

KC #SafeCommuteKC

A GUIDE FOR SAFE TRANSPORTATION TO THE WORKPLACE



RideKC







The New Commute Reality

Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our daily lives. As local governments moved to stop the spread with stay-at-home orders and emergency declarations, employers were forced to either halt operations, adapt essential work to new risks and regulations, or shift to a virtual office. Employers must now strive toward a fundamental new goal resilience in the face of an evolving pandemic and a rapidly-changing public health and safety landscape.

Safe, accessible commuting lies at the core of an employer's ability to maintain business continuity, regardless of the waxing and waning of COVID-19. The pandemic has highlighted equity as a core jobs access concern, as our frontline workers are most vulnerable to issues with transportation reliability, access, and safety. Because many workers cannot afford a car, safe commute options enable essential workers to get to work, stay healthy, and prevent jobsite outbreaks. On the flip side, for office-based jobs, telecommuting now plays a central role in continuing operations while social distancing. While only 7% of employers offered telework prior to the pandemic, it is anticipated that many more will continue to rely on remote work to maintain consistent operations, safety, and resilience for the foreseeable future.

As Greater Kansas City continues to balance our region's economy and community health needs, employer-based safe commute policies and plans are integral to core business operations and the health of our workforce. The Safe Commute Guide is meant to assist employers in navigating the risks and best practices for each of Kansas City's diverse transportation options, in order to find the solutions that make sense for their needs and goals through the pandemic and beyond. We hope to equip local businesses with the tools they need to get their employees to work and stay resilient in the face of a public health crisis.



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How to Use This Guide

This guide is meant to serve as a roadmap for developing COVID-safe commute policies, plans, and programming. It should be used in conjunction with your organization's Safe Return plan, as well as guidance from state and local health departments, local jurisdictions' recovery plans and regulations, local transit agencies and transportation authorities, **Occupational Safety and Health Administration** (OSHA) guidelines, **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** (EEOC) rules and regulations, trade association guidance, and all other laws that may apply to your workplace's re-opening.

Your organization's assessment of the safety of each transportation mode should be informed directly by any fluctuations in new virus cases in the region, testing and contact-tracing capacity, and availability of hospital beds and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in our area. In assessing the safety of the transportation options you promote or provide, consider the specific health risks of your individual employees and workforce more broadly, including (but not limited to) pre-existing conditions and lack of access to preventative care.

The Safe Commute Guide serves as a supplement to the Safe Return KC Guide. Because transportation serves as a pillar of jobs access, business continuity, and COVID-19 resilience, the guide aims to iterate Kansas City's diverse commute solutions as a foundation to broader operational planning and business goals. The guide addresses:

- Specific health, reliability, and economic considerations for available modes
- Best practices to help your employees get to work safely
- Key strategies for managing unpredictable commutes and parking demand
- Models for commuter engagement and employee policies

In developing your own commute plans, policies, and programming, we recommend you use the elements from this guide that make the most sense for your specific organizational needs and goals.





Comprehensive policy around commuting procedures is critical to ensuring that your employees get to work safely each day during this unpredictable time. Commute policies and benefits offer guidance, regulation, programming, and/or aid and incentives to employees that help them get to work. These policies should iterate a baseline of core employee transportation, telework, and parking options and procedures, while also incentivizing commute and parking behaviors that advance broader organizational goals.

Companies that develop a comprehensive transportation plan that includes long-term policies and concrete benefits can expect:



Higher employee engagement



Greater business continuity



Improved post-COVID rebound

Due to the evolving public health crisis at hand, having a concrete plan for getting employees to work is critical to avoiding potential impacts on productivity, workplace closures, and revenue. In addition, telecommuting during COVID-19 has led to major fluctuations in parking demand, requiring special consideration to the financial burden of unused parking facilities on both commuters and employers alike. Providing workers with a seamless and safe suite of commute options is imperative not only to the safety and accessibility of your jobsite, but also to your organization's bottom line.

When developing transportation plans and commute policies, consider the unique attributes of your organization, such as geographic location, size, organizational culture, industry, type of business, and any other specific conditions of your organization.

The safety, reliability, and adaptability of each transportation mode is subject to change according to various public health conditions and local regulations. Flexibility must be a core part of your plan, allowing your organization to scale each mode accordingly. Your commute policies should enable your employees to have an accessible and safe commute throughout the changing conditions of the pandemic.



