

TRIANGLE COMMUTER NEWS

A Publication of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

Ridesharing? Call 471-POOL.

Welcome to the Golden Triangle...



I am pleased to present you with this inaugural issue of our new quarterly newsletter, *Triangle Commuter News*. It provides timely information about commuting into downtown Pittsburgh.

A variety of factors affect the speed, convenience and cost of getting to work in Pittsburgh's central business district. Construction projects, ridesharing habits, transit developments, traffic laws, work hours and prices all influence commuting patterns. This newsletter will pull together the most important of these developments into a single publication.

We are providing complimentary

subscriptions to *Triangle Commuter News* to key personnel at more than 350 organizations throughout downtown Pittsburgh and the Near North Side. But we need your help in spreading this information to your associates who commute into the city. I would appreciate having it posted on your bulletin board. If your company has an internal newsletter, please share this publication with its editor. If you route copies through inter-office mail, please pass it along. And if you need more copies, please feel free to duplicate them as required.

To help us better serve your com-

muters' needs, I would welcome your story suggestions. Future issues may also ask you for help in collecting data about work hours, parking, ridesharing and other commuter-related information. Our aim is to increase the value of this newsletter and to improve the traffic patterns that affect us all.

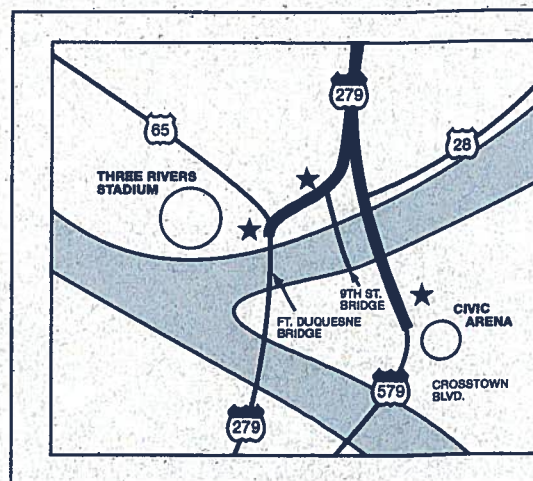
Robert Kochanowski

Robert Kochanowski
Executive Director

I-279 opens to two-passenger vehicles

The controversial High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane of I-279 opened to cars with two or more occupants during rush hours on August 10 at the direction of PennDOT Secretary Howard Yerusalem. A three-person minimum, which had been in place since the roadway opened in the fall of 1989, was removed for the duration of a four-month long road-widening project along the southbound portion of the highway between the McKnight Road and Venture Street interchanges. A decision on whether to reinstate the three-person restriction once the expansion project has been completed will be made at a later time.

Free help in overcoming one of the major obstacles to ridesharing — identifying people whose schedules and destinations match — is available from



Downtown HOV Exits

Vehicles carrying two or more people can exit I-279's HOV lane at either the Civic Arena, the Three Rivers Stadium or at Anderson (9th Street) on the North Side during morning rush hours for the duration of a PennDOT road-widening project that began August 10.

SPRPC's ridesharing program, according to project director Wade Fox.

"SPRPC has been helping people in the region make ridesharing arrangements since the 1973 oil crisis," Mr. Fox said. "We keep a computerized file of ridesharing information based on an average of 2,500 requests for assistance we get each year. People can call us 24 hours a day for help in finding rides, locating riders, using park 'n ride lots and organizing vanpools."

Individuals who wish to become part of an HOV-eligible commuting arrange-

ment can contact the ridesharing office by calling 471-POOL to request a form for registering their contact information and travel preferences. Companies that wish to survey their employees' commuting requirements may also contact the ridesharing office. Once the forms have been processed, SPRPC will furnish a list of potential candidates whose needs most nearly match the caller's. A similar program, which is open to all Oakland-bound commuters, is offered through Pitt and the University Health Center at 624-0687.

Detours, delays and diversions

Major PennDOT construction projects affecting traffic into downtown Pittsburgh include the following:

Bridgeville. A bridge reconstruction and replacement project between Academy Avenue and Cook Lane has closed Forsythe Road/Chestnut Street through September. A detour is posted.

