



COMMUTESMART

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



AN INITIATIVE OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

CommuteSmart Annual Report

October 2018– September 2019

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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

CommuteSmart Birmingham goals are to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in our region. This is accomplished by educating people on how their travel behavior impacts the air we breathe, as well as helping them find cleaner commute modes to work. We promote alternative ways of commuting to work such as carpooling, walking, biking, taking transit, or teleworking. CommuteSmart offers incentives to individuals that live or work in Jefferson, Shelby, unincorporated St. Clair and unincorporated Blount Counties who take an alternative commute to work. Outreach events and activities focus on building relationships with employers and their employees while providing additional benefits of cleaner commuting. CommuteSmart is an initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and it is funded by the Alabama Department of Transportation and Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds.

From October 2018 to September 2019, CommuteSmart added 2,043 new registrants to the Ridematching database bringing the total to 29,098. New and continuing participants reduced a total of 12,565,579 miles off the road. Commuters logged 4,164,601 vehicle miles reduced through vanpooling, while reducing another 8,400,978 miles through alternative commutes including carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and working from home (**Figure 1**).

Lower vehicle miles traveled equals lower vehicle emissions, less traffic, and more savings for CommuteSmart participants. In fiscal year 2019, CommuteSmart participants saved over 299,273 gallons of fuel, which totaled 919,577 in fuel cost savings. Commuter cost reductions, such as lower maintenance and insurance, helped participants save an estimated \$4,592,527 (**Figure 2**).

The following pages provide details of the CommuteSmart incentive programs and activities that took place in fiscal year 2019. 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.

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

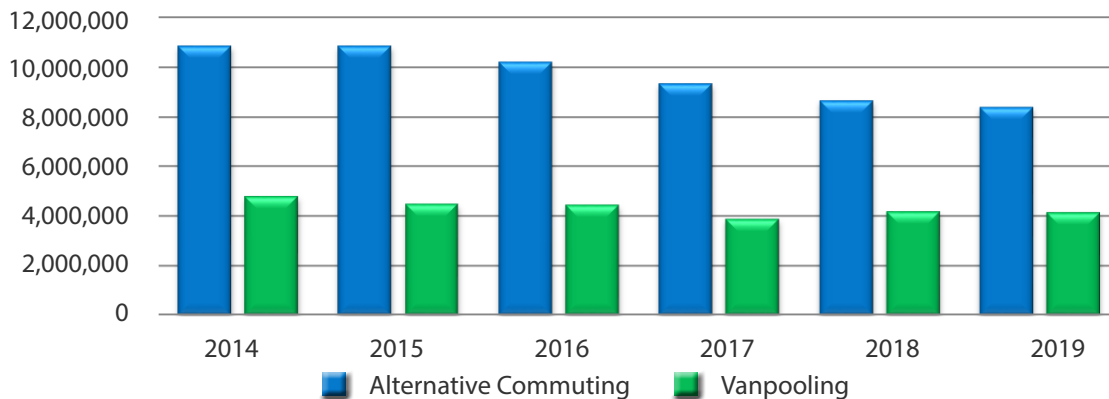
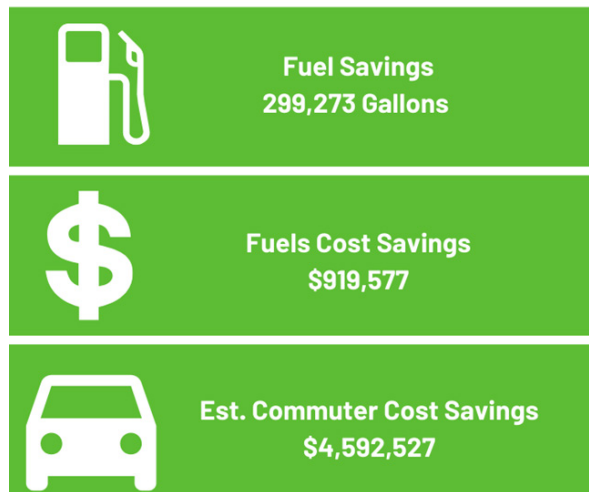