Developing Your Safe Commute Plan

Employer commute plans can be developed and managed the way you would manage any other HR policy or employee benefit. Commute plans should be created in line with broader business goals, employee needs, existing transportation options, and available resources. Plans should be established with built-in agility and should be revisited and revised regularly over the course of the pandemic. To get started on developing your organization's commute plan, you'll want to take these steps:

Establish internal stakeholders.

Assemble a mix of leadership in finance and HR, facilities, operations, sustainability, communications, and other internal stakeholders who have buy-in regarding transportation and safe return planning. A core task of commute planning lies in internal communications, so convene any internal contacts who have a stake in employee outreach.

Gather feedback from employees.

Gather as much qualitative and quantitative data as possible from your employees regarding their commute habits, motivations, fears, and pain points. Methods like surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews can help you get a better picture of how employees were commuting prior to the pandemic, and how they plan to get to work now.

Distribute any findings with both leadership and employees to foster dialogue around commute solutions. Use the results as a roadmap to shape the development of your commute policies, plans and programming.



For more ideas on where to start with data-gathering, we've included some sample survey resources on page 27.

Determine where commuting fits with your broader business goals, values, and needs.

Convene your core internal stakeholders and leadership to get a broad understanding of how safe, accessible commuting practices advance your organization's core mission. While employee and jobsite health and safety is key to COVID-19-resilience and continuity for all organizations, consider additional motivators like recruitment and retention, sustainability, lower overhead costs, value-for-dollar, and more.

Identifying core motivators helps increase buy-in from both leadership and employees. You can use these goals to tailor commute plans and programs that make the most sense for you and your workforce.

Assess available transportation options.

Consider each of the transportation modes that are accessible from your jobsite. In the Kansas City metro area, available modes include fixed-route public transportation, demand-based public transportation, vanpool, rideshare, telecommute, and active commute options (biking, scooting, and walking).



For details on the safety, reliability, cost, and scalability considerations each of these modes, refer to the decision matrix <u>pages 10-23</u> as a starting point. Your commute plans and programs should highlight and incentivize the transportation options that make the most sense for your goals and concerns, while also promoting accessible, diverse, and safe choices for your employees.

Communicate and educate.

Due to the rapidly-changing public health situation, frequent communication with employees around key commute policy and programming messages, parking or telework policies, and transit updates is essential. Employers should adopt the best mechanism for as regular as possible communications with all staff, and managers should maintain open lines of communication with their employees to mitigate commute issues and anxieties. Allowing for meaningful feedback loops can help you keep your commute policy relevant and agile, while ensuring that your employees have the best resources for their situation to get to work safely.

Employers should stay up to date on transportation service and public health conditions and be transparent about its real effects on their employees. Focusing on empathy and safety in your communications can help quell your employee's stress, anxieties and fears around travelling at this time.

You can sign up for live text and email updates for the transit services that most impact your business through **RideKC Notify**, and see live tracking and service updates on the **Transit app**.



Evaluating Commute Options

In the Kansas City area, we are fortunate to have diverse options to help your employees get to work each day. A crucial piece of developing safe commute plans and programming involves an analysis of the transportation options available to your employees. Consider where each mode fits with your broader goals, and ensure that your employees have the resources and guidance they need to take those modes safely. COVID-19-resilient commute planning should include a diverse mix of options, with the aim of developing mode-specific communications, education, and incentives for employees to shape commute behavior.

In this evaluation, we provide an analysis of each of the available transportation options in the Kansas City metro to get you started. We use six key metrics to evaluate each mode, developed with both employer and individual commuter concerns in mind. Because COVID-19 has highlighted the health of employees as central to basic business operations, it is crucial that employers consider health and safety as the top priority in their own evaluations. We have laid out the following considerations and priorities for our mode evaluation.

Risk

Employee safety is essential, and it starts the minute they leave the house to head to work. Through the pandemic, health concerns have become a critical part of transportation and workplace safety and risk. The safety and sanitary conditions of your workforce's daily commutes will have a direct impact on the health and safety of your jobsite, and employees' past modes of transportation may no longer be the safest option. As information about the pandemic unfolds, the level of safety of each transportation mode is consistently evolving. Employers should consider:

- Do employees have a safe way to get to and from work?
- Which modes provide both physical safety and emotional safety (low levels of anxiety and stress)?
- Is their usual commute still safe? How can employees get to work if they need to replace a mode of transportation due to updated safety considerations?