Indiana Township. Concrete patching along Rt. 910 as it approaches Rt. 28 and the resurfacing of Little Deer Creek Road will reduce traffic lanes until the end of August.

Jeannette. Rt. 30 traffic is restricted to one lane traveling in each direction from Jeannette to Adamsburg until December.

Monongahela. A Rt. 88 bridge replacement at Pigeon Creek will keep traffic restricted to one lane in each direction until mid-January.

Monroeville. Widening and resurfacing along Rt. 22 between Old Wm. Penn Highway and Rt. 48 has traffic restricted to one lane in each direc-



tion during daylight hours through mid-November. Between Old Wm. Penn Highway and Rt. 286, periodic lane restrictions will be in effect during daylight hours for a reconstruction project through mid-November. Resurfacing projects along Rt. 130 from Monroeville Blvd. to Brown Ave., and at the intersection of Rts. 148 and 48 will reduce traffic lanes through August.

Moon Township. Lane reductions are in effect at Narrows Run and Beaver Grade Roads for intersection improvements through May of 1993.

North Versailles. Resurfacing from the Westinghouse Bridge to Rt. 48/30 has closed the eastbound lane through September.

Shaler. Resurfacing of Rt. 8 at Pennview Street has restricted traffic to one lane in each direction during daylight hours through August. Also, improvements at the intersection of Duncan Rd. and Babcock Blvd. will reduce lanes through November.

Washington. Traffic along I-70 is

restricted to one lane in each direction between Exit 4 and the I-79 junction until late November. Also, traffic restrictions along I-70 between Exits 16 and 18 at the Belle Vernon Bridge will remain in effect until December.

Tickets, boots and towtrucks enforce parking rules

If on-street parking downtown seems scarce, it's because Pittsburgh Police intend to keep it that way. No street parking is permitted anywhere downtown during weekday morning and afternoon rush hours. Additional restrictions apply during baseball games and other special events. Illegal parking citations start at \$34. Towing to the Strip District auto pound is enforced around the clock. The \$75 fee to release an impounded car may be made by cash or credit card between 7:00 AM and 10:30 PM.

Downtown's coin-operated parking meters can only be activated with quarters. One quarter buys just seven minutes of parking time. Meter Maids enforce the time limits on metered parking spots and can issue citations every time they pass a car whose metered time has lapsed. There is no limit to the number of tickets a car can get for remaining at an expired meter spot.

Diamond lanes in downtown Pittsburgh are for buses only. No private cars or vans, regardless of how many passengers they carry, are permitted to use them. That restriction applies all day, every day. Both PAT and the city police enforce the prohibition with \$84 fines.

What does SPRPC stand for?

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission is the official metropolitan planning organization for the six-county Greater Pittsburgh area. It was started 30 years ago by the counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Washington and Westmoreland, as well as the City of Pittsburgh, to provide technical support in dealing with problems which affect the entire region. Today, with an expanded base of voting members and a staff of planning professionals, its mission includes assisting local governments, economic development, airport planning, information services and transportation studies as well as ridesharing.

SPRPC's formal responsibilities include transportation planning and programming for its members. A 20-year

Long Range Plan provides a comprehensive look at the region's future. A Transportation Improvement Plan, which spans a 4-6 year period, is a requirement for all federally funded transportation projects. The Annual Element of that plan identifies projects which are scheduled for immediate advancement.

Responsibility for determining which highway and transit projects in the region are to receive federal funding has been assigned to SPRPC. It is coordinating its decision-making procedure with all of the affected public agencies. A group of prominent government, civic and business leaders, known as the Regional Transportation Partnership, has been appointed to oversee that selection process. Their comprehensive plan is scheduled to be completed for adoption by Fall, 1993.

PAT Promotes TransitChek tax-free benefit program

A new program encouraging employers to provide transit vouchers for their employees is being promoted locally by Port Authority Transit. The program, called TransitChek, takes advantage of recent changes in the federal tax code which allow employers to subsidize up to \$21 per month of their employees' public transit commuting costs as a nontaxable fringe benefit. Even higher limits are now being considered by Congress. Vouchers in \$7, \$15 and \$21 denominations are being accepted

by vendors of transit passes and tickets throughout the region in lieu of cash.

