



# Getting Started with Commuter Benefits

**Commuter Choice Maryland**  
**Maryland Department of Transportation**  
**December 11, 2024**



# Commuting is a near universal, daily activity.

## And, it can be costly!

- Traffic congestion
- Poor air quality
- Lost economic opportunities
- Employee turnover

## 2023 Statistics

**31.4 Mins.**

Average one-way commute in MD<sup>1</sup>

**214 Million**

Person-hours of delay on MD roadways<sup>2</sup>

**\$5.6 Billion**

Estimated cost of roadway congestion in MD<sup>2</sup>

**\$12,182**

Average annual car ownership cost<sup>3</sup>



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SUCCESS - COMMUTING

**Commuting costs \$2,000 and 39 hours more than it did before the pandemic. It explains why no one wants to return to office**

BY CHLOE BERGER  
Nov 31, 2023 at 11:57 AM EDT

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [x](#)



**U.S. WORKERS HIT THE ROAD**  
How commutes have changed & their impact on career decisions

**23%** OF WORKERS HAVE LEFT A JOB BECAUSE OF A BAD COMMUTE



**Average Cost-per-Hire for Companies Is \$4,129, SHRM Survey Finds**

42 days is the average time it takes to fill an open position

August 3, 2016



Anyone ever quit their job because the commute took too much time in Boston? Posted this on a runners' group earlier (by mistake) but who knows

[r/careerguidance](#) - Posted by u/Kaylacathleen 1 month ago

Should I quit my job due to a long commute?

[Advice](#)

# Commuting can be improved.

How? By understanding options available to your team, promoting programs, incentives, and resources, and providing commuter benefits.

## Why provide benefits?

- Cost Savings: Tax reductions are available for both employer and employee
- Differentiate Company: Support employees, become more desirable employer
- Added Value: Improve affordability for employees
- Environmental Impact: Meet sustainability goals and certifications
- Requirements: Meet local government obligations

# Commuter Choice Maryland can help!

## Who we are

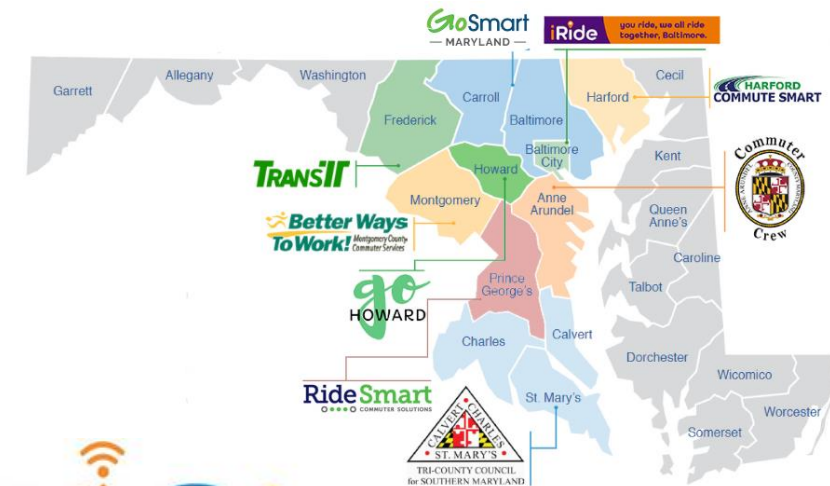
A free program of the Maryland Department of Transportation

## What we do

- Help employers develop commuter benefits programs
- Promote commuting options to the public
- Administer statewide commuter programs

## How we do what we do

- Financial incentives
- Assistance and recognition
- Lots of engagement and collaboration



[commuterchoicemaryland.com](http://commuterchoicemaryland.com)

# In this presentation, we will explore:

- How can employers **develop** commuter benefits programs?
- How can employers **promote** commuter benefits programs?
- How can employers **fund** commuter benefits programs?
- How can employers **receive assistance** to build commuter programs and **be recognized for** their achievements?





# How can employers develop and promote commuter benefits programs?

A brief, non-exhaustive overview



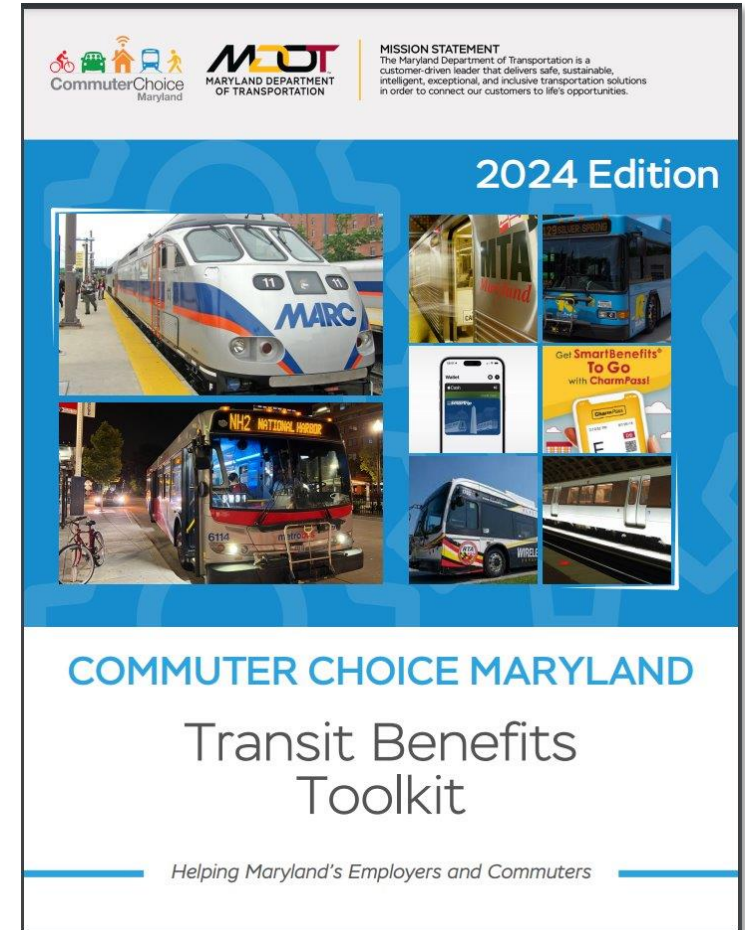
# Explore The Options: Transit

## What is it?

Network of buses, trains, and regional travel options.