Reliability

Emergency declarations, social distancing, and resulting low levels of ridership have impacted transit service around the country. In Kansas City, several routes and schedules have been impacted. In turn, commutes that were once reliable have become uncertain in the pandemic. Consider the following questions when evaluating the reliability of the modes available to employees:

- Are employees' usual modes of transportation still available?
- What additional options or safety nets are available to employees to get them to the jobsite?
- Are there transportation options that can help support a reintroduction back into commuting?

Equity & Cost-Effectiveness

Many in Kansas City do not have the option to drive alone to work. Whether from unreliable access to a vehicle or no vehicle at all, some of our most essential workers must pursue alternatives to driving alone every day. The cost of certain modes of transportation can be prohibitive, and many employees have specific needs such as ADA accessibility that can impact whether they can equitably access various options. When assessing the equity of available modes, evaluate:

- Do employees have reliable access to a vehicle? If not, what are their options and are those options equitable, inexpensive, and accessible?
- What are the most cost-effective modes?
- Which modes support employees' diverse needs, locations, schedules, and transit access? Which modes are accessible enough to ensure a simple commute?

Return On Investment

A core consideration of any business plan includes a clear value-for-dollar, and commute options should be no different. Assessing the return on investment for each mode is highly dependent on how much employee usage you get out of your investment. The greater the usage of your investment by employees, the quicker the payoff. When considering ROI for your commute programming, ask yourself the following:

- Is there a cost to promoting each mode? Where can we reduce or eliminate fixed costs, such as parking?
- What is the value-for-dollar in promoting certain modes, or reducing drive-alone commutes?
- How much labor does managing employee usage of that mode require, and what value are you getting for that time?

Flexibility/Adaptability

Rolling out commute policies will usually require a curve for adoption as you pursue and promote necessary resources. Some modes such as bus or streetcar may be easily and quickly adoptable because they require no acquisition of assets, while other modes such as telework may require a bit more infrastructure upfront to get that mode off the ground.

Ask yourself the **following questions** when considering the adaptability of a given mode:

- Does pursuing this mode for employees involve any rigid or long-term contracts?
- Does it require taking on any assets, acquiring technology, or updating facilities?
- What solutions are most readily adaptable in the short-term?
- Which modes are flexible enough to meet the various and changing needs of your employees based on current public health conditions?

Scalability

Your employees have diverse transportation needs and access, which will determine how broadly you can scale certain options across your workforce. Additionally, COVID-19 has shown that as we roll plans out, we also **need to be able to easily scale them back** according to developments with the pandemic locally and nationally. When you consider the scalability of a transportation option, assess:

- What transportation solutions will work across various employee geographies and office locations?
- What commute offerings can easily expand and contract as needed?
- Can a given mode scale up or down with employee demand without hurting the business' budget?







6ft.

Mode Evaluation: Telecommute

In the initial aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses around the world were forced to make a rapid transition to telework. As many employers pursued early phases of re-opening into the summer, remote work became a critical way of enforcing social distancing by keeping office capacities low and preventing direct interoffice contact. As we look forward into an uncertain future, many employers are establishing longer-term, more formal telework policies to allow their operations to stay resilient.

One thing is certain: until a vaccine is developed, various levels of remote work are here to stay.

Risk Lowest risk for transmission during commute, in meetings, or at jobsite.

Reliability Reliability is dependent on technology access and quality of network connections. With proper systems in place, telework is fully reliable and resilient.

Equity/ Remote

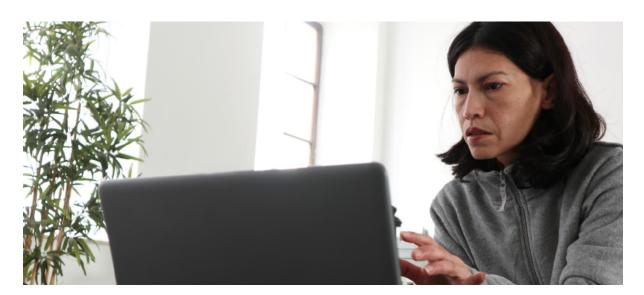
Cost-Effectiveness equipme

Remote employees must often pay for at-home Wi-Fi and/or for appropriate equipment like a laptop, web camera, etc. Roles that can be adapted to telework skew toward higher income/office jobs, with frontline workers lacking the ability to work remotely.

