



COMMUTESMART

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



AN INITIATIVE OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

CommuteSmart Annual Report

October 2022 – September 2022

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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. This report does not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the USDOT.

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Executive Summary

In the past few years, how people get to work has become a popular topic of conversation. CommuteSmart Birmingham strives to change the way commuters get to work. Established in 1999 by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB), CommuteSmart aims to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion in our region. We promote alternative ways of commuting to work, such as carpooling, walking, biking, taking transit, and teleworking. By offering incentives, CommuteSmart helps to ease the transition from driving alone to a cleaner commute. Any commuter living or working in the CommuteSmart program area, which includes Jefferson, Shelby, South Blount, and West St. Clair counties, is eligible to participate. CommuteSmart is funded by the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2022, CommuteSmart Birmingham continued using traditional and new methods to reach stakeholders. Increased gas prices and changes in work schedules were significant factors in our outreach activities in FY 2022. From October 2021 to September 2022, CommuteSmart added 572 new registrants to the ridematching database, bringing the total to 30,741. New and continuing participants removed 9,129,165 miles off the road. Commuters logged 2,801,756 vehicle miles reduced through vanpooling while reducing another 6,327,409 miles through carpooling, transit, bicycling, walking, and working from home (**Figure 1**).

In FY 2022, CommuteSmart participants saved over 222,014 gallons of fuel, which totaled \$667,372 in fuel cost savings. Commuter cost reductions, such as lower maintenance and insurance, helped participants save an estimated \$3,448,439 (**Figure 2**).

This annual report provides an overview of CommuteSmart Birmingham's program participation, outreach efforts, social media, and advertising for FY 2022. We hope to affect change in individuals by influencing them to get to work any other way than driving alone in their car. Please let us know how we can better serve you 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

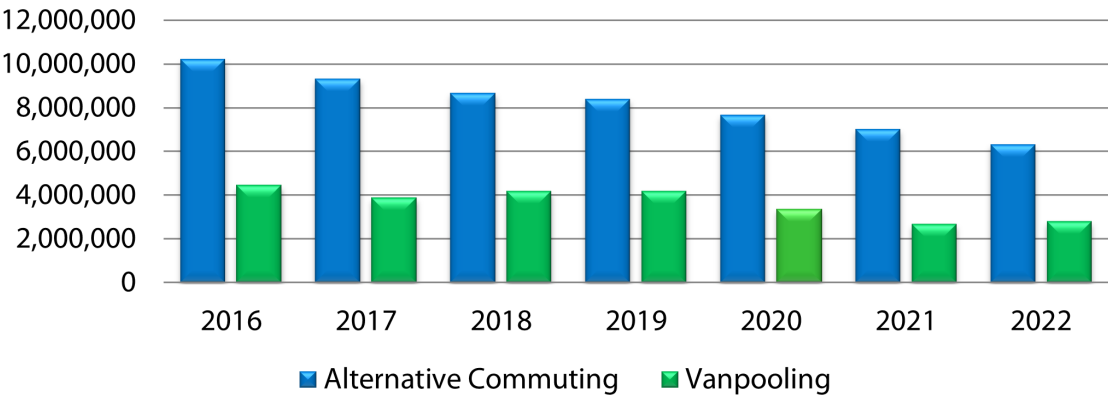
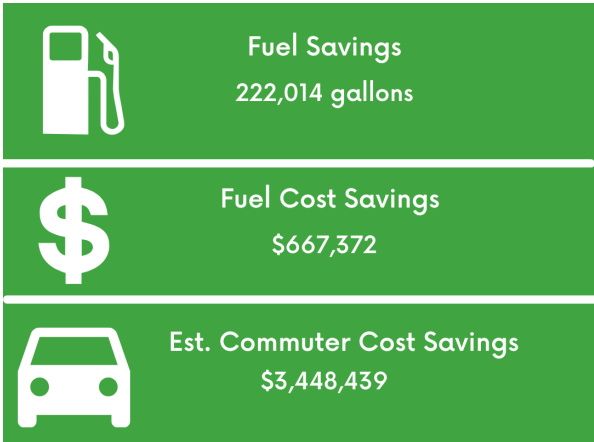


