

Frequently Asked Questions: Smart Commute Rewards 2017

Updated 7/17/17

TOP 10 FAQ's		
Category	Question	Answer
App	When an employee commutes between work and home does the employee need to tell the app? How will the app know which method of travel the employee is using - automatic or manual logging?	When the app recognizes your commute trip, you will simply need to reopen the app and confirm your mode. If your phone recognizes it as a bike or walk trip, it will be a one click verification, otherwise you'll just need to choose your mode. There is also a very short walkthrough video on this topic that may help: https://help.rideamigos.com/using-commute-tracker-app/
App	The App closes every time I open it. I am experiencing issues with the App.	Do you have your location set to always on? The app can't operate unless it is, and this is usually the reason why it closes. To turn your location settings on for an iPhone, go to settings > privacy > Location Services > RideAmigos App > Always On. For Android, go to Settings > Location > Switch to "On" > Agree.
Carpool/Parking Exception	If I am the driver of the carpool and park my car at the office, am I violating the Parking Rules and Regulations that are mandated by the program?	The statement in our Parking Rules and Regulations makes an exception for drivers of a carpool or vanpool, and also for employees who live within one mile of their office and leaves their car parked at home. Therefore, as the driver of the carpool you may park the carpool vehicle at your office.
Other Modes	Has the City thought about including electric, gas-free cars, ride hailing companies, scooters, mopeds, segways or motorcycles as a sustainable mode option?	We have considered that and have determined that the goal of the reward is to encourage employees to take a sustainable commute (bike, walk, transit, carpool, vanpool, telework) and reduce traffic congestion; therefore, single-occupant vehicle trips are ineligible, including single occupant motorcycles, Segways, street scooters, and hybrid/electric vehicles.
Other Modes	Are the fitness apps like Endomondo, Fitbit, etc. integrated with the SmartCommuteAustin.com site for tracking trips taken by bike or walking?	RideAmigos is currently updating the Commute Tracker app so that it will link with Strava and other fitness apps. Keep an eye out for this update coming soon!
Rewards	When will I receive the ADL that I have earned through Smart Commute Rewards?	ADL will be distributed to everyone at the same time via a memo at the end of the calendar year.
Rewards	How can I register for the program?	You will find all of the Smart Commute Rewards details at http://www.austintexas.gov/smartcommute .

Telework	I would like to start teleworking one day a week. How do I do that?	Your telework request must be approved by your department. We do not have the ability to approve a telework schedule. You'll log your telework on the SmartCommuteAustin.com dashboard. Logging your telework day will count for the 2 trip points per day maximum because you are eliminating the morning and evening commute trips. On your dashboard you will go to the log your trips section, fill in all of the information for your trip/s and in the drop down for mode of travel select telework, then push the blue log trips button.
Website	Can I retroactively log my commutes? I have a few in the past month.	The app won't allow backdating but you can log trips retroactively online at SmartCommuteAustin.com. The system is set on a two week sliding window; therefore, you are able to back log any trips within the last two weeks.
Work Schedule	Why are you not rewarding for off-peak commutes?	Travel outside of peak hours does not count, unless you are taking a sustainable commute. Having an off-peak schedule and still driving to work alone does not count for the rewards. We need to move from the 2015 23% employee commute reduction to a 30% employee commute reduction rate by 2021. In our survey of employees in 2015 we found that a large majority of the reductions during peak travel times were from off-peak work schedules. Therefore, we want to focus our efforts on increasing the number of employees taking a sustainable commute to work which would be a great contribution to our future achievement of the 30% goal.

Category	Question	Answer
ADA	Is the smartcommuteaustin.com site ADA compliant for the blind?	The site is screen-reader capable with full aria-labels and keyboard control.
ADA	Is The Commute Tracker by RideAmigos app ADA compliant for the blind?	Although the app is not officially ADA certified, all main aspects of the mobile application (onboarding and trip tracking) are available using built in accessibility tools on both iOS and Android.

