



COMMUTESMART

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



AN INITIATIVE OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

CommuteSmart Annual Report

October 2020 – September 2021

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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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Executive Summary

The CommuteSmart Birmingham Rideshare program began operations in 1999 under the direction of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB). Our focus is to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in Jefferson and Shelby counties by encouraging people to take an alternative commute to work, rather than driving in their car alone. Alternative commute to work options are carpooling, walking, biking, taking transit, or telework. The RPCGB utilizes State Transportation Program (STP) dollars to fund the CommuteSmart Birmingham Rideshare program. Educating people on how their travel behavior impacts the air we breathe can encourage positive behavior change. To help in this transition from driving alone to a cleaner commute option, CommuteSmart Birmingham rewards participants with incentives.

During the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, CommuteSmart Birmingham continued adjusting to our ever-changing environment. We saw shifts toward remote work, hybrid work, and multi-mode commutes. CommuteSmart Birmingham remains dedicated to educating the public about clean commuting to work and its benefits while offering support to our partners and participants. From October 2020 to September 2021, CommuteSmart added 524 new registrants to the ridematching database, bringing the total to 30,172. New and continuing participants reduced a total of 9,675,434 miles off the road. Commuters logged 2,661,776 vehicle miles reduced through vanpooling, while reducing another 7,013,658 miles through carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking, and working from home (**Figure 1**).

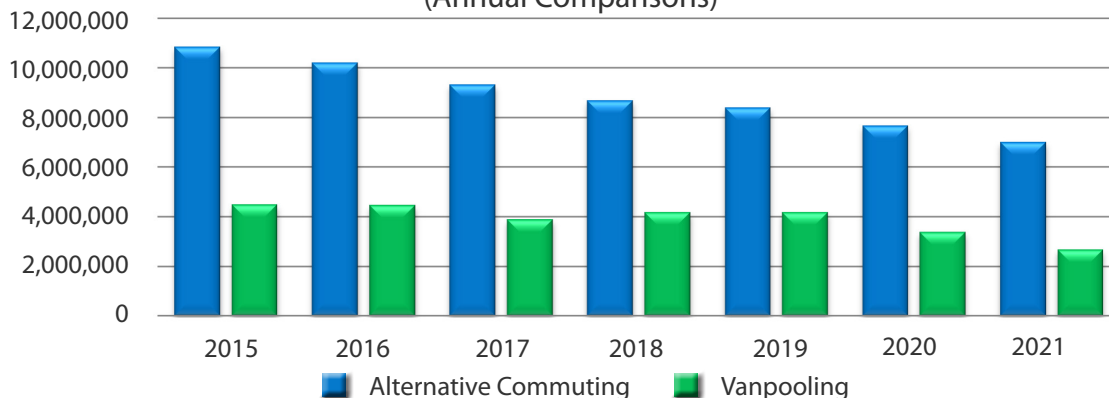
In FY 2021, CommuteSmart participants saved over 245,995 gallons of fuel, which totaled \$553,483 in fuel cost savings. Commuter cost reductions in fuel, including additional savings of wear and tear on their personal vehicles, helped participants save an estimated \$3,820,881 (**Figure 2**).

This annual report provides an overview of CommuteSmart Birmingham's program participation, outreach efforts, social media, and advertising for FY 2021. Through our efforts, we hope to continue to affect change in individuals and limit our participants' environmental impact.

Figure 1

Vanpool & Alternative Commute Vehicle Miles Reduced

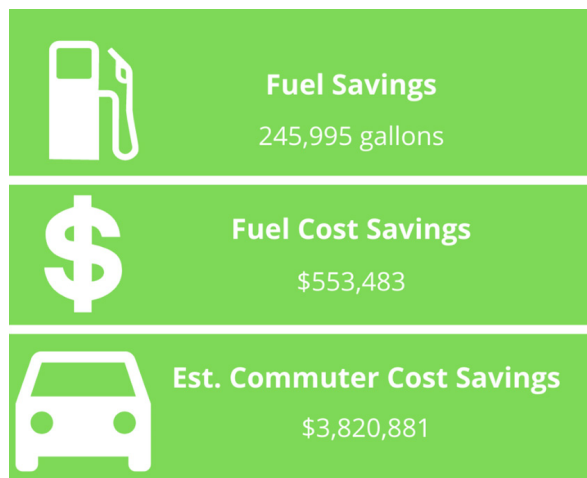
(Annual Comparisons)



From October 2020 to September 2021, CommuteSmart participants removed 9,675,434 vehicle-miles from the road. Commuters reduced 2,661,776 vehicle-miles through vanpooling, and another 7,013,658 through alternative commutes such as carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and working from home.

