

# TRIANGLE COMMUTER NEWS

DECEMBER 1994

A Publication of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

Ridesharing? Call 471-POOL



## Downtown Parking Squeeze to Tighten Even More

Parking in downtown Pittsburgh is tight and growing tighter. A recent Pittsburgh city planning department report placed the Golden Triangle's inventory of 20,000 parking places at 300 spaces short of meeting downtown's current needs. That number is expected to mushroom into a 2,800-space shortfall within two years, and more than 6,000 spaces by the end of the decade, as parking along the Mon wharf is replaced by a proposed new riverfront park. Although a city-sponsored master plan calling for various administrative measures is due to be completed next year, little relief is in sight, according to an analysis prepared by the Post-Gazette. On a typical weekday, the newspaper reports, 119,000 workers and 29,000 visitors crowd into the Golden Triangle.

About half use public transit or some form of ridesharing. But SPRPC estimates that downtown employment and retail traffic will grow at an annual rate of two percent over the next 20 years. If so, that would add 2,700 more commuters, and 400 more shoppers or visitors a day, every year.

Plans for two intermodal transportation centers on the fringe of downtown have been included in SPRPC's 20-year transportation plan for the region. They are designed to intercept inbound commuters and transfer them to transit lines and walkways into the Golden Triangle. Together they would add approximately 5,500 parking spaces to the city's inventory. But their construction is still years away, and the city planning department report notes that anywhere between 10,450 and 16,850 additional parking spaces will be needed to accommodate downtown growth over the next ten years.

In the meantime, full-day parking rates in the city's municipal garages and lots will increase by as much as \$3.00 on January 1, as part of a strategy to create more room for short-term mid-day traffic.

Private parking operators, who set their own rates, are expected to follow. Leased parking, which accounts for about 40% of the city's spaces, is also going up. A leased spot in the Mellon Square garage will jump from \$165 to \$225 a month.

**Increased carpooling, vanpooling, and transit use could keep the Golden Triangle from falling into further parking gridlock.** The Pittsburgh area, which already exceeds the national average for ridesharing, may support higher levels of pooling and transit use. But without significant parking or other travel improvements to downtown, the attraction of the city's suburbs for retail and office relocation could grow even stronger. ▲

## A Guaranteed Ride Home Could Make Vanpools More Appealing

More than half the vanpool riders in southwestern Pennsylvania are women. But over the years, a significant number of women with young children have withdrawn from the program. Their reasons have varied, but for many, it has been that a vanpool's traditional fixed schedule is inconsistent with responding to child-related needs and emergencies. Being available to leave work as required, as well as dropping-off and collecting children from daycare providers, is a duty that often falls to women. And that responsibility has tended to work against the continued participation by young mothers in pooled ride arrangements. However a growing number of ridesharing organizations

around the country have found that by providing assurances of a ride home — no matter when the need arises — they are taking the apprehension out of ridesharing. The beneficiaries are not only the mothers of young children, but men and women of every age who share a concern about being tied to a rigid van schedule when special circumstances arise.

The typical Guaranteed Ride Home program, or GRH, works by assuring vanpool passengers that if they need to return home before or after the van's normal departure time, they can take a taxi and the program will pay all or most of their fare. That assurance is particularly appealing in the Greater Pittsburgh area where cab fares are so high as to be

prohibitive for the typical vanpool trip.

In practice, GRH programs vary in their rules. In Pittsburgh's Airport Corridor Transportation Association, for example, only registered workers who rideshare at least three times a week are eligible. Other rules restrict the use of the program to unexpected situations that arise, making normal return rides home impossible. But while some programs place caps on the number of times an individual can use the service, the ACTA program does not.

A downtown-based GRH program is currently under consideration for daily commuters who either carpool, use rush hour-only transit routes, or participate in vanpools. The program is expected to become operational by mid-1995. ▲