## Examples of Commuter Benefits:

- Share trip-planning resources
- Offer subsidy/pre-tax financial assistance for transit fares
- Locate workplace near mass transit

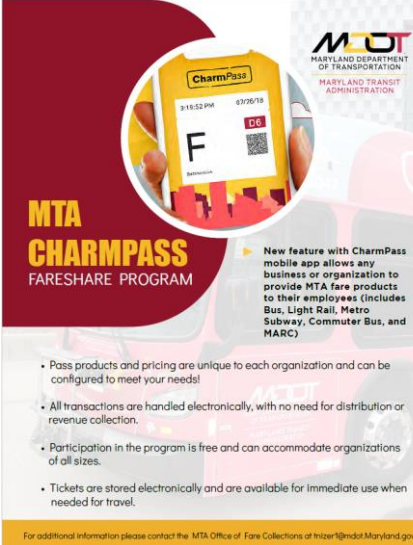


Explore the  
full Toolkit



# Employer Resource: Transit Pass Programs

- **Transit systems may offer their own pass administration platforms**
  - Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) FareShare Program
  - WMATA SmartBenefits Program
- **Third-party benefits administrators**
- **Pre-tax employee paid, employer-provided subsidy, or both**
  - Subsidies may qualify employers for MD Commuter Tax Credit
- **Additional local incentive programs may be available**




**MTA CHAMPASS**  
FARESHARE PROGRAM

New feature with CharmPass mobile app allows any business or organization to provide MTA fare products to their employees (includes Bus, Light Rail, Metro Subway, Commuter Bus, and MARC)

- Pass products and pricing are unique to each organization and can be configured to meet your needs!
- All transactions are handled electronically, with no need for distribution or revenue collection.
- Participation in the program is free and can accommodate organizations of all sizes.
- Tickets are stored electronically and are available for immediate use when needed for travel.

For additional information please contact the MTA Office of Fare Collections at [trizen1@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:trizen1@mdot.maryland.gov)



**Smart for Employers. Smart for Employees. Smart for You.**

SmartBenefits® is a fee-free way for employers to save on payroll taxes while allowing employees to commute tax free in DC, Northern Virginia and Southern Maryland.

Employees can use SmartBenefits® to pay for transit and parking tax free, anywhere Metro's SmartTrip® card is accepted, including at Metrolink parking lots. They can also use SmartBenefits® to pay for MARC, VRE and MTA Commuter Bus passes, as well as MetroAccess. Hundreds of vanpool operators accept SmartBenefits®, too.

You can offer SmartBenefits® as a direct employee benefit, a pre-tax deduction, or a combination of both. But no matter how you offer it, SmartBenefits® is a powerful tool for helping you recruit, retain and motivate employees.

It's easy to enroll and there are no ongoing fees.

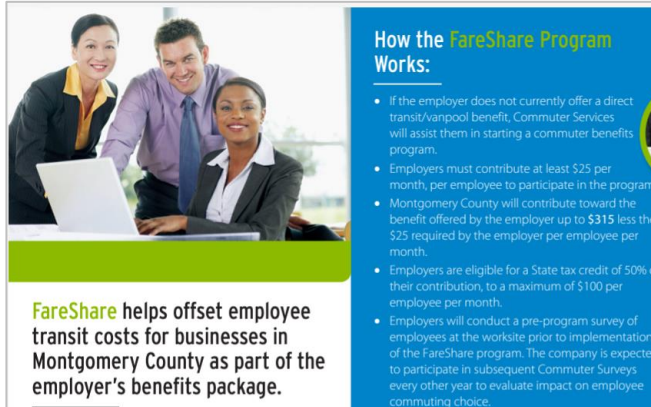
**ENROLLMENT IS EASY**  
See the GETTING STARTED section at [www.mta.com/smartbenefits](http://www.mta.com/smartbenefits).  
Need more help? Contact our SmartBenefits account team at [smartbenefits@wmata.com](mailto:smartbenefits@wmata.com) or 202-992-2784.



Get SmartBenefits® To Go with CharmPass!

Your Transit Pass. Faster.