Figure 2

Commuter Savings



Incentive Programs

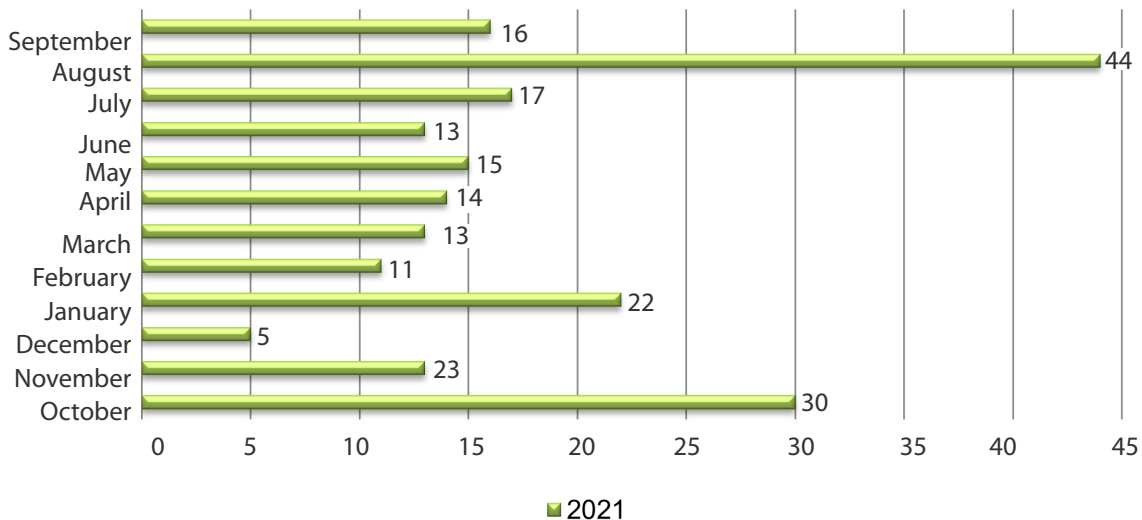
GetGreen

CommuteSmart Birmingham's initial 90-day incentive program is GetGreen. This is a one-time program that will pay new participants \$1 per day, up to \$70 for each day they log a clean commute in our database.

In FY 2021, CommuteSmart outreach events, virtual events, social media, advertising, and employer engagement yielded 213 GetGreen enrollees (**Figure 3**). Participants in GetGreen reduced approximately 227,254 vehicle miles last year, or an average of 1,067 miles reduced per participant. The GetGreen program cost for FY 2021 was \$9,468.90 or 4 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

