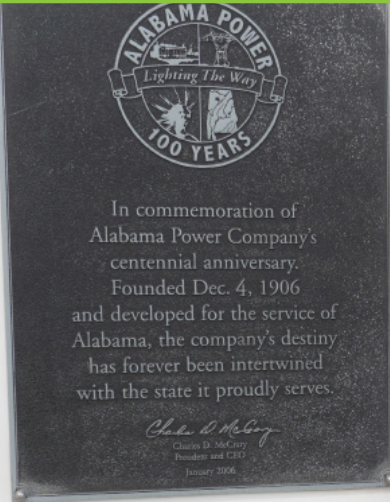




# COMMUTESMART

## ANNUAL REPORT 2018



AN INITIATIVE OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

# CommuteSmart Annual Report

October 2017 – September 2018

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This report was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB), as staff to the MPO, by the requirement of Title 42 USC 7401 et seq., Clean Air Act and 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93, Air Quality Conformity Rules and Regulations. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the USDOT.

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# CommuteSmart Executive Summary

Changing existing behaviors takes encouragement, incentives, and ease for most audiences. CommuteSmart Birmingham aims to change the way commuters get to work in our region. Created in 1999 by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, CommuteSmart works to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion in our region. The program utilizes incentive programs and maintains a database of program registrants to support taking a clean commute to work. Outreach activities focus on spreading awareness and working with employers to increase the offering of rideshare services available and multiply the messaging. The program also implements customer service best practices to increase retention. CommuteSmart is funded by the Alabama Department of Transportation and Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds.

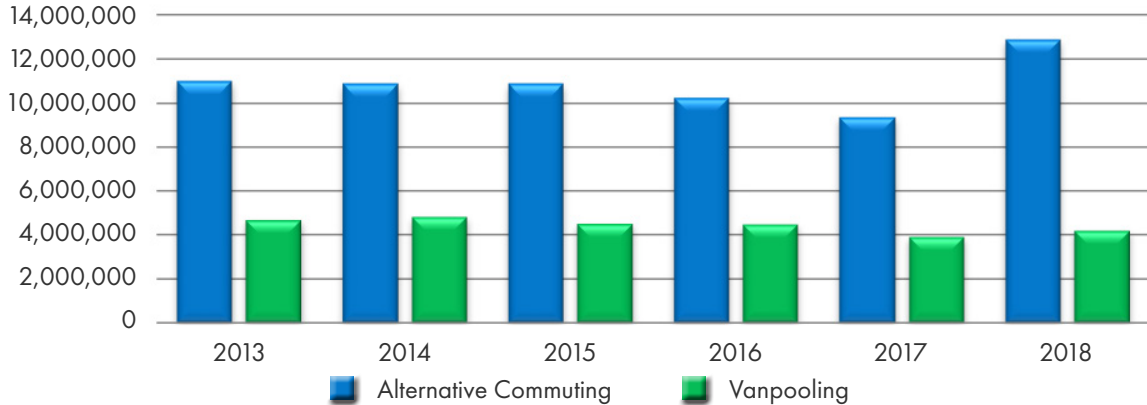
CommuteSmart engages audiences by working through employers, communities, and civic groups to spread program awareness. The program also uses paid and earned media campaigns to promote our mission. From October 2017 to September 2018, CommuteSmart added 2,293 new registrants to the ridematching database making the total 27,154. Program participants removed 12,855,324 vehicle miles from the road. Commuters reduced 4,171,146 vehicle miles through vanpooling, while reducing another 8,684,178 through alternative commutes such as carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking, and working from home (Figure 1).

Vehicle mile reduction equals lower vehicle emissions, less traffic, and more savings for CommuteSmart participants. In fiscal year 2018, CommuteSmart participants saved over 349,051 gallons of fuel, which totals \$805,764 in fuel cost savings. Commuter cost reductions, such as lower maintenance and insurance, helped participants save an estimated \$5,051,118 (Figure 2).

The following pages provide details of the CommuteSmart incentive programs and activities that took place in fiscal year 2018. Please let us know how we can better serve you moving forward in the coming years. Together we can reduce traffic, improve air quality, and strengthen the community.

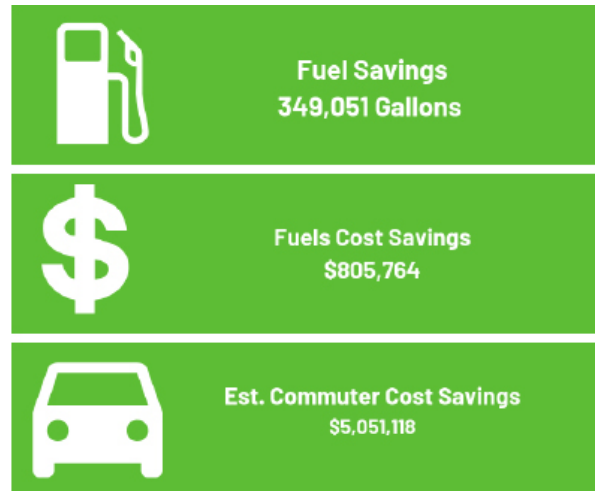
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**Figure 1**  
**Vanpool & Alternative Commute Vehicle Miles Reduced**  
 (Annual Comparisons)



**Figure 2**  
**Commuter Savings**

From October 2017 to September 2018, CommuteSmart participants removed **12,855,324** vehicle-miles from the road. Commuters reduced **4,171,146** vehicle-miles through vanpooling, and another **8,684,178** through alternative commutes such as carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and working from home.