Figure 2
Commuter Savings



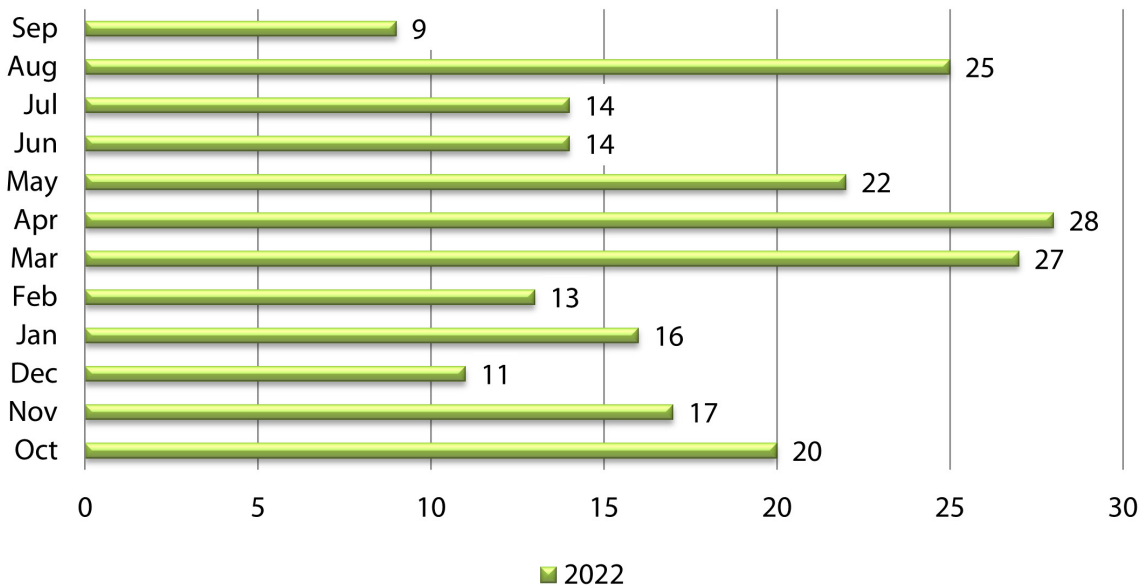
Incentive Programs

GetGreen

CommuteSmart Birmingham's initial 90-day program is GetGreen. The program encourages individuals to try an alternative commute option. This is a one-time incentive program that pay new participants \$1 per day, up to \$70 for each day they log a clean commute in our database.

In FY 2022, CommuteSmart outreach events, virtual events, social media, advertising, and employer engagement generated 216 GetGreen enrollees (**Figure 3**). Participants in GetGreen reduced approximately 229,709 vehicle miles last year, or an average of 1,063 miles reduced per participant. The GetGreen program cost for FY 2022 was \$8,834.98, or 4 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