Figure 3

New GetGreen Members



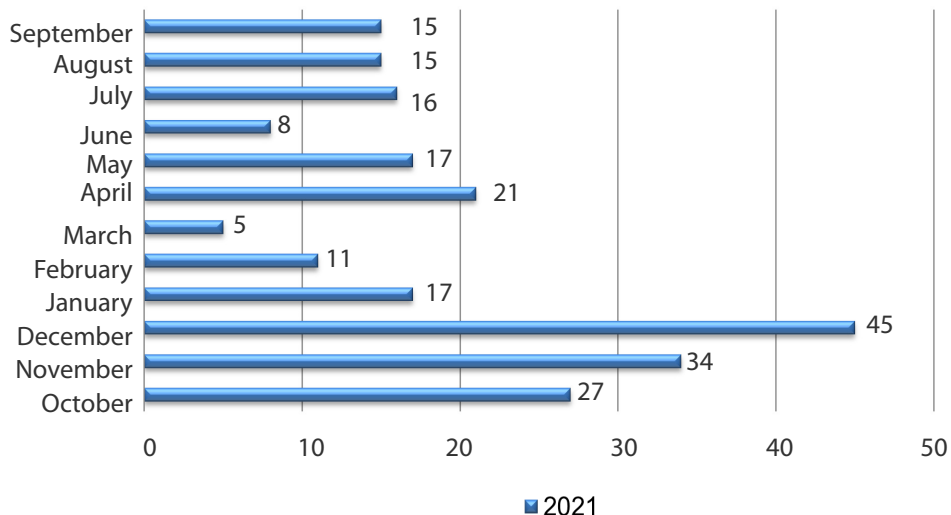
CommuterClub

After the initial 90-day GetGreen period, commuters are automatically enrolled in CommuterClub to encourage the continued use of clean commutes. CommuterClub is an ongoing program that awards a \$25 gift card quarterly for commuters that log at least 20 clean commutes during that period. Participants choose one of 8 gift card options including Chevron/Texaco, Publix, Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) Transit Pass, Cahaba Cycles, CVS, Express Oil Change, or Target. Employees and students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham may also choose the option of having \$25 added to their Blazer Bucks account, a balance account linked to each employee and student’s identification card.

In FY 2021 there were 231 new commuters registered in CommuterClub (**Figure 4**). The CommuterClub program cost was \$136,495.50 in FY 2021 and resulted in the elimination of 6,746,404 vehicle miles from the region’s roadways. As such, the program cost approximately 2 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

Figure 4

New CommuterClub Members



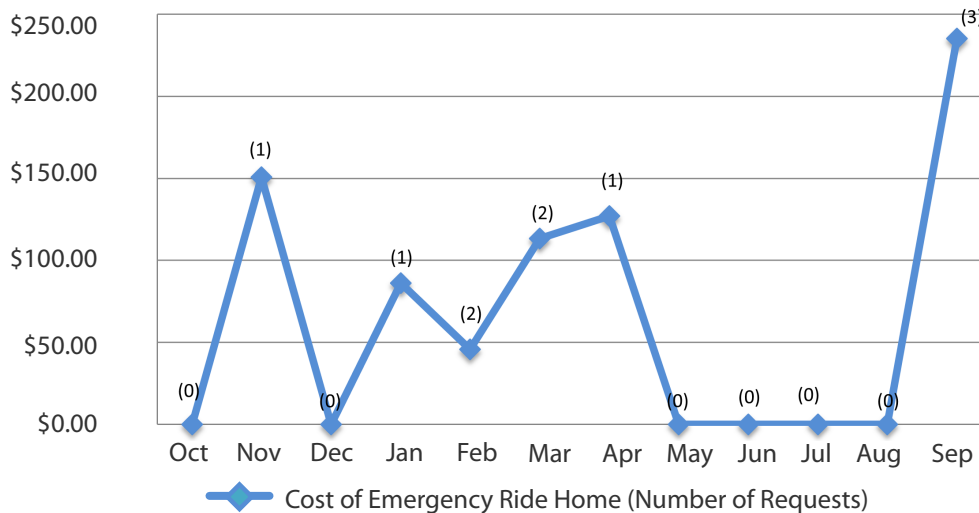
Emergency Ride Home

One of the biggest concerns that commuters have when transitioning from driving alone to taking an alternative commute is, "What happens if I have an emergency?" CommuteSmart Birmingham's Emergency Ride Home (ERH) benefit is provided for participants actively logging their clean commutes, as well as active vanpool members. Eligible participants can receive up to five ERHs each year. Examples of a qualifying reason includes personal illness, family emergency, or unexpected overtime. To receive this benefit, participants must contact a CommuteSmart Birmingham representative, and we will arrange transportation back to the origin of their commute at no cost to the participant. Active participants can elect to pay out of pocket for a Transportation Network Company such as Uber or Lyft and submit supporting documents for review and reimbursement. We will reimburse mileage at the current federal mileage rate per mile if the active participant chooses to get someone to take them back to their origin.

