**[DRAFT] Commuter Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

As a part of the Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP) effort, one of the University’s key objectives is:

**Objective 3.4.1: "Develop a Commuter Program (Bus, Bike, and Hike) for faculty and staff. Register 100 people by FY24 and 500 people by FY30." The responsible campus unit for championing this objective are Parking along with F&S.**

A convenient Commuter Program will incentivize staff and faculty members to leave personal vehicles off campus. Incentives through this program would only be offered to employees who relinquish their annual campus parking permits; as such, all participants will be required to obtain verification through the Parking Department.

This initiative follows suit after other Big 10 universities that have launched their own programs with featured incentives, such as:

* University of Maryland, College Park
  + Pre-Tax Transit Deduction, Guaranteed Ride Home Program, Parking Permit Discounts
* Indiana University Bloomington
  + Free emergency ride home (ERH), Free rides on Bloomington Transit Bus or campus bus, Free Zipcar membership and $9.50 driving credit, opportunity to win $50 gift card (once per semester), 10 one day permit (full rate) per semester, 5 one day permit (half rate) per semester
* University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
  + Students can win cool stuff and employees can earn Wellness rewards
* University of Wisconsin, Madison
  + Campus bus and discounted employee bus passes, discounted bike share, cost sharing through carpool and vanpool parking, the emergency ride home (ERH) program, comprehensive assistance and route planning for any mode(s) of alternative transportation, and more
* University of Iowa
  + Employee Van Pool, Carpool, U-PASS, Biking, Zipcar, Emergency Ride Home
* Rutgers University
  + Programs for Students and Staff. Commuter Tax$ave for employees, and Student Commuter Program for a $50 gift card for mass transit. There is also a Mass Transit Tax Savings for Part-Time Employees.

With its launch, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will be the 7th university to provide a Commuters Program to promote the use of sustainable options and active modes of transportation.

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**The following Commuter Program structure is proposed:**

*Establish a strategic point-based rewards program to inspire and motivate staff, faculty, and students to engage with active modes of transportation, such as Bus, Bike, or Hike, or alternate opportunities to work such as telecommuting. This point-based system incentivizes University members to leave their personal vehicles off campus, managing the demand of campus parking and reducing overall University-based carbon emissions. If telecommuting, this program will additionally reduce the amount of space utilized in university facilities.*

***After opting for active modes of transportations, the earned points may be redeemed for the following potential rewards, broken down by categories:***

* **Additional Paid Days Off (PTO) -- 1-2 days off in a Fiscal Year**
  + Highest level redeemable credit
* **Parking**
  + ~2 weeks of free parking on campus
* **Recreational Activities**
  + Credits to access, reserve, or rent equipment from the Fab Lab
  + Discount at Krannert Center (Theatre & Musical performances, Gift Shop)
  + Discounts to DIA sponsored events (Basketball, Football, etc. Games)
  + Discounts at Illini Bookstore / Illini Union items
  + Credits to rent/reserve sessions at the Bowling Alley
  + Discounted Membership to the ARC (original rate of $40/month, $5-10 monthly discount)
    - Ice Arena
  + Campus Bike Center Membership
  + Veo credits, where points are earned based off of an agreement made with Veo.
  + Veo Membership
  + ZipCar credits
* **Food & Retail**
  + Dining Credits (to be redeemed at locations throughout campus, such as Ikenberry Dining hall, 57 North, etc.)
  + Gift cards to local grocery stores (ex: Walmart, Target, Harvest Market, County Market, etc.)
  + Gift cards to local coffee shops (ex: Dunkin’ Donuts, Starbucks, BrewLab Coffee, Flying Machine Avionics, Espresso Royale, Café Kopi, Caffe Paradiso, Caffe Bene, etc.)
  + Gift cards to local restaurants
  + Gift cards to local stores
* **Physical Items**
  + Transportation Based
    - A Bike, Skateboard, Electric Skateboard
  + Technology Based ~~(to promote telecommuting)~~
    - iPad Pro, Phone, Laptop, Desktop Accessories, AirPods
    - Subscriptions to online programs and other applications ~~to ease online work~~
  + Illini Merchandise (Illini Union/Bookstore items)
    - Hoodie / Sweatshirt, T-Shirts, Hat
  + Other Miscellaneous Items (Giveaway items)
    - Hydroflask / Water Bottle, Reusable Cutlery or Straws
* **Other Incentives**
  + Parking credit at meters owned by the University of Illinois, the City of Champaign, and the City of Urbana

