

City of Austin Transportation Department



**End of Administrative Leave Pilot
March 2018**

Background

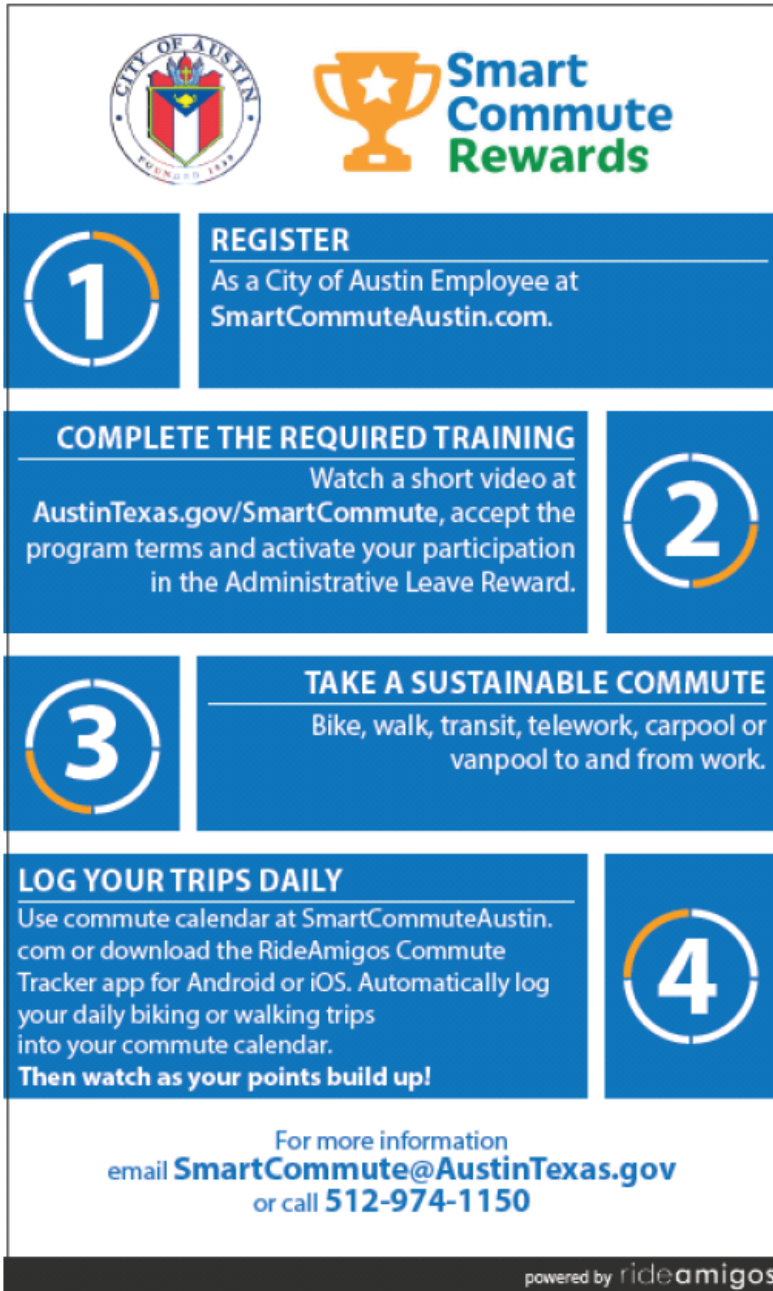
January 5, 2017 Interim City Manager Elaine Hart announced the new employee commute reduction program - Commute Connections. This program builds on the success of the 2015 employee commute reduction pilot where City staff collectively achieved a 23% reduction in drive alone trips during peak travel times. This equates to more than 5,000 vehicles removed from times of peak traffic on Austin roadways. Of the 23%, 11% of the trips were taken using sustainable transportation¹ options. In fact, 3% were from teleworking and 8% included walking, biking, public transit, carpool, and vanpool. Because less than half of the commute trip reduction was from sustainable options more needed to be done to encourage the workforce toward commuting differently with the vision of reaching the City's new employee commute trip reduction goal of 30%. The current benefits offered, such as free transit passes, free bikeshare memberships, subsidized vanpools, and opportunities to telework certainly helped to support the City's commute trip reduction goals. Adding Smart Commute Rewards as the incentive arm of the City's Commute Connections Program offered City of Austin employees various new incentives to change their commuting habit even just one day a week.