Download on the App Store or GET IT ON Google Play



**How the FareShare Program Works:**

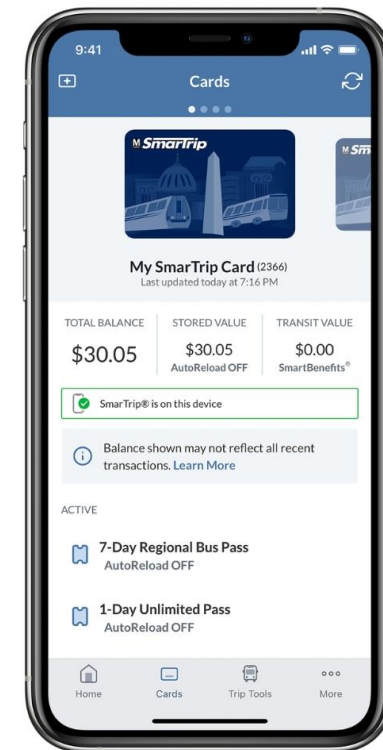
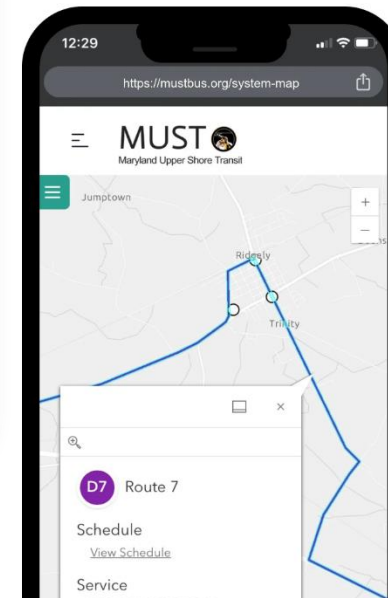
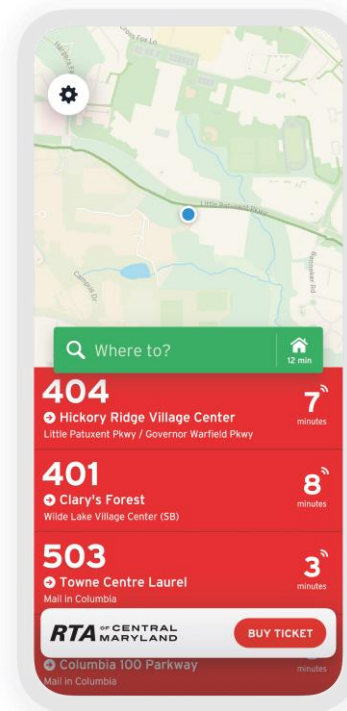
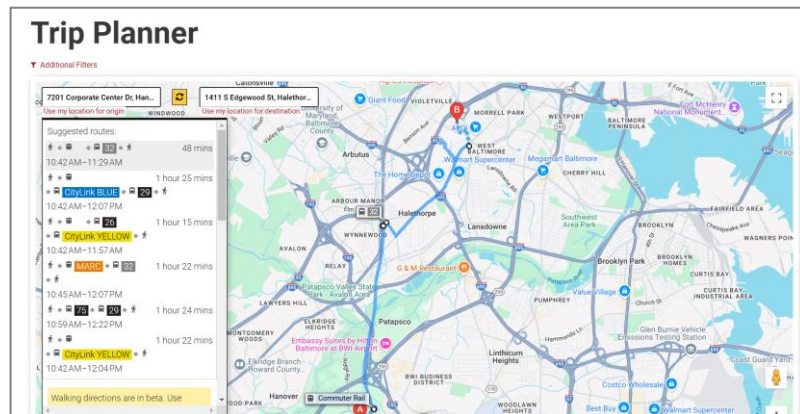
- If the employer does not currently offer a direct transit/vanpool benefit, Commuter Services will assist them in starting a commuter benefits program.
- Employers must contribute at least \$25 per month, per employee to participate in the program.
- Montgomery County will contribute toward the benefit offered by the employer up to \$315 less the \$25 required by the employer per employee per month.
- Employers are eligible for a State tax credit of 50% of their contribution, to a maximum of \$100 per employee per month.
- Employers will conduct a pre-program survey of employees at the worksite prior to implementation of the FareShare program. The company is expected to participate in subsequent Commuter Surveys every other year to evaluate impact on employee commuting choice.

**FareShare helps offset employee transit costs for businesses in Montgomery County as part of the employer's benefits package.**



# Transit Resources for Commuters

- Transit trip planning, real-time tracking, and digital ticketing



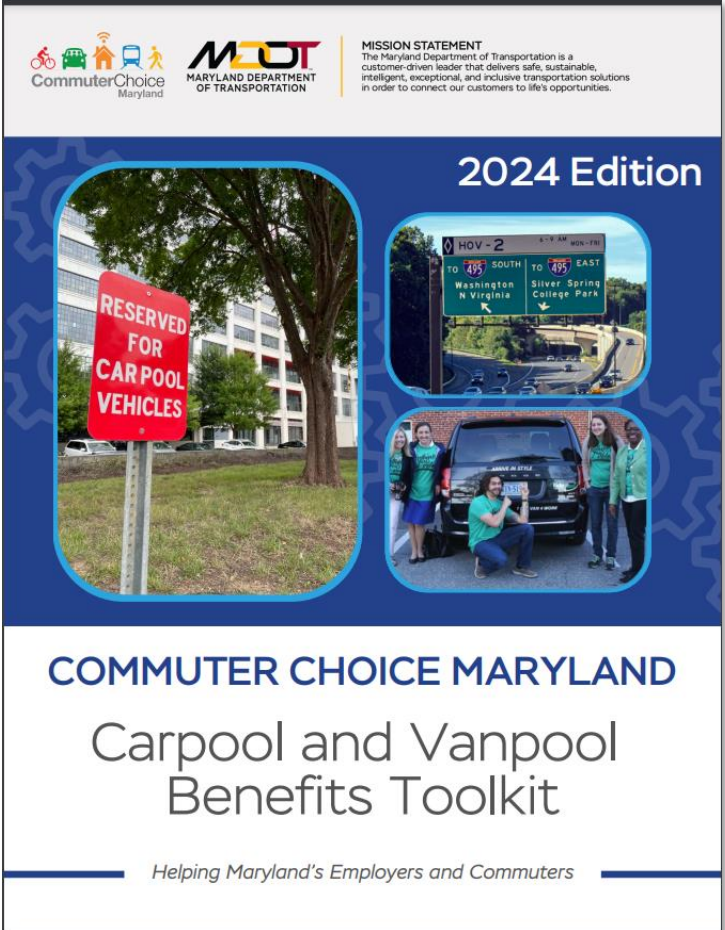
# Explore The Options: Ridesharing

## What is it?

Carpooling and Vanpooling

## Examples of Commuter Benefits:

- Share ridematching resources
- Subsidies and pre-tax payment options
- Toll discounts to employees who rideshare
- Preferred/discounted parking for carpools and vanpools



**CommuterChoice** Maryland

**MDOT**  
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION

**MISSION STATEMENT**  
The Maryland Department of Transportation is a customer-driven leader that delivers safe, sustainable, intelligent, exceptional, and inclusive transportation solutions in order to connect our customers to life's opportunities.