App	When an employee commutes between work and home does the employee need to tell the app? How will the app know which method of travel the employee is using - automatic or manual logging?	When the app recognizes your commute trip, you will simply need to reopen the app and confirm your mode. If your phone recognizes it as a bike or walk trip, it will be a one click verification, otherwise you'll just need to choose your mode. There is also a very short walkthrough video on this topic that may help: https://help.rideamigos.com/using-commute-tracker-app/
App	Do I have to download and use the app to participate?	Using the app is optional although some employees may find it more convenient than logging trips on a desktop computer.
App	I just commuted and my commute does not show up on my app. How can I manually add trips?	The app does not have the ability to add trips manually. You need to go to the SmartCommuteAustin.com to log trips manually on your dashboard.
App	I can't set my home address in the app because it's a newer address and not listed yet. How do I log my trips?	Some newer street addresses do not currently show up in the system. For now please use an address that is within 500 meters of your home.
App	The App closes every time I open it. I am experiencing issues with the App.	Do you have your location set to always on? The app can't operate unless it is, and this is usually the reason why it closes. To turn your location settings on for an iPhone, go to settings > privacy > Location Services > RideAmigos App > Always On. For Android, go to Settings > Location > Switch to "On" > Agree.
Carpool/Vanpool	Who can claim the commute in a carpool/vanpool? Is it just the driver, or everyone who is participating?	All employees participating in a carpool/vanpool can claim the commute. Each employee participating in a carpool/vanpool should record the commute on their own account.
Carpool	How can I get join a carpool to take part in Smart Commute Rewards?	You are able to look for carpool matches in the SmartCommuteAustin.com portal. Go to the Smart Commute Dashboard. On the right side of the screen, find the "My Commutes" box. Enter your favorite trip (home to work), and you can Search A -> B for carpool options. You may also look for carpool buddies at MyCommuteSolutions.com.
Carpool	Will it count if a city employee carools with someone else who works downtown but at a different company?	You do not have to carpool with other City employees. Your trips will still count for Smart Commute Rewards if you carpool with someone else that works for a different organization.

Carpool/Parking Exception	If I am the driver of the carpool and park my car at the office, am I violating the Parking Rules and Regulations that are mandated by the program?	The statement in our Parking Rules and Regulations makes an exception for drivers of a carpool or vanpool, and also for employees who live within one mile of their office and leaves their car parked at home. Therefore, as the driver of the carpool you may park the carpool vehicle at your office.
Carpool/Vanpool	How can I find my current carpool or MetroRideShare in the SmartCommuteAustin.com system?	The system has not been pre-loaded with RideShare information so you won't find your specific RideShare to link with; however, you can establish the group using the Carpool ID to be matched with others in your RideShare. You can find step-by-step information here: https://help.rideamigos.com/carpool-tracking-and-verification/
Communication	Are there forums or message boards for employees to talk to each other about sustainable commuting?	Commute Connections is the umbrella program that Smart Commute Rewards is operating under. The Commute Connections Program has as one of its goals to educate employees on their commuting options. Visit the Commute Connections website to learn more. Go to the Cityspace home page (http://cityspace.ci.austin.tx.us/) and click on the Commute Connections button. Additionally, I understand that there will be future trainings scheduled to inform employees of their options.
Eligibility	I live in an area that is not conducive to taking the train/bus/carpool/bike, and therefore I am unable to use a sustainable commute. This means I cannot earn ADL through this program. How is that fair?	The goal of the program is to positively impact the entire community by reducing the amount of city employees driving alone to work. The goal is not to give out vacation hours. Through the Smart Commute Program, we hope to manage congestion, reduce the number of single occupant vehicles on the road, and improve air quality. Therefore, all employees and Austin residents are still benefitting from this program, even if they are not earning vacation hours.
Eligibility	Who is eligible for the Smart Commute Rewards Program?	All full- or part-time regular employees of the City of Austin are eligible for the ADL, regardless if they just started taking a sustainable commute or this has been their way of getting to and from work for years. Even new hires can earn ADL during the probationary period. Contract and temporary employees are not eligible. Contract and temporary employees can still utilize the system functionalities such as: trip planning tool, finding carpool partners and bike buddies, etc.