# Numerous Projects Attempt to Mitigate Expected Fort Pitt Bridge Rehabilitation Traffic Crunch

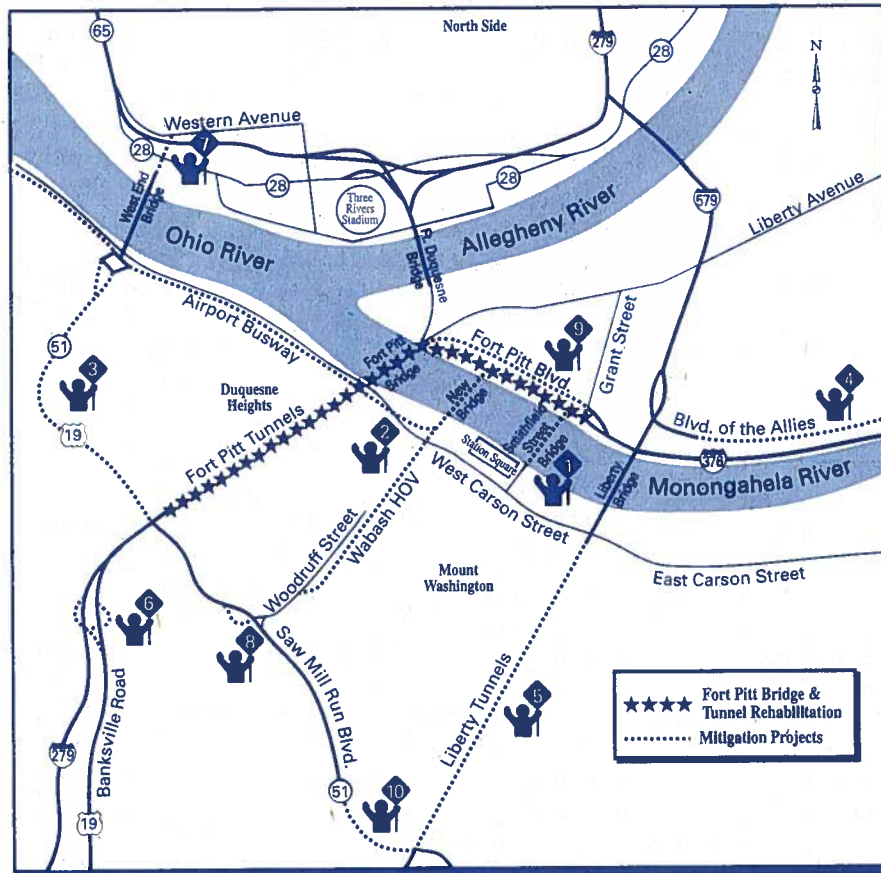
A carefully orchestrated series of transportation improvements serving traffic to and from the Golden Triangle is now being choreographed by PennDOT. It is part of the agency's attempt to lessen the traffic nightmare expected to result from the pending Ft. Pitt Bridge and Tunnel rehabilitation. For an eleven-month period beginning in May of 1997, the Parkway East Viaduct — the east-bound segment of I-376 between the downtown Ft. Pitt Bridge ramps and Grant Street — will be closed for reconstruction. The following year, the inbound tunnel and upper bridge deck will close for reconstruction, and when it reopens in 1999, the outbound lower bridge deck and tunnel lanes will close. Because the bridge is shorter than the tunnel, it won't take as long to repair, according to PennDOT. As a result, bridge traffic will be restored across the river before the tunnel is ready. However, that traffic must be detoured around Mount Washington until the tunnel repairs are complete.

An average of 144,000 vehicles a day now use the bridge, which forms a vital connection in Pittsburgh's east-west traffic flow. To help offset the impact of the closure, a number of projects are planned which would help to reduce traffic volume and make more efficient use of alternative routes. But its impact is expected to be so great that work on a number of other road

and bridge improvements in the area — projects unrelated to the Ft. Pitt Bridge and Tunnel rehabilitation — is now being scheduled to avoid potential conflicts with posted detour routes.

Key Ft. Pitt Bridge mitigation projects, as well as their tentative start and finish dates, appear in the chart below. Their locations are indicated on the accompany-

ing map. However, in addition to the projects shown here, a number of others are also being planned. They include retiming traffic signals along six key corridors, the addition of reversible lane control signals to a number of major arteries, improved highway surveillance, additional park 'n ride lots, faster incident response, expanded bus service, and increased ridesharing. Most of the projects listed here involve permanent improvements. But in many cases their construction will create temporary new congestion problems. ▲