**2024 Edition**

**COMMUTER CHOICE MARYLAND**  
Carpool and Vanpool  
Benefits Toolkit

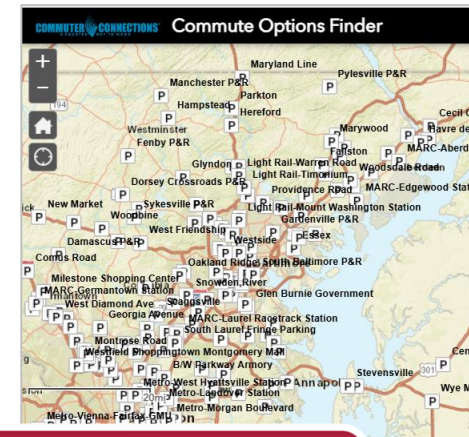
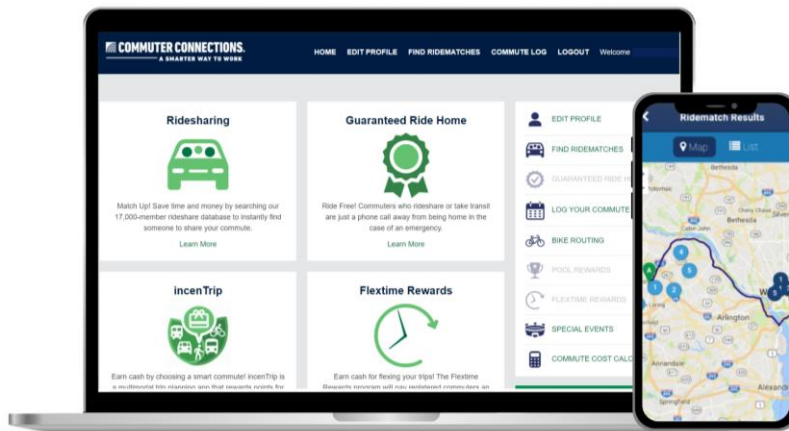
*Helping Maryland's Employers and Commuters*

Explore the  
full Toolkit

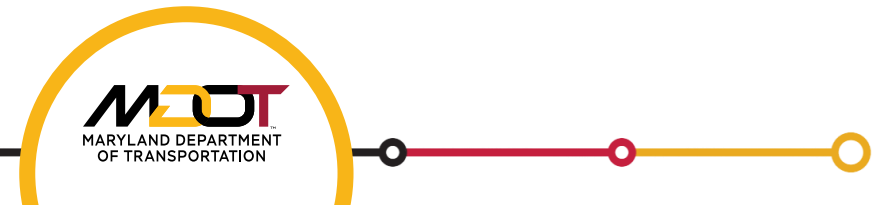


# Ridesharing Resources & Incentives

- Free ridematching platform to find carpools and vanpools
- Park-and-Ride Lot locations
- 'Pool Rewards for carpools and vanpools (DC region)



[CommuterConnections.org](https://www.commuterconnections.org)  
[BaltimoreCommutes.org](https://www.baltimorecommutes.org)



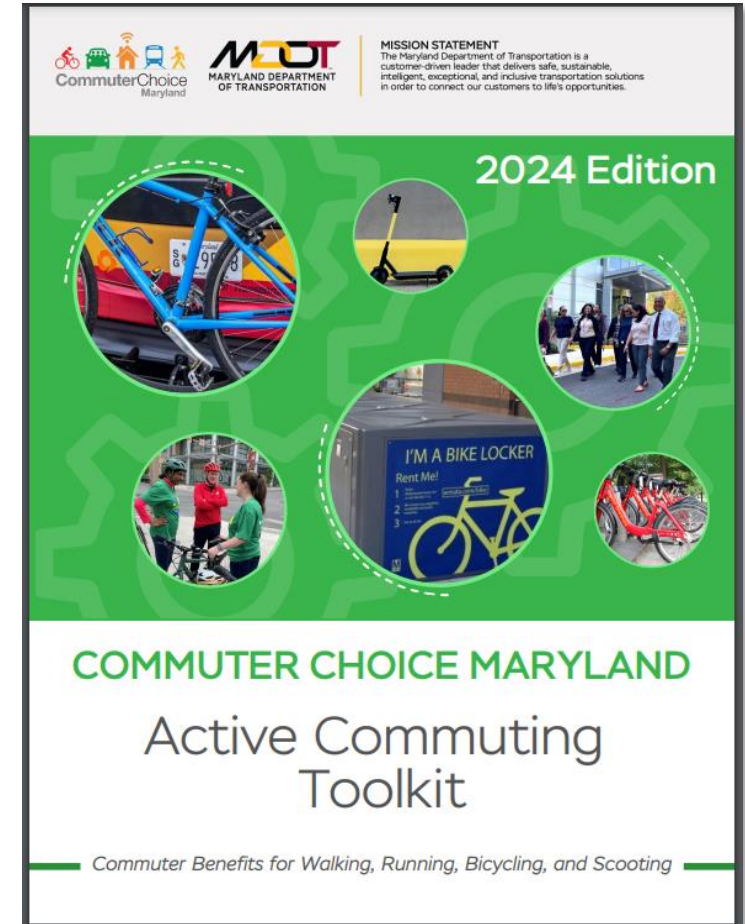
# Explore The Options: Active Commuting

## What is it?

Incorporating physical activity into commute

## Examples of Commuter Benefits:

- Share resources for bikeshare locations and guidance on bringing bikes and scooters on transit
- Subsidies for bike equipment and maintenance, reflective gear, bikeshare/scootershare memberships
- Financial incentives for employees to be active commuters (cycling stipends, health and wellness credits)
- Facilities at work: bike parking, showers, lockers
- Choose a work location that is accessible by foot or bike



Explore the  
full Toolkit





# Explore The Options: Telework & Flexwork

## What is it?

Flexibility about where and when work happens

## Examples of Commuter Benefits:

- Flexible work schedules: flextime and compressed work week
- Telework policy that permits some or all work to take place remotely
- Subsidies for telework costs
  - Computer equipment, software, internet
  - Coworking space memberships



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full Toolkit





# “What if” Resource: Guaranteed Ride Home

- **SIX free rides home from work per year**
- Personal emergencies and unexpected overtime
- Available across the greater DC/Baltimore regions
- Employer-funded GRH programs may qualify for the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit