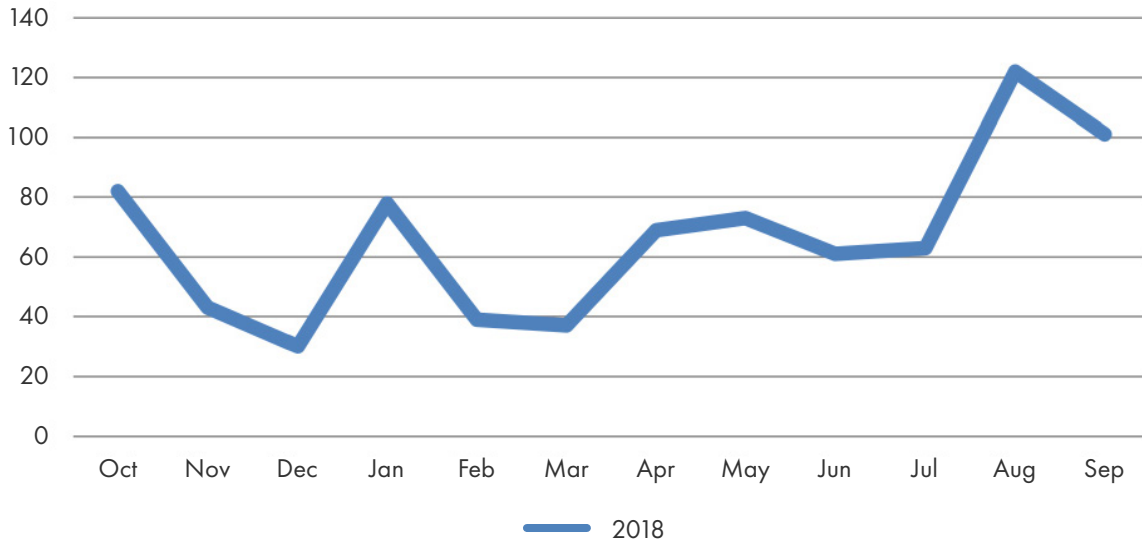
## CommuteSmart Incentive Programs

### GetGreen

CommuteSmart offers the GetGreen program to encourage individuals to try an alternative commute option. Under this program, new participants logging a minimum of 20 alternative commutes in the first 90-days earn \$1 per day, up to \$70. Any commuter living or working in the CommuteSmart program area, which includes Jefferson, Shelby, South Blount and West St. Clair County, is eligible for GetGreen incentives.

In FY 2018, CommuteSmart outreach events, social media, advertising, and employer engagement yielded 798 GetGreen enrollees (Figure 3). These participants logged approximately 646,867 vehicle miles reduced last year, or an average of 811 miles reduced per participant. The GetGreen program cost \$29,234 or 5 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

