



Something for Everyone: The UMBC Commuter Benefits Approach



UMBC

With nearly 14,000 students and more than 1,000 faculty and staff members, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) has to get creative in order to provide transportation options that are convenient for as many people as possible. Everyone's transportation needs are unique, and that is why the Parking Services team at UMBC sees their role as so much more than just offering parking. Harry Wilhelm, the team's Communications and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Specialist, says, "Students and staff want to be able to get around without a car, on their bike, or on a bus. We must make it easier."

SIMPLE AND SECURE BIKING

Several UMBC community members use bikes to get to and around campus, and Wilhelm says it's clear there is even more untapped potential. UMBC is working to install its first bike parking facility to address the need and concerns regarding secure bike parking. This area will include cameras and keycard access to make people riding bikes feel more comfortable. Once the storage facility is realized, UMBC hopes to partner to create a bikeshare program and student-led bike shops to make accessing and maintaining a bike as easy as possible. While the school strongly supports transit, Wilhelm admits, "It will always be cheaper to buy bikes and install bike repair facilities than to buy more buses." He further states that bikes also play a huge role in reducing the campus's carbon footprint.

RIDES IN A PINCH

The majority of travel on campus can be done conveniently by foot, bike, or bus. And although many students and staff would like to reduce their need for parking and car ownership, the lack of other options leaves many driving a car when needing to travel off-campus or back home in a pinch. One of UMBC's solutions is to offer Zipcar, a third-party service that allows students to use a car only when needed. Users can rent cars from three locations on campus by the hour, with insurance and gas included in the cost. Wilhelm says it removes the barriers to living car-free on campus and reduces strain on the university's most popular parking lots. UMBC employees can also take advantage of Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH), which allows those who take more sustainable trips (e.g., carpool, transit, vanpool) to get a free ride home for an urgent need or when they must unexpectedly leave or work later than their scheduled time.

Like UMBC, your employees may be eligible for GRH from Commuter Connections at no cost to you. GRH benefits allow your staff who use a sustainable commute, the reassurance that they can get home in the case of an emergency or unexpected overtime. Learn more [here](#).

ENCOURAGING CARPOOLS

Another option that helps UMBC reduce the number of vehicles and demand for parking on campus is carpooling. UMBC has been building back its carpool program since the COVID-19 pandemic and currently has nearly 40 registered carpools, with a goal of 75 by 2030. In addition to the cost savings associated with gas and wear and tear, employees who carpool enjoy a substantially discounted parking permit, \$180 a year instead of \$280 per parking spot. UMBC is also evaluating options to further transform the carpool lot into a green lot by adding resources such as EV charging stations and scooter parking/charging.

Did you know you could subsidize carpooling for your employees and get half your investment back through the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit? Businesses and non-profits in Maryland can get up to \$1,200 back per employee per year for carpooling, transit benefits, and so much more. Learn more [here](#).

GETTING THE WORD OUT

To communicate all the commuter benefits UMBC offers, Wilhelm says he uses as many channels as possible, including emails, banners, and flyers. He believes the messaging option provided through the university's new parking enforcement app will be a game changer. One essential part that makes UMBC so successful is getting information into as many people's hands as possible. Sustainability is a shared goal and responsibility, so buy-in from student organizations and the broader campus community is paramount. Wilhelm is also working with the sustainability team to communicate with students, parents, faculty, and other parts of the university.

Pictured to the Right:

A bike being serviced at UMBC's Fix-It station

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-Harry Wilhelm

Communications and TDM Specialist, UMBC