**GUARANTEED RIDE HOME (GRH)**

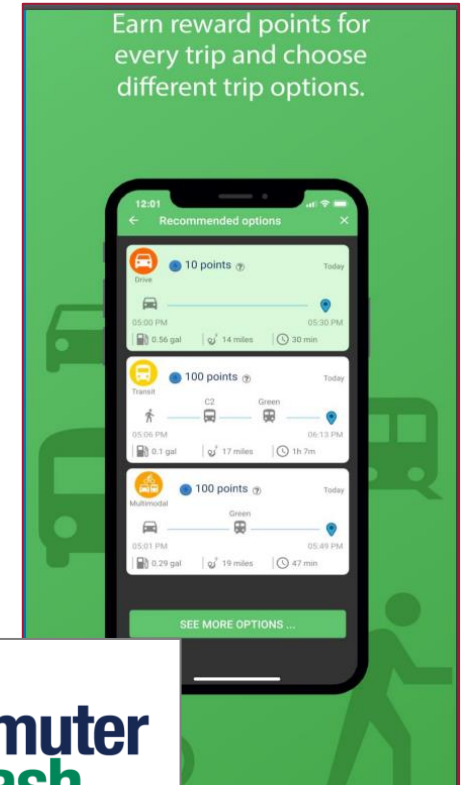
Taking the **“what ifs”** out of your work day!



[CommuterConnections.org](http://CommuterConnections.org)  
[BaltimoreCommutes.org](http://BaltimoreCommutes.org)

# Commuter Rewards

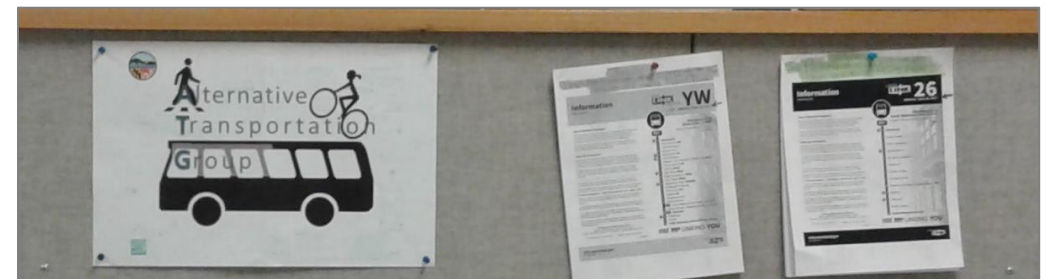
- incenTrip (soon to be rebranded as Commuter Cash)
- Earn points for logging commute trips, redeemable for real-world rewards
- Opportunities to earn additional points through various challenges
- Free and available across Maryland, DC, and northern Virginia



# When and How to Promote

## Early, often, and however you can!

- Include with recruitment materials
- Include as part of new employee onboarding and orientation
- Regular reminders – intranet, posters, digital boards, emails, employee events





# How can employers fund commuter benefits?

Federal and State tax incentives



# Funding Commuter Benefits Programs

## Employer-Provided Subsidy

- Employer funds a direct benefit
- Certain benefits eligible for **State Tax Credit**
- Certain benefits eligible for **Federal Tax Incentives**

## Employee Pre-Tax Benefits

- Funds deducted from employees' pay checks
- Save on Payroll and Income Taxes
- Certain benefits eligible for **Federal Tax Incentives**

Combine approaches  
across benefits  
(where allowable)



# Federal Transportation Fringe

The IRS allows employers to offer tax-free commuter benefits for:

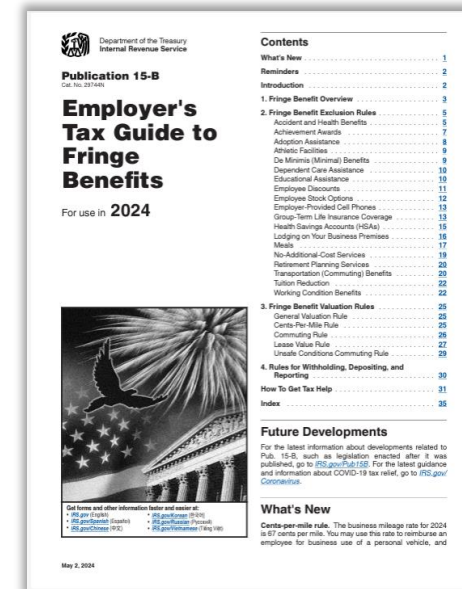
- Transit
- Vanpool
- Qualified commuter-related parking



## 2025 limits:

- **\$325/month/employee** for transit and vanpool
- **\$325/month/employee** for commute-related parking

Applies to **employer-provided subsidy**, **employee-pretax benefits**, or **both**



[www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15b.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15b.pdf)



# Maryland Commuter Tax Credit

**Eligible businesses include:**  
Sole proprietorships, corporations, tax-exempt nonprofits, and pass through entities such as partnerships, subchapter S corporations, limited liability companies, and business trusts.



- Applies to **employer-provided subsidies**
- For Maryland businesses, including 501c3 and 501c4
- Claim 50% of subsidies paid to employees for commuting, **up to \$1,200 per employee per year**
- Claim against personal/corporate income tax or insurance premium tax

## Qualifying Commuter Programs:

- Transit\*
- Vanpool\*
- Carpool
- Parking Cash-Out
- Active Transportation
- Telework
- Multimodal Last Mile
- Employer-Funded GRH

\* Also qualifies for the Federal Transportation Fringe Benefit

[www.mdot.Maryland.gov/mdcommutertaxcredit](http://www.mdot.Maryland.gov/mdcommutertaxcredit)





# How can employers receive assistance and recognition for building commuter programs?

Employer Partner Program



# Customized Support for Maryland Employers

Because There is No “One Size Fits All” Solution

Employer Partners receive free assistance including but not limited to:

- Evaluating your workplace’s unique situation and employees’ needs
- Supporting survey and data analysis efforts
- Connecting you to program resources
- Help implement and launch new programs
- Providing ongoing support and promotional materials
- Sharing information on tax benefits



