

Washington DC Joins Commuter Choice Program

ICF Consulting (ICF) has added Washington D.C. to the list of major cities participating in the **Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative**, which is aimed in part at reducing motor vehicle emissions.

The program, which was launched in April, is run by **EPA** and the **Department of Transportation (DOT)**. It is designed for employers who want to help fight traffic congestion while improving commuting options for their employees.

The program is managed by EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality and was borne out of the Energy Star initiative designed to prompt consumers to make energy efficient purchases. The Energy Star program labels energy-efficient products like clothes washers, TVs/VCRs, heating and cooling equipment, so consumers can save money on energy bills while simultaneously reducing overall air pollution levels. The Energy Star program has been expanded to include new and existing homes, and office buildings.

EPA estimates that if half of US employers adopted the Commuter Choice program traffic congestion and emissions from mobile sources would shrink by an amount equal to removing 15 million vehicles from the nation's commuting fleet.

EPA sources said that the agency is currently considering whether to institute a program similar to Commuter Choice, but aimed at metropolitan transportation planners. That program would establish a set of standards that

if adhered to would further increase use of energy efficient commuting modes.

Under the Commuter Choice program an employer with 1,000 employees could take 175 cars off the road. Doing so would save 44,000 gallons of gasoline, and reduce global warming emissions by 420 metric tons each year. Employers would save about \$13,000 in taxes, and employees would save \$160,000 in gasoline, parking and vehicle costs each year, according to EPA estimates.

Employers in Houston, TX, Sacramento, CA, Seattle, WA, Chicago, IL, and Atlanta, GA, have also adopted the Commuter Choice program.

In order to qualify employers have to offer one of four primary benefits, and three out of a list of 20 secondary benefits to their employees. Primary benefits include subsidizing mass transit use by employees, or establishing an extensive telecommuting program. Secondary benefits include providing preferred parking for carpools, and offering shower facilities for employees that run, walk or bike to work.

ICF is a consulting firm that provides guidance to clients on energy and environment issues. That focus makes it an obvious candidate for the program, ICF Consulting Chairman and CEO Sudhakar Kesavan said.

"Not only does ICF Consulting advise clients on many of the issues addressed in the Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative, but this offers an outstanding opportunity for our firm to carry out its commitment to the environment and the community," Kesavan said.