"I am very excited about this program – I hope the trial run is successful. I find it very motivating when I start to waffle in the morning about walking or riding the bus to work."

Austin Public Library Employee

¹ **Sustainable Transportation** – Trips using transportation options that limit emissions and waste, minimize consumption of non-renewable resources, and minimize the use of land. Sustainable trips include telework, transit, bicycle, walk, carpool, vanpool

Under the Smart Commute Rewards pilot phase full- and part-time regular employees were able to voluntarily earn Administrative Leave (ADL) hours. Users followed the registration steps found on our program webpage (Appendix A) and logged their trips at SmartCommuteAustin.com.



Contract and temporary employees were not eligible to earn the ADL leave offered. Additionally, ATD ran individual contests during the pilot phase that all employees were able to participate in to be entered to win various prizes.

Employees earned varying amounts of leave time based on how many trips they took and logged within the 6 month period. The graphic below outlines the tier structures used during the pilot.

Smart Commute Rewards



ADL was distributed via emailed memo to either a single point of contact (SPOC) in a specific department/office or directly to the employee if no SPOC was designated. Employees are required to attach the memo to their timesheet in the pay period they intend to use it.

Using ADL requires scheduling and approval by each employee's director and supervisor, as department workloads must be taken into consideration. The hours of leave earned must be used all at one time within one year. Unused leave will be lost.

Implementation

ATD provided outreach in several forms throughout the program. Prior to program launch communications were distributed via newsletter articles distributed to CitySource News, flyers, and posters that were distributed at the One Texas Center and LCRA buildings. Upon program launch ATD hosted several registration events at various city building locations (One Texas Center, City Hall, and Austin Energy on Barton Springs Blvd) and offered free b-cycle passes to those registering for an account.



After program launch ATD provided program information via newsletter articles to CitySource News, flyers/posters at One Texas Center and LCRA buildings, Did You Know emails were distributed regularly to all SmartCommuteAustin.com users, and banners were added to the SmartCommuteAustin.com page.

Contests

All contests under Smart Commute Rewards are meant to encourage the workforce to participate in some way, for example, beginning to using the new commute tracking portal, using the Commute Tracker app, or taking a survey. The following contests occurred during the same time period as the ADL reward tracking, May – October 2017.

- Getting Started – May 1–21, 2017

Users enrolled in the contest and successfully logged in the commute tracking portal four (4) individual sustainable commute trips (from home to work and/or from work to home) using any of these modes, telework, transit, bicycle, walk, carpool, and vanpool during the contest period. A drawing awarded each of seven (7) \$50 Amazon gift cards to seven individual winning employees from the following departments: City Auditor's Office, Austin Energy, Watershed Protection, Austin Water Utility, Public Works Department, and Austin Convention Center.

- Appy Traveler - July 10-23, 2017

Users enrolled in the contest and successfully logged two (2) individual sustainable commute trips (from home to work and/or from work to home) using the commute tracker app at SmartCommuteAustin.com using any of these modes, transit, bicycle, walk, carpool, and vanpool during the contest period. A drawing awarded seven (7) \$50 Amazon gift cards to seven individual winning employees from the following departments: Municipal Court, Capital Contracting, Convention Center, Austin Transportation Department, Austin Resource Recovery, and Development Services Department.

- Survey Contest – October 9-22, 2017

To enter the contest users took the survey posted on SmartCommuteAustin.com. A drawing awarded ten (10) \$50 Amazon gift cards to ten individual winning employees from the following departments: Austin Energy, Parks and Recreation, Austin Water, Austin Police Department, Communications & Technology Department, Human Resources, Purchasing Office, Austin Fire.

"As employees, we learn so much about sustainable commuting options and reducing our carbon footprint. That's not something that my former employer ever discussed or encouraged."