Figure 2
Commuter Savings

*From October 2018 to September 2019, CommuteSmart participants removed **12,565,579** vehicle-miles from the road. Commuters reduced **4,164,601** vehicle-miles through vanpooling, and another **8,400,978** through alternative commutes such as carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and working from home.*



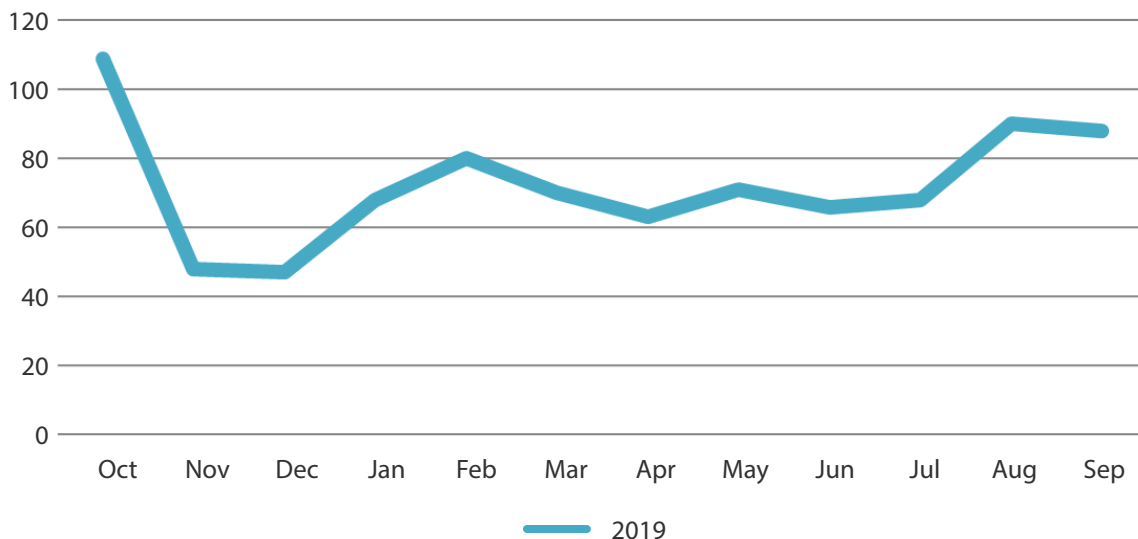
CommuteSmart Incentive Programs

GetGreen

In order to encourage individuals to try an alternative commute option, CommuteSmart offers the GetGreen program. 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 FY2019, CommuteSmart outreach events, social media, advertising, and employer engagement yielded 868 GetGreen enrollees (**Figure 3**). These participants logged approximately 757,366 vehicle miles reduced last year, or an average of 873 miles reduced per participant. The GetGreen program cost \$32,928.96 or 4 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