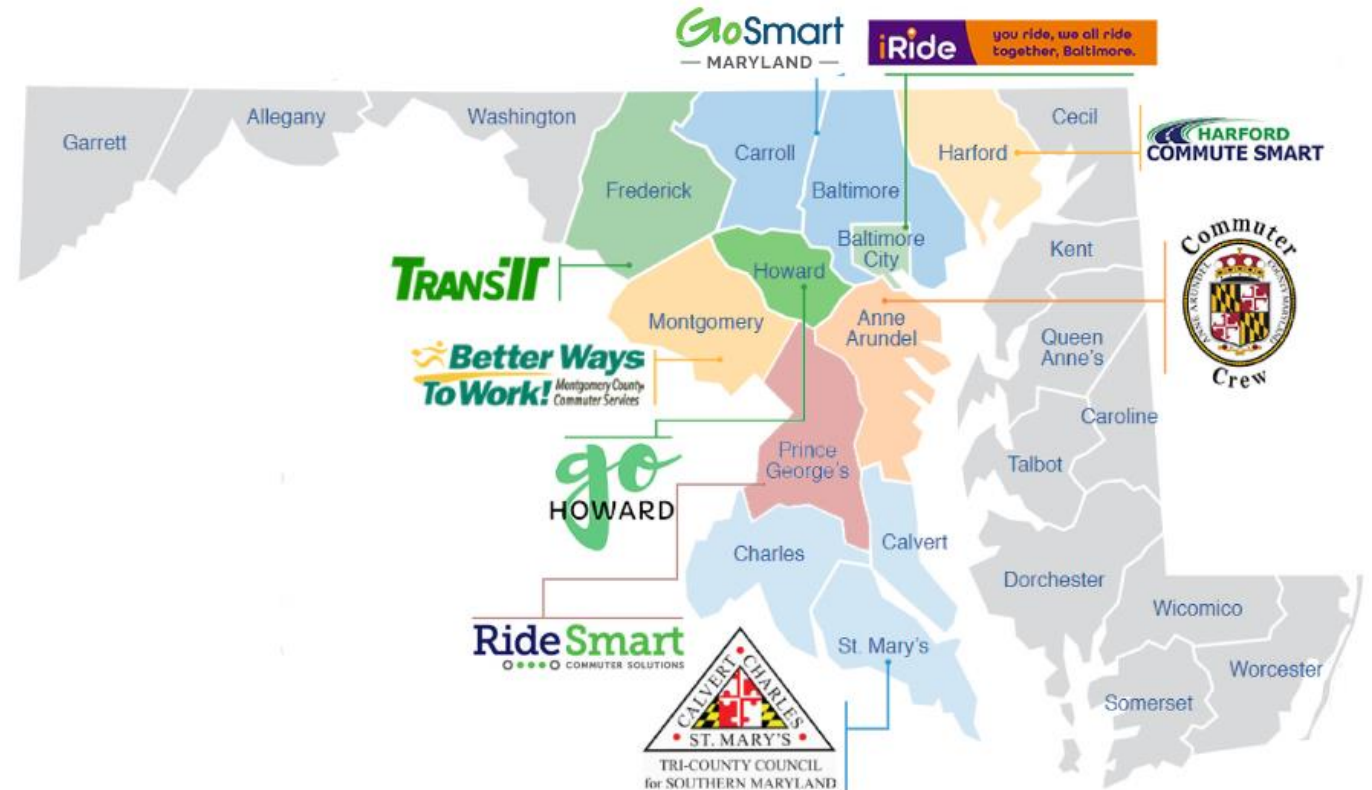
[www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner](http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner)



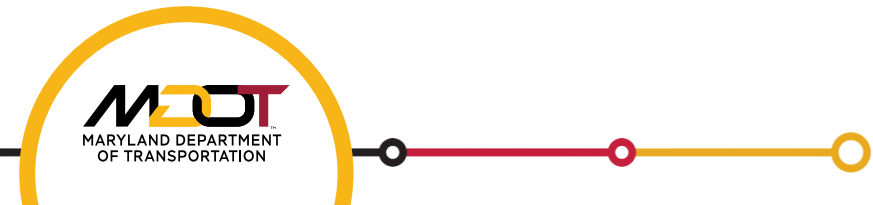


# Statewide Support

- We're part of a dedicated statewide network of commute program managers.
- No matter where your workplaces are in Maryland, you have our support!



[mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/index.aspx?pageid=52](http://mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/index.aspx?pageid=52)