Figure 3
New GetGreen Members

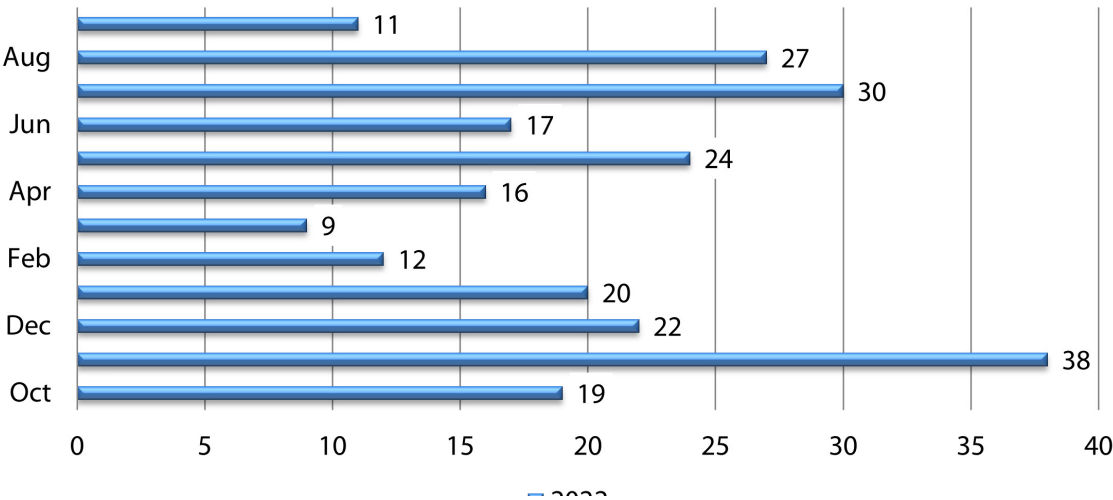


CommuterClub

After the initial 90-day GetGreen period, commuters are automatically enrolled in CommuterClub to encourage the continued use of clean commutes. Commuter Club is an ongoing program that awards a \$25 gift card quarterly for commuters that log at least 20 clean commutes during that time. Participants choose one of 9 gift card options including Chevron/Texaco, Publix, BJCTA Transit Pass, Cahaba Cycles, CVS, Express Oil Change, Redemptive Cycles, and Target. Employees and students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham have the additional incentive option of having \$25 added to their Blazer Bucks account, a balance account linked to each employee and student’s identification card.

In FY 2022 there were 245 new commuters registered in CommuterClub (**Figure 4**). The CommuterClub program cost was \$92,019.00 in FY 2022 and resulted in the elimination of 6,097,700 vehicle miles from the region’s roadways. As such, the program cost approximately 2 cents per vehicle mile reduced.

Figure 4
New CommuterClub Members

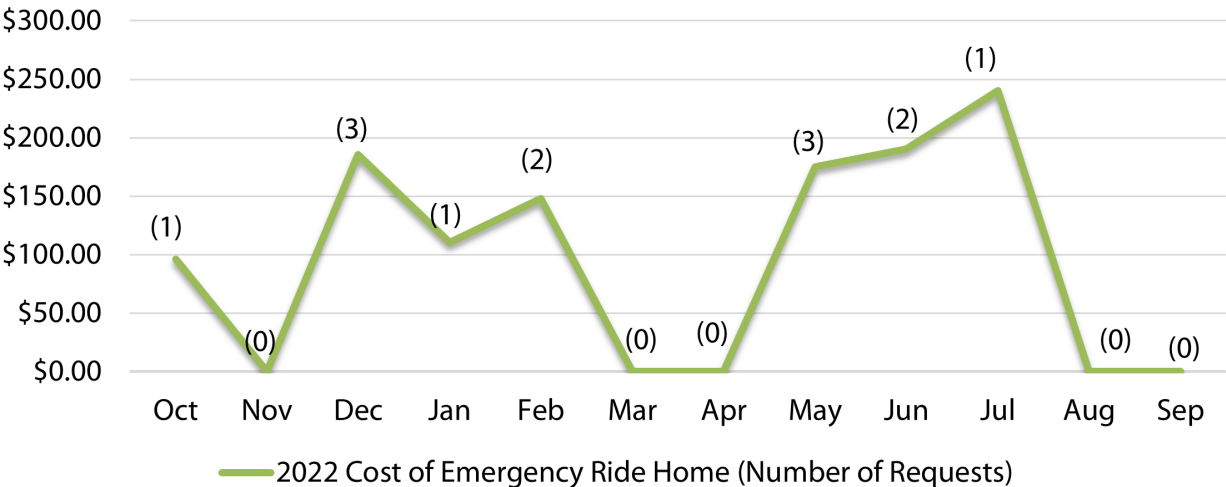


Emergency Ride Home

A significant question we hear from commuters transitioning from driving alone to taking an alternative commute is, “What happens if I have an emergency?”. The unpredictability of leaving your car at home can make some commuters second guess taking an alternative commute to work. CommuteSmart Birmingham’s Emergency Ride Home (ERH) benefit is provided for participants actively logging their clean commutes and active vanpool members. Eligible participants can receive up to five Emergency Ride Homes each year. Examples of qualifying reasons include personal illness, family emergencies, or unexpected overtime. To receive this benefit, participants must contact a CommuteSmart Birmingham representative, and we will arrange transportation back to the origin of their commute at no cost to the participant. Active participants can elect to pay out of pocket for a Transportation Network Company such as Uber or Lyft and submit supporting documents for review and reimbursement. We will reimburse mileage at the current federal mileage rate per mile if the active participant chooses to have someone to take them back to their origin.