Figure 3
New GetGreen Members

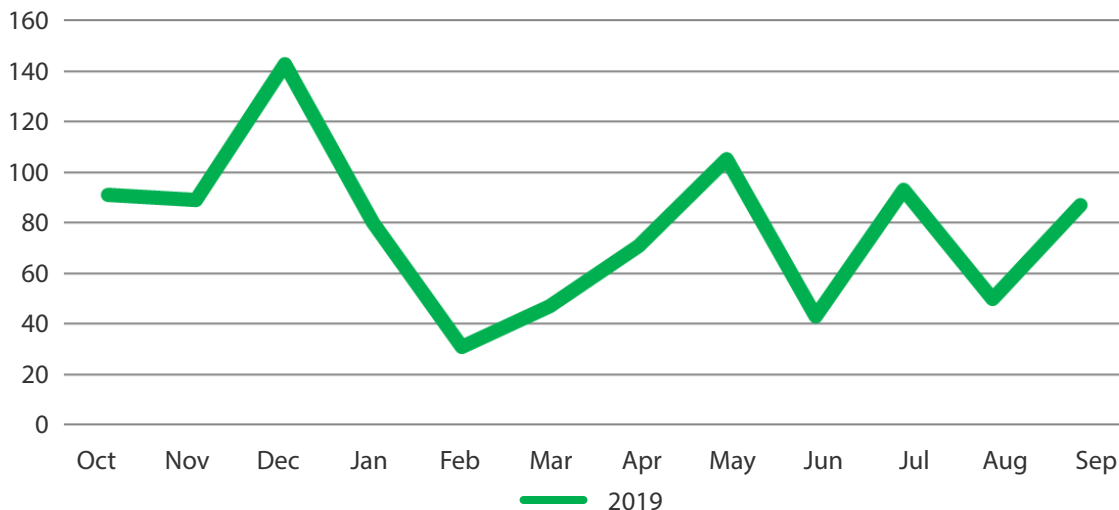


CommuterClub

After the initial 90-day GetGreen period, commuters are automatically enrolled in CommuterClub to encourage the continued use of alternative commutes. This program awards \$25 gift card rewards for commuters that log at least 20 alternative commutes each quarter. Participants choose one of 8 gift card options including Chevron/Texaco, Publix, BJCTA Transit Pass, Cahaba Cycles, CVS, Express Oil Change, and Summit. Employees and students of 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 Fiscal year 2019 there were 930 new commuters registered in CommuterClub (**Figure 4**). The CommuterClub program cost \$162,040 in fiscal year 2019 and resulted in the elimination of 7,643,612 vehicle miles from the region’s roadways. As such, the program cost approximately 2 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

Figure 4
New CommuterClub Members

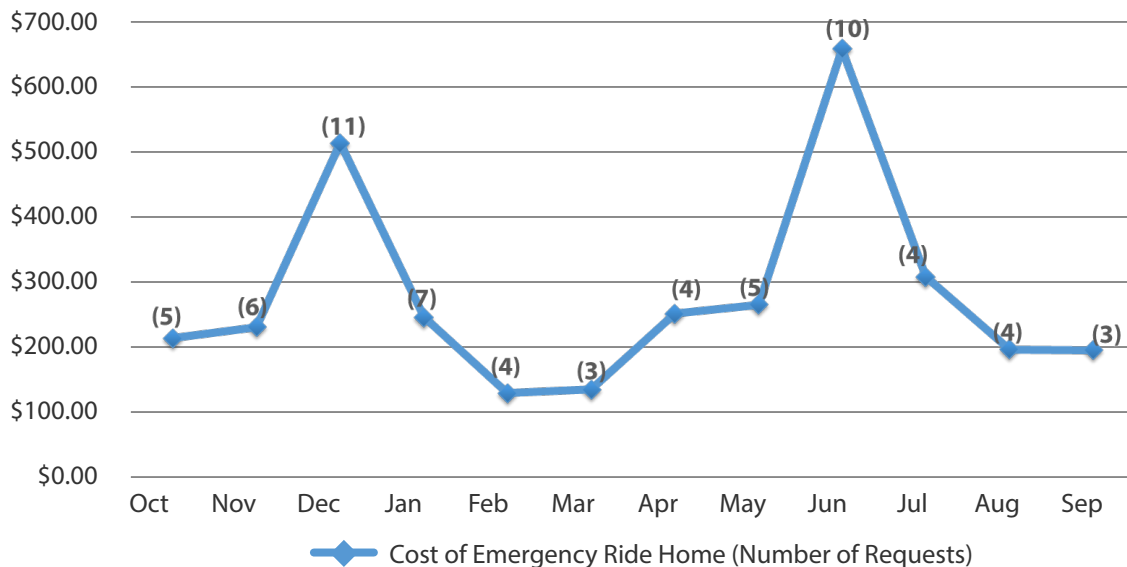


Emergency Ride Home

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) benefit. Participants actively logging their commutes, as well as active vanpool members, are eligible for up to 5 Emergency Ride Homes 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 2019, CommuteSmart participants received 66 ERHs at a total cost of \$3,344.86 (**Figure 5**). The average cost per ERH was \$50.68 this fiscal year.