*Austin Public Works Employee
Getting Started Contest Winner*

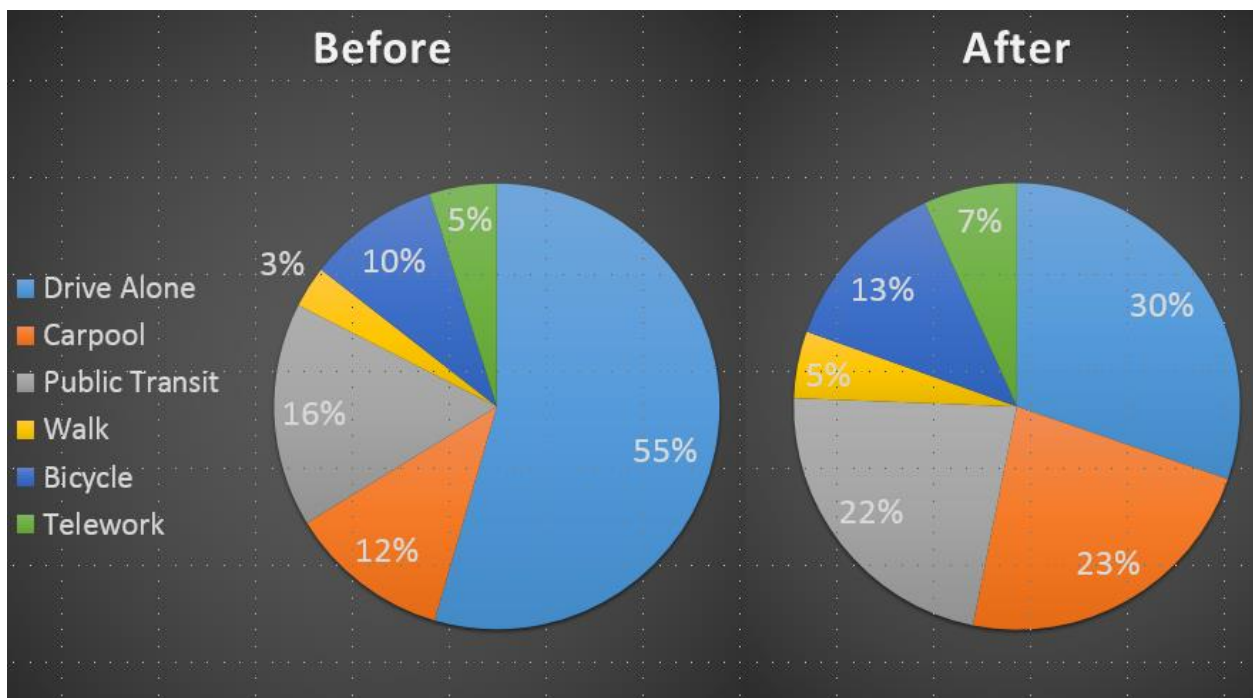
**See Appendix B for flyers for the Appy Traveler and Survey contests.

Results

By the end of the ADL pilot period there were over 1,300 SmartCommuteAustin.com users. Over 900 of those users were registered to earn ADL and over 600 users did earn some level of ADL.

The survey was advertised to all City staff via newsletter article in CitySource News, electronic flyers to employees at One Texas Center, Did You Know email to all active SmartCommuteAustin.com users. The survey was open to all City staff from October 9-22. The survey had 421 respondents. Based on survey respondents, we saw the following results:

- 53% of participants made a positive shift to change their drive alone habit,
- Carpool and Vanpool trips doubled, and
- 97% of participants liked the ADL reward.





SMART COMMUTE REWARDS launched to City of Austin employees on May 1, 2017. The program offers employees incentives (administrative leave and prizes) for taking a sustainable commute.* Smart Commute generated some impressive 2017 statistics and received the Air Central Texas Public Sector award for its innovative approach.

Number of employees registered:

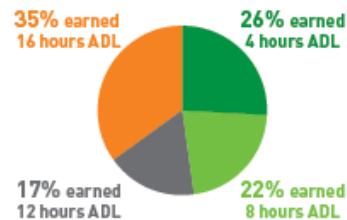


10% of the regular and civil service workforce

Administrative Leave (ADL) participation: **990**



606 Smart Commute Rewards participants earned ADL



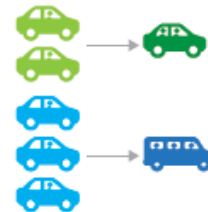
421 individuals took the survey



53% of participants made a positive shift to reduce their drive alone trips



Carpool and vanpool trips **doubled**



Nitrogen oxides reduced: **3** tons
Carbon dioxide reduced: **380** tons



Calories burned: **2,982,385**



Questions?

Email
SmartCommute@AustinTexas.gov
or call 512-974-1150.



* Definition: A sustainable commute means employees leave their drive-alone habit, for even one day a week, and take a different mode to work.