In FY 2022, CommuteSmart participants received 13 ERHs at \$1,145.33 (**Figure 5**). The average cost per ERH was \$88.10 this fiscal year.

Figure 5
Emergency Ride Home Totals



Vanpool

Commuting by vanpool has various benefits, especially for those dealing with a longer commute. Less stressful commutes, increased morale, lower tardiness/absenteeism, reduced parking demand, and increased commuter cost savings are among a few of the benefits of being part of a vanpool. The CommuteSmart Birmingham vanpool program is maintained and operated by Commute with Enterprise. 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 each month.

The Commute with Enterprise team worked with CommuteSmart outreach coordinators at various 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 25 operating vanpools each month (**Figure 6**), resulting in 26,048 trips off the roadway in 2022
- Lowered carbon dioxide emissions by 1045 tons and carbon monoxide emissions by 41.88 tons (**Figure 7**)
- Reduced 107,698 gallons of fuel consumption for a total savings of \$392,525 in fuel cost (**Figure 8**)
- Took 46,444 fewer passenger trips, which reduced vehicle miles traveled by 2,801,756
- Filled 194 available seats on vanpools, maintaining 63.56% occupancy for FY2022

Figure 6
2022 Vanpool Totals

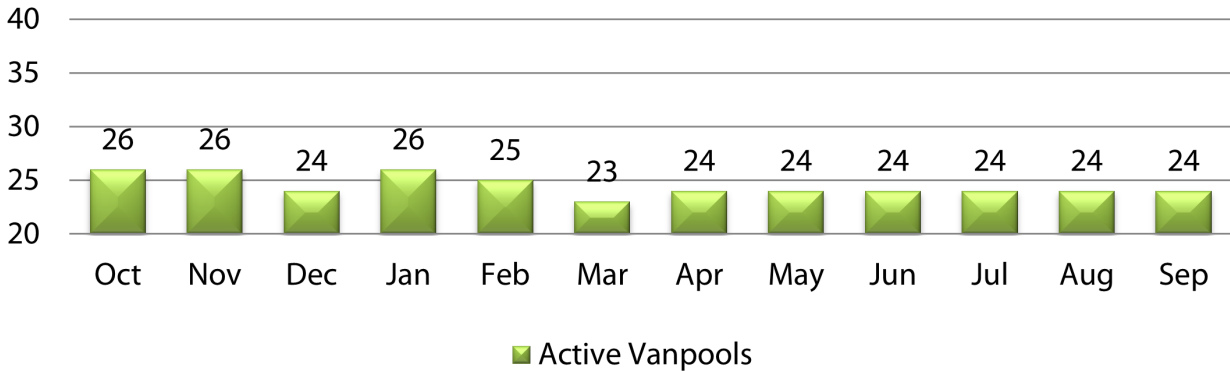


Figure 7
2022 Carbon Dioxide Reduction (tons)