Figure 5
Emergency Ride Home Totals



Vanpool

Commute with Enterprise manages the vanpool program for CommuteSmart. The benefits of vanpool commuting for individuals and employers include increased commuter savings, less stressful commutes, reduced parking demands, lower levels of tardiness and absenteeism, and higher work morale. 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 33 operating vanpools each month (**Figure 6**), resulting in 45,782 cars off the highway in 2019
- Lowered carbon dioxide emissions by 1,417 tons and carbon monoxide emissions by 62.25 tons (**Figure 7**)
- Reduced 160,607 gallons of fuel used for a total savings of \$360,742 in fuel costs (**Figure 8**)
- Took 79,333 fewer passenger trips, which reduced vehicle miles travelled by 4,164,601
- Filled 206 available seats on vanpools, maintaining 79% occupancy for 2019.

Figure 6
Vanpool Totals

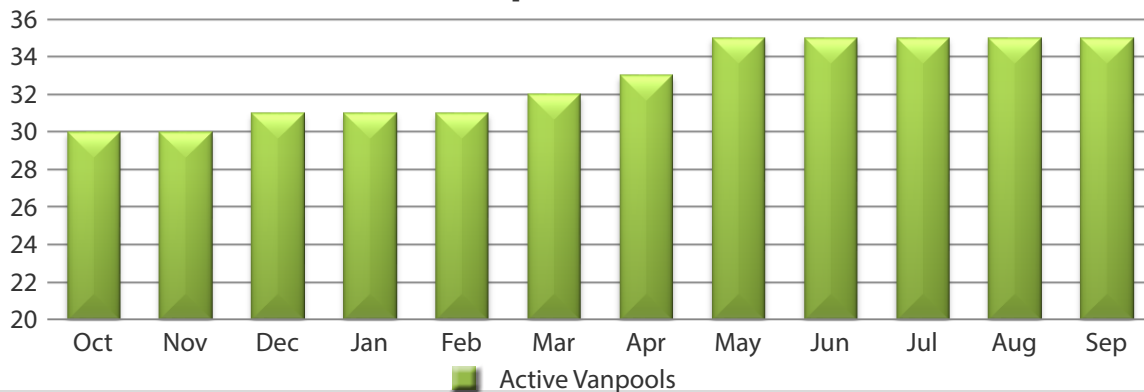


Figure 7
Carbon Dioxide Reduced (Tons)

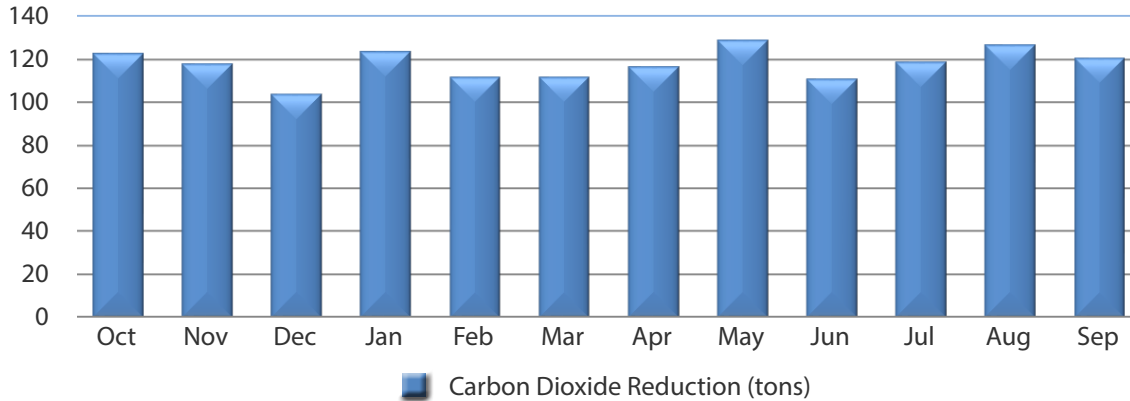
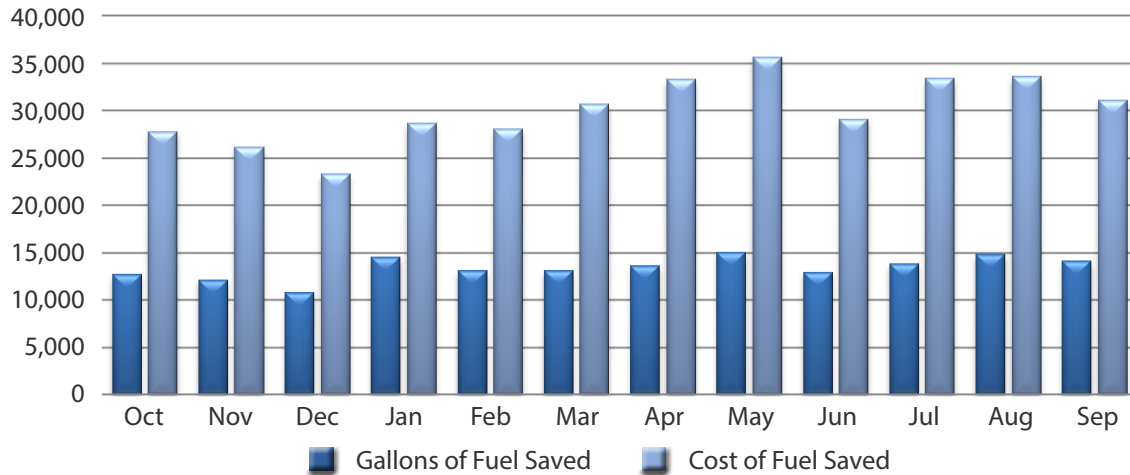