Additional Surveys

- **Listening to the Workforce**

The 2017 Listening to the Workforce survey has 1,077 open ended comments that were related to Alternative Transportation or City Sustainability Measures. Recommendations noted in the survey were:

- More departmental accountability and monitoring of employee participation
- Better departmental communications on how employees can short mid-day trips sustainable
- Departments should consider expanding opportunities for employees to telework
- Departments should consider supporting more alternative work schedules
- More employee trainings on how to register in Smart Commute for the ADL reward
- Consider including an incentive that temporary employees can earn

- **Managers' Survey**

A survey of managers in January 2018 showed that in general 59% of the managers responding to the survey were either satisfied or very satisfied with the program, none were dis-satisfied. Managers noted the key strengths of the program to be:

- The ADL reward motivated employees to commute differently
- The mobile app was helpful for supporting program participation
- Emailed tips directly to program participants were helpful

Managers noted the key opportunities of the program to be:

- Improve communications to staff as ADL period/s launch and managers as the ADL period/s wrap up
- Evaluate barriers (departmental and personal) that may keep employees from participating
- Consider additional incentives beyond ADL

Recognitions

- The ADL was identified by City of Austin employees as the best reward for this program. 97% of survey respondents said that they prefer ADL over any other reward option.
- The Austin Transportation Department received the 2017 Air Central Texas Public Sector Award for its Smart Commute Rewards program.



- Smart Commute Rewards has drawn interest from organizations coast-to-coast, including: City of Santa Monica, California; City of Hillsboro, Oregon; City of San Antonio, Texas; City of Nashville, Tennessee; City of Raleigh, North Carolina; City of Tacoma, Washington; Pittsburgh Pennsylvania's Downtown Partnership, and New York City's Department of Transportation.
- Supports the City of Austin standing as one of the 2018 Best Workplaces for CommutersSM.



- Program presented at the 2017 Association for Commuter Transportation Annual Conference and at the 2018 Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association Annual Meeting.

Key Quotes from Participants

"Smart Commute Rewards is convenient and cost effective. I consider this as one of my employment benefits."

- Austin Fire Department employee

"I am a big fan of the Smart Commute Rewards ADL. It got me to bike to work nearly every day...it is an excellent way to decrease congestion, improve air quality, and encourage healthy practices."

- Neighborhood Housing & Community Development

"The ADL makes me feel appreciated."

- Austin Resource Recovery employee

"I find participating in Smart Commute Rewards very motivating when I start to waffle in the morning about walking or riding the bus to work."

Austin Public Library employee

"I do whatever I can to avoid driving now."

- Austin Energy employee

"I like the concept of incentivizing alternative commutes, and the fact that managers in our office are fully supportive of Smart Commute Rewards. I strongly believe this is the right direction for employers to be taking."

- Budget Office employee

"Simple to use and as a major employer we owe it to set a positive example for other government agencies, as well as, the private sector."

- Austin Transportation Department employee

Goals

Smart Commute's aim is to set City of Austin as a leader in managing traffic congestion and supporting improvements to regional air quality. The following metrics are indicators of progress toward reaching the program goals between May 1 and October 31, 2017:

EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

Six Month Goal: Pilot Year, 10-15% of eligible employees participating

Six Month Actual:

Overall Users in the Platform – 1,295 individuals (10% of regular and civil service employees)

Users Registered for ADL – 990 individuals (8% of eligible employees)

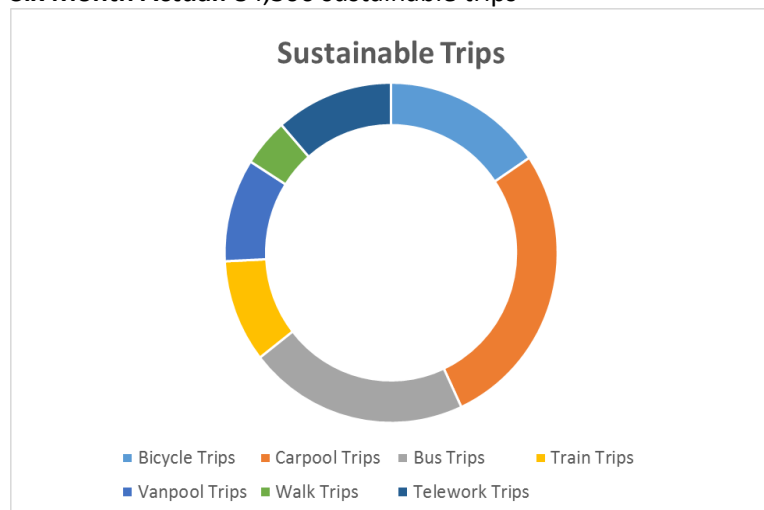
Users Receiving ADL – 606 individuals (5% of eligible employees)