Midday Trips	Will the commutes <i>during</i> working hours be able to count if I make them sustainable (i.e. phone conference meetings, walk from worksite to worksite, or to bring lunch to work)?	The purpose of the ADL reward is to promote using sustainable commutes (alternatives to driving single occupant vehicles) on the daily commute to and from work to manage traffic congestion and improve air quality. Other trips during your work day will not count toward the reward.
Other Modes	Has the City thought about including electric, gas-free cars, ride hailing companies, scooters, mopeds, segways or motorcycles as a sustainable mode option?	We have considered that and have determined that the goal of the reward is to encourage employees to take a sustainable commute (bike, walk, transit, carpool, vanpool, telework) and reduce traffic congestion; therefore, single-occupant vehicle trips are ineligible, including single occupant motorcycles, Segways, street scooters, and hybrid/electric vehicles.
Other Modes	Can kayaking be added to the program, since it is sustainable and also lessens traffic on the hike and bike trail?	Unfortunately at this time we are not accepting new mode types into the program. This is the pilot year and at end of the year we will re-evaluate the program set-up.
Other Modes	Are the fitness apps like Endomondo, Fitbit, etc. integrated with the SmartCommuteAustin.com site for tracking trips taken by bike or walking?	RideAmigos is currently updating the Commute Tracker app so that it will link with Strava and other fitness apps. Keep an eye out for this update coming soon!
Other Modes	Does driving your children to school count as carpooling?	We have considered that and have determined that dropping children off at school does not count as a carpool.
Parking Exception	If I drive to my work site, then leave my car there overnight while taking a sustainable commute home, would that violate the Parking Regulations?	We understand that there may be many different ways of commuting and some may need an exception to the parking requirements of the program. Therefore, we have created a parking exception that is posted at the bottom of our Smart Commute Rewards webpage austintexas.gov/smartcommute . Each individual employee wishing to request an exception shall send their request in an email to SmartCommute@AustinTexas.gov and allow 3 business days for a response. In the body of the email the employee shall outline their specific commuting situation and describe their need for an exception.
Rewards	What is the maximum amount of ADL I can receive this year?	The maximum ADL you could receive in 2017 will be 16 hours.
Rewards	When will I receive the ADL that I have earned through Smart Commute Rewards?	ADL will be distributed to everyone at the same time via a memo at the end of the calendar year.
Rewards	What is the end date for the program?	The last day to log trips will be October 31st, 2017

Rewards	I am already receiving 16 ADL through another City program. Can I participate in the Smart Commute Program and earn 16 more ADL hours?	Yes, you are still eligible for the ADL through our Smart Commute program even if you participate in another program that also provides ADL. Please note that use of ADL is always subject to the approval from your supervisor.
Rewards	When we say "44 trips" is that 22 days (to and from work)?	You are correct. 44 trips is equivalent to 22 days where you took a sustainable commute to work and then home from work.
Rewards	How can I register for the program?	You will find all of the Smart Commute Rewards details at http://www.austintexas.gov/smartcommute .
Telework	I would like to start teleworking one day a week. How do I do that?	Your telework request must be approved by your department. We do not have the ability to approve a telework schedule. You'll log your telework on the SmartCommuteAustin.com dashboard. Logging your telework day will count for the 2 trip points per day maximum because you are eliminating the morning and evening commute trips. On your dashboard you will go to the log your trips section, fill in all of the information for your trip/s and in the drop down for mode of travel select telework, then push the blue log trips button.
Transit	Will bus pass swipes automatically update the program calendar/app where we are inputting our trips?	We did discuss this option with the Smart Commute calendar vendor and found that at this time bus pass swipes will not automatically update the program calendar or app. If that functionality becomes available in the future we will send out a message to all City employees.
Transit	How do I save a multi-modal, one-way trip?	There currently is not a way to schedule and log one complete multi-modal trip. We recommend that you log one mode per trip, and select the mode of your longest leg. For example, if you drove one-mile to the transit station, traveled 8 miles on transit, and then walked 1/4 mile to work, then log one trip as transit.
Transit	How far can one travel to a Park-and-Ride location by car before the trip is deemed ineligible?	If you drive alone to a park-and-ride and then take the bus or train, the bus or train trip counts because you are keeping your car off of the most congested roads. There is not a limit on the number miles traveled to get to the park-and-ride that would make you ineligible.
Transit	Are there free bus passes for City employees?	You can get a free annual transit pass, good for all bus routes and the train, from your HR representative.