ROI Requires some upfront investment in IT systems, HR policies, and planning, but enables operations to continue with clear value for dollar.

Adaptability Requires planning/implementation period to adapt existing operations to virtual space. Once policies and systems are established, the workplace becomes more flexible/agile.

Scalability Some roles may not be adapted to remote work, including frontline positions or manual labor. For office-based roles, telework may be easily scaled up or down.



Best Practices: Telecommute

1. Continue teleworking where possible to minimize health risks. Remote work is the best action to reduce exposure risk while continuing operations.



Establish formal, long-term policies. Policies should clarify which employees are eligible, set expectations for communications and accountability, and outline expectations regarding access and security. We've enclosed a sample telework policy in this guide on page 27.

- 2. Invest in the right technology for success. Virtual meeting platforms and Cloud storage have become crucial to continue office work, but additional tools like work phones, computers, or higher-speed internet can help your employees reliably work remote each day. Focus on results. Have managers set clear goals and benchmarks with employees and check in often.
- 3. Communicate. Frequent communication with your teams can reduce isolation, establish shared expectations, and boost culture/morale.

Local resources

For more information on developing effective telecommute policies and practices, visit the **RideshareKC** website, or contact RideshareKC for complimentary consultations at <u>rideshare@marc.org.</u>

Mode Evaluation: Fixed-Route Public Transportation

The coronavirus crisis has substantially impacted public transit. Ridership has taken a hit, but began to recover this summer as stay-at-home orders were lifted. Fixed-route public transportation options in Kansas City, including **RideKC Bus** and **KC Streetcar**, continue to be an essential mode for workers across the metro, including many of our frontline workers.

Through the pandemic, RideKC Bus and KC Streetcar have adopted stringent sanitation efforts, pursued touchless and rear-door boarding, offered zero-fare transit, encouraged social distancing, and provided hand sanitizer onboard vehicles.

Risk

Low to no ability to social distance. Higher levels of physical exposure to others with no contact tracing. Safety precautions for RideKC are based on local public health regulations. Current mandates require masks for passengers. See "Local Resources" section below.

Reliability

Service times and route availability may be impacted by fluctuating ridership and public health regulations. RideKC bus drivers must enforce capacity limits, which may impact reliability at peak hours.

Equity/ Cost-Effectiveness

The RideKC system is not charging fares through the end of the year, and KC Streetcar is always free offering a solid no-cost option for those without access to a vehicle or other modes.

ROI No upfront cost for employers for existing services.

Adaptability

Employers incur no fixed assets, and transit is immediately adaptable for employees. Because there is currently no fare, passes are not necessary, and commuters can easily adopt.

Scalability

May be limited due to routes and scheduling. Geographic locations of employees and offices must be located near fixed routes.



Best Practices: Fixed-Route Public Transportation

- Communicate with your transit agency regarding your return timelines to see what services are available. If you hear concerns from workers about access, provide feedback back to RideKC.
- 2. Educate your employees about nearby transit options using emails, staff website pages, breakroom posters and other forms of communication that include current information about schedules, route maps, etc. Boosting ridership for routes near your business encourages your transit agency to maintain that route. You can contact RideKC for materials and information.
- 3. Sign up for RideKC Notify and download the Transit App to discover delays, fare changes, and service updates. Encourage your employees to take advantage of these platforms to plan their commutes and stay on top of the transit updates that impact them.
- 4. Be flexible and understanding. Reduced schedules and limited vehicle capacities mean employees may need additional time to get to work.
- 5. Keep an open dialogue with employees about their commute to ensure they have a seamless and reliable route to work each day.

Local Resources

For more information, visit the <u>RideKC Bus</u> and <u>KC Streetcar</u> websites for details about their COVID-19 responses and service updates, and/or or download the <u>Transit App</u> for live tracking info and trip planning. You can also contact RideKC to learn more about transit services in your area at <u>(816) 221-0660</u>.