New Annual Goal: Permanent Program Year 1, 15%-20% of eligible employees participating

NUMBER OF SUSTAINABLE TRIPS

Six Month Goal: 50,000 sustainable trips

Six Month Actual: 84,306 sustainable trips



New Annual Goal: 88,200 trips

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED REDUCED

Six Month Goal: 800,000 vehicle miles reduced

Six Month Actual: 1.3 million vehicle miles reduced

New Annual Goal: 1,365,000 vehicle miles reduced

ENVIRONMENTAL

NOx

Six Month Goal: 5,000 lbs reduced (2.5 tons)

Six Month Actual: 3 tons

New Annual Goal: 3.5 tons

CO2

Six Month Goal: 790,000 lbs (395 tons)

Six Month Actual: 380 tons

New Annual Goal: 400 tons

CALORIES BURNED

Six Month Goal: 600,000

Six Month Actual: 2.9 million

New Annual Goal: 3.1 million

PARKING SPACES AVAILABLE

Six Month Goal: 26,000 individual parking spaces

Six Month Actual: No data due to difficulty of calculating with any accuracy and certainty

New Annual Goal: No stated goal

Conclusions

Strengths

- At least 10% of the workforce participated in some form
- Tier structure was easy to understand
- Nationwide Program Interest

Weaknesses

- Continue to improve real-time data linkages so that trips can be reported directly into the commute tracking portal. For example, when an employee bus pass is scanned the information that they took the bus on a certain day and time automatically uploads into the commute tracking portal.
- Registration to become eligible for ADL was complex causing more work for ATD staff on the back end
- HRD does not maintain a complete list on the status of employees (regular, temp, contract)

Opportunities

- Consider adding a reward for alternative work schedules (including 3rd shift) that take vehicles off the road at peak travel times.

- Consider adding more modes of travel.
- Consider adding rewards for mid-day trips and school pools.
- Consider adding improved incentives for temporary employees.
- Consider including gated parking garages to automatically log driving trips
- Needs to be year round – two 6 month reward periods, 32 hours of ADL available annually, 16 hour increments of ADL usable for 6 months.

Threats

- Commute Tracker app malfunctioned at times
 - Solution: RideAmigos provided support to individual users and has made enhancements to the app.
- Distribution of ADL cumbersome
 - Solution: work toward establish distribution of ADL through the timekeeping system.

Appendix A



Smart Commute Rewards



Help manage traffic congestion, improve your health and preserve the environment – all while earning a reward! If you're a full- or part-time City of Austin employee, you can earn administrative leave for taking a regular sustainable commute. This means leaving your drive-alone habit, for even one day a week, and choosing instead to bike, walk, take transit, telework, carpool or vanpool. It doesn't matter whether you're taking your first sustainable commute or you've been doing it for years! The less you drive alone, the more administrative leave time you'll earn and the less you'll spend on gas.

How Smart Commute works:

- **Register** as a City of Austin employee on the [Smart Commute Rewards portal](#).
- **Complete the required training** by watching a short video on the [Smart Commute Rewards training website](#), accepting the program terms and activating your participation in the Administrative Leave Reward.
- **Take a sustainable commute** - Bike, walk, transit, telework, carpool or vanpool to and from work.
- **Log your trips daily** into the commute calendar on the [Smart Commute Rewards portal](#) or download the RideAmigos Commute Tracker app for [Android](#) or [iOS](#) and automatically log your daily biking or walking trips into your commute calendar. Then watch as your points build up!
- Get your reward at the end of calendar year 2017 and spend your time off however you want!

Full- or part-time regular City employees will be rewarded for trips taken from May through October 2017 based on the following tiered structure:

Six-Month Employee Participation Goal	Comparable to Participating	Employee Reward
44 trip points	1 day per week	4 hours ADL
88 trip points	2 days per week	8 hours ADL
132 trip points	3 days per week	12 hours ADL
176 trip points	4 days per week	16 hours ADL

*based on a six-month program with a two-trip-points-per-day limit

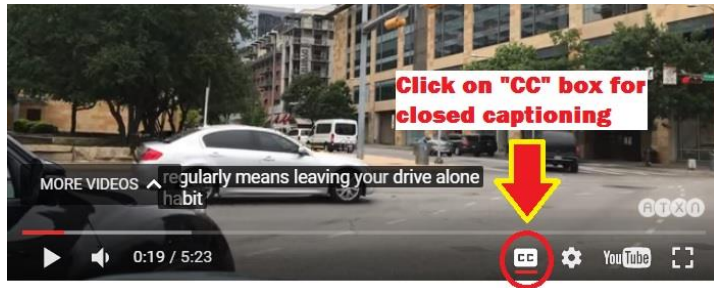


Employees are responsible for accurately tracking their sustainable commutes according to the guidelines laid out in the Smart Commute Rewards training. Non-compliance with the guidelines may subject employees to disciplinary action. Employees must receive supervisor approval before altering their work schedule or work location to utilize sustainable modes of transportation (telework, vanpool, carpool, bike, walk, transit).