**Figure 3**  
**New GetGreen Members**

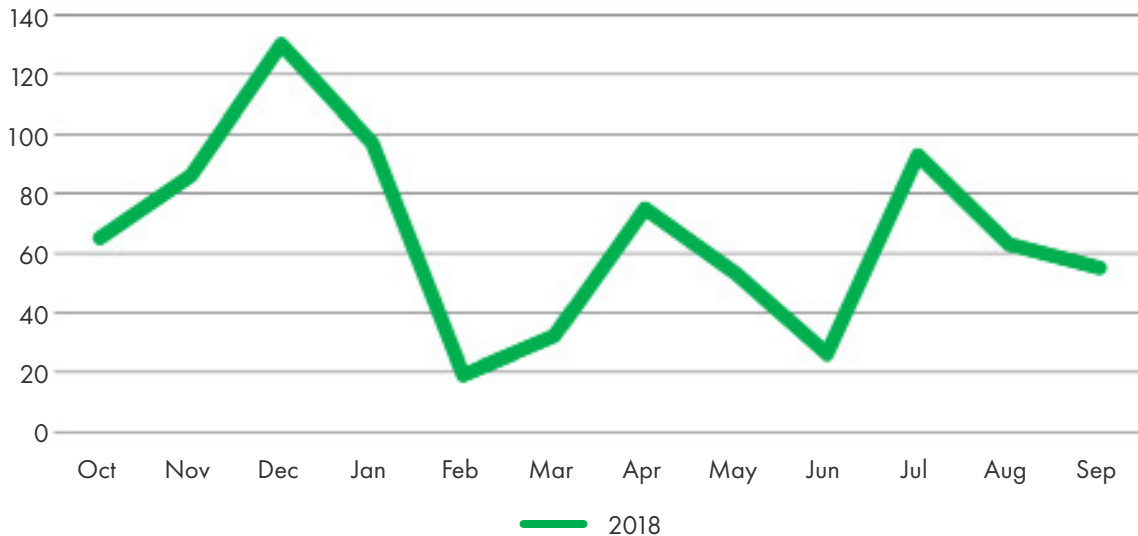


## CommuterClub

After the initial 90-day GetGreen period, commuters are automatically enrolled in CommuterClub to encourage the continued use of alternative commutes. This program provides \$25 gift card rewards for commuters that log at least 20 alternative commutes each quarter. Participants choose one of 7 gift card options including Chevron/Texaco, Publix, BJCTA Transit Pass, Cahaba Cycles, CVS, The Summit, and Express Oil Change. Employees of the University of Alabama at Birmingham may also choose the option of having \$25 added to their Blazer Bucks account, a declining balance account linked to each employee and student’s identification card.

In Fiscal year 2018 there were 794 new commuters registered in CommuterClub (Figure 4). The CommuterClub program cost \$195,545 fiscal year 2018 and resulted in the elimination of 8,070,269 vehicle miles from the region’s roadways. As such, the program cost approximately 2 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

**Figure 4**  
**New CommuterClub Members**

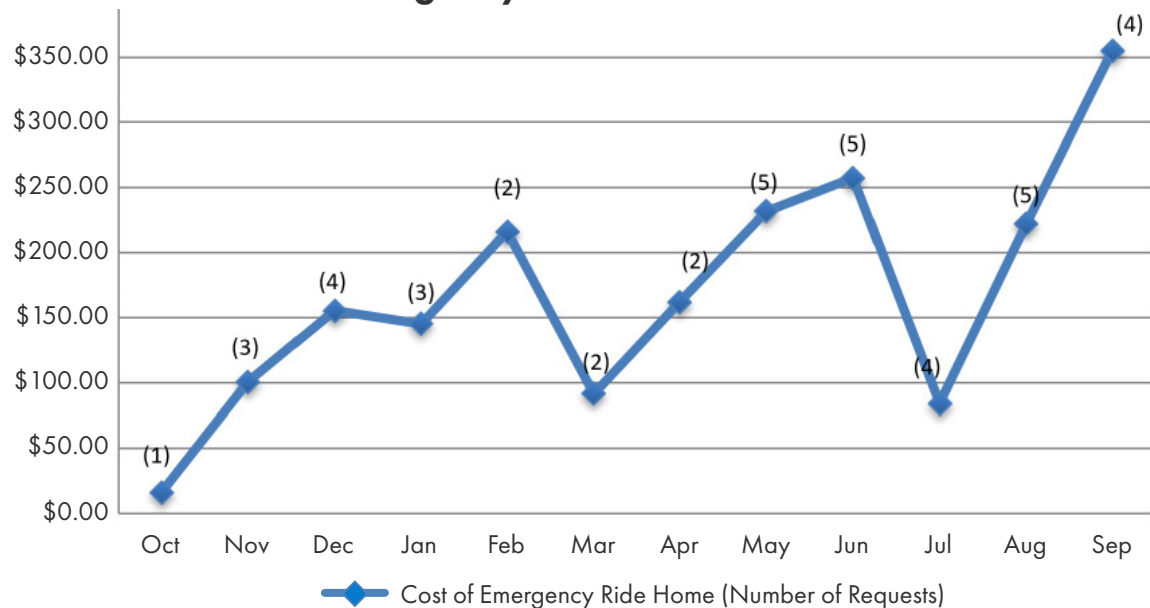


## Emergency Ride Home

For individuals interested in switching from driving alone to taking an alternative commute, the security of a private vehicle for emergency situations is often one of the most significant hurdles to making a change. CommuteSmart helps remove this obstacle by providing an Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program. Participants actively logging their commutes, as well as active vanpool members, are eligible for up to 5 emergency rides home each year for qualifying events such as illness, family emergency, or unscheduled overtime. In these instances, active participants contact CommuteSmart to arrange transportation back to the origin of their commute at no cost to the participant.

In FY 2018, CommuteSmart participants received 40 ERHs at a total cost of \$2,039.71 (Figure 5). The average cost per ERH was \$50.99 this fiscal year.

