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Commute Solutions

State agencies join the TCEQ's call for state employees to consider commute options other than driving alone. The benefits are less traffic congestion and better air quality.

State agencies want the solo commuter to consider alternatives

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Thirty-three state agencies have signed on to become partners in the TCEQ's campaign to promote commuting options for state employees. The campaign, called the Texas Clean Air Challenge, promotes the voluntary use of vanpools, car pools, public transit, teleworking, biking, walking, and flexible work schedules.

The challenge is a partnership that strives to improve air quality by promoting participation in commute solution alternatives.

With 70,000 state workers traveling daily in and around the state capital, employees of state agencies and universities can play an important role in curbing air emissions, says TCEQ Commissioner Larry R. Soward.

"State employees in Central Texas drive an estimated 1.5 million miles per day in their daily commutes," Soward pointed out. "We want to significantly reduce the number of cars on the road by encouraging state employees to share their ride to work."

Soward said TCEQ estimates show that if 5 percent of state employees were to join a two-person car pool, about 1,750 vehicles would be eliminated from Central Texas roads each day. The other commute alternatives would eliminate even more vehicles from daily travel.

The single largest contributor to Central Texas air quality problems is vehicle emissions, according to TCEQ data. Austin and the surrounding counties are one of several urban areas required to bring air quality up to federal standards. The leading air improvement measure planned by the Austin area is curbing car and truck emissions.

Soward applauded the agency heads who have pledged to do all they can to encourage their employees to reduce vehicle emissions.

Commissioner Jerry Patterson of the General Land Office was one of the first to announce support of the Clean Air Challenge. "More carpooling means less traffic and less pollution," he said. "This is a small step, but a simple, common-sense solution that I encourage others to consider."

Chairman Victor Carillo of the Texas Railroad Commission also pledged that his agency "will work to be part of the solution."

Among the other government partners that are promoting employee awareness and participation are the Texas Department of Transportation, the University of Texas at Austin, the Texas Building and Procurement Commission, the Texas Water Development Board, the Adjutant General's Department, and the State Preservation Board.

For more information about the clean air initiative, call the TCEQ at 512/239-3182, or visit www.cleantexas.org.

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These four Toyota Prius automobiles, which get 45-55 miles per gallon, became part of the TCEQ's Rideshare Program in 2004. The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Austin purchased 15 hybrids and made them available to some public and private members of the Clean Air Partners organization.

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TCEQ Options

Of the 3,000 employees at the TCEQ headquarters and regional offices, about 10 percent participate in at least one commuting option. The TCEQ's car pools and vanpools remove more than 100 vehicles from Central Texas roadways each day.

Employees who telework accounted last year for 200,000 fewer miles traveled, or 80 tons of emissions. Employees who worked a compressed schedule (usually a 10-hour, four-day work week) eliminated 300 vehicles from local roadways each week.

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