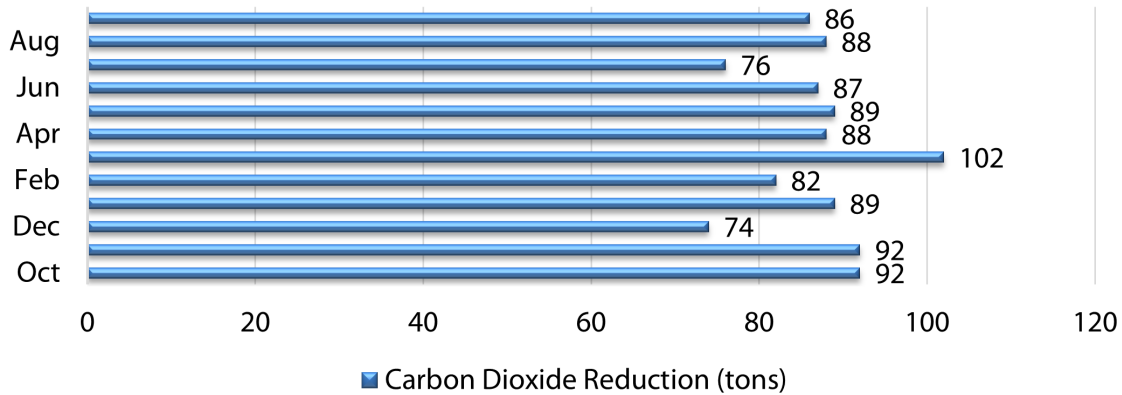
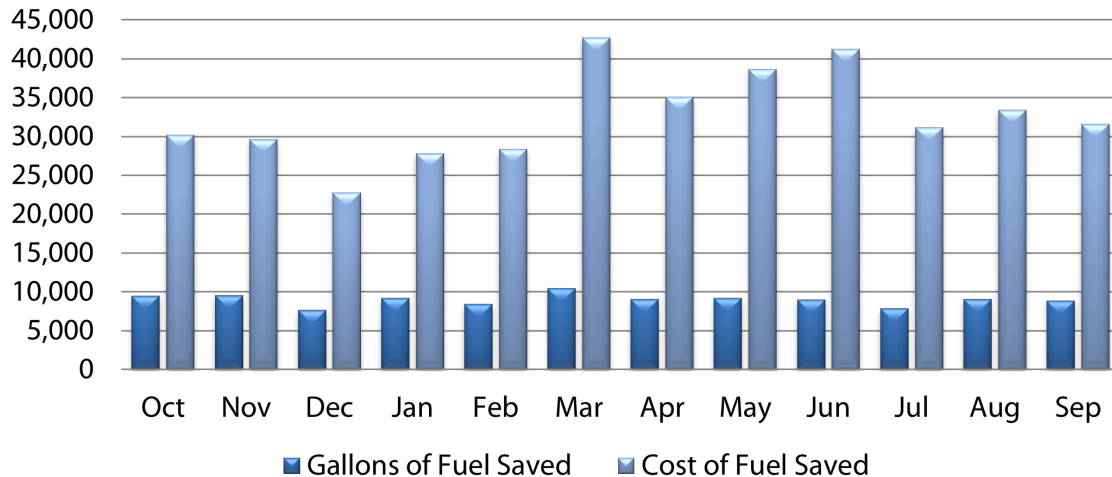


Figure 8
2022 Vanpool Fuel Savings



Outreach Activities

For CommuteSmart Birmingham, outreach is the primary source of promoting the program and educating the public on the benefits of taking a clean commute. Outreach activities include developing partner relationships, informational materials, social media engagement, and traditional advertising/public relations campaigns. CommuteSmart's outreach team works with existing and prospective partners to increase program awareness to accomplish our goals.

Outreach Coordinators

CommuteSmart Birmingham outreach coordinators utilize a host of marketing tools such as promotional materials for employees, speaking presentations at online events or in-person, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plans, email blasts, cluster map analysis, Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) quarterly newsletters, and commuter surveys.

In FY2022, CommuteSmart started to see things return to regular scheduled activities but engaging with the public continued to require creative planning. CommuteSmart Birmingham navigated these hurdles by adding supplementary offerings, such as online presentations, informational sessions for new employees and increased email communication to registered commuters. CommuteSmart expanded its social media presence as an interactive tool, spreading information to our audiences throughout the region.

Bike racks and carpool/vanpool preferred parking signs remained an added benefit offered to partners, at no cost, for their participating employees.

Bike to Work Day is CommuteSmart Birmingham's premier annual event. In FY 2022, we partnered with Redemptive Cycles to host an energizer station, and welcomed bike commuters to celebrate. All participants were entered into a drawing for a Bike Month giveaway. During Bike Month, CommuteSmart's social media highlighted healthy benefits from biking, commuter testimonials, giveaways, and bike safety tutorials. We had over 41 contest participants.



CommuteSmart Birmingham gained two new partners Prosper Birmingham and VEO in FY 2022.

Social Media

Social media continues to be a key focus for CommuteSmart Birmingham. With many commuters taking a hybrid commute or working from home, CommuteSmart uses our social media engagement to promote our program and put out important program information. The website and social media channels educate and engage potential and active participants and employers. Social media posts increased our website traffic, brand awareness, and customer service and helped capture new business opportunities. Our current social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.