Figure 8
Vanpool Fuel Savings



CommuteSmart Outreach Activities

CommuteSmart outreach embraces a range of events and 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.

Bike-to-Work Day continued to be CommuteSmart's premier event in 2019. During the annual event, CommuteSmart partners with local coffee shops and the bicycle community to celebrate National Bike-to-Work Day locally. CommuteSmart works tirelessly to promote the event through social media campaigns, local media campaigns, and community outreach. The initiative proves to be the most successful outreach event for CommuteSmart.

CommuteSmart welcomed Action Enterprises and Schnellecke Logistics Alabama as new partners this year. These partners connected CommuteSmart to an additional 791 employees and residents.



CommuteSmart in Numbers

2019 Outreach Coordinator Accomplishments

60

Meetings

1,835

Client Contact (phone/emails)

2

New Partners

80

Partner Events

66

Presentations

651

Rideshare Applications Collected

0

Maps/Cluster Analysis

26

Blast Emails

CommuteSmart Social Media and Website

CommuteSmart utilizes our website and social media channels to interact and engage creatively with current and potential program participants. CommuteSmart currently focuses its social media efforts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (launched in April 2019). These outlets 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 and Instagram pages.

In 2019, CommuteSmart increased the number of Facebook Page “Likes” to 1,261 and reached approximately 37,207 people through this platform. On Twitter, CommuteSmart now has 874 followers and garnered over 33,428 impressions. Five months after being launched, Instagram has 191 followers.

Interactive content, videos, and testimonials are the tools CommuteSmart uses on their website to educate and encourage program participants. Traffic to the website is generated from various sources (**Figure 9**) with 53.4% coming from individuals typing in www.commutessmart.org or bookmarking the site in their browser. Over the year, the website received 82,244 total visitors with 24,379 visiting for the first time (**Figure 10**).