**Figure 5**  
**Emergency Ride Home Totals**





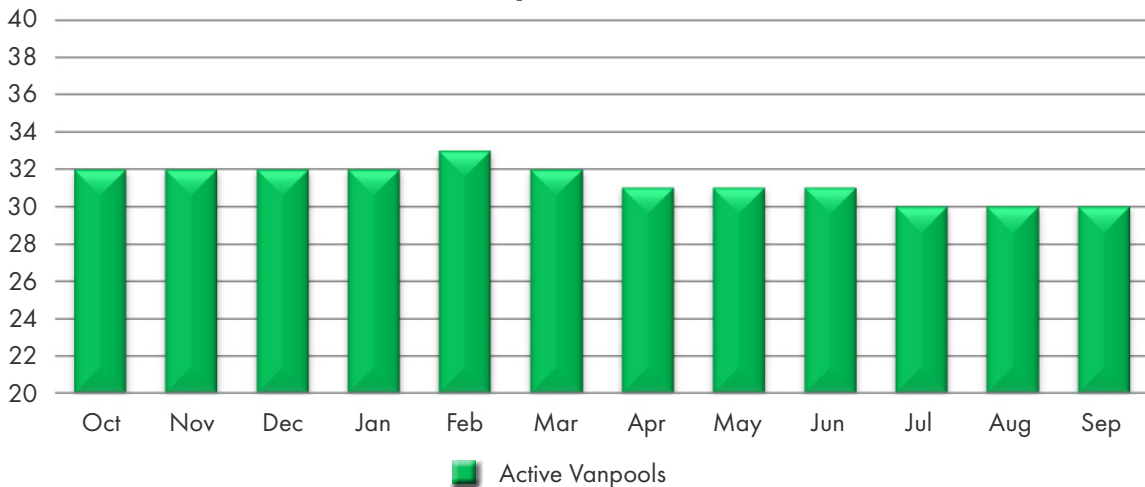
## Vanpool

Commute with Enterprise currently manages the vanpool program for CommuteSmart. Increased commuter savings, less stressful commutes, reduced parking demands, lower levels of tardiness and absenteeism are all benefits of taking a vanpool commute to work. To help incentivize more vanpools, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham provides a \$400 subsidy for 7 to 9 passenger vans and a \$450 subsidy for 12 and 15 passenger vans.

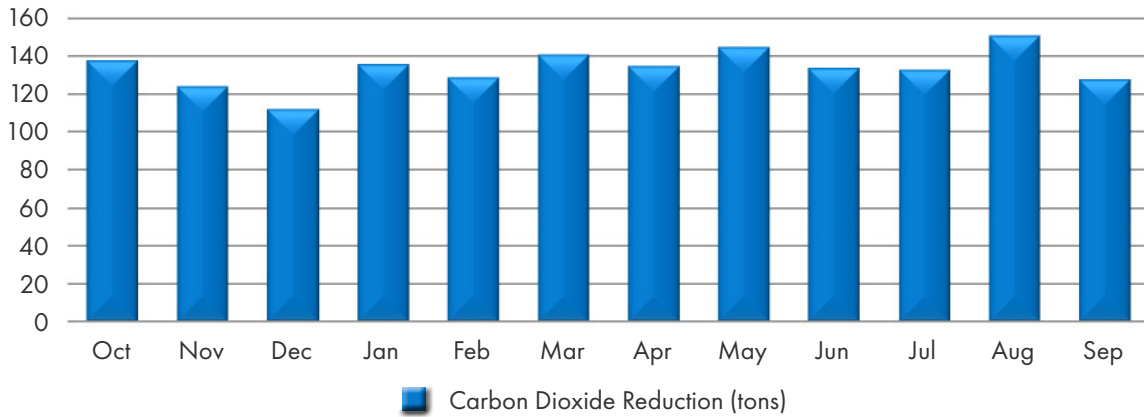
The Commute with Enterprise staff worked with CommuteSmart outreach coordinators at special events and supported marketing campaigns with local businesses, civic groups, and communities to promote vanpooling and its benefits. As a result of these efforts and the subsidy, vanpool participants:

- Maintained an average of 31 operating vanpools each month (Figure 6), resulting in 45,936 cars off the highway in 2018;
- Lowered CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 1,606 tons and carbon monoxide emissions by 62.35 tons (Figure 7);
- Reduced 165,522 gallons of fuel used, saving \$399,265 in fuel costs (Figure 8);
- Took 75,878 fewer passenger trips, reducing vehicle miles travelled by 4,171,146; and
- Filled 205 available seats on vanpools, maintaining 82% occupancy for 2018.

