

**CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY
COMMISSION
CPSC**

**TRANSIT SUBSIDY BENEFIT
PROGRAM**

**STANDARD OPERATING
PROCEDURES**

AND

**FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS**

From: Hinson, Kenneth
Sent: Friday, January 18, 2013 10:41 AM
To: Everyone - Feds Only
Subject: Increase in Transit Benefits

CPSC Transit Benefit Recipients,

On January 2nd, President Obama signed into the law the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012. Part of that Act authorized an increase in the tax-free transit benefit statutory limit, changing the maximum allowable amount from \$125 to \$245 per month. I am pleased to announce that CPSC will be implementing this provision immediately, and employees that take mass transit to work and receive the transit benefit are eligible for the additional subsidy up to \$245 starting in March.

Here's how the increase works. Participants in the program are eligible for up to \$245 per month, depending on the actual cost of the mass transit portion of their commute. For example, if an employee's actual mass transit cost is \$160 per month, they would be eligible for a \$160 per month subsidy. If, on the other hand, an employee's mass transit costs are \$300 per month, the employee would be eligible for a subsidy of \$245 per month, the maximum allowed.

Here's what Transit Benefit Recipients need to do to ensure they receive an increase in their transit benefit payment, if they are eligible. CPSC is implementing the new TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application, **effective February 1st**. This new online system will accept your application for transit benefits and calculate your eligible commute costs, ensuring you receive the subsidy amount you are entitled to. This new system replaces CPSC Forms 119 and 119A. **In order to receive an increase in your transit subsidy, you must renew your application through the TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application in early February.**

In an effort to meet our implementation deadline, I encourage transit subsidy recipients and their supervisors to participate in the upcoming **mandatory training** for TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application Training, hosted by Department of Transportation. **Training is on Wednesday, January 23rd, 410A/B/C, @ 10:30am. Attendees should bring their laptops.**

To receive your subsidy increase:

Smart Trip Card participants must complete their annual recertification online application by **February 6th** in order to be eligible for an increased subsidy payment on March 1st.

TRANServe Debit Card participants must complete their annual recertification online application by **February 13th** to be eligible for an increased subsidy payment on March 10th.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact CPSC Transit Benefits Coordinator, Cynthia Warren, at 301-504-7117.

Thank you,

Kenneth R. Hinson

Executive Director

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Office of Facilities Services

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS VERIFICATION ISSUING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

PURPOSE:

To establish standard operating procedures, for the management, use, issuance and accountability for the Transit Benefit Program.

I. Procedures for the CPSC Transit Benefit Process:

- 1.** The Office of Facilities Services (EXFS) is responsible for the Transit Benefit Issuance Program.
- 2.** All employees must properly complete the TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application. Individual participants will be notified via email when their applications have been submitted to their Supervisors, when their applications have been approved or when their applications have been disapproved. The TSBP Program Coordinator will be notified via email when the applications are waiting to be processed.
- 3.** The CPSC Transit Benefits Program Coordinator and the Employee's Supervisor respectfully, are responsible for approving or disapproving all applications and worksheet information.
- 4.** All CPSC employees who receive monthly parking passes are not eligible to download transit benefits for that month.

II. Procedures for Transit Benefit Verification:

1. Employees daily expenses will be verified using the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) website by the Transit Benefits Program Coordinator.
2. Employees home address will be verified through the Human Resource Department by the Transit Benefits Program Coordinator.

III. Procedures for Safeguarding Applications, SmarTrip Cards, Debit Cards and Transit Benefit Reports:

1. EXFS will ensure that all records and fare media are stored in a secure and locked safe within room 425.
2. EXFS will ensure access to the safe will be limited to the identified EXFS staff positions.
3. EXFS will maintain electronic and/or hard copy records of all applications and worksheets.
4. EXFS will maintain electronic and/or hard copy records of Transit Benefit Reports furnished by DOT.

IV. Procedures for Issuance of SmartBenefits and Debit Cards:

1. All employees who have access to smartbenefit machines for their daily commute must use the smartbenefits program.

2. Employees must purchase and register a smartrip card with WMATA before joining the Transit Benefit Program.
3. All employees must submit properly filled out and approved TRANServe Online Transit Benefit Application and Worksheet before being activated in the smartbenefits and debit card program by DOT.
4. You must fill out the TRANServe Online Transit Benefit Application and Worksheet annually (February 1st thru February 6th).
5. DOT will only issue debit cards to persons who ride VRE, MARC, MTA commuter buses for their daily commute.
6. Lost or stolen smartrip cards or debit cards are the responsibility of the person they were issued to.

V. Procedures for Making Changes, Extended Leave and Leaving Program:

1. Employees must fill out the TRANServe Online Transit Benefit Application and Worksheet if their address changes and they need to increase or decrease their benefits.
2. If employees are going to be on extended leave, business travel, vacation, holidays, CWS days and telecommuting they must subtract the number of days from the following month.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

**Consumer Product Safety Commission
Transit Subsidy Benefit Program
Frequently Asked Questions**

Who is eligible to receive the transit benefit?

The transit subsidy is for all Federal employees, whether part-time, or temporary. However volunteers nor temporary and contract employees are permitted to participate.

