

Downtown TMA Commuter Programs Showing an Impact

Fewer employees are driving to work in downtown Palo Alto alone, according to the 2017 Downtown Palo Alto Employee Survey, with the overall drive alone rate decreasing by 4 percent, and by a full 10 percent among service workers in the past year.

The statistically valid survey was conducted in May 2017 by EMC Research for the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association (TMA). The TMA was established a year ago with the goal of significantly reducing commuter trips by single occupant vehicles into Downtown.

Across all business sectors, the survey shows that the drive alone rate dropped to 53 percent compared to 57 percent a year ago. The most impressive gains were in the service sector, where the drive alone rate dropped from 80 to 70 percent, transit use increased by 6 percent, and rideshare by 7 percent.

The TMA believes these reductions are largely the result of programs launched in the past year which subsidize the cost of monthly transit passes for low income workers working in service industries.

The TMA is currently subsidizing a monthly transit pass for some 100 low income employees each month, making taking Caltrain, SamTrans, VTA, or the Dumbarton Express an affordable and welcome option for many who work in hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, and Downtown's retail stores.

The TMA also offers a program which caps the cost of carpooling to work at \$2 per ride. This program appeals to workers travelling from as far away as Pleasanton, San Francisco and Fremont/Newark and San Jose areas. It also adds convenient commute benefits from the closer-in communities of Sunnyvale and Mountain View. This program currently has an average of 73 carpools operating every day.

The 2017 survey confirmed that the City's parking policies, coupled with TMA programs, are having an impact on employee parking on neighborhood streets. A year ago, 19 percent of survey respondents reported parking on neighborhood streets; this year it dropped to just 7 percent.

The survey also points to a direct correlation between employees who have parking permits and drive-alone rates. A full 75 percent of employees who have a parking permit drive alone.

The survey validated the growing trend of workers commuting over longer distances, as fewer downtown workers live in Palo Alto and more are commuting from the East Bay.

<http://www.paloaltotma.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/17-6393-Report-7.pdf>

###