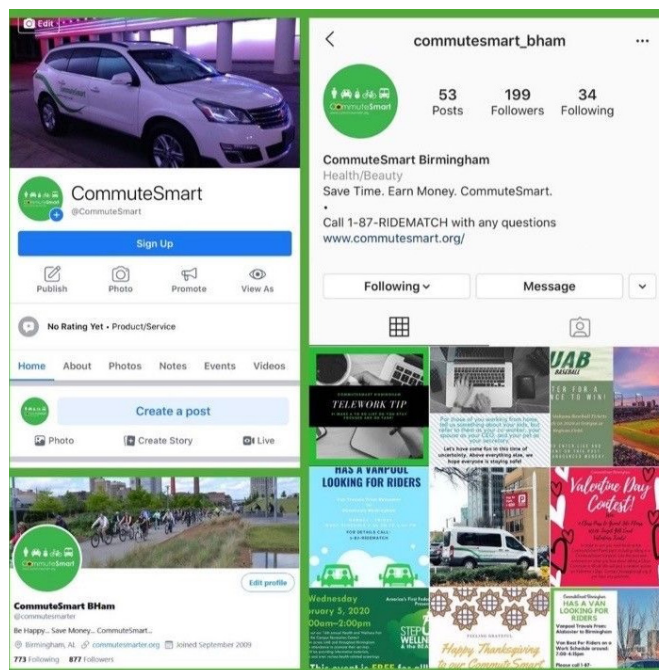


Figure 9
Traffic Sources Overview

www.commutesmart.org

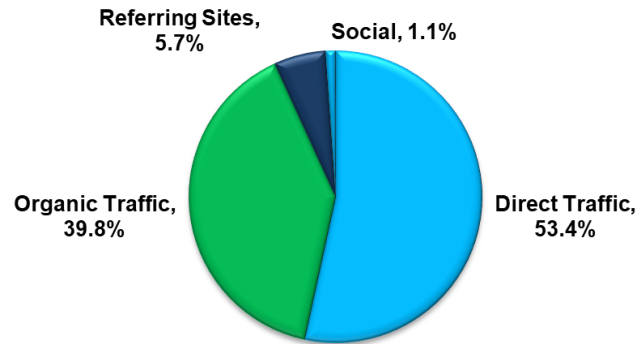
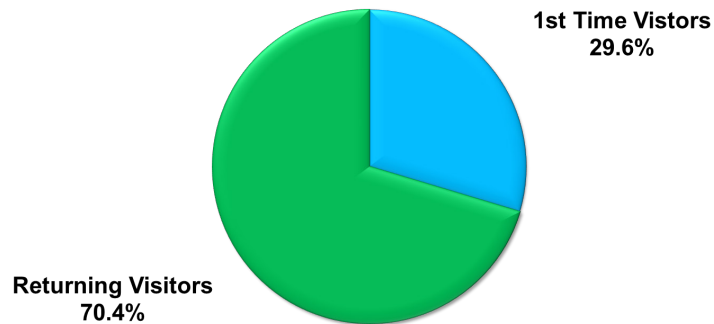


Figure 10
Website Statistics

www.commutesmart.org



CommuteSmart Public Relations and Advertising

In Fiscal year 2019, CommuteSmart continued to employ traditional public relations and advertising to increase brand awareness through an ongoing marketing campaign. 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. 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.

CommuteSmart reached the public through a variety of platforms. HOT107, an Urban radio format, provided a series of radio remotes with morning host Tasha Simone. These remotes included social media posts, Facebook Live feeds, interviews and commercial messages.



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”. WIAT-TV featured a “Living Local” segment that aired multiple times in early morning news and midday newscasts. Spokesman Cycle Ads, a billboard that is attached to a bicycle, was also featured on Good Day Alabama. Spokesman Cycle rode around downtown Birmingham through Bike to Work Week in high pedestrian areas of town.



CommuteSmart sponsored “Arc Stories” at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. This event is a unique “story telling” platform that reaches an audience that is compatible with CommuteSmart participants.

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, featuring the CommuteSmart logo. CommuteSmart’s logo 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 April 22- May 26, 2019. The strategy was to reach listeners while they were in their automobiles driving to work. The radio campaign ran on three 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 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.

Cumulus Radio was added to the media mix for the 2019 outreach campaign. Local morning host Tasha Simone provided in depth features and live remotes throughout the flight. These remotes focused on specific aspects of the CommuteSmart programming including carpooling, vanpooling, taking transit, and riding a bike to work. Tasha participated in a live remote with the CommuteSmart team from a carpooling experience, as well as conducting an interview while riding on the transit system for a day. Not only did she focus on the different commute modes, she also did a live remote while teleworking from home.

The CommuteSmart media buy focused on multiple distinct and diverse audiences. Summit Media helped spread the message about CommuteSmart by targeting the cycling community on Birmingham Mountain Radio. CommuteSmart sponsored “The Morning Blend” on Birmingham Mountain Radio and received interviews promoting Bike to Work Day and CommuteSmart. Summit Media also provided streaming ads on all their digital station platforms and gave bonus spots throughout the campaign. WAGG was also included as part of the Summit Media outreach campaign.



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. Jeh Jeh Pruitt with FOX6 conducted four live interviews to promote Bike To Work Day on Good Day Alabama.