Mode Evaluation: Demand-Based Public Transportation

RideKC provides several demand-responsive transit options, with vehicles ranging from mini-buses and shuttles to taxis. These transit services offer flexible routing and scheduling, where commuters must request a ride in advance. RideKC currently operates on-demand <u>Microtransit</u> regions in Wyandotte County and Johnson County, as well as <u>RideKC Flex</u> services in North KC, Gladstone, South KC, and Lee's Summit.

Low-income, elderly, or disabled persons can use <u>RideKC Freedom</u> paratransit for on-demand ride scheduling. In addition, anyone can order a RideKC Freedom

On-Demand taxi from anywhere in RideKC's service area at a discounted rate.

RideKC's diversity of demand-based transit options help bridge service gaps and extend affordable transportation choices to lower-density areas of the metro.

Risk Low to no ability to social distance, but increased capacity for contact tracing due to ride scheduling. Safety precautions for RideKC are based on local public health regulations. Current mandates require masks for passengers. See Resources below.

Reliability Wait times may fluctuate for certain on-demand services. Route and scheduling limitations depend on region and service type.

Equity/
Cost-Effectiveness

Moderately cost-effective and serves as an inexpensive alternative to taxi service for commuters who cannot access transit. Paratransit provides ADA-accessible options.

ROI No upfront cost for employers for existing services.

Adaptability Employers incur no fixed assets. Employees may need to register in advance depending on service.

Scalability Limited to each demand-based program's region. Geographic locations of employees and offices must be in or near the program's region.



Best Practices: Demand-Based Public Transportation

- 1. Communicate with RideKC about demand-based public transportation options in your area. Collaborate with other businesses in your area and RideKC to see if there is a shared need for microtransit in your area.
- 2. Educate employees about relevant demand-based options by providing maps, schedules, and other materials. Contact RideKC for outreach materials.
- 3. Foster dialogue with employees about transportation needs, and any ADA-accessible transit requirements.

Local Resources

Visit <u>RideKC</u> to learn more about on-demand services in your area, and to learn more about RideKC's **COVID-19 precautions** for these flex options.

Mode Evaluation: Vanpool

In partnership with **Commute with Enterprise**, <u>RideKC Vanpool</u> offers a cost-effective option for groups of commuters with longer rides to work. Commuters pay an affordable monthly fare that covers all costs of operating the van, including gas, insurance, roadside assistance, and more.

Commuters can register their own **vanpool groups**, or are matched with existing vanpools according to their route. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, Commute with Enterprise has provided hands-on support and consultation to keep vans sanitary and safe.

Risk

Low to no ability to social distance, but a set group of riders means there is more predictable exposure, strong ability to contact trace and management can oversee safety protocols.

Reliability

Dependent on commitment of other vanpoolers, but participants usually have financial and geographic buy-in to consistently participate. Roadside assistance and loaner vehicles are provided.

Equity/ Cost-Effectiveness

Cost-effectiveness dependent on length of commute and number of participants in each vanpool. For commutes longer than 15 miles one-way, riders can expect to see savings versus driving alone. Pre-tax commuter benefits can be used to cover monthly fare.

ROI No cost for employers. Employers can opt to pay for employee subsidies or incentives through providing commuter benefits.

Adaptability

Employers incur no fixed assets and there is no contract for employers. Contracts are between vanpool commuters and Enterprise and are renewed on a month-by-month basis. Commuters must register with Commute with Enterprise, and setup process takes 1-14 days.

Scalability

Limited to number of long-distance commuters. Can easily scale up or down due to month over month contracts.



Best practices: Vanpool

- Adopt and enforce Commute with Enterprise's <u>Clean Commute Pledge</u>, which outlines strict health and sanitation protocols for vanpoolers.
- 2. Establish A/B scheduling for vanpoolers to split the number of people in each vehicle. Keep vanpool groups on the same shift wherever possible.
- 3. Adopt and enforce a policy that riders must wear masks inside vanpools at all times.
- 4. Consider subsidizing a vanpool for last-mile transportation to the jobsite, or for employees impacted by transit service changes.
- 5. Provide <u>pre-tax fringe commute benefits</u> and seat subsidies to incentivize ridership and increase employee savings.

Local Resources

Contact **Commute with Enterprise** to discuss vanpool eligibility, potential cost-savings, and to use their complimentary mapping and survey services. You can reach **RideKC's Vanpool Services** via Commute with Enterprise at GroupEmail.KCATARideshare@ehi.com.