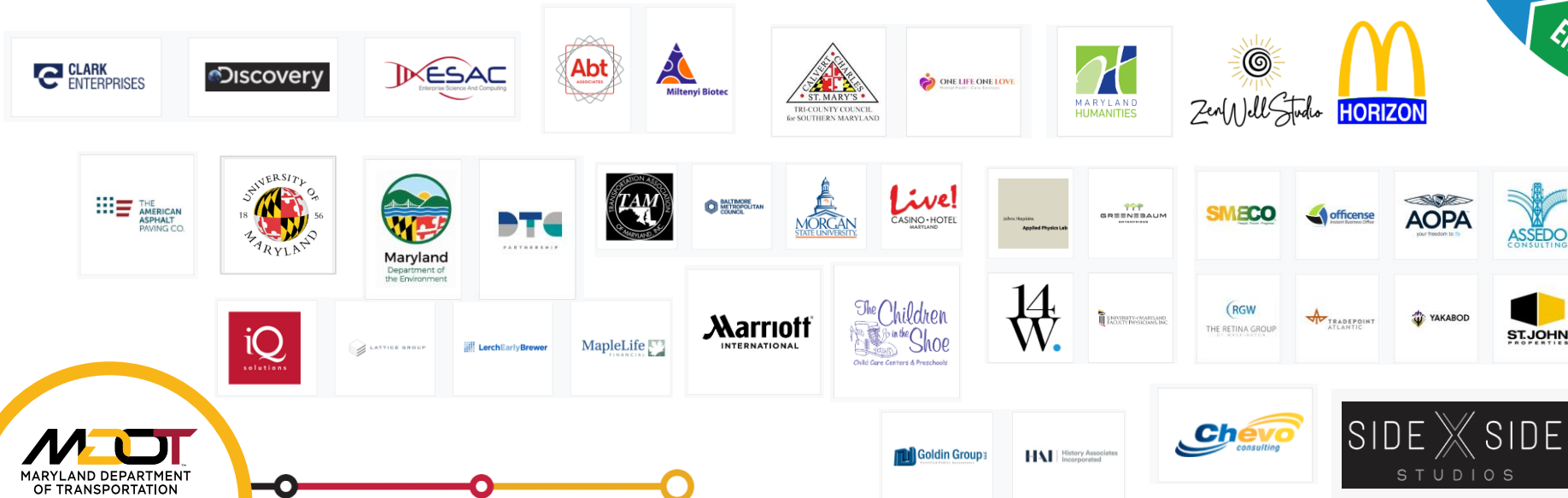




# The Recognition Your Organization Deserves!

Employer Partners receive statewide recognition of your organization's leadership.

If your organization provides and/or promotes any commuter option or benefit, we want to celebrate it!



Join Today!



# Inspiration From Maryland Employer Partners

## Horizon LLC ([Link to article](#))

- \$50 monthly transit pass is 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked benefit in employee surveys.
- Employee turnover is significantly lower than national average because of their commuter benefit.



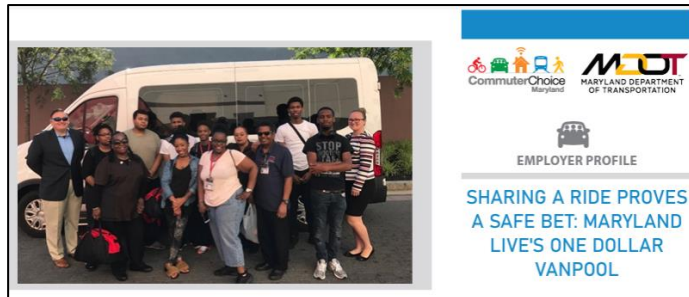
<https://youtu.be/hhBrBjMjghM?si=a6hzlyV4rXnzlQwE>

# Inspiration From Maryland Employer Partners

## Live! Casino & Hotel ([Link to article](#))

- 24/7 operation
- Vanpool subsidy
- \$1 a Day Commute Club

“None of the participants have left since starting the program. Normally the turnover rate for that shift was over 50%.”



“From a leadership and business perspective, investing in a vanpool program is a smart decision, especially if your employees face transportation obstacles.”

-Steve Heise

Vice President of Human Resources, Maryland Live! Casino and Hotel

“I save money each day, and the driver and other riders”

Live! Casino & Hotel is one of Maryland's major employers, with approximately 3,000 team members. It is located just off the Baltimore-Washington Parkway - part of one of the most heavily congested corridors in the nation.

Open 24/7, 365 days a year, Live! understands that providing safe, convenient and comfortable transportation options to its employees is crucial to maintaining operations and productivity around the clock. This is why Live! launched a vanpool program for its employees, not only lowering the cost of commuting but cutting commute times as well.

Live! Casino & Hotel's Vice President of Human Resources Steve Heise, took the reins on coordinating the vanpool program, with help from Anne Arundel County's Rideshare Coordinator Tabitha Ernst and local representatives from Enterprise Rideshare, the leading vanpool provider in the country.

Enterprise Rideshare jumpstarted their efforts by placing vanpool ads around the Live! facilities. They also conducted outreach to generate interest among the team members.

Enterprise was also busy behind the scenes, working with Live! Director of Analytics Craig Levesque, developing finance models and helping them take advantage of the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, which covers up to 50% of eligible expenses for running a vanpool program. They also conducted geo-target analyses to detect areas with the highest need for vanpools.

The overnight shift generated the most interest, due to the less frequent bus service late at night that many team members relied on to get to work. The “door-to-door” service was another strong selling point for these team members, eliminating the need to walk up to a mile in the middle of the night, to and from the bus stop.

After joining the vanpool, their commuting costs dropped to \$1 per day and travel times went down

## Davis Construction ([Link to article](#))

- Commuter options (telework) responsible for 5% increase in retention

 Employer Profile

## Construct Creative Commute Options



Looking to improve your staff's commuting experience and increase employee retention? Learn how DAVIS Construction has made this happen! Headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, DAVIS is a 500+ person company with dozens of jobsites across several states including their main office in Rockville, Maryland.

**COMMUNICATE AND RETAIN**  
Greg Munson, Senior Manager of Office Services and Facilities, makes sure DAVIS staff have easy access to commute information. He knows the more information that is available the more comfortable one is in exploring commute options. He ensures that route maps and schedules are posted in their lobby, a place both employees and visitors frequent, and that their employee intranet site is kept updated with relevant links, maps and details related to commute options.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, few DAVIS employees worked from home. However, during the height of the pandemic, DAVIS restructured their policies to accommodate a flexible work schedule for employees who live in the DMV area. They continue offering this option to all employees, allowing many staff to work up to two days per week remotely after they have worked at the company for six months. **This policy alone has been credited by DAVIS for increasing their employee retention by five percent!**

Pictured to the Right:  
DAVIS Construction's  
Reston Row Hotel/





# Inspiration From Maryland Employer Partners

## Eurofins Agrosience ([Link to article](#))

- Flexible work scheduling
- Help facilitate carpools



"It's our responsibility to offer comprehensive benefits programs to each and every employee. We need to look at how people get to and from work and how they impact the community."

-Heather Hillaert, HR Director, Eurofins Agrosience Services



Healthcare. Vacation. Retirement. Dental. These are all things people expect in return for the jobs they perform. But with a tight labor market and many workers reevaluating what they expect from their employers, companies like Eurofins Agrosience Services are finding other benefits to attract and retain top talent, sometimes at no additional cost.

One such benefit is flexibility. While Eurofins, a scientific testing company, cannot offer remote and hybrid work benefits to the vast majority of their employees, the company has found a way to provide a benefit that allows employees to have a healthy work-life balance.

