

# the route



Winter 2014

a quarterly newsletter from



CommuteSmart  
Birmingham

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

### Mason Corporation



In 2008, Mason Corporation realized that many of their employees were taking longer commutes and utilizing alternative commutes to get to work. They partnered with CommuteSmart to help educate their employees on the benefits of taking an alternative commute and to introduce employees to the program incentives. "CommuteSmart provided a FREE benefit to our employees that was very successful from the beginning", said Human Resources Director, Jocinda McSwain.

"Mason Corp looks forward to furthering our relationship with CommuteSmart through both participation in program events as well as company events, said McSwain. CommuteSmart loves making a difference in the lives of our partner companies! Thank you, Mason Corporation !

## WHAT'S NEW?

CommuteSmart welcomes our new partners on board:

- Viva Health
- HMS Host Birmingham
- Fortis Institute

## COMMUTESMART STATS:

### 2012-2013 COMMUTER COST SAVINGS

- COMMUTER COST SAVINGS= \$6,436,643
- FUEL SAVINGS (GALLONS)= 438,258
- FUEL COST SAVINGS= \$1,549,516

## YOUR LONG COMMUTE COULD BE KILLING YOU

For many of us our everyday life includes a long come to and from work. A study published by the American Journal of Medicine in 2012 said that those who travel 16 or more miles each way have a higher blood pressure and weigh more.

Commuters with longer commutes are nine percent more likely to be overweight because they don't exercise as much, frequent fast food drive-thrus or they are sleep deprived due to the long commute. Another area affected by taking a long commute is your overall mood. Spending a prolonged amount of time in the car, especially in traffic, makes commuters moody, tired and stressed.

We know that quitting your job isn't the most practical solution, but there are a few small changes that commuters can make.

- **Change the way you get to work:** Carpooling can ease the stress of a commute. Share the ride with family, co-workers, friends and anyone who is interested in taking a smart commute. Walking, Biking, Vanpooling and taking transit are other great options to alleviating the stress of a long commute. Go to [CommuteSmart.org](http://CommuteSmart.org) to see how we can help you change your commute.
- **Get Moving:** We know it's hard especially if your morning or afternoons are taken up by sitting in traffic. One way to avoid traffic is to head to the gym after work and wait the traffic out. A lunch workout is also a great way to fit activity into your busy schedule.
- **Eat a healthy breakfast:** Sitting down to a healthy breakfast either before work or when you first get to your desk is essential to starting your day off right. Eating breakfast gets your metabolism going and that will stop weight gain.
- **Get enough sleep:** Not sleeping enough is tied to weight gain. If you have a long commute make sure you go to bed early in order to get the proper amount of sleep. Also consider vanpooling, resting while you ride to work is one of the many benefits our participants talk about! Go to [www.CommuteSmart.org](http://www.CommuteSmart.org) to learn more about vanpooling.

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@commutesmarter



## TEAM COMMUTESMART

The CommuteSmart team is here to ensure that your involvement in our program is easy and beneficial. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

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The BJCTA system has a bad reputation, so I didn't know if I could make the commute work. The first day of class I had several back-up plans. I had called three friends and family members and said, "Listen, if the bus breaks down, I'm going to call you to come pick me up in downtown or Smithfield or College Hills, OK? 'Cause I can NOT be late for class." But you know what? I got on the bus three blocks from my house and I was walking into my classroom 15 minutes later. The bus trip took nine minutes. I have ridden the bus to BSC more than 20 times in the last three months — it has never been late and has never broken down.

### 3. What benefits have you seen from participating in the program?

I really appreciate the analytics. I like knowing that I've made a clean commute 86% percent of the time since I started the program. I walk 70% of the time, drive alone 14% and ride the bus 9% (the remainder is split between telework and carpool). Seeing these numbers empowers me to set goals. I'd like "drive alone" to represent the smallest percentage of my commute time. The incentives — gift cards and cash — are nice, but they have almost nothing to do with why I started participating in CommuteSmart. Mass transit is a public health issue, an environmental issue and an economic issue — even if you never get on a bus, the quality of the transit system has an impact on your life.