Mode Evaluation: Carpooling

Traditional carpooling is an easy way to save money on the way to and from work.

RideshareKC provides carpool matching services for individual commuters and can assist employers with developing a carpool program.

Although carpooling is a less optimal option for social distancing considerations, it can provide an **inexpensive alternative** for many commuters without access to a vehicle.

Risk

Low to no ability to social distance. However, a small set group of riders means there is more predictable exposure and strong ability to contact trace. Management can oversee safety protocols.

Reliability

Dependent on commitment of other carpoolers and level of employee adoption.

Equity/ Cost-Effectiveness

Low-cost. May provide option for those who are unable to use transit and do not have access to a car.

ROI No cost for employers.

Adaptability

Employers incur no fixed assets. Once carpoolers are matched, it is immediately adoptable.

Scalability

Can easily scale up or down depending on attitudes of employees. Some geographic limitations.



Best Practices: Carpooling

- 1. Develop workplace-specific carpool programming. Work with RideshareKC to provide educational materials, internal carpool matching, and planning assistance.
- 2. Provide priority parking for carpoolers and vanpoolers.
- 3. Encourage smaller carpool sizes for increased social distancing.
- 4. Establish sanitation and health protocols for carpoolers.
- 5. Always advocate for mask-wearing in carpools.

Local Resources

Visit **RideshareKC** to learn more about carpool programming and protocols.

Mode Evaluation: Biking, Walking, or Scooting

The coronavirus pandemic has spurred what many are calling a "bike boom," as homebound teleworkers and social distancing commuters take to the streets for much-needed exercise, fresh air, and safe commuting. Streets and sidewalks are filled with many more pedestrians, cyclists, and e-scooters provided by companies like Bird and Spin; and bike shops are quickly selling out as our communities rediscover the joys of active transportation.

RideKC Bike offers bicycle and e-bike share in locations around the metro, offering multiple healthy and accessible options. Throughout the pandemic, RideKC Bike has greatly **increased their sanitation efforts**, providing a safe commute solution. The system also provides free passes for healthcare workers and small businesses using RideKC Bikes for transportation and delivery services. Employers can also work with BikeWalkKC for **consultation**, **design services and permitting on bike parking**.

Risk

High opportunity to social distance, and transmission rates are lower outdoors. Shared surface transmission rates are low, meaning bike and scooter share is reasonably low risk.

Reliability

Active transportation is reliable for pedestrians or individuals who own their own bikes/scooters but is often weather-dependent. Bike and scooter share reliability is limited to availability.

Equity/ Cost-Effectiveness

Low or no cost to commuters, but accessibility may be limited to a commuter's physical abilities. In-store availability of bicycles may be limited due to high demand from consumers.

ROI

Minimal upfront investment by employers for bicycle facilities like lockers, bike racks, showers, or changing facilities. ROI dependent on usage.

Adaptability

No contracts, minimal fixed assets, and immediately adaptable for commuters.

Scalability

Viability is limited to a smaller population of employees due to geographic location, topography, existing bike lanes and infrastructure, etc.



Best Practices: Biking, Walking, or Scooting

- Provide or promote educational programming for new cyclists through local organizations like <u>BikeWalkKC</u>.
- 2. Assess and update bicycle facilities such as lockers, bike racks, and showers to accommodate cyclist demand, and incentivize new active commuters.
- 3. Encourage bike commuters to download bike-friendly apps like Strava, FitBit, or UnderArmour to track trips, or log rides on the RideshareKC website to compete with other employees at your organization.
- 4. Provide incentives for bicycle commuters, including contests or parking payouts.

Local Resources

The <u>RideKC Bike website</u> and <u>mobile app</u> provide information on nearby bicycle and e-bike rentals. To learn more about developing bicycle programming at the workplace, how to provide RideKC Bike + Scooter memberships for your employees, or to learn how you can become a more bike-friendly employer, contact Karen Campbell with BikeWalkKC at info@bikewalkkc.org.

In addition, Mid-America Regional Council has a number of active transportation resources, including a regional bike map located **here**.



Mode: Driving Alone

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 83% of commuters in Kansas City drove alone to work. Kansas City's car culture can be attributed to the size of our sprawling metro area, making transit access difficult for less population-dense parts of the city.