How do I apply for the Transit Subsidy Benefit Program (TSBP) ?

You must complete the TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application and Worksheet. Prior to completing this form you must make sure you meet the eligibility requirements.

What are the eligibility requirements for the TSBP?

Participants must be CPSC employees who use the subway, train, bus, etc. or ride VRE, MARC, MTA commuter buses for their regular daily commuting trips.

What authority allows transit subsidy to be provided to eligible employees within the CPSC?

Public Law 102-486, Section 1911, Treatment of Employer Provided transportation Benefits, effective December 31, 1992. Public Law 103-172, Federal employees Clean Air Incentives Act, effective January 1, 1994. Internal Revenue Service Notice 94-3 dated 1994, Qualified Transportation Fringes Under Code 26 USC, Section 132(f). Public law 105-178, Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century, dated June 9, 1998. Executive Order 13150 dated April 21, 2000. 26 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1, Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefits.

Who administers the TSBP?

The Department of Transportation (DOT) administers the TSBP.

Is there an annual transit subsidy recertification requirement?

Yes. From February 1st thru February 6th you have to complete the TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application and Worksheet and submit it to your TSBP Program Coordinator.

Who should I contact when I have a question about the transit subsidy program?

You should contact the Office of Facilities Services, Cindy Warren, TSBP Program Coordinator at 301-504-7117.

Do I receive the monthly maximum of \$245.00 a month even though my actual monthly commute amount remains \$60.00?

No, the law states you will receive the maximum amount of \$245.00 or the actual commute cost, whichever is less. So, your amount would remain \$60.00 per month. For example: Mary Doe's monthly commuting cost is \$245 (so Mary would receive the maximum benefit of \$245 per month). Bob Doe's monthly commuting cost is \$50 (so Bob would receive \$50 per month).

When does the transit subsidy become effective?

The average processing time from the time the application is submitted is about four days.

Are carpoolers eligible to receive transit benefits?

No. Carpool participants are not eligible to receive the transit benefit. The transit benefit is for those commuting on mass transit (bus, rail, light rail, or authorized VRE, MARC, MTA commuter buses).

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Can employees apply for this program at any time?

Yes, the program is open continuously for new, modify, or cancelled applications.

What is a SmarTrip Card?

An electronic plastic fare card that is rechargeable in that it can have benefit amount electronically loaded onto it each month and can be used on Metrorail, Metrobus, as well as some other area transit systems.

What is a Debit Card?

It is a Visa-branded debit card that provides your transit benefit electronically.

When computing my monthly cost how many working days should I use and can I include other expenses?

You should use the exact number of days you actually use mass public transportation or commuter highway vehicles. Do NOT include parking fees, gasoline costs, mileage, holidays, CWS days and telecommuting.

When I leave the Agency what do I do about my transit benefit?

You must cancel your transit application through the TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application and go to “Withdraw from the Program.” The CPSC TSBP Program Coordinator will be notified via email and he/she will calculate what you need to return to the agency in the form of a check made payable to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Am I permitted to transfer my subsidy to other family members, such as my husband or children?

No, transfer of the transit subsidy benefit is not permitted to anyone, whether family member, co-workers, or others. Along the same lines, you may not sell the transit benefit to another person. If you need to withdraw from the program, you should contact your TSBP Program Coordinator.

My spouse drops me at work but I take mass transit home am I eligible to receive a benefit?

Yes, as long as you use a form of mass transit for 50% of your regular commute between work and your residence.

What if I get a job in another agency can I keep my unused transit subsidy?

No, you must cancel your transit application through the Electronic Transit Application and the TSBP Program Coordinator and he/she will calculate what you need to return to the agency.

What if I have a change in the way I commute or the cost, what do I need to do if anything?

It is your responsibility to update your TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application and Worksheet and your TSBP Program Coordinator will be notified via email.

What should I do if I commute less days in a month than I stated on the form for reasons of vacation, extended sickness, etc.?

All changes to your commuting costs must be updated on your application. If you are out on extended leave (90 days or more), you must withdraw from the program and re-enroll when you return.

What if my SmarTrip card is lost, stolen, or damaged?

If your smartrip card is lost, stolen, or damaged, call 1-888-762-7874 to cancel your card and request a new one. WMATA will transfer your benefit to a new card, less a \$5 new card fee, and send the card to you. Once you have your new smartrip card, you must go to the TRANServe Transit Benefit Online Application and put in your new number located on the back of the smartrip card. Your TSBP Program Coordinator will be notified via email.

What if my Debit card is lost, stolen, or damaged?

In the event a Debit Card is lost or stolen the participant should notify JPMC Customer Service at 1-866-891-6951 to have their card cancelled. In addition, the participant should notify their TSBP Program Coordinator to ensure any funds remaining on the Debit card can be transferred to a new Debit Card.

Will DOT replace a demagnetized or broken SmarTrip Card or Debit Card for CPSC employees?

No, CPSC does not have an agreement with DOT to replace smartrip cards or debit cards.

I forgot to download my monthly benefit. Am I able to get two months next time?

No. Transit benefits are for the current calendar month.