In FY 2021, CommuteSmart participants received 10 ERHs at a total cost of \$758.18 (**Figure 5**). The average cost per ERH was \$75.82 this fiscal year.

Figure 5

2021 Emergency Ride Home Totals



Vanpool

The CommuteSmart Birmingham Vanpool program is maintained and operated by Commute with Enterprise (CWE). Commuting by vanpool has a multitude of benefits, especially for those dealing with a longer commute. Less stressful commutes, increased morale, lower levels of tardiness/absenteeism, reduced parking demand and increased commuter cost savings are just some of the benefits of being part of a vanpool. The RPCGB provides a \$400 monthly subsidy for 7 to 9 passenger vans and a \$450 monthly subsidy for 12 and 15 passenger vans.

The CWE 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, vanpool participants:

- Maintained an average of 24 operating vanpools each month (**Figure 6**), resulting in 25,454 trips off the roadway in 2021
- Lowered carbon dioxide emissions by 1001.00 tons and carbon monoxide emissions by 39.79 tons (**Figure 7**)
- Reduced 103,157 gallons of fuel used for a total savings of \$261,776 in fuel cost (**Figure 8**)
- Took 46,349 fewer passenger trips, which reduced vehicle miles traveled by 2,661,776
- Filled 121 available seats on vanpools, maintaining 62% occupancy for 2021