***Additional incentives that could be offered, without necessary redemptions are:***

* **Shared Spaces**
  + Inspired by Illinois Tech’s “Commuter Lounge”, the University of Illinois can provide a shared space specifically available for commuter students. By offering a space to study, have fun, and relax outside of academic classes, the goal would be to provide comfort on-campus to eliminate the need to continuously travel to different places throughout the day.
  + Inspired by BenU’s “Commuter Lockers”, lockers can be provided throughout the campus for students, faculty, and staff to use. For individuals who do not have an office or designated space to call their own, providing a locker will provide convenience for community members to store their necessities at a convenient location, as opposed to in their cars, apartments, or homes.
  + Shower Facilities available to individuals who bike or walk to campus
  + Bike Lockers at discounted or free rates (difficult for it to be free)
    - Long-term system membership
    - Will need to be close to the free parking lots (Urbana, Champaign, E-14)
* **Guaranteed Emergency Rides -- Low priority, difficulties with staffing and COVID-19**
  + Sarthak or Stacey will be talking to Pete Varney
* **Resources to help parents identify child care services near campus -- Need more discussion, ideas, and experienced input**

***The following ideas may be used to engage and motivate the public to begin their Bus, Bike, or Hike Journey:***

* Create a platform to track the total of mitigated CO2 emissions, energy savings, trips saved, money saved, etc. (to provide quantifiable successes for users to stay updated with their sustainable journey)
  + For future reference: <https://cleartheairchallenge.org/the-challenge/>
  + Would need an app
* Social initiatives such as commuter challenges and friendly competitions
  + Refer to the “Clear the Air Challenge” for commuter challenges
  + Best performing individuals will win a prize in [month]
* Campaigns to educate users of the importance of the Commuter Program & its environmental benefits
* Raffle at the end of the year (Giveaways)
  + End of the year report -- “\_\_\_\_\_ was reduced/saved/etc.”, “\_\_\_\_\_ participated in the challenge”, etc.
  + Raffle as a “Thank you” for participating
    - 10 people = 1-2 prizes, 100 people = 5-10 prizes
  + Can be held at different events throughout the year

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**Logistics with Partnerships & Sponsorships:**

* [VeoRide Financial Proposal](https://uillinoisedu-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/fandsamaloto2_ad_uillinois_edu/EW3VZDzdeBlPsL9qF9fK6jkBEiaXQjZRlkp4rttKdhH1Kw?e=yhTjFb) (Very rough draft for brainstorming)

**Potential Action Items:**

* Identify point-to-cash value ratio
* Identify quantitative information regarding profit margin for proposals for partnerships or sponsors

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**Sources used for Inspiration:**

[Rideamigos:](https://rideamigos.com/commuter-incentives/)

* Parking cash-out programs
* Providing pre-tax benefits to those who use qualified alternative commuting modes
* Points-based reward programs
  + Points-based reward programs also work well. Organizations can assign specific point values to specific modes of transportation, allowing commuters to earn those points every time they log a commute using those modes. You can also offer bonus points to those who reach certain thresholds, such as using an alternative mode to commute every day in a given week, or a set number of times each month. Then, participants can redeem those points for prizes, which can be anything from cash and [gift cards](https://rideamigos.com/platform/commuterewards/) to event tickets or [paid days off](https://rideamigos.com/city-of-austin-commuter-incentives-case-study/).
* Social incentives, like commuter challenges and friendly competitions
* WHY?
  + “Some jurisdictions have laws requiring businesses and employers of a certain size to maintain in-house commuter programs. This ensures that larger organizations promote alternatives to solo driving in the interests of fighting pollution and congestion.
  + If you aren’t bound by law to maintain a commuter program and you’re not sure whether or not to invest in implementing one, these facts and tips can help you make the right decision:
    - Employers with a significant percentage of commuters who travel by car can benefit from incentive programs that encourage the adoption of different modes
    - Incentive programs are a proven way to reduce or manage employee parking demand, thus helping control costs
    - They can also be used as a strategy to manage campus parking, helping colleges and universities improve safety while saving money
    - Companies that offer commuter programs tend to attract and retain higher-quality workers and benefit from higher levels of employee job satisfaction
    - Commuter programs also help businesses qualify for valuable tax benefits and government incentives
  + At the end of the day: if your workforce is large enough that your employees would benefit from an incentive program and you want to do your part to drive positive change, then go ahead and introduce one.”
* <https://wisconsindot.gov/Documents/travel/road/rideshare/EmployerToolkitWeb.pdf>
* <https://decisely.com/perks-of-commuter-benefits-program/>