Annual giveaways are a key strategy that CommuteSmart Birmingham uses to engage the public and encourage alternative commute logging of active participants. We use our Birmingham Barons contract season tickets and items collected from our business partners for these purposes. Our "12 Days of Christmas" campaign remains one of the most popular giveaways of the year.

Our commuters and partners are the heart of our program. CommuteSmart Birmingham highlights them on social media in our Commuter and Partner Spotlights. These testimonials showcase their loyalty and commitment to our program and allow us opportunities for increased customer service.



I have been utilizing CommuteSmart since 2016. I chose to vanpool because it is affordable, convenient and there is no use for my personal vehicle. Vanpooling has made a positive impact on my transportation needs and has provided me with an affordable and safer way to and from work. The company has been nothing short of exemplary when I ever needed their assistance. They are always there and willing to provide support in any way possible. I would highly recommend anyone interested in joining CommuteSmart for vanpooling purposes. It is an affordable, reliable way to work. You would not be disappointed.

Harvey Jones



VALERIE JONES

I heard about CommuteSmart from a co-worker over a year ago and I have really loved using it! What a great idea! My husband and I both have our own accounts and the way we use it is we are a one car family so, since he works downtown like I do, he drops me off every morning and picks me up every afternoon. We really love it! We also love to have lunch together every day, too, so he drives over and picks me up and we try to eat somewhere near my office. If it's nice outside, we try to sit outside. We love being together as much as we can and even if we did have two cars, we prefer to drive in and drive home together. Makes that part of life more enjoyable.

In FY2022, CommuteSmart increased the number of Facebook page “Likes” to 1,478 and reached approximately 9,390 people through this platform. On Twitter, CommuteSmart now has 865 followers and garnered over 3,998 impressions. Our Instagram currently has 363 followers.



The CommuteSmart Birmingham website is www.commutesmart.org. Offering interactive content, videos, information on alternative commute options, employer services, bike rack applications, the ERH benefit, and partner spotlight, it is the hub for both potential and current participants. It is also the primary connection to our logging database. Website traffic is generated from various sources (**Figure 9**), with 52.15% coming from individuals typing in www.commutesmart.org or bookmarking the site in their browser. Over the year, the website received 56,847 total visitors, with 17,594 visiting for the first time (**Figure 10**).

Figure 9
2022 Traffic Sources Overview
www.commutesmart.org

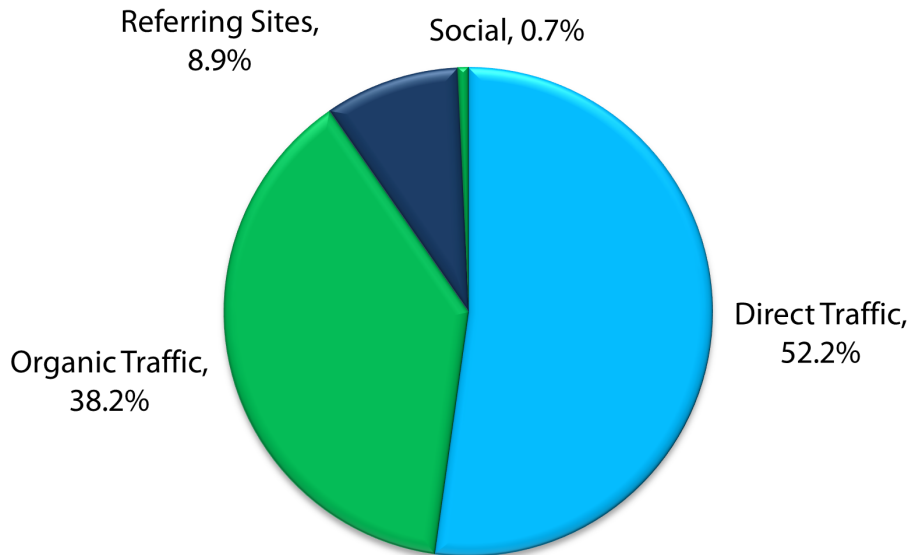
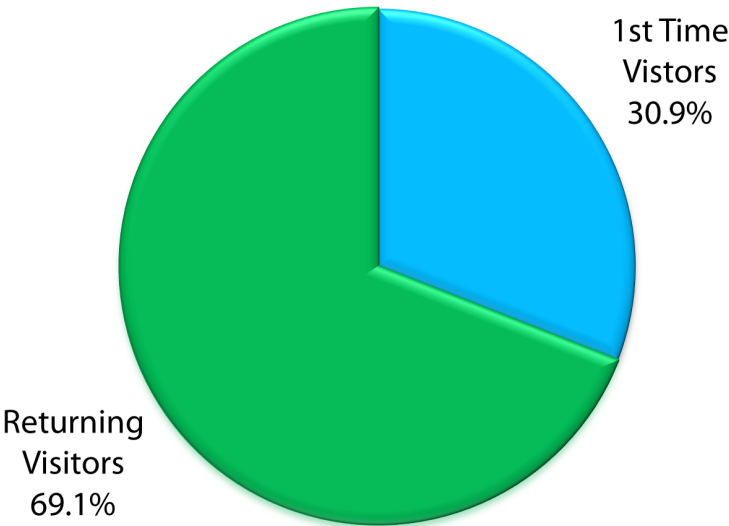