Figure 6

2021 Vanpool Totals

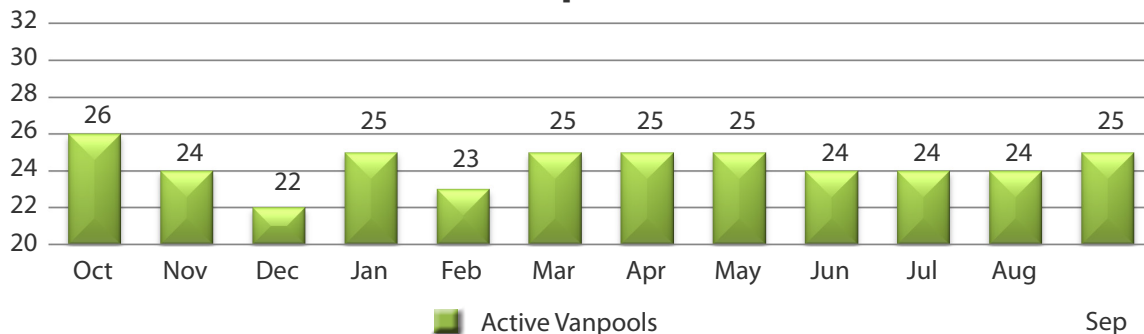


Figure 7

2021 Carbon Dioxide Reduction (Tons)

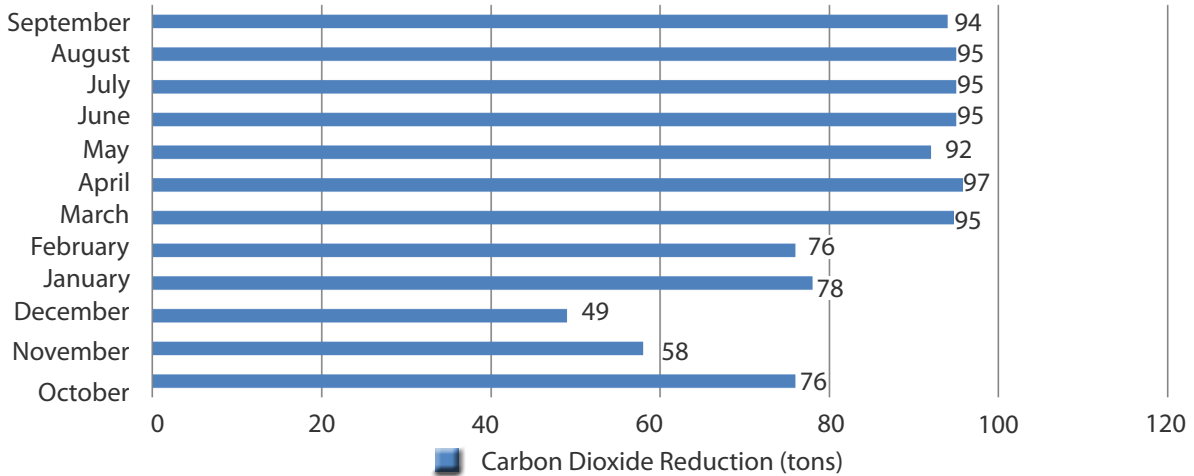
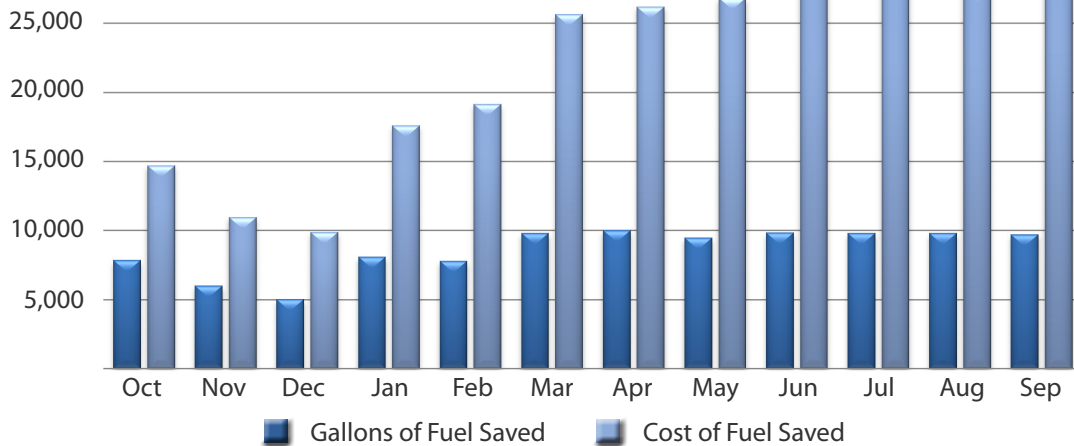


Figure 8

2021 Vanpool Fuel Savings



Outreach Activities

CommuteSmart Birmingham's outreach efforts are focused on employers promoting our program to their employees to encourage them to travel to work by modes other than single-occupant vehicles. To accomplish this, our outreach team works with existing partners and prospective partners to educate them on our program benefits.

Outreach Coordinators

CommuteSmart Birmingham outreach coordinators utilize a host of marketing tools such as speaking presentations at online and in-person events, promotional materials in new hire packets, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plans, email blasts, cluster map analysis, Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) quarterly newsletters, and commuter surveys.

FY 2021 presented CommuteSmart with continuing challenges of engaging the public. CommuteSmart Birmingham navigated these hurdles by adding supplementary offerings, such as quarterly ETC online training events to engage and educate our partner contacts while promoting our program benefits.

Bike racks and carpool/vanpool preferred parking signs are offered to partners at no cost as an added benefit to their CommuteSmart program participating employees.

CommuteSmart Birmingham's Annual Bike to Work Day is typically one of our most significant events; however, for FY 2021, our team had to promote biking in other ways. To encourage our participants to seek cycling as an alternative commute option, we launched an online campaign emphasizing the benefits of biking, along with a "Pledge to Ride" contest. All participants were entered into a drawing for a Bike Month giveaway. Redemptive Cycles partnered with us by offering contest participants free bike tune-ups. Our social media highlighted healthy biking benefits, commuter testimonials, giveaways, and bike safety tutorials. We had over 42 participants.



CommuteSmart Birmingham gained three new partners: Central Six Works Alabama, REV Birmingham, and Redemptive Cycles in FY 2021.

To further strengthen our partner relationships, we provided cluster map analysis to one client and installed bike racks at one partner business location.

	Meetings	13
	New Partners	3
	Partner Events	13
	Presentations	2
	Client Contact(phone/emails)	967
	Rideshare Applications Collected	31
	Maps/Cluster Analysis	1
	Blast Emails	34

Social Media

Due to newly instated employer remote work policies, CommuteSmart increased its social media presence as an interactive tool, spreading information to our audiences around the region. The website and social media channels are used to educate and engage potential and active participants and employers. Social media posts increased our website traffic, brand awareness, and customer service and helped capture new business opportunities. Current social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In FY 2021, we added LinkedIn as an additional avenue to connect with audiences.