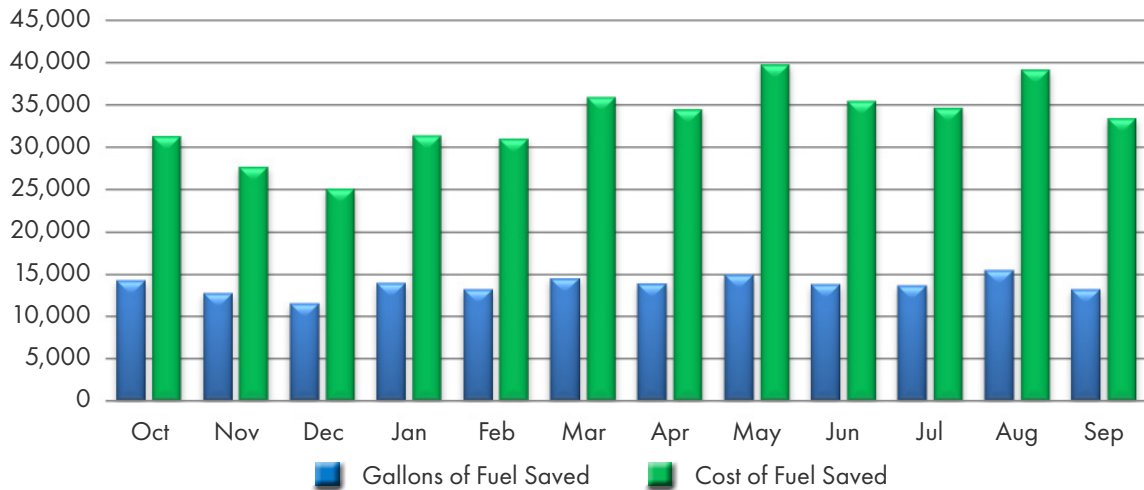
**Figure 6**  
**Vanpool Totals**



**Figure 7**  
**Carbon Dioxide Reduced (Tons)**



**Figure 8**  
**Vanpool Fuel Savings**



## CommuteSmart Outreach Activities

CommuteSmart outreach incorporates a range of activities including developing community and employer partner relationships; providing promotional items and information pamphlets; engaging individuals in person and online; and building awareness through traditional advertising and public relations campaigns. Outreach coordinators work with employers and community partners to create customized programs to increase the number of employees and residents utilizing alternative commutes.

### Outreach Coordinators

The Outreach Coordinator's primary focus is to increase the awareness of the program's mission, incentives, and benefits by engaging audiences through their employers. CommuteSmart provides marketing tools such as presentations, special events, giveaways, monthly email blasts, cluster analysis mapping, and social media strategies. CommuteSmart provides all these marketing services at no-cost. CommuteSmart assists partners with re-location planning, commuter surveys, bike racks, and preferred parking signs.

In fiscal year 2018 CommuteSmart hosted Bike to Work Day. During the annual event, CommuteSmart partners with local coffee shops and the bicycle community to celebrate National Bike to Work day locally. During this celebration, CommuteSmart works tirelessly to promote through social media campaigns, local media campaigns, and community outreach. The initiative proves to be the most successful outreach events for CommuteSmart.

CommuteSmart welcomed Z-Modular, Dollar General, Barnes Realty Group, City of Mountain Brook, and Mountain Brook Chamber of Commerce as new partners this year. These partners connect CommuteSmart to an additional 976 employees, students, and residents.

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# CommuteSmart in numbers

## 2018 outreach coordinator accomplishments

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**100**

Meetings

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**2,846**

Client Contact (phone/emails)

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**5**

New Partners

---

**118**

Partner Events

---

**78**

Presentations

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**1,005**

Rideshare Applications Collected

---

**0**

Maps/Cluster Analysis

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**674**

Blast Emails

## CommuteSmart Social Media and Website

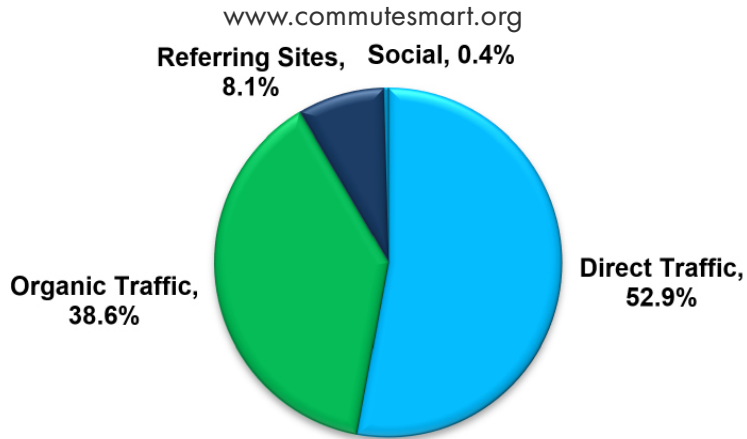
CommuteSmart utilizes our website and social media channels to interact creatively and engage with current and potential program participation. Twitter and Facebook provide great vehicles to increase website traffic, create brand awareness, improve customer service, and capture new business opportunities. A series of promotional giveaways created a huge surge in activity on our Facebook page.

CommuteSmart currently focuses its social media efforts on Facebook and Twitter. In 2018, CommuteSmart increased the number of Facebook Page “Likes” to 1,044 and reached approximately 27,910 people through this platform. On Twitter, CommuteSmart now has 875 followers and garnered over 53,200 impressions.

