

# Swedish Medical Center – Seattle, Washington

## **Short description:**

Travel demand management measures targeted at commuters to the Swedish Medical Center using Single Occupancy Vehicles.

## **Handbook topics:**

Travel Demand Management: Employer-based Commute Program and Parking Management

## **Location:**

Seattle, Washington State, USA

## **Dates:**

1991-Present

## **Description:**

The Swedish Medical Center, in Seattle, WA is comprised of three separate campuses spread throughout the greater Seattle area. Despite the challenges inherent in scheduling and transportation due to the irregular work shifts of hospital employees, Swedish has supported transportation benefits since the 1980's. During that time, Swedish campus was already implementing innovative employer-based commute programs. For instance, carpools with three or more Swedish staff received free parking at the Swedish campus and those with two or more receive 50% parking subsidy. Along with those incentives were also 25% transit subsidies for eligible employees. In 1986, the medical center's growth surpassed its capacity and needs for a new building developed. At the same time, the City of Seattle were mandating new construction and developments to develop a transportation management program (TMP). As Swedish expanded, it developed its TMP around its already aggressive employer-based commute programs.

In 1991, Washington State passed its own legislation to reduce traffic congestion and single occupancy vehicle (SOV) commutes. This mandate, the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law required employers with more than 100 employees traveling to work during peak morning times to provide commute alternative programs. Since 1991, Swedish has therefore been required to develop programs that encourage employees to utilize alternative, non-SOV modes of transportation for their commutes.

Through Swedish's Employer Transportation Coordinator, Swedish expanded their initial program from the late 1980s to one that provides extensive transit, ferry and rail subsidies, preferential parking and vanpool subsidies. All employees at Swedish are eligible for fully subsidized transit and rail passes, called a Flexpass, or a Washington State Ferry pass. The Flexpass can be used on each of the three adjoining county transit systems, the regional transit system, regional commuter rail, and soon-to-be-built monorail. All employees with a Flexpass are also eligible to participate in a county-sponsored vanpool program. In addition, Swedish provides a \$63.00 a month vanpool subsidy for all employees. Since most vanpools in the area cost less than \$63, the subsidy covers often 100% of vanpool costs for employees. An added benefit for employees with a Flexpass is the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program, which includes 16 free taxi-rides home a year. Lastly, Swedish provides employees that work a 12-hour shift a unique taxi service where between 6:00 – 7:00pm employees with a Flexpass can take a taxi to a specific park-&-ride.

Each of Swedish Medical Center's three campuses also has unique parking initiatives that help to reduce SOV parking while providing convenience for employees commuting to work. The First Hill campus features fewer parking spaces and higher levels of transit service than the other two campuses. Thus, the First Hill campus has limited all day shift SOV parking to upper management since July 1990. SOV parking costs \$70/month; carpool parking is \$12.50 per person per month and vanpools park free. Carpools and vanpools also receive the access to the best parking spaces at First Hill. Given the need for flexibility and the on-call realities of hospital work, carpool and vanpool passengers receive four free SOV parking days a month. Night shift employees at First Hill receive free parking but are not eligible for Flexpass. Instead, they are eligible for the WA State Ferry Pass and/or a dollar value Puget Pass that covers their specific commute.

Because the Providence and Ballard campuses do not receive high levels of bus service, parking is more plentiful at each campus. At Providence, SOV's are charged \$60 a month and carpools cost \$12.50 per person per month. At the Ballard campus, the smallest of the three campuses, parking for SOV is \$30 a month while carpoolers park for free.

In order to better understand and create comprehensive commuting programs for the employees, Swedish's Employer Transportation Coordinator (ECT) has relinquished her single occupancy vehicle (SOV) commute to try most of the commute alternatives. In marketing the program, the ETC has also sent out fact sheets with bus route information, parking requirements and costs, and Flexpass, carpool and vanpool benefits to each employee when they are hired. In addition to the fact sheet, the ETC also utilizes the intranet, employee newsletters and new employee orientations to market the various program elements.

**Benefits:**

Swedish's employer-based commute programs have shown remarkable efforts in reducing SOV use. The following table shows the resulting modal splits that resulted from their efforts:

<b>MODE</b>	<b>Providence</b>	<b>First Hill</b>	<b>Ballard</b>
Drive Alone	50%	34%	55%
Carpool	19%	23%	14%
Vanpool	4%	3%	0%
Bus/Retail	22%	32%	15%
Bicycle	1%	1%	6%
Walk	3%	5%	8%
Other (flextime, compressed work week)	1%	2%	2%

**Lessons learned:**

Swedish Medical Center not only abides to the local and state mandates, their programs are also evident of the center's dedication to employee satisfaction and retention. In addition to adherence to Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law, Swedish

views their transportation benefits program as a recruitment and retention tool, especially at a time when many hospitals in the USA nationwide are experiencing nursing shortages. In developing their travel demand management strategies, Swedish worked with local rideshare and transit organizations to develop and implement a variety of incentives and disincentives to SOV commutes.

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**References:**

*Reference*

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