CBS 42 produced and aired an interview for Lillian Lalo's segment called "Living Local." This segment was filmed at Railroad Park and encouraged viewers to sign up for CommuteSmart and to participate in Bike to Work Day.



Television

A total of 4 local television stations, along with multiple cable networks, were purchased in the market for the flight which aired April 15, 2019 to May 26, 2019. **Figure 11** breaks down the television campaign and the total amount of added value television stations provided CommuteSmart. The total of the campaign was \$60,465 including expenditures and added value.

Figure 11
Television Campaign
Cost and Value Added Comparison

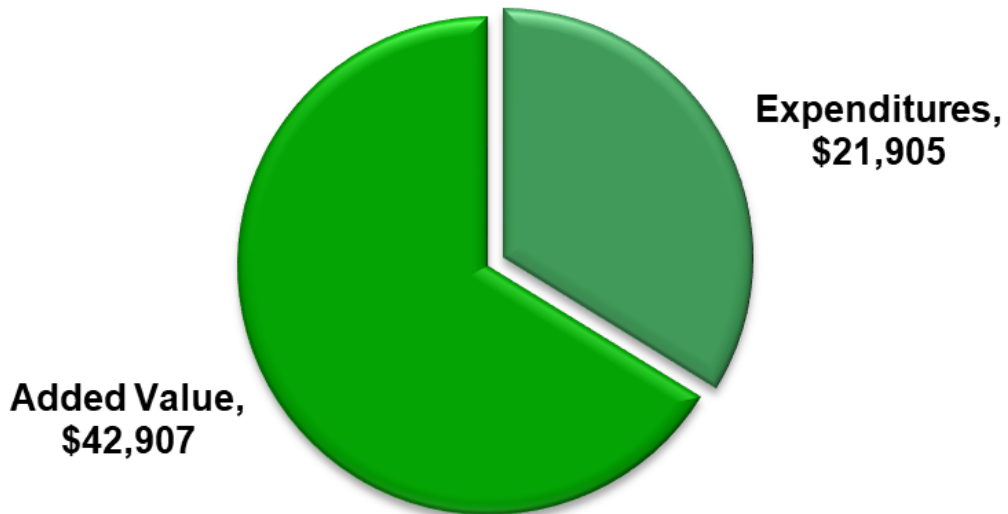


Radio


CommuteSmart purchased spots from a total of 3 radio stations airing between April 22, 2019 and May 26, 2019. Through these spots, CommuteSmart received \$42,907 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 \$64,812.

Figure 12
Radio Campaign

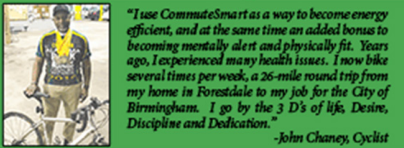
Cost and Added Value Comparison



Print / Digital / Sponsorships




The smarter way to work!

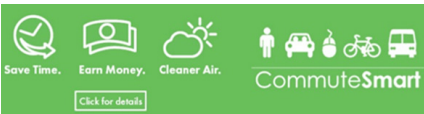


"I use CommuteSmart as a way to become energy efficient, and at the same time an added bonus to becoming mentally alert and physically fit. Years ago, I experienced many health issues. I now bike several times per week, a 26-mile round trip from my home in Forestdale to my job for the City of Birmingham. I go by the 3 D's of life, Desire, Discipline and Dedication."
-John Chaney, Cyclist

"MY COMMUTE IS BETTER BECAUSE I COMMUTE SMART"



CommuteSmart
www.commutesmart.org



Save Time. Earn Money. Cleaner Air.

CommuteSmart

Click for details

Birmingham Times

This print and digital publication reaches the entire community with a focus on the African American population. Ads ran in the Birmingham Times throughout the campaign which featured commuter stories and highlighted actual CommuteSmart participants.

Starnes Publishing

E-mail newsletters are sent through Starnes Publishing to local communities. CommuteSmart ads were featured in 100 e-mail newsletters in the following: Homewood Star, Vestavia Voice, Village Living, Hoover Sun and 280 Living.