Smart Commute Rewards is a component of the City's Commute Connections Program, which aims to help City employees take actions that will improve their health and regional air quality while freeing up parking near City buildings. Find out more about City employee commute options by clicking on the "Commute Connections" button on the CitySpace home page.

Questions? Click [here](#) for answers to commonly asked questions, email smartcommute@austintexas.gov or call 512-974-1150.

Smart Commute Rewards Training



Once you have finished watching the [training video](#), click [here](#) to confirm that you understood the training and agree to the terms of the program.

You'll then be given a [link](#) to activate your Administrative Leave Rewards - make sure to click that link to ensure that you're eligible for rewards!

Reward Guidelines

- Read the [Frequently Asked Questions document](#).
- Read the [Administrative Leave Reward rules](#).
- [Request an exception to the parking requirements](#).

What's 'App'ening in July? The Appy Traveler Contest!

(FOR CITY OF AUSTIN EMPLOYEES)



TRY THE SMART COMMUTE APP BETWEEN **JULY 10-23**
AND YOU COULD WIN A \$50 AMAZON GIFT CARD!*



HERE'S HOW:

1. Enroll in the contest at SmartCommuteAustin.com in the incentives tab
2. Successfully log two individual sustainable trips in the Commute Tracker app by RideAmigos (eligible mode types: bicycle, walk, carpool, vanpool, bus, train)

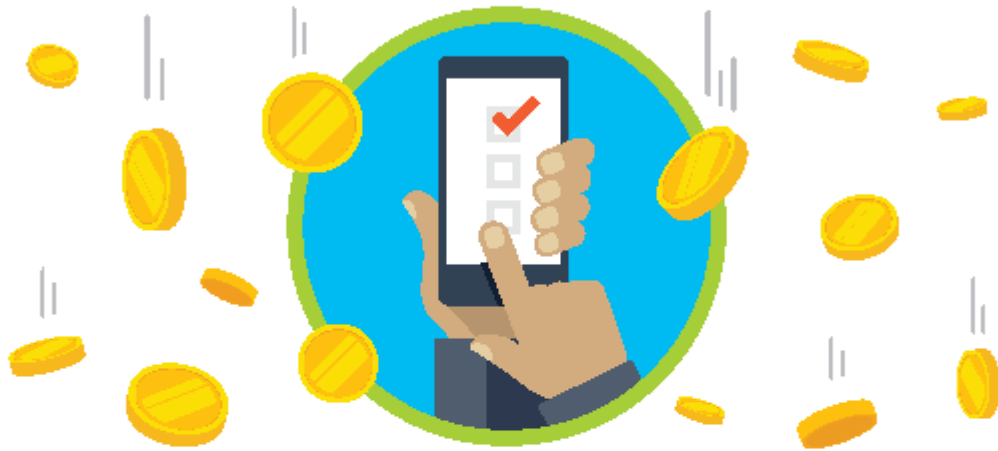


Contest rules can be found at AustinTexas.gov/SmartCommute
Questions? Email SmartCommute@AustinTexas.gov or call 512-974-1150

*Prize: Seven (7) \$50 Amazon gift cards
(taxable income) to seven individual winning employees

5,000 Pennies for Your Thoughts?! Smart Commute Survey Contest

(FOR CITY OF AUSTIN EMPLOYEES)



TAKE THE SMART COMMUTE ONLINE SURVEY BETWEEN
OCTOBER 9 – 22 AND YOU COULD WIN A \$50 AMAZON GIFT CARD!*



HERE'S HOW:

If you have an active SmartCommuteAustin.com
user account, complete the online survey at
AustinTexas.gov/SmartCommute to be entered!



Contest rules can be found at AustinTexas.gov/SmartCommute
Questions? Email SmartCommute@AustinTexas.gov or call 512-974-1150

*Prize: Ten (10) \$50 Amazon gift cards
(taxable income) to ten individual winning employees