### 4. Are there any advantages to taking the bus or taking an alternative commute?

For me, taking the bus is a pleasure. I talk to strangers. I read. I think. If I'm on my phone, then I'm not endangering myself and everybody else on the road by texting and driving. Most days, my "alternative" commute is walking 0.8 miles. If I go home for lunch, then I've built walking 2.5 miles a day into my daily routine. This is good for my body and my mind. I'm burning calories, I'm thinking and I'm getting to know my neighbors. I'm interacting with strangers, with the architecture of my city, even with the weather!

The CommuteSmart program, an initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, was created in 1999 to help alleviate traffic congestion and reduce air pollution in Jefferson and Shelby counties. CommuteSmart encourages individuals to change their commuting habits and educates them on cleaner modes of transportation. Some of these methods include carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling, walking, teleworking and transit. CommuteSmart is 100 percent federally-funded, and all CommuteSmart services are provided at no cost to individual participants, and local companies and their employees.

Tell us about your commute. We'd love to hear from you. Email us at [commutesmart@rpcgb.org](mailto:commutesmart@rpcgb.org), or call us at 1-87-Ridematch or visit our website at [www.commutesmart.org](http://www.commutesmart.org).

Are you interested in receiving the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) newsletter, Connections? The RPCGB is an organization providing community and transportation services for Jefferson, Shelby, Blount, St. Clair, Chilton and Walker counties. Visit [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org) and click on the Connections Newsletter link on the homepage.

## VANPOOLS LOOKING FOR RIDERS

**Origin:** Springville  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:30 p.m.

**Origin:** Gadsden  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 3:30 a.m.

**Origin:** Alabaster  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:00 p.m.

**Origin:** Birmingham  
**Destination:** Eastern Montgomery  
**Work Arrival:** 8:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 5:00 p.m.

**Origin:** Tuscaloosa  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:30 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:00 p.m.

**Origin:** Bessemer/Fairfield  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:30 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:00 p.m.

**Origin:** Tuscaloosa  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:30 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:30 p.m.

**Origin:** Huntsville/Moody  
**Destination:** Anniston Army Depot  
**Work Arrival:** 8:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 5:00 p.m.

**Origin:** Hayden  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:30 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:00 p.m.

**Origin:** Alabaster  
**Destination:** Downtown Montgomery  
**Work Arrival:** 6:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 3:30 p.m.

**Origin:** Springville  
**Destination:** Downtown Bham  
**Work Arrival:** 7:00 a.m.  
**Work Departure:** 4:00 p.m.

Please contact Lisa Williamson Smith at (205) 264-8436 for more information regarding any of these vanpools.

## STAR COMMUTER SPOTLIGHT Glenny Brock

### 1. How long have you been participating in CommuteSmart?

I started participating in CommuteSmart in July 2013, thanks to encouragement from my friend Brian Atkinson, the business outreach coordinator for the CommuteSmart Program.

### 2. How did you get started taking the bus to work?

I have two jobs — I work in communications and development at the Alabama Theatre and I teach writing at Birmingham-Southern College (BSC). I have lived downtown for two years, but only started walking to work at the theatre this summer. By the time school started, I was used to ignoring my car for days or even weeks at a time. I decided I didn't want to experience the stress of interstate traffic anymore if I could avoid it. I like to take the surface streets, but even a short solo commute feels lonely sometimes.



The CommuteSmart program, an initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, was created in 1999 to help alleviate traffic congestion and reduce air pollution in Jefferson and Shelby counties. CommuteSmart encourages individuals to change their commuting habits and educates them on cleaner modes of transportation. Some of these methods include carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling, walking, teleworking and transit. CommuteSmart is 100 percent federally-funded, and all CommuteSmart services are provided at no cost to individual participants, and local companies and their employees. Tell us about your commute. We'd love to hear from you. Email us at [commutesmart@rpcgb.org](mailto:commutesmart@rpcgb.org), or call us at 1-87-Ridematch or visit our website at [www.commutesmart.org](http://www.commutesmart.org). Are you interested in receiving the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) newsletter, Connections? The RPCGB is an organization providing community and transportation services for Jefferson, Shelby, Blount, St. Clair, Chilton and Walker counties. Visit [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org) and click on the Connections Newsletter link on the homepage.