CommuteSmart Birmingham uses annual giveaways to gain new participants and increase alternative commute logging of active participants. We make use of our Birmingham Barons contract seasonal tickets and items collected from our business partners for these purposes. Our “12 Days of Christmas” campaign is one of our most popular giveaways.

CommuteSmart Birmingham
Presents

The 12 Days of Christmas Giveaway

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9
TO
MONDAY, DECEMBER 20

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL
MEDIA FOR A CHANCE TO
WIN!

FACEBOOK:
COMMUTESMART

INSTAGRAM:
COMMUTESMART_BHAM

TWITTER:
COMMUTESMARTER

Hello Birmingham!

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!

Celebrate Independence Day with the family!
Tell us your favorite part about being a
CommuteSmart participant for a chance to win 4
club level tickets to the Barons game on Sunday,
July, 4, 2021.

Participation will be verified.

CommuteSmart Birmingham recognizes the value of commuter and partner spotlights. These testimonials showcase the loyalty and commitment to our program and allow us opportunities for increased customer service.

In FY 2021, CommuteSmart increased the number of Facebook page “Likes” to 1,400 and reached approximately 8,047 people through this platform. On Twitter, CommuteSmart now has 882 followers and garnered over 519 impressions. Our Instagram currently has 300 followers.



Scott Wood


“I’ve been participating in CommuteSmart Birmingham for about 15 years, first carpooling with some friends. A job change then allowed me to bike to work.

Now, due to the virus I work from home full time. I don’t know what the future holds, but I’ll do my best to support CommuteSmart and cleaner air.

The incentives from CommuteSmart come in handy too. Every quarter I receive a gift card to fuel up my car. That doesn’t take much because, well, I’m working from home. “Win-Win!”

Teleworker

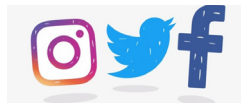
Arita Payne



“I’ve been riding public transit since the age of 12. My mom taught me how to read the schedules & everything else.

I’m 56 now...I love riding transit because you get to meet a lot of people plus you ride with some pretty neat bus drivers...I don’t drive, so public transit is my main source to get to work & other places I may have to go. I enjoy it.”

Transit Rider



The CommuteSmart Birmingham website is www.commutesmart.org. It contains interactive content, videos, information on alternative commute options, employer services, bike rack applications, the ERH benefit, and partner spotlights. It is the primary connection to our logging database. Website traffic is generated from various sources (Figure 9) with 51.4% coming from individuals typing in www.commutesmart.org or bookmarking the site in their browser. Over the year, the website received 59,030 total visitors with 16,644 (28.20%) visiting for the first time (Figure 10).

Figure 9

2021 Traffic Sources Overview

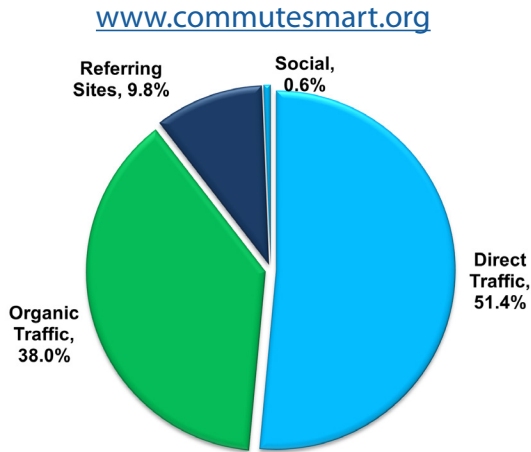
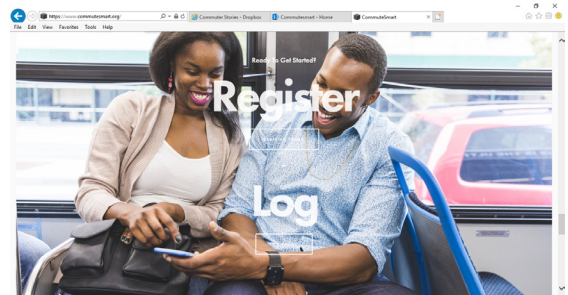
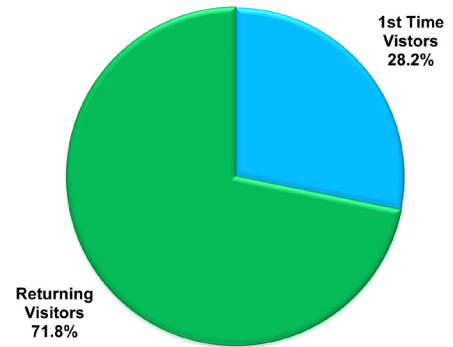