Figure 10
2022 Website Statistics
www.commutesmart.org



Public Relations and Advertising

A vital part of CommuteSmart's success is the use of marketing and public outreach. Traditional public relations and advertising were developed to educate commuters about the benefits of CommuteSmart.

CommuteSmart utilizes its outreach campaign to drive participation in the program while educating people throughout Jefferson and Shelby counties about air quality issues and the consequences of individual choices, such as travel behavior and transportation preferences. An ongoing marketing and outreach campaign provides information and encourages individuals and companies to participate in the CommuteSmart program.

In FY2022 concerns over the rising cost of gasoline resulted in multiple media interviews that helped promote CommuteSmart and the benefits of choosing a clean commute. Historically, when gas prices go up, there is an increased interest in carpooling and other alternative commute options. A media release with the headline "CommuteSmart Birmingham Offers Gas Saving Solutions to Combat Rising Gas Prices" was written and distributed to local news outlets in our region. Jeniese Hosey, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator for CommuteSmart, was interviewed by every local television news outlet in FY2022. The focus of these interviews was to encourage commuters to find a clean commute to work through vanpooling, carpooling, riding a bike, walking, or telecommuting.

Hybrid work schedules have increased across our region and created a significant shift in how commuters get to work. With the change in commuters on the road, CommuteSmart continued the decision to decrease the media budget and focus on media interviews to get the message out to the public.

There was a strong emphasis in the media during Bike Month in May 2022 to inspire people to commute to work on a bicycle. Other benefits of the program were highlighted, such as additional clean commute modes and fuel cost savings.

Media Campaign

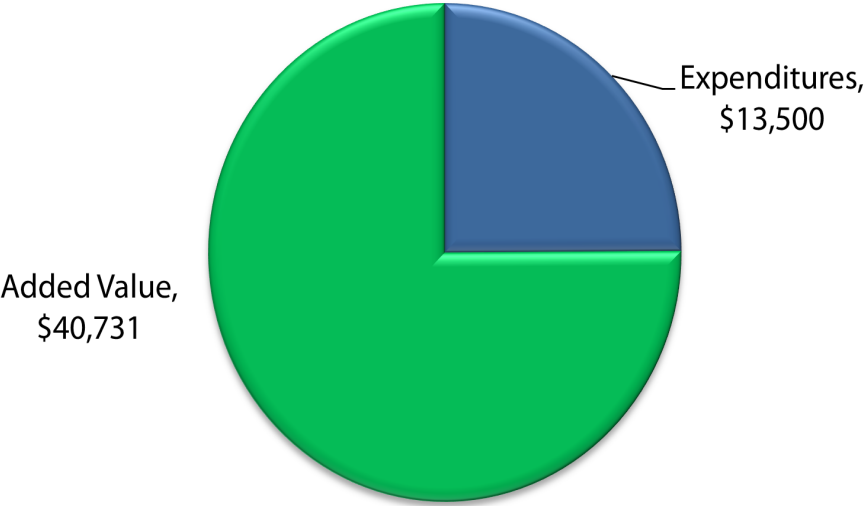
In FY 2022, a radio outreach campaign was developed to reach commuters while they were driving. The 8-week traffic sponsorship ran August through September. It targeted drivers on their morning and afternoon commutes through iHeart Media's, Total Traffic Network, an air schedule on Birmingham Mountain Radio, and a series of radio remotes with Tasha Simone on Hot 107.7. **(Figure 11)**



The media attention from Bike Month helped fuel an increased interest in CommuteSmart. Additional Interviews were provided to help promote Bike to Work Day in May including CBS42 Midday News, Talk of Alabama on ABC 33/40, Birmingham Mountain Radio's Morning Blend, and WBRC's Good Day Alabama.