PROJECT NAME	MAP #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	START DATE	END DATE
Smithfield St. Bridge	◆ 1	Sandblasting and repainting	March 1995	June 1995
Airport Busway	◆ 2	Combined busway from Carnegie and HOV from Rt. 51 to downtown via new Mon River bridge	October 1994	November 1997
West End Bypass	◆ 3	Rehabilitation and reversible lane addition	March 1996	November 1996
Blvd. of the Allies	◆ 4	Resurface and add center barrier	April 1995	November 1995
Liberty Tunnel	◆ 5	Floor replacement	May 1996	November 1996
Banksville Interchange	◆ 6	Ramp widening	May 1995	December 1995
West End Bridge	◆ 7	Widen northbound off ramp to two lanes	March 1996	May 1997
Rt. 51 at Woodruff St.	◆ 8	Add jughandle for left turn from Rt. 51	March 1996	October 1996
Ft. Pitt Blvd.	◆ 9	Relocate eastbound lanes over westbound lanes	March 1996	January 1997
Saw Mill Run Blvd.	◆ 10	Straighten road from Crane to Liberty Tunnels	January 1996	April 1997

# Transportation Management Associations Target Diverse Areas

In southwestern Pennsylvania, transportation services are typically provided on a county or metropolitan basis. But two key parts of the region, each with its own distinctive set of needs, have taken matters into their own hands. By forming local transportation management associations, or TMAs, they are working directly with public officials, agencies, and private firms to solve travel problems for their member organizations.

Although Oakland and the Airport corridor differ in many respects, employers in the two areas share a common concern: moving people to and from their places of work with speed and efficiency. It is a challenge that both TMAs are attempting to address with a variety of travel demand management strategies, many involving alternative forms of transportation.

Oakland, with its high concentration of hospitals, universities, professional offices and retail establishments, is Pennsylvania's

third largest center — just behind downtown Philadelphia and Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle. Public transit and private shuttles operate frequently in Oakland. Congestion is chronic, parking is scarce, bikes are common, and walking is the preferred form of local travel.

The airport corridor, where access to Pittsburgh International Airport has attracted a growing number of office clusters, industrial parks, shopping centers, and housing subdivisions, has just the opposite: no sidewalks and almost no transit service, but plenty of open space and lots of free parking.

To Oakland Transportation Management Association head Ann Winkelstein, whose 25 members include the major institutions in her densely developed neighborhood, a major part of the solution to parking and traffic congestion comes through administrative remedies, such as coordination of transportation planning and changes in

zoning. As a result, much of her time is spent gathering information and advocating on Oakland's behalf with city, county and regional government agencies.

But to Airport Corridor Transportation Association executive Lynn Manion, whose 35 members include developers, building owners, and municipalities as well as employers, the major transportation problems tend to be those created by isolation and exclusive dependency on private cars. While some members are eager for increased roadbuilding to handle local traffic, others are concerned about getting transit-dependent city residents to work and back. And for many workers along the Parkway West, where office buildings are often remote from one another and from amenities such as restaurants and banks, a shuttle service connecting local stores, offices and transit stops is a high priority. Consequently, ACTA's role leans more toward providing direct services.

*Continued on page 4.*

## Vanpool Riders Needed

Weekday vanpools to downtown Pittsburgh depart from and return to communities throughout the region. Current passenger openings include the following:

**From: Butler**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$80  
Contact: Cory Simmons  
Phone: 566-5521

**From: Export, Murrysville**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$88  
Contact: Barry Ryan  
Phone: 234-6152

**From: Gibsonia**

Work times: 7:30 - 4:15  
Monthly fare: \$78  
Contact: John Guadagnino  
Phone: 433-6254

**From: Greensburg**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$92  
Contact: Gary McConnell  
Phone: 644-6695

**From: Greensburg**

Work times: 7:30 - 4:15  
Monthly fare: \$80  
Contact: Burma Gindlesperger  
Phone: 644-5949

**From: Holiday Park, Plum, Monroeville**

Work times: 8:00 - 4:45  
Monthly fare: \$70  
Contact: Richard Conrad  
Phone: 281-6900

**From: Imperial**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$64  
Contact: Ronald J. Senovich  
Phone: 681-8311

**From: Irwin, N. Huntingdon**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$80  
Contact: Joe Goffner  
Phone: 236-2913

**From: Irwin, N. Huntingdon**

Work times: 8:30 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$80  
Contact: Donald Douglass  
Phone: 234-5230

**From: Irwin, N. Huntingdon**

Work times: 8:30 - 4:45  
Monthly fare: \$90  
Contact: Patrick Rafferty  
Phone: 565-2169

