

Smart COMMUTER

Commute Information for Business Executives & Elected Officials in Northern New Jersey

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Shore EZride Promises A Sizzling Summer For Visitors To Jersey Shore

Thanks to the Shore EZ ride jitney, beach lovers will now be able to make a beeline to the inviting sands of Jersey shore without getting caught in the annoying traffic snarls on Garden State Parkway.

During the upcoming summer, Shore EZ ride jitney, a transportation service formerly known as Shore Link Shuttle, will offer beach-goers a seamless connection with NJ transit trains.

Shore EZ ride jitney will meet NJ trains as they arrive in Long Branch, Asbury Park (Ocean Grove), and Bradley Beach to take visitors to beaches or to their accommodations.

The service is not only bound to attract more visitors to jersey shore but will make their summer-time more enjoyable. The jitneys will offer convenient stops along its entire route including downtown and beach front areas.

In addition to making the Monmouth County's many attractions and resort towns easily accessible to thousands of visitors, the much-needed service will have a major impact in reducing traffic congestion and promoting a cleaner environment.

Shore EZride 2012 service schedule & rates:

- Service will be available from May 25 to September 3
- Hours of operation: 9 a.m. to 11p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sunday
- Rate: \$1.00 per ride

Visit www.visitmonmouth.com/tourism or for additional information, please contact:

Wendy Arias (732) 462-3333;
warias@ezride.org



From left: Pat Kay, Aging In Place Partnership Board Transportation Facilitator, Mike Ketofsky, South Brunswick Senior Center Advisory Council representative, David Cornelsen, AIPP Community Car Coordinator, South Brunswick Mayor, Frank Gambatese and Steven R. Fittante, Director Middlesex County DOT during a visit at the local at senior center to implement the *Community Cars Program*.

Community Cars Program reaches out to South Brunswick Seniors

Meadowlink has recently announced that it is expanding the coverage of its *Community Cars Program* to include South Brunswick, starting April 1, 2012.

In partnership with Aging in Place Partnership (AIPP) the program will launch in South Brunswick and extend to the surrounding communities.

Launched in 2008 in partnership with National Center for Senior Transportation (NCST), the program, currently serves over 30 communities in North Jersey. It was originally started in response to the growing need among seniors for a reliable, alternative mode of transportation.

The *Community Cars Program* will offer South Brunswick seniors, sixty and older, the convenience of being able to

use EZ ride marked cars driven by a team of volunteer drivers for their commuting needs. From shopping, to an evening with friends or simply a doctor appointment. There is a \$15 dollar membership for the year for joining the program and a fee of \$2.50 for each ride including \$.55 per every mile and \$1.10 per every mile after 10 miles.

AIPP is making great headway in improving transportation options for older adults in South Brunswick to remain more independent and stay active in the community. The AIPP transportation planning committee is now working closely with EZ Ride to replicate their success in South Brunswick.

For more information contact:
Wendy Arias at (732) 462-3333;
warias@ezride.org

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Gridlock In Washington Takes Big Bite Out Of Commuter Tax Benefit

Due to legislative inaction by Congress, the transit commuter benefit enjoyed by both drivers and public transit riders has been slashed in half. Until last year, a provision in the transit commuter benefit passed as part of 2009 stimulus package, provided public transit riders and drivers a monthly tax break of up to \$230 to cover the cost of their parking and commuting expenses. Businesses have also enjoyed a tax break from this commuter benefit. In 2010, participating transit riders across the country saved their companies about \$300 million in payroll taxes.

"When the clock struck 12 on New Year's Eve, the federal tax break that allowed hundreds of thousands of commuters to pay for their transit benefits with pre-tax dollars of up to \$230 a month expired," Senator Charles Schumer said in a news conference.

Starting January 2012, the parking part of tax break for drivers has gone up to \$240 per month due to an automatic cost-of-living increase. But the break for transit riders will be significantly less. It will be reduced to \$125 per month in pretax dollars, an almost 50% reduction.

While Congress extended other tax benefits at the end of 2011 and recently while extending the payroll taxes, it failed to extend the commuter benefit which would have removed the dollar disparity

between public transit and parking parts of this tax break.

If Congress fails to act to make the commuter tax benefit equitable, it may cost public transit users up to \$550 per year. Businesses may lose the valuable dollars that could be reinvested to create jobs.

"At a time when Congress and the Administration have resisted revisiting gasoline taxes (user fees) to support much needed investments in our nation's transportation infrastructure, it is ironic that they are willing to effectively raise taxes on public transit users," said Michael Melaniphy, President of American Public Transportation Association. "Reducing the benefits for public transit riders at the same time that tax benefits are increased for auto usage is a significant divergence from this country's balanced approach to transportation. This drop in benefits will cause a dramatic increase in commuting costs for public transit riders," he added.

A 1-year extension of the transit benefit is included in the finance title of the Senate transportation bill and IF that were to become law, transit benefit parity would be restored retroactively.

For more information, please contact:

Avnish Gupta (201)939-4242;
agupta@ezride.org

Employers In the Spotlight

Businesses Across New Jersey to be Honored for New Jersey Smart Workplace Award

Anticipation is high as companies, schools and communities around the state will come together to celebrate the Smart Workplace Awards on March 27, 2012.

