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<b>JOHN HOANG</b> Transportation Program Manager, C/CAG	<b>DOUGLAS KIM</b> Director, Planning San Mateo County Transit District
<b>SHIRLEY CHAN</b> Traffic Engineer City of Daly City	<b>SAM BAUTISTA</b> Principal Engineer City of South San Francisco

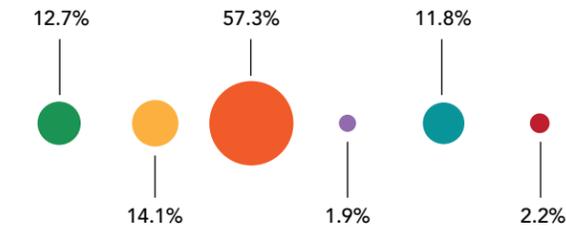
City/County offices and titles as of June 30, 2015

# Commute.org



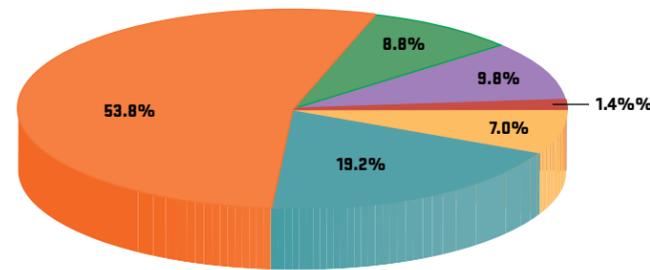
ANNUAL REPORT | FY 2015

## FY 2015 FUNDING



<b>AB 434 Funds: BAAQMD (C/CAG) \$457,500</b>	<b>Employer Outreach Grant: MTC (C/CAG) \$70,000</b>
<b>Congestion Relief Funding: C/CAG \$510,000</b>	<b>Measure A Funds: SMCTA \$425,000</b>
<b>Shuttle Funding: SMCTA, Consortium Members \$2,072,510</b>	<b>Miscellaneous &amp; Interest \$79,525</b>

## FY 2015 EXPENDITURES



<b>Employer Outreach \$664,750</b>	<b>Commuter Outreach &amp; Incentives \$337,428</b>
<b>Shuttle Operations \$1,862,509</b>	<b>Public/Private Partnerships \$49,510</b>
<b>Shuttle Program Management \$304,786</b>	<b>Administration &amp; Program Support \$243,035</b>

## FUNDERS AND PARTNERS



**Commute.org**

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WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE OUR SAN MATEO COUNTY COMMUTE

## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Report for Commute.org. Recognized as one of the nation's leading regional transportation demand management agencies, Commute.org has been promoting alternative transportation solutions for San Mateo County employers, commuters, and residents since 2000.

Commute.org, structured as a joint powers authority (JPA), is governed by 17 cities and towns as well as the County of San Mateo. This report presents a synopsis of the agency's program of work, the challenges we face, and the key initiatives we will undertake in the coming year.

The Bay Area has led the country in economic growth since the end of the Great Recession. The increased economic activity and labor force participation has resulted in more commuters, longer commute times, unprecedented roadway congestion and record-setting ridership on public transit. Commute.org plays a critical role in providing education, incentives, and leadership that help employers, commuters and residents become part of the solution.

We are pleased to share some highlights of the past year, including:

- *Commute.org shuttle ridership is at record levels with reduced per passenger costs*
- *Employer participation in funding the shuttle program has expanded*
- *Bicyclists are accounting for a larger share of overall commuters than ever before*
- *The agency's Strategic Plan has been updated with a new five-year vision*
- *The Connect, Redwood City! pilot project concluded successfully*
- *The Commute.org web site averaged more than 10,000 visitors per month*

We understand the challenges that San Mateo County faces with unprecedented levels of traffic and congestion on our roadways. In this report, you will learn how Commute.org is actively reviewing and implementing innovative ways to get people to rethink their commutes and choose better ways to move throughout our county. We invite you to join us and work together to become part of the solution.