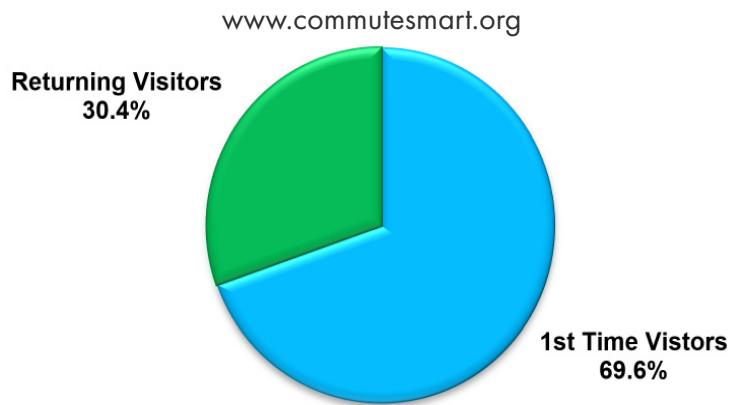


The CommuteSmart website provides interactive content, videos, and testimonials to instruct and encourage program participation. Traffic to the website is generated from various sources (Figure 9) with 53% coming from individuals typing in [www.commutessmart.org](http://www.commutessmart.org) or bookmarking the site in their browser. Over the year, the website received 79,971 total visitors with 22,215 visiting for the first time (Figure 10).

**Figure 9**  
**Traffic Sources Overview**



**Figure 10**  
**Website Statistics**



## CommuteSmart Public Relations and Advertising

In Fiscal year 2018, CommuteSmart continued to utilize conventional public relations and advertising to increase brand awareness. An ongoing marketing and outreach campaign was developed and implemented. The campaign's main objective was to increase CommuteSmart participation by motivating people throughout Jefferson and Shelby counties to make changes that would help reduce the number of single occupied vehicles on the road. Strategies for the outreach campaign included advertising on radio, print, television, digital media, and on-site events targeting commuters. WBRC aired a series of bike safety promotions throughout "Bike to Work Week". In addition to the messages about bike safety, CommuteSmart was featured on multiple live news segments that aired during Good Day Alabama to promote "Bike to Work Day".



Spokesman Cycle Ads, a new advertising outlet, was incorporated into the media mix. A local entrepreneur created this company that provides a rolling billboard on the back of a bicycle. A “Bike to Work” billboard was designed to encourage people to ride their bikes to work. This billboard was visible during highly attended events in the downtown area including Birmingham Barons baseball games and Pepper Place Market.

CommuteSmart also sponsored two unique events that targeted the CommuteSmart demographic including “Taste of Five Points” at Vulcan Park and “Arc Stories” at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.





The outreach campaign targeted adults ages 25-54 with specific target demographics that included women and the African American community. Research has shown that women are more likely to carpool to work with co-workers than men. However, men are also targeted but in a secondary manner. The African American community is an important demographic that was also taken into consideration when implementing the media outreach strategy. Birmingham Times was utilized to highlight commuter stories that targeted that demographic. Radio messages aired on 98.7 KISS-FM to reach the younger demographic and on Hallelujah to reach the older demographic. WBHM-FM, the local public radio station, was also utilized to reach people who are environmentally friendly and want to help make a difference by taking cars off the road.

Public Relations efforts included radio and television interviews with the CommuteSmart staff, which aired across 3 television stations and 2 radio stations. This added value alone provided approximately 317,600 impressions.



## Media Campaign

The media outreach campaign combined several media sources including digital, mobile, print, television and radio. This combination of media helped build the brand and drive consumers to the website. The logo used for CommuteSmart includes simple icons to demonstrate the various options to participate in the program including walking, riding a bike, taking transit, carpooling, vanpooling, and telecommuting.



A radio campaign aired May 1- June 25, 2018. The strategy was to reach listeners while they were in their automobiles driving to work. The radio campaign ran on seven radio stations in the market to reach a diverse audience. iHeart Media delivered a strong campaign and provided additional exposure with added value spots and website presence. CommuteSmart sponsored the Total Traffic Report on four radio stations that reached people while they were sitting in traffic. All the radio and television messages were designed to push consumers to the CommuteSmart website. This offered a measurable way to determine the effectiveness of the messages. A major increase in website traffic

coincided with the media outreach campaign. The programming selections exemplify the diversity of the target audiences intended to be reached. There was a deliberate focus to run the advertisements in the morning and afternoon when individuals are dealing with commuting issues.

Summit Media Corp provided a complete marketing campaign that included radio, event marketing and digital. As a sponsor of “Taste of Five Points” at Vulcan Park, CommuteSmart was featured on promotional messages across four radio stations and on all the station’s websites. CommuteSmart sponsored “Morning Blend” on Birmingham Mountain Radio and received interviews promoting Bike to Work Day and CommuteSmart. Summit Media Corp also provided streaming ads on all their digital station platforms and gave bonus spots throughout the campaign.

WBHM-FM, public radio, was included in the buy to reach an audience that is environmentally friendly. The local research conducted showed WBHM as one of the most listened to stations by CommuteSmart current members.

Television and radio interviews were conducted during National Bike to Work Week to promote Bike to Work Day and to educate viewers about the benefits of CommuteSmart. An interview on WAGG-AM radio with Sheila Smoot targeted transit riders and educated that audience about the benefits that CommuteSmart provides for riding the bus to work.