The award is given to recognize and honor businesses for promoting initiatives that provide innovative commuting options to their employees. This year the guest speaker will be our own trustee, New Jersey Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver.

New Jersey Department of Transportation, in partnership with several transportation management associations, developed the Smart Workplace program in 2006 to encourage employers to offer their employees commuting alternatives that would not only make travel to work much easier, but also would benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum awards will be presented to companies depending on the level of commitment they have shown to make their businesses a Smart Workplace.

Current Companies set to receive a Platinum award are as follows;
ACS, AEGIS Insurance Services, Inc., ARRI CSC, AT&T, Becton Dickinson, Berkeley College, Caldwell College, Churchill Corporation Services, Continental Airlines, Continental Airlines Chelsea Food Service, County of Union,

Courtyard by Marriott Elizabeth, Crestron Electronics, Inc., Ernst & Young, LLP, FedEx, FedEx Express, Felician College, Garden State Diner, Gate Gourmet, Gateway Group One, Hartz Mountain Real Estate, High Point Insurance, Hilton Woodcliff Lake Hotel, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, Huntleigh, ITT Exelis, Kean University, Lisbon Cleaning, Meadowlands Regional Chamber Meadowlink, Medco, Merck & Co. Inc., Middle Atlantic Products, Inc., Molly Pitcher Inn, New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, NJ Transit Corporation, Passaic Public Library, Port Authority of NY & NJ, PSE&G, QPSI, Quest Diagnostics Incorporated NY/NJ, Robert Stewart Inc., Rose Brand, Rutgers, Saks 5th Ave, Schering Plough, Sika Corporation, The Children's Place, Trinitas Hospital, Unilever, United, Veteran Affairs New Jersey, Visual Graphic Systems Inc., Vonage, Walmart, Worldwide Flight Services.

Qualifying companies will be recognized by the New Jersey Smart Workplaces (NJSW) program. More than 200 companies have qualified to receive the award.

For more information about NJSW program or to request an application for next year's award's ceremony, please contact:

Stephen Culpepper (201) 939-4242;
sculpepper@ezride.org

Looking To Save Money On Your Commute?

Traffic jams...fender benders...road rage. Horror stories about daily commute are endless. What's even worse is the amount of money we spend on it when the gas prices are so high. Now you can do something about it.

Check out Meadowlink's transportation programs. Meadowlink will be hosting a "Lunch and Learn" event. The focus of the event will be on, "Saving Money on Your Commute".

Can signing up for rideshare help you save some dollars? Or should you carpool or vanpool instead? Maybe biking and walking are more suited to your healthy lifestyle. Whatever you decide to do, you need to be armed with more information.

Our goal is to present you with all the choices available to make your life a little easier.

If your company is interested in hosting a Commuter Event, please contact:

Stephen Culpepper (201) 939-4242;
sculpepper@ezride.org

Meadowlink
144 Park Place East
Wood-Ridge, NJ 07075
Phone: (201) 939-4242
Fax: (201) 939-2630

e-mail: info@ezride.org



Comments? Suggestions?

Feel free to forward your thoughts on improving the

Smart Commuter

to Kinga Skora at (201) 939-4242

or

e-mail:

info@ezride.org



MEADOWLINK
144 Park Place East
Wood-Ridge, NJ 07075

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Service Updates

Meadowlink's Program May Make Parents' Wishes Come True

Healthy kids...Safe way to get to School... Clean air. These are the simple wishes of every parent. Are you one of them? If so, you may want to consider what Meadowlink has to offer.

Meadowlink, in partnership with the New Jersey of Transportation (NJDOT), has received federal funding through a *Safe Routes to School (SRTS)* grant to improve safety while at the same time encourage children to walk and bicycle to school.

If you are an interested parent, educator or just an active citizen in your community, you can start walking and biking programs. Meadowlink is here to assist you.

About *Safe Routes to School (SRTS)*

Meadowlink will bring the *Safe Routes to School Program* to area schools **ABSOLUTELY FREE!** Meadowlink will take care of administering the program every step of the way. This will include assistance with travel plans, setting up biking and walking events, running safety and

educational programs, evaluation, follow-up and monitoring.

SRTS programs are currently being administered in 10,000+ schools in all 50 states. Meadowlink is excited to offer you and your community the opportunity to join them in providing safer, healthier options for our school children.

SRTS? A win-win situation

SRTS Program helps kids maintain their health. It helps them arrive at school alert and ready to learn. It helps parents connect with other families. Also, the program benefits the schools by reducing traffic congestion and creating a safer pick-up and drop-off environment. Most importantly, the community around the school would be able breathe cleaner air because of fewer cars on the road.

For more information about the *SRTS Program* please contact:

Nora Shepard (201) 939-4242;
nshepard@ezride.org

Freebies galore.....

Transit Display for your worksite

Meadowlink is an advocate for public transportation and has a 'transit-first' policy.

Transit displays provide easy access to NJ Transit's information. These displays are available for your worksite free of cost.

Meadowlink will customize and set them up at your worksite. Each display is designed to hold commute information such as car/vanpool brochures, as well as all bus and train schedules relevant to your location.

To obtain a FREE display, please contact:

Michael Jensen (201) 939-4242;
mjensen@ezride.org