: In mid-2020, Commuters Trust began the process of automating the Ride Guarantee enrollment process. Through automation, we can offer our program participants the flexibility to use their transportation discounts when they need them and scale efficiently to more employer partners.



Sherry works as a custodian.

Sherry does not own a car and has limited transportation options because she works third shift. Sherry sometimes gets a ride to work from a family member, but can't always rely on that. Sherry needs to get home quickly after finishing work to help her kids get ready for school, which prevents her from taking the bus.

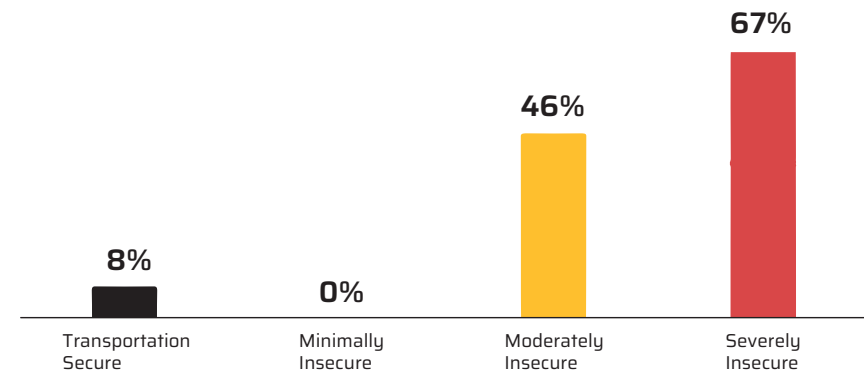
Without Ride Guarantee, Sherry would spend \$200 per pay period for Lyft rides to and from work. The extra savings through the Ride Guarantee program have helped Sherry budget for other household expenses and ensure she can get to and from work. Sherry shared that the program is “invaluable” to employees like her with unconventional work schedules.

BikeMatchSB: In late March, as the pandemic put the safety of people's usual ride to work in doubt, Commuters Trust collaborated with the Bike Michiana Coalition to start #BikeMatchSB, which matched pairs of bicycle donors and frontline workers in need of a safer way to get around.

* Name changed to protect privacy.

What We're Learning

We're getting smarter about the problem we're solving. When we set out to tackle this problem, we understood transportation insecurity as a general problem facing many workers in our region. We thought about commute distance, time of day, and participant preferences. However, we didn't explicitly consider the varied degrees of insecurity and how our solution could accommodate different levels of need. We've since learned from our participants that some individuals rely on our program as an 'emergency backup' to their normal commute mode; these individuals often face temporary moments of transportation insecurity—a flat tire, a missed bus ride. Others rely on our program as their daily solution to get to work; these individuals typically face more challenging or chronic transportation barriers—no car, challenging carpool situations, or inability to use the bus, for example.



Likelihood of Enrolling in Ride Guarantee, Based on Transportation Security Index Score

What We're Learning

We've concluded that our current Ride Guarantee program is a good solution for individuals who face temporary or moderate transportation insecurity, and less so for those facing chronic or severe insecurity.

We're adjusting our approach, expectations, and targets for Ride Guarantee accordingly. For the chronically and severely transportation insecure, we're working on new ideas to meet these needs. These solutions will likely look less like a set of ride discounts and more like pathways to permanent car access.

These lessons also inform our plans to track impact in 2021. We're implementing a new "transportation security index," a metric developed by social science and mobility researchers, to track how well we can help our participants improve their individual transportation security. This, along with measures of workplace attendance, will help tell a fuller story of our program's impact.

Now offering Uber: Ride Guarantee launched in 2019 with Transpo and Lyft. In fall 2020, we began piloting use of Uber alongside Lyft with several employers. As of early 2021, Uber is now available to all new Ride Guarantee participants.



Justin works as an attendant at a local grocery store.

Justin was born with a brain injury and doesn't have a license or own a car. Justin does not live close to his job and would typically pay \$17 for a full-fare Uber ride.

At the end of 2020, Justin participated in Ride Guarantee. With his transportation budget reduced, Justin was able to save money for other household expenses. Justin used his subsidized Uber rides to pick up extra Sunday and late-night shifts. Justin's commitment to work extra shifts allowed him to build a strong relationship with his manager.

Justin recently began cashier training and hopes to be promoted within the year. His long-term goal is to obtain a driver's license with the help of a vocational rehabilitation center. Once Justin has his driver's license, he plans to save for a reliable car.

Helping residents access job training: The successful completion of workforce development training programs can be difficult for those with limited transportation options. In late 2020, Commuters Trust partnered with WorkOne and Goodwill Michiana to provide free and discounted transportation options to individuals commuting to selected workforce training



Future Vision

What's Next for Commuters Trust

Commuters Trust will continue to provide eligible participants with access to subsidized rides to and from work through our Ride Guarantee program. Based on our learnings from Phase 2, in 2021 we'll focus on addressing temporary transportation gaps with our Lyft, Uber, and Transpo benefits, and develop new, permanent solutions for those experiencing chronic, more severe transportation insecurity. In the year ahead, we plan to:

- **Expand current programs to neighboring counties**, including the manufacturing hub of Elkhart
- **Build new partnerships** with employers across all industry sectors
- **Maintain partnerships with workforce development agencies** to help new hires and trainees manage transportation costs as they look for and start jobs, until they can manage these costs on their own
- **Pilot programs** to provide participants with chronic transportation insecurity with support to own and maintain their own cars
- **Further automate our enrollment process** to create a seamless program experience for participants and partner organizations





CommutersTrust.com