Figure 10

2021 Website Statistics

www.commutesmart.org



Public Relations and Advertising

Marketing and public outreach for CommuteSmart is an essential part of the overall success of the program. CommuteSmart utilizes its outreach campaign to drive participation in the program while also educating people throughout Jefferson and Shelby counties about air quality issues and the consequences of individual choices such as travel behavior and transportation preferences. An ongoing marketing and outreach campaign provides information and encourages individuals and companies to participate in the CommuteSmart program.

Marketing strategies for FY2021 were adjusted due to the ongoing global pandemic. In the past, the focus of the campaign was to encourage commuters to find a clean commute to work through vanpooling, carpooling, riding a bike, walking, transit, or teleworking. CommuteSmart continued to push the campaign that was developed to meet the needs of the changing work environment during the pandemic. There was an assumption that the workplace would be back to “normal” starting FY 2021, but that was not the case. Dates that were set for returning to work continued to be delayed throughout 2021.

In the past, marketing efforts were focused on a “clean commute” with carpooling and vanpooling being the leading modes to accomplish this. With the decreased number of commuters on the road, the decision was made to decrease the media budget and focus on media interviews to get the message out to the public.

An emphasis was placed on Bike Month in May 2021 to encourage people to commute to work on a bicycle. In this series of interviews, other alternative commute options were highlighted as well.



Media Campaign

In FY 2021, CommuteSmart focused its media buy on television. This campaign helped build the brand and drive consumers to the website. CommuteSmart was featured on CBS42's Living Local segment with reporter Lillian Lalo at Railroad Park. The interview segment ran multiple times on CBS42. In addition to on-air interviews, the segments were housed on CBS42.com's Living Local section. The interview segment aired on the following dates and times.

Day	Date	Time	Newscast	Total Impressions
Friday	5/7/2021	6 to 7 am	CBS42 Morning News	7,375
Friday	5/7/2021	12 to 12:30 pm	CBS42 Noon News	18,875
Friday	5/7/2021	4 to 6:30 pm	CBS42 Evening News	8,000
Saturday	5/8/2021	6 to 7am	CBS42 Weekend News	4,375
Sunday	5/9/2021	6 to 7am	CBS42 Weekend News	3,750
Sunday	5/9/2021	10 to 10:35 pm	CBS42 Late News	21,250
Totals				60,625

CommuteSmart was featured on Talk of Alabama, a local community-oriented show on WBMA-TV, ABC 33/40. The interview aired on May 7, 2021, and reached 17,000 viewers.

CommuteSmart partnered with WBRC-TV FOX6 throughout the month of May to promote CommuteSmart and Bike Month. Anchor and reporter Steve Crocker of WBRC is an avid cyclist and did a feature story about cycling in the Birmingham area.