CommuteSmart presents

Roots

stories about the nature of the South

Friday, April 5th
at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens
6:30pm | Admission: \$10.⁰⁰

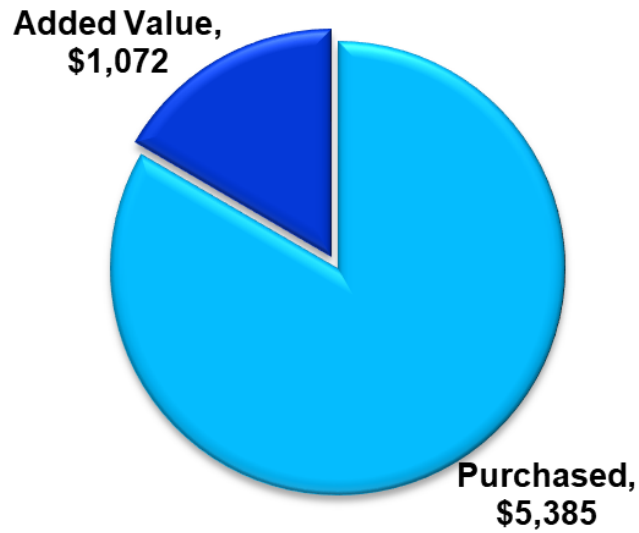
ARC
BIRMINGHAM
BOTANICAL GARDENS

Arc Stories: ROOTS

Arc Stories is a Birmingham-based, storytelling organization. ROOTS was the topic of the spring event that was held on Friday, April 5, 2019 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The demographic for this event aligns well with people who cycle to work. This is the 3rd year that CommuteSmart sponsored the event. CommuteSmart received digital presence in addition to recognition throughout the event.

CommuteSmart purchased \$5,385 worth of advertising and received \$1,072 worth of added value. Total print, digital, and sponsorships was valued at \$6,457 combining the purchased and added value (**Figure 13**).

Figure 13
Print/Internet Campaign
Cost and Added Value Comparison



CommuteSmart Partners

As of September 2019

Gold Partners

Alabama Power

City of Montevallo

Fortis Institute

HealthSouth

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

CommuteSmart Partners

As of September 2019

Bronze Partners

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

CommuteSmart Partners

As of September 2019

Bronze Partners (continued)

Intermark Group	Shipt
Jefferson County Commission	Sign Faces
Jefferson State Community College	Southern Research Institute
Kinder Morgan	South Shelby Chamber of Commerce
Lakeshore Foundation	Spire
Molton, Allen & Williams, LLC	State Farm Insurance
Motion Industries	Superior Mason Corporation
Mountain Brook Chamber of Commerce	Thompson Tractor
Nathan & Nathan, PC	T-Mobile
Piggly Wiggly Distribution	University of Alabama
Positive Maturity	University of Alabama Health Services
Pride Staffing	University Place Apartments
Princeton Baptist Medical Center	U.S. Pipe and Foundry
Regions Financial Corporation	Viva Health, Inc.
Schnellecke Logistics Alabama	Vulcan Materials
Shelby Baptist Medical Center	Watts Realty
Shelby County Board of Education	Z-Modular
Sheraton Birmingham Hotel	

CommuteSmart Partners

As of September 2019

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

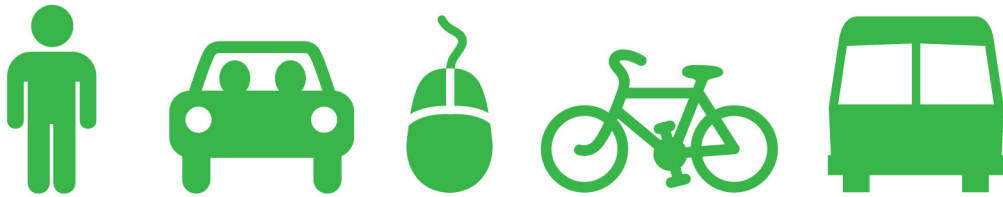
Vallocycle

The WRATT Foundation

YMCA of Greater Birmingham

YWCA Central Alabama

Zyp Bikeshare



CommuteSmart

www.commutesmart.org



AN INITIATIVE OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM