

CommuterConnection

A quarterly **Choose your way**  **BelleVue** publication for Downtown Bellevue employers and employees.
www.chooseyourwaybellevue.org

First Quarter 2009

Commuter Connection's top five New Years resolutions *And how your commute can help you get there...*

Save money

If you currently drive to work alone, try taking the bus or carpooling with a co-worker at least one day per week. If you commit to your new commute mode full time you'll save money on car insurance, gas, vehicle maintenance and even tire wear & tear! Also, by splitting or taking away your monthly parking costs altogether, you could save over \$1800* per year! (*Based on average monthly parking rates for downtown Bellevue garages.)

Have a better work/life balance

Commuting in a rideshare or taking transit sets your work hours to specific start and stop times because you and others are reliant on a pre-determined schedule. Having this "time clock" will keep you on task during the day and heading home at a predictable time each night.

Do something good for the environment

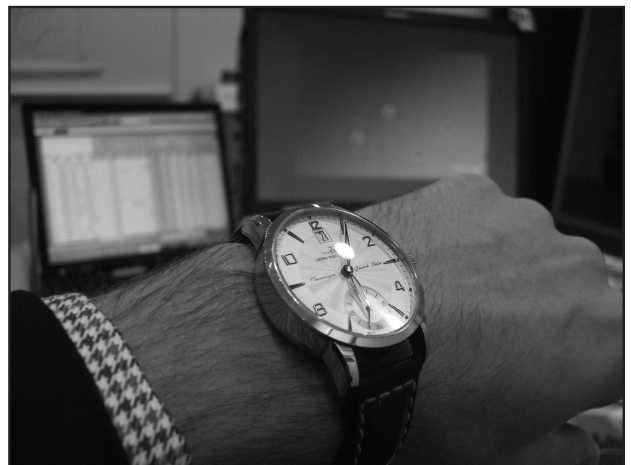
Is your New Year's resolution to go green? Whether you're ridesharing, commuting by bike, walking or taking the bus to work, you can take credit for doing something good for the environment. Visit www.carbonfund.org/site/pages/carbon_calculators to compare your vehicle's carbon footprint to a transit commute.

Reduce stress

Read, listen to music or even nap during your commute. When you're not driving you have time to relax before and after work, reducing stress in your life overall.

Get active

Do you want to lose weight and get fit in 2009? Let your commute help you reach your fitness goals! If you live in or near downtown Bellevue, why not walk to work? If you live further away, consider biking. You can even combine biking with a bus ride. All Metro and Sound Transit buses are equipped with at least two bicycle racks for riders to use at no additional fare.



Inside this edition...

- * Be prepared for your winter commute
- * A look inside "ORCA"
- * Regional transportation projects update
- * Wheel Options returns

Want to stay connected?

Sign up to receive future newsletters at

www.chooseyourwaybellevue.org

Employers: Commute benefits won't bust your budget

With an uncertain economy, employers are focused on the bottom line while employees look for ways to trim their own budgets at home. But implementing cost-saving measures doesn't have to be all bad, especially when it comes to commuting. To learn more, employers are invited to join us for a Commute Advantage workshop focused on no-cost commute benefits for employees. We'll highlight free resources available to employers and their employees, as well as ways that businesses can help employees save money on their transit passes.

Workshops will be held on **Wednesday, February 25** and **Thursday, February 26** at 2 p.m. in the TransManage office at 500-108th Ave. NE, Suite 210.

Can't attend a workshop? Downtown Bellevue employers are eligible for a free commute benefits consultation through the Commute Advantage program at any time, so let us know when you're ready to get started.

RSVP to a workshop or send inquiries about the Commute Advantage program to: caryn@bellevuedowntown.org or by calling 425.453.0644.

Be prepared for inclement weather

After recently experiencing a major snow storm and the commute difficulties it brought to our region, here are some helpful hints to keep your moving during the next storm.

Metro/Sound Transit Riders:

When there is snow and ice on the roads, Metro/Sound Transit service may be rerouted or cancelled. Use these resources for service updates:

Metro:

<http://transit.metrokc.gov/up/rr/adverseweather.html>
or call (206) 553-3000.

Sound Transit:

<http://soundtransit.org/x167.xml> or call (888) 889-6368.
Press 1 to select Rider Services, and then 1 for up-to-date ST Express service info.

Always plan ahead by listening to media reports regarding current road conditions. Dress and prepare accordingly, as transit routes may be severely delayed due to conditions.

Carpool/Vanpool:

If you carpool or vanpool, have a plan in place for times of inclement weather. In order to prepare for the next storm it is important to do the following:

- Decide if your vehicle will operate during times of snow and ice.
- Have an up-to-date phone tree.
- Plan alternate routes or pick up points, especially if your main route includes hills and back roads.
- Keep your fuel tank at least half full and have an emergency kit in the vehicle. This should include enough food, water and blankets for everyone in the vehicle. Kitty litter or sand also aids with traction.