Vanpool	If we are already in a CapMetro Vanpool, can't there be something we can submit to show our ridership?	Employees participating in the program will be required to log their trips separately in their calendar at smartcommuteaustin.com. We have consulted with both smartcommutaustin.com vendor and vRide, and found that at this time there is not a way to sync up the vRide reports with the Smart Commute Rewards trip log calendar.
Vanpool	I'm trying to add my Capmetro vanpool number so other riders can join in.	The SmartCommuteAustin.com system at this time cannot recognize the individualized vanpool numbers in the region.
Website	I've set my account to "Shared with No One" but will that interfere with my ability to get credit for my sustainable commutes?	We encourage everyone to have their account set to Share Publicly or Share With Selected Networks. This will allow you to find carpool opportunities that you might not know exist. However, if you need to set the sharing settings to private, your preference will not interfere with accruing the trip credits for the sustainable commute trips you log.
Website	Is there an option to have multiple "home" and "work" locations?	Yes, you can have multiple "Favorite" trips through the Smart Commute Program dashboard. When you search a trip via the Smart Commute Dashboard, you can designate it as a "Favorite" trip by clicking on the star. This will ensure that it always appears as a favorite trip in the "My Commutes" box on the Dashboard. The Commute Tracker by RideAmigos app only supports one home and work pair.
Website	I would like to add another "Favorite Trip" to my page. Is there a way to do that?	There is a video on how to set up a favorite trip at https://help.rideamigos.com/videos/ under the Basic "How To" Videos section.
Website	Do I only need to log the days that I engaged in carpool, telework, etc., or do I have to log every day including the majority which I drive alone?	You only need to log your sustainable commute (vanpool, carpool, telework, transit, bike, walk) trips. You may also log your drive alone trips but that is not necessary to be eligible for the ADL reward.
Website	Does the program provide a "trip planner" for biking and walking?	Our commute tracking portal - SmartCommuteAustin.com - has an integrated and robust trip planning tool that includes biking and walking. Maps.google.com is also an easy resource for bike and walk trip planning.

Website	What if my mode to work is different from my mode home? (e.g. bus to work but carpool home). How do I log different modes in one day?	If you traveled by different modes on the way to work and then back home (example: bus to work; carpool home) you can log the trips individually by filling in all the same information as described above but instead of putting in a return time click on the blue No Return Trip text and it will acknowledge that you are logging only one trip.
Website	Can I retroactively log my commutes? I have a few in the past month.	The app won't allow backdating but you can log trips retroactively online at SmartCommuteAustin.com. The system is set on a two week sliding window; therefore, you are able to back log any trips within the last two weeks.
Work Schedule	Why are you not rewarding for off-peak commutes?	Travel outside of peak hours does not count, unless you are taking a sustainable commute. Having an off-peak schedule and still driving to work alone does not count for the rewards. We need to move from the 2015 23% employee commute reduction to a 30% employee commute reduction rate by 2021. In our survey of employees in 2015 we found that a large majority of the reductions during peak travel times were from off-peak work schedules. Therefore, we want to focus our efforts on increasing the number of employees taking a sustainable commute to work which would be a great contribution to our future achievement of the 30% goal.
Work Schedule	Are employees who work compressed or alternative work schedules or travel outside of peak hours eligible for the rewards?	For employees who work 4-10s, their 5 th day off does not count as a sustainable commute. If they take a sustainable commute (bike, walk, transit, carpool, vanpool, or teleworking) on any of the other four days, then that counts. Travel outside of peak hours does not count, unless they are taking a sustainable commute.
Work Schedule	How is a vacation day/s handled? How are they logged?	On days you take leave you do not commute to work; therefore, there are no trips to log.