**From: Latrobe/Rte 30**

Work times: 7:30 - 4:30  
Monthly fare: \$88  
Contact: Luanne Stepanic  
Phone: 234-4832

**From: Mars, Valencia**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$76  
Contact: Patrick Dickson  
Phone: 433-4549

**From: Monaca, Ambridge**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$85  
Contact: Cindy Robinson  
Phone: 234-0517

**From: Monroeville**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$70  
Contact: Harry Banks  
Phone: 433-4835

**From: Murrysville, Monroeville**

Work times: 8:00 - 4:45  
Monthly fare: \$70  
Contact: Mark Gibson  
Phone: 497-6792

**From: Natrona Heights, Allegheny Valley**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$92  
Contact: Carolyn Nulph  
Phone: 261-3640

**From: Pleasant Hills**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$65  
Contact: Wade Fox  
Phone: 391-5590 x312

**From: Plum Boro, Penn Hills**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$70  
Contact: John F. Smith  
Phone: 255-7717

**From: Robinson Twp., Forest Grove**

Work times: 7:30 - 4:30  
Monthly fare: \$75  
Contact: Ray Terpack  
Phone: 633-3792

**From: Steubenville, Weirton**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$80  
Contact: Don Lawrence  
Phone: 321-3129

**From: Washington, Meadowlands**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$90  
Contact: Steve Lissan  
Phone: 433-5390

**From: Weirton, W.Va.**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:15  
Monthly fare: \$82  
Contact: Dana Grim  
Phone: 255-4432

**From: West Mifflin**

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00  
Monthly fare: \$65  
Contact: Adesta T. Kondas  
Phone: 633-3892



# ACCESS System Moves Commuters With Disabilities

According to the 1990 census, Allegheny County is America's 19th most populous county. But for years, it has been served by the nation's largest paratransit service. Port Authority's ACCESS system, with a dedicated fleet of 520 vehicles, carries more than two million elderly and disabled riders a year to destinations throughout Allegheny County. Most of its riders are either retired or unemployed. But they also include a number of full and part-time employees who depend on the service to get to and from work.

Although ACCESS is operated under the direction of PAT, it is not at all like PAT's normal service. For example:

- PAT employees and equipment are used to provide regular bus and LRT service. But ACCESS service is contracted out to twelve independent commercial and non-profit carriers, each of which is assigned its own service area. It is administered by an outside contractor, ACCESS Transportation Systems, Inc.
- Government grants provide approximately half of PAT's regular operating expenses. But anywhere from 80% to 100% of the price of an ACCESS ride is underwritten by lottery receipts and government grants, depending on the program in which the passenger is participating. As a result, the ACCESS passenger's cash outlay is comparable to a regular bus fare.

- PAT's normal service operates on fixed routes according to set schedules. ACCESS requires advance reservations, and its routes are determined by the requests of its passengers. Each participating carrier takes reservations for its own ACCESS riders.

- Anyone can ride PAT buses and LRTs for the same fare. However, only those who have established their eligibility according to a series of government program criteria may use the heavily-subsidized ACCESS system. Even then, a person may not be eligible to use ACCESS for every trip.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, led PAT to replace its entire bus fleet with wheelchair-accessible vehicles by the end of the decade. However only those ACCESS vehicles which are specifically dedicated to wheelchair service are so equipped. Others include sedans, vans, and minibuses.

Questions about using ACCESS should be directed to its administrative office at 562-5353. Detailed information about all of the specialized personal transportation services in the region is available in SPRPC's newly updated *Senior and Disabled Transportation Assistance Directory*. Single copies are available free of charge by calling the agency at 391-5590 ext. 342. ▲

## Transportation Management Associations Target Diverse Areas

*Continued from page 3.*

Despite the differences in their member profiles and priority issues, both organizations are concerned about the impact of the Ft. Pitt Bridge and Tunnel reconstruction. The two TMAs are working closely with SPRPC, PennDOT, and officials of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to develop a coordinated transportation demand management program focused on travel from the Airport to Oakland and key points in between.

Additional information about ACTA is available by calling 788-1199. OTMA's office can be contacted at 621-1099. ▲

### What Do You Think?



If you would like to comment on any of the articles in this issue of *Triangle Commuter News* or if you have any story ideas or commuter-related issues that you would like to see developed in future editions, please write or call us at the address noted on the mailing panel, below. ▲

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