PAT's five-year old TransitPass program, in which employees of large companies could purchase monthly passes through payroll deduction, is being replaced by the TransitChek system. "TransitChek can expand corporate participation, especially by smaller companies," according to PAT executive director William W. Millar. "It removes essentially all restrictions on how many employees can participate, on which

transit operators can honor them, and on the types of fare instruments people can purchase."

In addition to PAT, current participants in the TransitChek program include the Beaver County Transit Authority, the Westmoreland County Transit Authority, the Mid-Mon Valley Transit Authority, G. G. & C. Bus Lines, DeBolt Unlimited, Access and Amtrak. More information on the program is available by calling the Port Authority at 237-7386.

Vanpool riders needed

Downtown vanpools typically carry 12-15 people round-trip, every working day, for a flat monthly fee. They work best for commuters who share similar work schedules and who live relatively close to one another. Normally, in return for organizing the pool, collecting the fares and maintaining the van, the driver rides free. Current openings for passengers in downtown-bound vanpools include the following:

From: **Apollo/Vandergrift**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$85
Contact: Donald Speer
Phone: 261-0700

From: **Export, Murrysville**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$75
Contact: Harry Folk
Phone: 644-8021

From: **HolidayPark/Plum/Monroeville**
Work times: 8:15 - 4:45
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Richard Conrad
Phone: 281-6900

From: **Irwin, North Huntingdon**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$65
Contact: Renee Bartolomucci
Phone: 288-2852

From: **Latrobe**
Work times: 7:30 - 4:30
Monthly fare: \$85
Contact: Luanne Stepanic
Phone: 234-4832

From: **McKeesport**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$75
Contact: Robert Wilson
Phone: 433-6613

From: **McKeesport/Versailles/Elizabeth**
Work times: 7:30 - 4:30
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: William Bury
Phone: 392-8773

From: **Natrona Hts./Allegheny Valley**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$75
Contact: Carolyn Nulph
Phone: 261-3640

From: **New Kensington/Oakmont/Plum**
Work times: 8:15 - 5:15
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Robert Deutsch
Phone: 288-1707

From: **Pleasant Hills**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$65
Contact: Wade Fox
Phone: 391-5599

From: **Port Vue/McKeesport**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$75
Contact: Cindy Harbert
Phone: 288-5560

From: **Robinson, Forest Grove**
Work times: 7:30 - 4:30
Monthly fare: \$60
Contact: Raymond Terpack
Phone: 633-3792

From: **Weirton**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Kirk Zecchini
Phone: 553-6718

From: **West Mifflin**
Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$62
Contact: Adesta Kondas
Phone: 633-3892

From: **White Oak, North Versailles**
Work times: 7:30 - 4:15
Monthly fare: \$65
Contact: Harry McDaniel
Phone: 644-6657

Flexitime blunts impact of PAT strike on downtown workers

Nearly half of the commuters who work in downtown Pittsburgh reported that it took them less time to get to work during the 28-day strike by PAT operators earlier this year than it did when transit operations were normal. That unexpected finding was among the surprises contained in a mail survey which sampled more than 250 of the 3,400 commuters who contacted SPRPC for ridesharing assistance during the walkout.

The Commission's study of the strike's impact, which included traffic counts at 14 sites and vehicle occupancy counts at eight key locations in addition to the postcard mail back survey, showed a 25% increase in the number of vehicles driving downtown in rush hours during the strike. But in many cases, the routes and starting times of those trips had changed from what they had been before. Two-thirds of the commuters surveyed reported leaving for work ear-

lier than they used to. Secondary routes into town experienced a 42% traffic increase during morning rush hours over the corresponding pre-strike period.

"The increased use of flexitime by downtown companies was a major contributor to the ease of travel but numerous instances of inconvenience and hardship during the strike also occurred," according to SPRPC ridesharing coordinator Wade Fox. The survey revealed that half of the employers downtown provided flexible work hours for the duration of the strike. Only 28% had instituted flexitime before the strike began.

"Flexitime spreads out the traffic peaks and takes better advantage of the region's existing road and highway capacity," Mr. Fox said. "A commuter's ability to leave early and use alternate routes helps to shorten travel times. It is the key lesson we learned from the PAT strike."




SPRPC

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