The sheer number of cars on the road comes at a price for businesses, however, as commuters foot the bill for personal vehicles and embark on congested and stressful commutes, while employers must maintain vast parking facilities to accommodate them. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unpredictable parking demand, with concern that the pandemic could spur many more commuters to drive alone and cause a sudden strain on parking facilities.

Risk

Beyond telecommute, driving alone provides the lowest risk of exposure. Good commute option for individuals with health risks who have access to a car and must work on site.

Reliability

Dependent on consistent access to a well-maintained vehicle. Increases in commuters driving alone generates congestion, leading to added commute time and potential impacts on employee stress/productivity.

Equity/
Cost-Effectiveness

Highest cost mode. Requires access to vehicle and ability to drive. Also mode with highest environmental impacts and costs.

ROI

Parking investment and facilities maintenance can be very costly to employers.

Adaptability

Employers must acquire and maintain parking facilities, which may not be easily adaptable or flexible.

Scalability

Can easily scale back on drive alone commuters depending on alternative commute options, however scaling up on drive alone commuters can be costly and can create parking management issues.



Best Practices: Driving Alone

- 1. Encourage employees with pre-existing conditions and other health risks to pursue driving alone if they have access to a vehicle and must work onsite.
- 2. To minimize potential strain on parking facilities, educate your employees about safe alternatives to driving alone.



- 3. Charging employees parking by the day can more cost-effectively accommodate A/B scheduling, remote work, and other uncertainties related to parking demand brought on by the coronavirus. See <u>pages 24-25</u> of this guide for more details.
- 4. Consider encouraging telecommuting at least part-time through the pandemic to limit parking strain and encourage social distancing.

Local Resources

To learn more about how to manage your single-occupancy vehicle commuters, safely reduce drive-alone commutes, and manage parking concerns, contact **RideshareKC** at rideshare@marc.org.



Potential Strategies

A robust safe commute policy should include the diverse transportation options that make the most sense for organizational goals. In addition, there are several other considerations and strategies that may be included to accommodate the health, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness of employee commute habits.

Flex Time

COVID-19 has spurred the introduction of more flexible policies for many companies offering telework, as working families have been balancing childcare, schooling, and work responsibilities. To accommodate their lives at home, many teleworkers have worked during non-traditional hours, with managers shifting their focus toward tangible results rather than closely managing scheduling. Building some flexibility into employees' telework schedule may be a critical accommodation for many workers attempting to strike a balance through the pandemic.

As workers return to the workplace, however, flexible scheduling takes on a new role. During peak commute hours of 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., roads, transit stops, buses, and the streetcar become crowded, making social distancing difficult. One possible solution is to let workers shift their hours to commute during off-peak times, promoting less congestion and safer commuting.

In addition, staggering shifts or using A/B scheduling can promote social distancing in the office, decrease congestion during morning commutes, and allow commuters who carpool/vanpool to have fewer passengers. Providing some flexibility for arrival times of transit commuters is also critical at this time, as capacity limits on vehicles and changes to service may impact their usual route to work.

Daily Parking

Parking facilities are a costly side-effect of having a high number of commuters who drive alone, with employers frequently footing the bill. COVID-19 has led to unpredictable parking demand as many workers continue working from home full-time or part-time, while others have switched to driving alone to work. Many employers who provide free parking currently are stuck paying for vastly underused parking facilities.



A potential solution to costly parking facilities and unpredictable demand during COVID-19 is to change the pricing structure for employee parking. Charging a daily parking fee would accommodate the flexible commute mix of telework, transit, active commuting, and driving, allowing individuals to pay only for the parking they use. A daily parking fee model eliminates the sunk cost of monthly parking that goes unused, provides substantially lower overhead for employers (possibly even generating revenue), and introduces daily choice and flexibility for commuters. In addition, if commuters are already paying for monthly parking, a daily fee could provide substantial savings if they use alternative modes or working from home some days. Parking costs are the most critical incentive for guiding commute behavior, and introducing the incentive of cost-savings for employees who skip driving can substantially unburden parking facilities, leading to lower overhead.