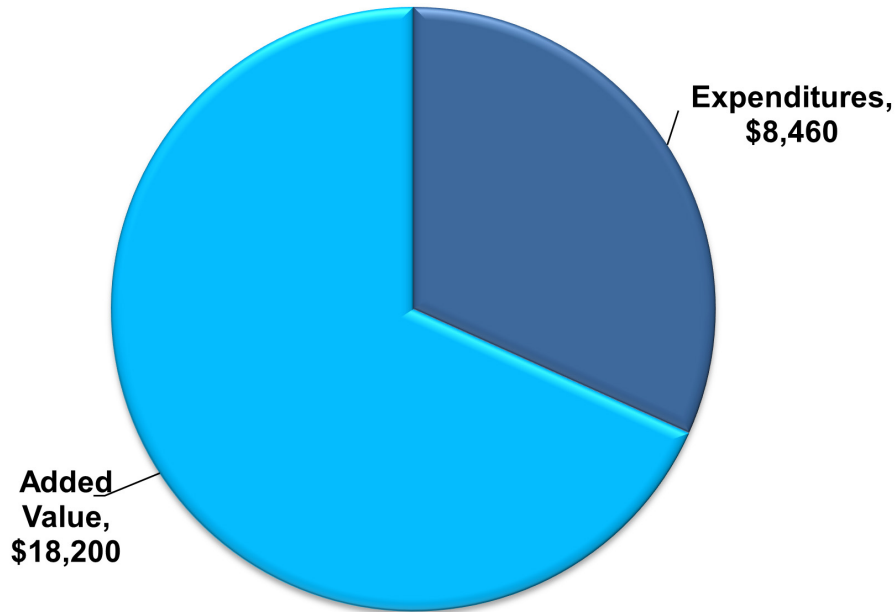
In addition, morning reporter Jeh Jeh Pruitt featured CommuteSmart live during Good Day Alabama. During this daily local news segment, Jeh Jeh Pruitt covers local events and issues in the community. A total of four interviews aired and delivered a total of 234,500 impressions.



Broadcast and Digital/Streaming Television

One local television station, in addition to streaming platforms Roku, Amazon Fire and Apple TV, were purchased in the market for the flight. The campaign aired from May 3, 2021, through May 31, 2021. **(Figure 11)** breaks down the television campaign and the total amount of added value television stations provided CommuteSmart. The total of the campaign was \$26,660.00 including expenditures and added value.

Figure 11
2021 Television Campaign
Cost and Value Added Comparison



CommuteSmart Partners

Last Updated September 2021

Gold Partners

- Alabama Power
- City of Montevallo
- Fortis Institute
- Encompass Health
- Protective Life
- Southern Company Services
- The University of Alabama at Birmingham
- VA Medical Center

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

- 58 INC.
 - Action Enterprises
 - Advantage Resourcing
 - Alabama Media Group
 - Altec, Inc.
 - American Family Care
 - Autotec
 - Balch & Bingham, LLP
 - Barber's/Mayfield
 - Barnes Reality Group
-

CommuteSmart Partners

Last Updated September 2021

Bronze Partners (Continued)

- 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
 - Central Six Works Alabama
 - City of Hoover
 - City of Mountain Brook
 - City Wholesale Inc.
 - Cooper Green Mercy Hospital
 - Corporate Realty Services
 - Daniel Corporation
 - Dollar General
 - EBZ System, Inc.
 - 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
 - Middle Alabama Agency on Aging
 - Motion Industries
 - Mountain Brook Chamber of Commerce
 - Nathan & Nathan, PC
 - Pack Health
 - Piggly Wiggly Distribution
 - Positive Maturity
-

CommuteSmart Partners

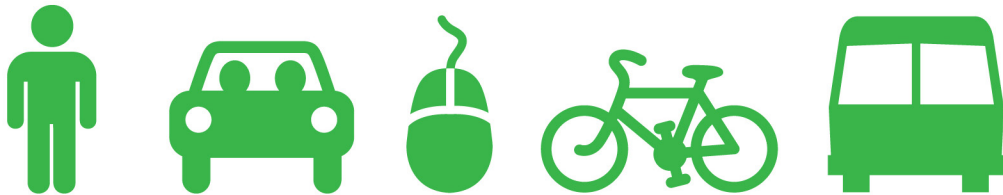
Last Updated September 2021

Bronze Partners (Continued)

- Pride Staffing
- Princeton Baptist Medical Center
- Regions Financial Corporation
- Redemptive Cycles
- REV Birmingham
- Schnellecke Logistics Alabama
- 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
 - 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
 - YMCA of Greater Birmingham
 - YWCA Central Alabama
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CommuteSmart

www.commutesmart.org



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