



## Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Leadership Initiative Phone Forum Program Change to Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> June 25, 2003

*Available exclusively to Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Employers, phone forums provide cutting-edge information on a range of topics related to commuter benefits. Moderated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), these forums feature experts on key topic areas.*

On June 25, 2003, the Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Leadership Initiative held a phone forum to inform employers on the program update to Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> and answer any questions they might have. Patrice Thornton, EPA forum moderator, provided opening remarks and introduced the featured participants.

### **Featured Participant Presentations**

*Robin Snyder, Office of Transportation and Air Quality, EPA*

Robin Snyder, the national recruiting manager for Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>, launched a Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> pilot in San Francisco and oversees campaigns in Atlanta, North Carolina, Sacramento, as well as a national outreach effort. The Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Leadership Initiative (CCLI) was launched in 2001 to recognize employers that provide outstanding commuter benefits and to provide those Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Employers with technical assistance. CCLI has been successful, but EPA is now looking to update the program and image to provide a better product for the employers. In addition, EPA believes the new program title, Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> more accurately describes the employers as leaders in the business community.

In mid-2002, EPA went to the San Francisco Bay Area to pitch the idea of a Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> cam-

paign and was met with very positive responses from existing Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Employers and third-party supporters. EPA formed a coalition of Bay Area Organizations including Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Northern California Human Resources Association, and others. Bay Area employers were invited to be on the list, and EPA received a very positive response. The Bay Area's first Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> list included 84 employers, 24 of which were already Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Employers.

Once finalized, the first Bay Area's Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> list was released to the media and received a tremendous response, including 20 newspaper articles and 5 television news spots. One of these television spots and several newspaper articles are available online at <[www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov)>. The list received significant media coverage from October to January with the most recent article published in June. Not only did this media coverage highlight the program, it also focused on specific employers and their commuter benefits programs. To assist the media in highlighting specific employers, EPA provided the media with anecdotal information on employers' programs.

As a result of Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>, the number of employers participating in the program has increased rapidly to nearly 1,800 employers representing approximately 800,000 employees. The Washington D.C. list was released on June 25, and the release of the Houston Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> list is scheduled for July 9. EPA will release the second annual Bay Area Best Workplaces for

Commuters<sup>SM</sup> list the week of October 20. Other upcoming campaigns include Sacramento, the New York Metro Area, New England, Denver/Boulder, San Antonio, North Carolina, Tucson, and Phoenix.

*Steve Offutt, Office of Transportation and Air Quality, EPA*

Steve Offutt is the manager of the national Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> campaign. Mr. Offutt provided forum participants with answers to frequently asked questions about the CCLI transition to Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>. EPA believes that the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> name is clearer and much more effective in designating an employer as the best. All employers who are currently enrolled in CCLI will automatically become Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>. The term Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> and Commuter Choice<sup>®</sup> Employer are still owned by EPA, but will no longer be associated with this program.

The requirements for participation in Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> are identical to the National Standard of Excellence established under CCLI. As before, these requirements are bestowed on individual worksites, and EPA is currently working with national employers to bring multiple worksite employers into the program.

The current CCLI Web site has been updated to reflect the transition to Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>. The site can now be found at <[www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov)>. The previous URL <[www.commuterchoice.gov](http://www.commuterchoice.gov)> is still functioning as well. EPA plans to update the Web site content in approximately 2 to 3 weeks. EPA is also in the process of updating program materials. Although quite a bit of the content will remain the same, some of these documents may take time to update. EPA will notify employers of the program change via phone forums and periodic e-updates. Employers may now begin referring to themselves as Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> and will receive a letter along with a new certificate in the next few weeks.

Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> is a service-marked term that is owned by the federal government. Only those employers in the program are permitted to use this service-marked term, and employers should strive to protect the term from improper use.

## Open Discussion

Following the featured speakers' presentations, other forum participants asked questions and provided additional information on some of the points discussed.

- Robin Snyder from EPA emphasized that the term Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> must always be used in a plural sense to indicate that the employers are part of a group.
- Eyedin Zonobi from San Jose State University asked if EPA is planning to place ads in local newspapers announcing the program change and the list of Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>, and also asked if EPA would provide employers with a logo to use in their publications. Steve Offutt explained that EPA is not allowed to place paid ads in newspapers; however, the San Francisco list should generate earned media when it is released in the fall. In addition, EPA can provide employers with assistance in generating their own press coverage. A program identifier has been designed for Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> regional campaigns. Mr. Offutt indicated that EPA would provide this identifier to regional campaign coordinators.

## Closing

Patrice Thornton closed by thanking the participants for their presentations and thanking the employers for participating in the forum. If employers have additional questions about the transition to Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>, they can e-mail <[bwc@epa.gov](mailto:bwc@epa.gov)>. The next phone forum has not yet been scheduled, but will soon be announced. If employers have topic ideas for future phone forums, they are encouraged to submit them to EPA.