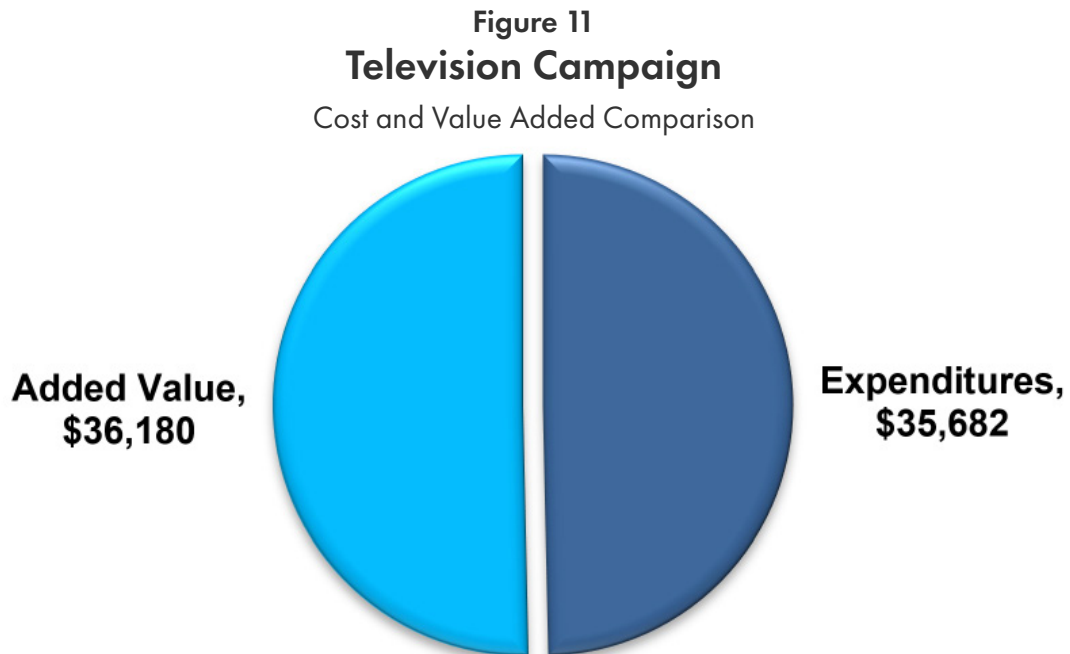
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CommuteSmart  
Birmingham

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## Television

A total of 4 local television stations, along with multiple cable networks, were purchased in the market for the flight which aired May 7, 2018 to June 24, 2018. Figure 11 breaks down the television campaign and the total amount of added value television stations provided CommuteSmart. The total of the campaign was \$71,862 including expenditures and added value.

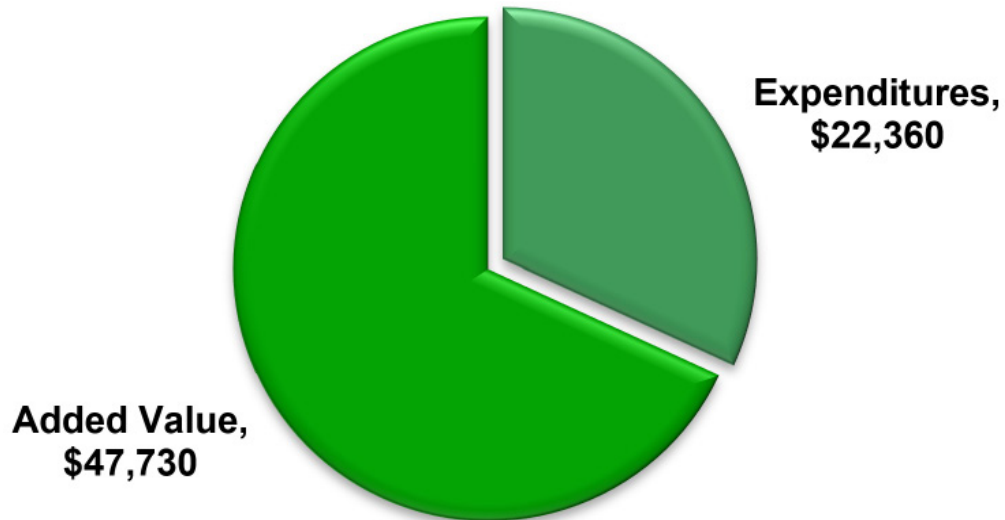


**Radio**

CommuteSmart purchased spots from a total of 9 radio stations airing beginning on May 1, 2018 until June 25, 2018. Through these spots, CommuteSmart received \$47,730 in added value. Figure 12 illustrates the breakdown of the radio campaign and the total amount of added value the radio stations provided the program. Altogether the radio campaign was valued at \$70,090.