**Join us for the next Bellevue
employer network group meeting!**

**Wednesday March 11, 1 p.m.
Bellevue City Hall**

RSVP to caryn@bellevuedowntown.org

COMMUTER SPOTLIGHT



Name: Joey Henderson

Employer: Puget Sound Energy

One-Way Commute: Including transfer time, about 1 hour and 25 minutes

Commute Origin: North Tacoma area

Commute Mode: Bus + train

How do you like using two commute modes to travel to work?

"I would prefer one mode because then I wouldn't be reliant on two different schedules, but it's really not that inconvenient."

How do you pay for each leg of your commute?

"I buy a monthly 3-zone Puget Pass which covers both the transit and train portions of my commute. My employer subsidizes the majority of the pass so I only have a small out of pocket cost."

If you didn't commute the way you do currently, what other options would you have? Is this the best?

"I would probably be driving alone and dealing with gridlock. I chose my two-mode commute over a free parking spot because it actually takes less time, is more reliable and relaxing. Transit plus train is definitely the best option, but if you put telecommuting into the mix it's a different story. I am also able to work from home about once a week through my employer's progressive telework program"

What do you like to do during your commute? Do you read, listen to music or nap?

"I always make sure I have something to read during my commute, whether it be for work or pleasure. I also take advantage of the Wi-Fi and work stations on the train."

What advice would you give to someone considering a bus, train or dual commute mode like yourself?

"Give it a try. It's much easier than I thought!"

! Attention Metro transit riders !

King County Metro will implement a new fare structure beginning **Saturday, February 1**.

The new rate structure includes a **25¢** fare increase for all one and two-zone peak and off-peak adult fares.

UPDATE of current and upcoming regional transportation projects

Sound Transit 2 Plan: On Nov. 4, 2008, Puget Sound voters approved Proposition 1, the Sound Transit 2 ballot measure that will build an additional 36 miles of light rail, including a 14.5-mile light rail extension east from downtown Seattle across Interstate 90 to Mercer Island, Bellevue and Redmond's Overlake Transit Center, to form a 55-mile regional system by 2023. The plan will also add 100,000 hours to regional express bus service beginning in 2009. As part of these additional hours there will be a 30% increase in service on the busiest routes.

To learn more about the future of the ST2 plan, go to: <http://future.soundtransit.org>

SR-520 Improvements: The Washington State Department of Transportation is moving ahead with improvement plans for SR-520 that will include a six-lane corridor from I-5 to just west of I-405. SR 520 will have two general-purpose lanes and one HOV lane in each direction. The design plans for eastside improvements call for building lids over Evergreen Point Road, 84th and 92nd Avenue NE to help with neighborhood connectivity.

To learn more about the SR-520 Improvement project, go to: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge

I-405 construction: In November 2008, crews set massive girders onto the columns that will support the new NE 10th Street bridge. The girders were set during two weeks of night time closures on I-405 and had minimal impacts on traffic. The new bridge is scheduled to open to traffic in early 2009.

To learn more about the construction of the NE 10th Street Bridge, go to: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/i405/NE10thStreet

WSDOT recently opened a new southbound I-405 freeway bridge over I-90. Crews will be working on opening a new northbound I-405 lane and an improved on-ramp early 2009. A new northbound lane on I-405 from 112th Ave SE to I-90 will also be opened, easing a major commuter chokepoint. Carpoolers and bus riders will benefit from improvements at the 112th Ave SE on-ramp to northbound I-405, including a ramp meter and an HOV bypass lane.

To learn more about the South Bellevue Widening project, go to: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/i405/112thAvetoSE8th

Get "smart" with ORCA

ORCA, One Regional Card for All, is the region's new transportation pass featuring smart card technology. The transition to the new system begins this Spring, when riders will gradually receive a re-loadable card and manage the products on it using an online account or kiosks throughout the region. The card will facilitate fare payment on seven different transit agencies—King County Metro, Sound Transit, Community Transit, Pierce Transit, Everett Transit, Kitsap Transit and Washington State Ferries.



ORCA will provide product options similar to the current PugetPass and FlexPass, as well as several new features. Cards will have an e-purse, giving transit riders the ability to put money into an account that will be debited every time they use it. Employers who currently provide a commute subsidy or PugetPasses will benefit from the new e-voucher and account management tools. Stay tuned for more information from your transit agency as the ORCA program rolls out in early 2009. Visit <http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/CommuterSolutions/products/bus/ORCA.aspx> for online ORCA updates. Also, look for our ORCA 101 workshop schedule in the next edition of Commuter Connection.