We want to thank our employees, volunteers, partners and funders. With your continued involvement and support we look forward to another year of serving San Mateo County.

Sincerely,



Jeff Gee  
Board Chair



John Ford  
Executive Director



Strong economic growth in San Mateo County has led to increased congestion

## WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS TO REDUCE PEAK PERIOD COMMUTE TRIPS

Working directly with employers allows the agency to reach a high number of commuters through a single channel.

### Employer Outreach

Commute.org's core work involves providing employers with the information needed to adopt and sustain employee participation in commute alternatives, such as taking public transit, carpooling, vanpooling, biking and walking. In FY 2015, agency staff worked closely with 400 of the largest employers in San Mateo County (representing over 100,000 employees) and provided program information to another 4,000 employers.

### Employer-Based Shuttle Program

Commute.org manages 19 shuttle routes that provide first/last mile transportation between transit stations and worksites. Additionally, the shuttles serve residents who live in close proximity to shuttle routes and help connect them to public transit in the county. The shuttle program is funded through a combination of grants from agencies that include the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) and the San Mateo County Transportation Authority as well as funds from private employers and sponsoring cities.

In FY 2015, Commute.org shuttles set a ridership record, providing 551,465 passenger trips. This represents a 15.4% increase from the prior year. Average daily ridership exceeded 2,200 passengers, with the vast majority boarding shuttles at Caltrain stations throughout the county.

### Employer Support Services

Commute.org works with employers of all sizes and types including private companies, non-profits, schools, and government agencies. The Employer Outreach Team provides free consulting and support services for employer liaisons and facilities managers.

The Emergency Ride Home Program supports commuters who use alternative modes by providing a free taxi in the event of an emergency. A total of 62 employers with over 40,000 employees participate in the program, which is funded by Commute.org and participating employers.

The Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program is a pilot regulation requiring employers with 50 or more employees in the nine-county region of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to register and provide some form of commuter benefits to their employees. Commute.org provides support for the San Mateo County employers that are subject to the regulation. While still far from full compliance, the program has already resulted in thousands of employees gaining access to pre-tax commuter benefits, which hopefully leads them to use public transit or vanpool as a commute alternative.



Over 450 people participated in the Carpool Incentive Program



Private buses help reduce SOVs in San Mateo County

## INSPIRING COMMUTERS TO USE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Educating, inspiring and incentivizing commuters about alternative transportation options is the objective of this program area.

### Direct Communication with Commuters

The Commute.org web site is designed to help commuters find smarter ways to commute in San Mateo County. The site attracts an average of 10,000 visitors each month, many of whom use the mobile version for the latest information on shuttles and other commuter support programs. Additionally, Commute.org's Commuter Club now has over 5,500 participants who receive tips to improve their commutes and opportunities to participate in programs and promotions that reward non-solo driving.

### Vanpool and Carpool Incentive Program

The Carpool Incentive Program encourages commuters to try carpooling for at least two days per week for eight weeks. In FY 2015, a total of 459 people participated in the program and received an incentive to encourage them to continue carpooling. In a survey of those who received incentives, nearly all (96%) indicated that they plan to continue carpooling an average of four days per week. During the fiscal year, Commute.org also rewarded 64 new vanpool participants with cash subsidies to help them offset the costs of their vanpools.

### Try Transit Incentive Program

One of Commute.org's most popular programs is Try Transit. In an effort to encourage commuters to use public transit as an alternative to driving alone, Commute.org provides free transit tickets from transit agencies that operate in and around San Mateo County, including Caltrain, SamTrans, BART, and San Francisco Bay Ferry. Of the 545 people who participated in the program in FY 2015, 82% indicated that they would continue using transit as an alternative to driving alone.