"We pride ourselves on providing flexible schedules. Our employees have responsibilities outside of work, and they appreciate being able to come in late and leave early," says Human Resources Director Heather Hillaert. In addition to helping retain employees, flexible work schedules can also serve to reduce congestion in Maryland during peak travel times and allow staff to commute when less cars are on the road. Hillaert estimates that about 40% of Eurofins' 150 Maryland staff takes advantage of the flexible work schedule benefit, which can include hybrid and remote work for administrative jobs and non-traditional work hours for most of the company.




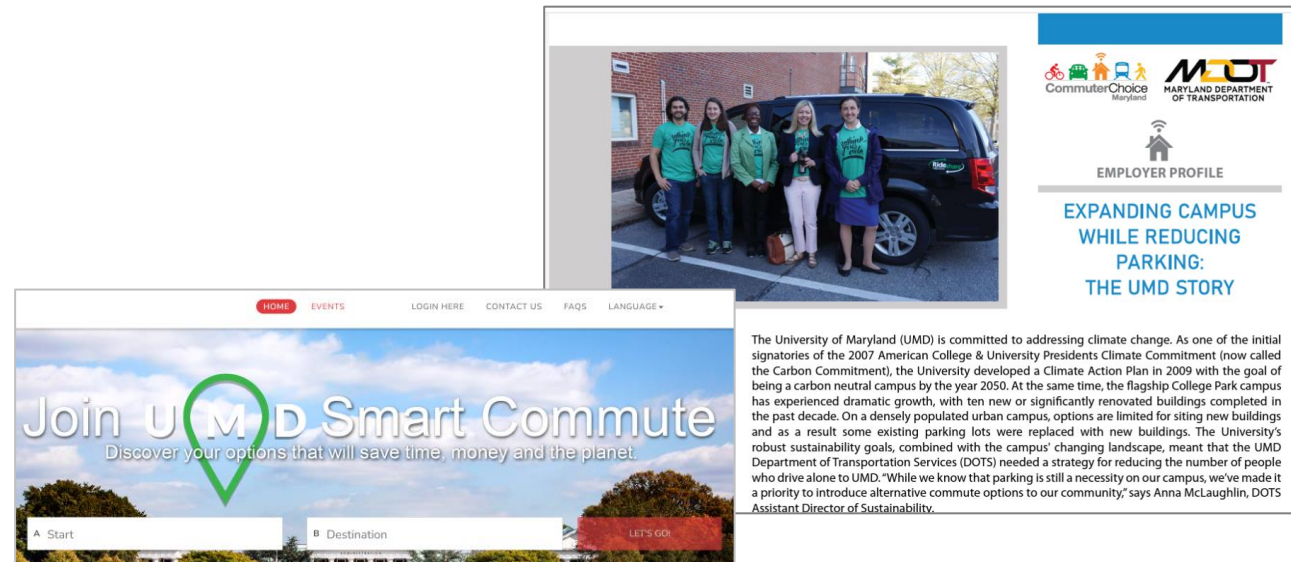


EMPLOYER PROFILE

ATTRACTING TALENT WITH EASIER COMMUTES AND FLEXIBLE WORK ON THE EASTERN SHORE

## University of MD ([Link to article](#))

- Pre-tax transit
- 50% carpool parking discount
- Bike Commuter Incentive: free use of locked parking and showers
- Rainy Day Bike Rewards: daily free parking pass earned for every 10 bike commutes
- Promote GRH



EMPLOYER PROFILE

EXPANDING CAMPUS WHILE REDUCING PARKING: THE UMD STORY

The University of Maryland (UMD) is committed to addressing climate change. As one of the initial signatories of the 2007 American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment (now called the Carbon Commitment), the University developed a Climate Action Plan in 2009 with the goal of being a carbon neutral campus by the year 2050. At the same time, the flagship College Park campus has experienced dramatic growth, with ten new or significantly renovated buildings completed in the past decade. On a densely populated urban campus, options are limited for siting new buildings and as a result some existing parking lots were replaced with new buildings. The University's robust sustainability goals, combined with the campus' changing landscape, meant that the UMD Department of Transportation Services (DOTS) needed a strategy for reducing the number of people who drive alone to UMD. "While we know that parking is still a necessity on our campus, we've made it a priority to introduce alternative commute options to our community," says Anna McLaughlin, DOTS Assistant Director of Sustainability.



# Inspiration From Maryland Employer Partners

## Johns Hopkins APL ([Link to article](#))

- Pre-tax transit passes
- Shuttle from MARC station
- Successful Waze carpooling and vanpool pilot programs
- Awareness that APLs talent pipeline may not own cars

"A number of younger staff don't even want to own a vehicle, let alone drive to work, and one thing they're weighing in their job choice is the lifestyle factors, like whether they would need a car."

-Brian Cornell

Campus Development Manager, Johns Hopkins University  
Applied Physics Laboratory



EMPLOYER PROFILE

A JOB IN THE SUBURBS  
AND A LIFE WITHOUT  
A CAR: THE APPLIED  
PHYSICS LABORATORY  
MAKES IT POSSIBLE

## Abt Associates ([Link to article](#))

- Strong telework policy
- Telework/ergonomic subsidy
- Transit subsidy
- Scope 3 emissions

"We recognize that work isn't always a place you go to; work is a thing that you do. So we offer our employees flexibility and balance to deliver on their work"

-Lisa Simeon  
Chief Operations Officer,  
Abt Global



l to r: Christina Henderson, DC Councilmember (TPB Vice-Chair); Drew Morrison, MDOT; Kim Stama, Abt Assoc.; Jessen Carroll, Abt Assoc.; Elby Davis, Abt Assoc.

# Keep the Conversation Going

**Stacey King, Program Manager**

**Commuter Choice Maryland**

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410-865-1100

[www.commuterchoicemaryland.com](http://www.commuterchoicemaryland.com)

**f** **@** **in** @CommuterChoiceMD



## References

- <sup>1</sup>US Census, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Data Estimates.
- <sup>2</sup>MDOT, The Playbook: 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan.
- <sup>3</sup>AAA, 2023 Cost of Car Ownership.