Figure 11
2022 Radio Campaign
Cost and Added Value Comparison



CommuteSmart Partners

Last Updated September 2022

Gold Partners

- Alabama Power
- City of Montevallo
- Fortis Institute (still open)Encompass Health
- 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

Bronze Partners

- 58 INC.
 - Action Enterprises
 - Advantage Resourcing
 - Alabama Media Group
 - Altec, Inc.
 - American Family Care
 - Autotec
 - Balch & Bingham, LLP
 - Barber's/Mayfield
 - Barnes Reality Group
 - Birmingham Association of Realtors
 - Birmingham Business Alliance
-

CommuteSmart Partners

Last Updated September 2022

Bronze Partners (Continued)

- 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
 - Central Six Works Alabama
 - City of Hoover
 - City of Mountain Brook
 - City Wholesale Inc.
 - Cooper Green Mercy Hospital
 - Corporate Realty Services
 - Daniel Corporation
 - Dollar General
 - EBZ Systec, Inc.
 - EyeSight Foundation of Alabama
 - Glenwood, Inc.
 - Golden Flake
 - Grandview Medical Center
 - HMS Host
 - Hoover Chamber of Commerce
 - Intermark Group
 - Jefferson County Commission
 - Jefferson State Community College
 - KBR
 - Kinder Morgan
 - Lakeshore Foundation
 - Middle Alabama Agency on Aging
 - Motion Industries
 - Mountain Brook Chamber of Commerce
 - Nathan & Nathan, PC
 - Pack Health
 - Piggly Wiggly Distribution
 - PNC (FKA BBVA Compass)
 - Positive Maturity
 - Pride Staffing
 - Princeton Baptist Medical Center
 - Regions Financial Corporation
 - Redemptive Cycles
-

CommuteSmart Partners

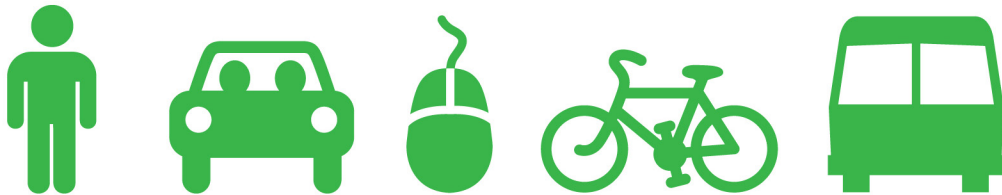
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Bronze Partners (Continued)

- REV Birmingham
- Schnellecke Logistics Alabama
- Shelby Baptist Medical Center
- Shelby County Board of Education
- Sheraton Birmingham Hotel
- Shipt
- Sign Faces
- Southern Research Institute
- South Shelby Chamber of Commerce
- Spire
- State Farm Insurance
- Superior Mason Corporation
- Thompson Tractor
- T-Mobile
- University of Alabama
- University of Alabama Health Services
- University Place Apartments
- U.S. Pipe and Foundry
- Viva Health, Inc.
- Vulcan Materials
- Watts Realty
- Z-Modular

Community Partners

- Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition
 - Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
 - Alabama Environmental Council
 - Alabama Partners for Clean Air
 - Alabama Rivers Alliance
 - Birmingham Bike Club
 - Birmingham Botanical Gardens
 - Black Warrior Riverkeeper
 - City Action Partnership (CAP)
 - Cobbs, Allen & Hall
 - Eco Three
 - Gateway
 - Homewood Rotary
 - When did this one become inactive?
Prosper Birmingham
 - Sain & Associates
 - Vallocycle
 - VEO
 - YMCA of Greater Birmingham
 - YWCA Central Alabama
-



CommuteSmart

www.commutesmart.org



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