

FEDERAL ETC UPDATES

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU GETS CARS OFF THE ROAD!



Since 1790, the Census Bureau and its predecessor organizations, have collected data on many aspects of the U.S. population.

From a simple population count to economic data, Census Bureau's mission is "to serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We honor privacy, protect confidentiality, share our expertise globally, and conduct our work openly. We are guided on this mission by scientific objectivity, our strong and capable workforce, our devotion to research-based innovation, and our abiding commitment to our customers."

While the U.S. Constitution requires only that the decennial census be a population count, since the first census in 1790 the need for useful information about the United States' population and economy became increasingly evident.

The decennial census steadily expanded throughout the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, the demographic, agricultural, and economic segments of the decennial census collected information on hundreds of topics.

The work of processing these data kept the temporary Census Bureau office open for almost all the decades following the 1880 and 1890 censuses.

Recognizing the growing complexity of the decennial census, Congress enacted legislation creating a permanent Census Bureau office within the Department of the Interior on March 6, 1902, and then on July 1, 1902, the Census Bureau officially "opened its doors" under the leadership of William Rush Merriam.

In 1903, the Census Bureau office was moved to the newly created Department of Commerce and Labor. It remained within Commerce when Commerce and Labor split into separate departments in 1913. The Census Bureau headquarters have been in Suitland, MD since 1942. Today, more than 4,500 are employed at that location.

With this important mission, the need to recruit and retain employees, and a need to help these employees get to and from work, the Census Bureau Administrative and Customer Services Division Transit Benefits Team was formed according to Executive Order 13150, "Federal Workforce Transportation." This executive order mandated that federal agencies provide transportation benefits to encourage mass transportation and expand commuting alternatives to qualified federal employees and Census Bureau wanted to be at the forefront of this initiative.

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Developed as a financial incentive to encourage federal employees to use transit, vanpooling, carpooling, or other alternative modes of commuting, rather than commuting to and from work in single-occupancy vehicles, the program contributes to the strategies aligned in Executive Order 13423, "Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management", to reduce the use of petroleum and greenhouse gas emissions.

Following the Executive Order 13150, Census Bureau, through a partnership with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), established the Transit Benefit Program for headquarters and field offices in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The Transit Benefits Program Office provides policy guidance to Census Bureau, troubleshoots problems that may arise, and monitors internal controls. The program's management was through the Department of Transportation (DOT) and included transit pass purchasing, tracking, distribution, and reporting services.

After many years of hard work, the Transit Benefits Team developed a "one-stop shopping" initiative that will support all processes previously managed by DOT and provide participants in the Transit Benefits Program a comprehensive interface mechanism for accessing all of the Census Bureau's transit benefits nationwide. Consequently, the team will be better equipped to expand its customer base, reduce a greater number of commuters on the highways, and contribute to a further reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Since 2007, the Transit Benefits Team has successfully increased participation in the Transit Subsidy Program. The number of Smart Benefit Program participants increased approximately 120 percent to a total of 852 employees currently in the program. This is equivalent to an estimated 852 personally owned vehicles (POV) off the road and an estimated reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 4,456 Metric Tons of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to the carbon dioxide emissions from electricity use of 556 homes for one year.

Commuter Bus Program participants have reduced the number of POVs by 69, equating to an estimated 361 Metric Tons of carbon dioxide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and



vanpool participation removed an additional 55 POVs, which equates to an estimated reduction of 361 Metric Tons of carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions. Ultimately, the team has recruited and reduced the number of POVs on the roads by 976 employees, which has contributed to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 5,104 Metric Tons of carbon dioxide; the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions avoided by recycling 1,779 tons of waste instead of sending it to a landfill.

Finally, in order to reduce program costs, the Transit Benefits Team centralized the administrative management processes by separating from DOT. This strategy resulted in the elimination of a 7.9 percent management fee imposed by DOT and a cost savings of \$137,000 per year. The Census Bureau Transit Subsidy Team administers its own program and directly collaborates with the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority. This initiative opens the door for Census Bureau to manage its own transportation subsidy program and to collaborate with other federal agencies.

Federal agencies, while mandated to have commuter benefits programs, make these programs work through a true desire to reduce single occupant vehicles, reduce pollution, and, most of all, help their employees get to work safely and stress free. For more information on how your agency can reduce vehicle trips to your worksite, visit www.federaletc.org.