Commute Benefits & Incentives

While cost is a core factor in shaping commute habits, there are other unique incentives an employer can consider when encouraging safe and accessible commutes. If you are concerned about unpredictable surges or declines in parking demand throughout the pandemic, encouraging the use of alternative modes can make the number of cars in the lot more consistent, and combat untenable increases in single-occupant vehicle commuters. A balance of incentives and disincentives can be used to keep demand for parking predictably low.

- Commute Subsidies: Certain qualified transportation costs are designated a fringe benefit by the IRS. For 2020, employees can spend up to \$270/month of pre-tax income on public transportation or vanpool. Alternatively, employers can provide a stipend of up to \$270/month (or a combination of a stipend and pre-tax deduction) for employee public transportation or vanpool. Employees save on federal income taxes, while employers save on payroll taxes.
- Parking Cash-Out: For companies that offer free parking, employees who drive
 to work are receiving an additional benefit (worth the cost of their parking spot)
 over commuters who take alternative modes of transportation. Parking cash-out
 evens the balance, providing a payout to employees for the equivalent cost of a
 parking spot if they choose to forego parking. Providing a fiscal incentive to skip
 driving alone leads to a reduced strain on parking facilities.
- Contests and Rewards: Hosting employee contests around biking, walking, scooting, or teleworking can foster a fun culture of safe, healthy commuting.
 You can set up rewards through RideshareKC for individuals who pursue diverse, sustainable, or active commute types. In addition, commuters can log trips on apps like Strava or RideshareKC to view leaderboards for certain modes.

Guaranteed Ride Home

RideshareKC offers a **Guaranteed Ride Home program** for workers who take transit, carpool/vanpool, or have an active commute. The program provides a crucial safety net for these commuters, covering the cost of up to two rides per year in an emergency or if their ride falls through. Because employees may need to quickly get home in the event that they or their family members begin showing symptoms, or if a jobsite must shut down, it is crucial that employees **register for the program** in advance.



Telework Policy Samples

- Society for Human Resource Management Template: https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/policies/pages/telecommuting_policy.aspx
- Oregon Office of Energy Template: http://www.teleworkva.org/downloads/PolicySample1.pdf
- ThinkHR Sample Policy: https://www.thinkhr.com/hrhotline/alerts/Sample%20Policy%20-%20 Telecommuting%20Arrangements.pdf

Commute & Parking Policy Guides

- Guidebook to Implementing an Employer-Based Commuter Options Program, Massachusetts Department of Transportation.
 https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidebook/download
- Commuter Benefit Briefs, Best Workplaces For Commuters.
 Supporting Commuters Returning to Worksites in COVID-19, Association for Commuter Transportation.
 https://www.actweb.org/files/ACT/Publications/Supporting_Commuters_Version_2_FINAL.pdf
- Parking Cash Out & Daily Parking, Best Workplaces For Commuters.
 https://www.bestworkplaces.org/pdf/ParkingCashout_07.pdf

Commute Survey Samples

- Employee Transportation Survey Sample, San Francisco Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission.
 https://commuterbenefits.511.org/docs/sample_survey.pdf
- Employee Commute Survey Example, Central TX Clean Air Partners.
 http://www.cleanairpartnerstx.org/EmployeeCommuteSampleSurvey2012.pdf
- Guide to Employer Commuter Surveying, Best Workplaces for Commuters.
 https://www.bestworkplaces.org/pdf/survey-guidelines-faq.pdf

Additional Resources

- Latest COVID-19 News & Updates, Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Emergency Managers Committee.
 - http://www.preparemetrokc.org/
- Safe Return KC Guide, MARC, Greater Kansas City Chamber, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, Kansas City Area Economic Development Council. http://www.preparemetrokc.org/covid19/assets/SafeReturnKCGuide.pdf
- Information & Resources To Promote Safe Commuting During COVID-19, Association for Commuter Transportation.
 https://www.actweb.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3506
- Protecting Yourself When Using Transportation, CDC.
 https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html#rideshare-taxi
- Telework.gov: https://www.telework.gov/about/
- Safe Commute Toolkit, Scoop.
 http://na-sj30.marketo.com/rs/423-JTP-331/images/Scoop%27s%20safe%20
 commute%20toolkit.pdf
- Integrating Measures for Business Continuity and Transportation Demand Management to Ensure Regional Emergency Preparedness and Mobility, Transportation Research Record.
 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3141/2137-10
- Coronavirus Disease Advice for the Public, World Health Organization.
 https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public