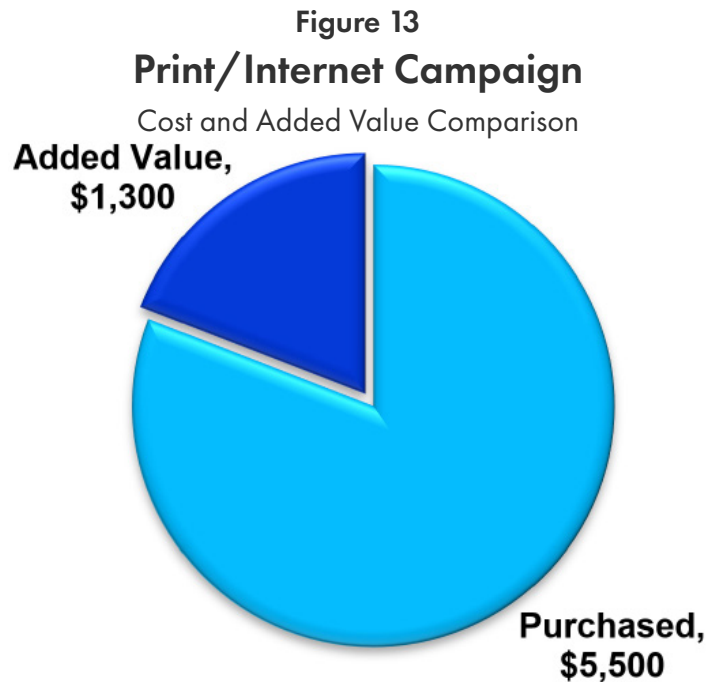
**Figure 12**  
**Radio Campaign**

Cost and Added Value Comparison



### Print / Digital / Sponsorships

CommuteSmart's campaign with the Birmingham Times and Starnes Media ran in that last quarter of FY2018. CommuteSmart purchased \$5,500 worth of advertising and received \$1,300 worth of added value. Total print, digital, and sponsorships was valued at \$6800 combining the purchased and added value (Figure 13).



# CommuteSmart Partners

As of September 2018

## Gold Partners

Alabama Power

City of Montevallo

Fortis Institute

HealthSouth

Protective Life

Southern Company Services

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

VA Medical Center

Virginia College

## Silver Partners

American Cast Iron & Pipe Company (ACIPCO)

Baker Donelson

Cahaba Cycles

Children's Health System

Children's South

City of Birmingham

Daxko

Harbert Realty

Jefferson County Department of Health

Lawson State Community College

PRA Group

Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)

St. Vincent's Health System

Samford University

SPOC Automation

University of Montevallo

## Bronze Partners

Advantage Resourcing  
Alabama Media Group  
Altec, Inc.  
American Family Care  
Autotec  
Balch & Bingham, LLP  
Barber's/Mayfield  
Barnes Realty Group  
BBVA Compass Bank  
BE&K/KBR  
Birmingham Association of Realtors  
Birmingham Business Alliance  
Birmingham Coca-Cola  
Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority  
Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center  
Birmingham Public Library  
Bradford Real Estate Group  
Brasfield & Gorrie  
Brookwood Baptist Health  
Buck Creek Stain Glass  
Bud's Best Cookies  
Callahan Eye Foundation at UAB  
Cardiovascular Associates of the Southeast  
City of Hoover  
City of Mountain Brook  
City Wholesale Inc.  
Cooper Green Mercy Hospital  
Corporate Realty Services  
Daniel Corporation  
Dollar General  
EyeSight Foundation of Alabama  
Glenwood, Inc.  
Golden Flake  
Grandview Medical Center  
HMS Host  
Hoover Chamber of Commerce  
Intermark Group  
Jefferson County Commission  
Jefferson State Community College  
Kinder Morgan  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Molton, Allen & Williams, LLC  
Motion Industries  
Mountain Brook Chamber of Commerce  
MTR Properties  
Nathan & Nathan, PC  
Piggly Wiggly Distribution  
Positive Maturity  
Pride Staffing  
Princeton Baptist Medical Center  
Regions Financial Corporation

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Shelby Baptist Medical Center  
Shelby County Board of Education  
Sheraton Birmingham Hotel  
Shipt  
Sign Faces  
Southern Research Institute  
South Shelby Chamber of Commerce  
Spire  
State Farm Insurance  
Superior Mason Corporation  
Thompson Tractor

T-Mobile  
University of Alabama  
University of Alabama Health Services  
University Place Apartments  
U.S. Pipe and Foundry  
Viva Health, Inc.  
Vulcan Materials  
Watts Realty  
Z-Modular

## Community Partners

Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition  
Alabama Department of Economic and  
Community Affairs  
Alabama Environmental Council  
Alabama Partners for Clean Air  
Alabama Rivers Alliance  
BiciCoop  
Birmingham Bike Club  
Birmingham Botanical Gardens  
Black Warrior Riverkeeper  
City Action Partnership (CAP)  
Cobbs, Allen & Hall

Eco Three  
Gateway  
Homewood Rotary  
Jefferson County Committee for Economic  
Opportunity  
Sain & Associates  
Vallocycle  
The WRATT Foundation  
YMCA of Greater Birmingham  
YWCA Central Alabama  
Zyp Bikeshare

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