### Bicycle Safety and Parking

Coordinated by Commute.org, free bicycle safety workshops led by a certified bicycle safety instructor provide employees and residents essential information, including: rules of the road for cyclists, tips on buying a bicycle, and bicycle maintenance. In FY 2015, Commute.org sponsored two workshops and subsidized 86 bicycle racks and lockers that employers installed at their worksites.

### School Pool and Carpool to College

The Commute.org School Pool and Carpool to College programs offer new carpool participants incentives to carpool at least twice a week during the school year. Neither program has reached the participation goals that were set; therefore, new versions of the programs will be developed with launches scheduled for FY 2017.

## SPECIAL CAMPAIGNS AND EVENTS

### Rethink Your Commute

The 2015 annual commuter campaign, Rethink Your Commute, asked commuters to use an alternative commute mode during the months of April and May. Commuters were encouraged to enter weekly prize drawings by sharing with Commute.org which commute alternative they chose to take each week. The goal of this campaign was to engage commuters from all over the county and encourage them to share their alternative commute stories. We were thrilled that 2,269 commuters from 740 employers participated in the campaign. The FY 2016 campaign promises to be even bigger and better!

### Bike to Work Day

Commute.org is the county-wide coordinator for Bike to Work Day, which takes place every year in May. In 2015, despite challenging weather conditions, San Mateo County had more than 10,000 bicycle riders counted by over one hundred volunteers from 42 energizer stations (a new record). Special thanks to the groups that staffed the energizer stations, which included employers, cities, and local bicycle advocates.

### Bike Commuter of the Year

As part of Bike to Work Day in 2015, Nathan Losch was named San Mateo County's Bicycle Commuter of the Year. Mr. Losch is a fifth grade teacher at Redwood Shores Elementary School and commutes via bicycle along the Bay Trail from his home in San Mateo. He is an inspiration not only to his colleagues, but also to the next generation of commuters that he teaches.

### Connect, Redwood City!

Under an MTC Climate Initiatives grant, Commute.org and its partners (County of San Mateo, City of Redwood City and San Mateo County Transportation Authority) marketed a suite of transportation demand management programs to employers and residents in Redwood City. Commute.org coordinated the vanpool component of the program that put a dozen vans on the road, resulting in reduced VMT (vehicle miles traveled) and tremendous cost-savings for the participants. The project concluded in FY 2015 and the lessons learned will be applied to future programs in other San Mateo County cities.



2,300 people participated in the "Rethink Your Commute" campaign



10,000 bicyclists pedaled through the county on Bike to Work Day



## BY THE NUMBERS

Traffic congestion is a complex, regional issue. Recent census data shows that 50% of San Mateo County residents work in other counties, and 50% of our county's workforce commutes in from neighboring counties. This highlights the importance of working closely with public and private sector partners across the Bay Area to reach the people commuting to, from, or through San Mateo County.

Understanding commuter behavior is critical for delivering real solutions. That is why we conduct Commute Profile Surveys. The FY 2015 survey found the drive-alone rate still at a stubbornly high 75%. Irregular work hours, the need for flexibility, and lower travel time are the three most frequently cited reasons for driving alone. The good news is that an increasing percentage of commuters (14%) use public transit as their primary commute mode. Full survey results are available on our web site.



## TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Transportation Demand Management, or TDM, is a general term for strategies and policies that reduce demand for motor vehicle travel, particularly in single occupancy vehicles. TDM programs can mitigate a wide range of undesirable externalities associated with driving, including congestion, poor air quality, less livable communities, reduced public health, reduced environmental health, and GHG emissions. Commute.org's TDM programs focus on reducing single occupancy vehicle travel in San Mateo County, particularly at peak commute hours.

## AGENCY DEVELOPMENT

### Strengthening the Agency

Under the guidance of the Board of Directors and Supervisory Committee, the staff of Commute.org has been focused not only on improving existing programs and services, but also adding, refining and eliminating programs to meet the evolving needs of the employers and commuters in San Mateo County.

