

Guaranteed Ride Home Programs: Good for Employees, Employers, and the Environment

A fear of not being able to get home in the event of an emergency is a major reason why many employees are reluctant to travel to work in anything other than their own car. But Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) programs can assuage these fears, providing peace of mind and reassuring commuters that, if needed, a ride home will be available.

Also known as Emergency Ride Home programs, GRH programs are generally available to commuters who regularly vanpool, carpool, bike, walk or take public transit to work. Many commuters who routinely use these alternative modes of transportation would not do so if the GRH program did not exist.

GRH programs can be operated by a variety of organizations, including local transit authorities, councils of government, metropolitan planning organizations, and transportation management associations. They are relatively inexpensive to implement and maintain and provide critical support to all types of commuters, including those transitioning into the workforce from public assistance. Some GRH programs have moved beyond commuter services and address options for individuals with disabilities or older adults who may be using paratransit services for medical appointments and other types of travel.

Benefits to Business

In many communities, participation in a GRH is free for employers. When businesses participate in GRH programs, they reap the benefits by:

- Having a mechanism in place to help employees who unexpectedly need to stay late at work, and have missed their ride home
- Cultivating an image as a company that cares about the health and well-being of its employees and the environment
- Having employees arrive at work less stressed and better able to concentrate without having to worry if an emergency arises
- Having more employees commute to work via vanpool or public transportation, and all the benefits that entails, including qualifying the

company and employee for the Commuter Tax Benefit program¹

How GRH Programs Work

Generally, a GRH's sponsoring agency sets program eligibility criteria, acceptable reasons for use, allowable destinations, service hours, payment method, and membership fees, as well as program policies and procedures. There is usually an annual limit on the number of times an individual can use a GRH service.

- GRH programs require employees to commute other than by driving their car alone a minimum number of times per week to qualify.
- Many programs allow users to obtain a ride home either by taxi or rental car.
- Either the employees pay for the ride and are reimbursed at a later date for all or part of their costs or the sponsoring agency covers the cost. In some communities, employers pay the transit provider a small annual base rate (determined by the size of the company workforce) to allow their employees to participate in a GRH program.

Many programs provide vouchers to cover the cost of a ride home, eliminating the need for employees to have cash on hand to pay for the service. Employees receive vouchers either when they first register for the program or on the day a ride home is needed. The vouchers are used to pay for the services, and the program sponsor then reimburses the provider.

¹ For additional information, see Fact Sheet #6: [Tax Incentives for Businesses: A Direct Benefit of Commuter Benefit Programs.](#)