Wheel Options

Want to be rewarded for your commute? All you need to do is choose not to drive alone two or more times between March 9 and March 20, then log your trips at www.wheelloptions.org for a chance to win \$2,500! Wheel Options is open to anyone who is 18 years or older and commutes to a paid or volunteer job in Washington State. Qualifying commute options are riding the bus or the train, carpooling, vanpooling, biking, walking, teleworking and working a compressed work week.

Feel free to stop by Commuter Connection, located in the Rider Services Building at the Bellevue Transit Center, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. for personalized assistance with exploring your Wheel Options.

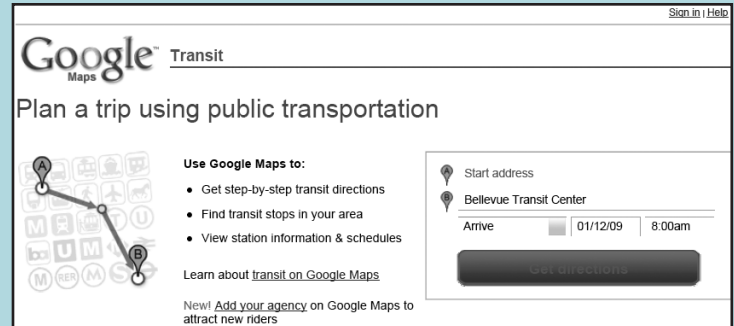
Transportation technology tip

Technology Tip: Google Transit (www.google.com/transit)

Google Transit has now made it easier to plan your trips using public transportation! This Google feature integrates transit stop, route and schedule data from King County Metro and the Washington State Ferries with the interactive options available through Google Maps.

Here is a step by step guide to using Google Transit:

- 1) Open the Google Transit site: www.google.com/transit
- 2) Enter your starting and destination addresses, including city and state, in the boxes on the right.
- 3) Just below the address boxes, enter the date and time of your trip.
- 5) Click "Get Directions" and look at the column on the left to get the route, time and bus stop locations for your trip. Look at the map on the right to see your trip route and bus stops.



For commuters coming into Downtown Bellevue, Google Transit has data on King County Metro routes or Sound Transit routes operated by King County Metro (550, 555, 556, 560, 564 and 565), as well as the Washington State Ferries.

Stay tuned for our next Transportation Technology Tip in the second quarter of Commuter Connection.

Your Commute Resources

Commuter Connection

Open Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
(425) 452-5273
locker@bicyclealliance.org

Choose Your Way Bellevue

www.chooseyourwaybellevue.org

City of Bellevue Transportation Department

(425) 452-7896
www.bellevuewa.gov/transportation-choices.htm

FlexPass

(425) 453-0644
caryn@bellevuedowntown.org

King County Metro

Rider Information: (206) 553-3000
Bus Time: (206) BUS-TIME
<http://transit.metrokc.gov>

King County Metro Rideshare Operations

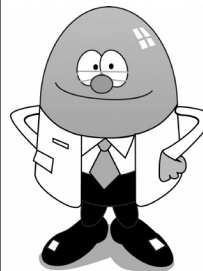
(206) 625-4500
vanpool.information@kingcounty.gov
www.rideshareonline.com

Sound Transit

(206) 398-5000
<http://www.soundtransit.org>
main@soundtransit.org

TransManage

(425) 990-3097
sarah@bellevuedowntown.org
www.bellevuedowntown.org/transmanage



Dear Commute Doctor,

With all the information out there about different commute options, how can I determine what would actually work best for me?

Sincerely,
Confused Commuter

Dear **Confused Commuter**,

It can be challenging to filter through all the various commute information, so the best advice I can give is to sit down and talk with the experts at Commuter Connection. Staff is available on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for free individualized commute planning, so take 15 minutes out of your day and let Commuter Connection's knowledgeable staff develop the best commute plan for you! Commuter Connection is located in the Rider Services building at the Bellevue Transit Center. Offering free commute planning, bus route information, bike parking and transit pass sales, Commuter Connection is your one-stop shop for all things transportation. If you can't make it to the storefront's regular business hours, try one of the following resources to help plan your commute:

For bus routing visit King County Metro's trip planner online at: <http://tripplanner.metrokc.gov>.

To find carpool or vanpool partners contact Rideshare Operations at vanpool.information@kingcounty.gov or call **206-625-4500**. You can also find your own rideshare matches by registering your free commute profile at www.rideshareonline.com.

Visit www.chooseyourwaybellevue.org to learn about your commuting options within Bellevue.

Have a question for the Commute Doctor?
Submit questions to: jordan@bellevuedowntown.org