In FY 2015, the board of directors undertook a year-long review of the agency's Strategic Plan. The plan, originally adopted in 2009, was updated with a new strategic vision and refined operational goals. At the heart of the updated plan is the understanding that in order to be successful, the agency must seek out and leverage partnerships with other organizations that share similar goals and adopt technology that can be used to support, educate and promote the behavior modification necessary to reduce the number of drive-alone commuters.

As a public agency, Commute.org understands the need to be completely transparent in all of its activities. Earning and maintaining the trust of the funders, program participants, and members is not just a goal, but a core requirement of the agency's staff and board at all times.



Caltrain and Commute.org shuttles provide an efficient inter-modal commute



The *Connect, Redwood City!* vanpool program reduced solo driving by over 1,000,000 miles



Ridership on Commute.org shuttles increased over 15%



### CALTRAIN PARTNERSHIP

After five consecutive years of ridership increases, Caltrain now serves more than 60,000 weekday riders on average. Many of those riders are San Mateo County residents or employees who rely on Commute.org shuttles to provide them first/last mile transit service.

The Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project will electrify the corridor between San Francisco and San Jose with new high-performance electric rail vehicles, upgrades to the railroad's signal system, and implementation of advanced safety technology known as Positive Train Control. Increased ridership and improved performance from electrification are critical for Caltrain to restore, sustain, and improve its services, and to meet future demand.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2016

Commute.org's FY 2016 work plan was adopted in June 2015, and is the roadmap that the agency will use to achieve its short-term goals. In addition to our ongoing operations, the agency identifies several "key initiatives" to focus on during the fiscal year. Key initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year include:

### Shuttle Services Contract Transition

After nearly two years of working on an RFP, contract award, and pre-transition planning, Commute.org transitioned to a new shuttle service provider in July 2015. Once past the initial phase of the transition, staff will work with the vendor to implement many of the tools and programs that have been planned for the new service.

### Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program

Commute.org has operated an Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program for more than a decade. The current program is employer-centric, which means that only those employees who work for participating employers are eligible to use the program. In order to expand the coverage of this important safeguard, Commute.org is designing a program that will allow all permanent employees in San Mateo County to be eligible for the GRH program on days that they do not drive alone to work.

### San Mateo County Compliance with Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program

Commute.org's employer outreach team will be working with employers within San Mateo County to achieve as close to full compliance with the Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program as possible.

### Web Site Release

The Commute.org web site team spent almost a full year redesigning the site, which will be launched in FY 2016. The new web site will be streamlined, intuitive and provide phone and tablet users with a quicker and easier mobile-friendly resource.

### Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Partnerships

Commute.org will participate in a multi-year, multi-phase project led by Joint Venture Silicon Valley. The project is based on the concept of Mobility as a Service (MaaS), a transport service model in which a customer's major commuting and traveling needs are met over one interface and are offered by a variety of service providers.

The project's goal is to use emerging technology to develop and pilot new TDM tools focused on measurably increasing mobility, convenience, and productivity while reducing stress, traffic congestion and GHG emissions.



## HIGHWAY 101 CONGESTION

Longtime residents of San Mateo County know that Highway 101 has always had traffic issues. In the past, however, traffic was usually limited and caused by special events or accidents. Not anymore.

Now motorists need to allot twice as much time for travel at just about all hours of the day on Highway 101. While much of the traffic is attributable to drive-alone commuters, it is a combination of many factors.

Since the Highway 101 corridor is the most economically productive corridor in California, finding solutions to the congestion has become of paramount importance to the public agencies that control the highway and the private sector that relies on it. Assembly Member Kevin Mullin (District 22) has introduced AB 378, which could be a vehicle for future legislation that would expedite efforts to make improvements.

Commute.org is dedicated to working with our funders and partners to do everything we can to reduce the drive-alone rate on Highway 101.