



PEF/encon

NYS Public Employees Federation Division 169
Room 1404 State Office Building
207 Genesee Street
Utica, New York 13501

February 25, 2007

Honorable Eliot Spitzer
Governor of New York State
New York State Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer,

The world energy crisis and global warming have the people of New York State and our country looking to the government to provide leadership to address the energy, economic and environmental problems we confront. The NYSDEC PEF/encon Steward's Council is recommending a plan, based upon the offering of commuter benefits to employees across the state, as a means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants; reduce congestion, parking demand and consumption of our ever tightening supply of oil resources; and to enhance smart growth principles and provide local economic benefits. We are also working with Senator Breslin on a similar proposal. Commuter benefits include transit subsidies, telecommuting, compressed workweek, carpool incentives, flex time and other benefits that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) by commuters.

The transportation sector consumes about sixty-six percent of the total amount of oil used in the state and eighty-seven percent of oil consumed in NYS comes from foreign countries - we are sending money and jobs out-of-state. Additionally, emissions from the transportation sector are one of the largest contributors to global warming. What is missing from most current energy plans is one of the fastest and most effective strategies to reduce oil consumption in the transportation sector: the offering of commuter benefits to commuters. In an energy crisis, energy conservation becomes the primary strategy.

Our plan would offer commuter benefits to all State employees, which would show leadership by example (several years ago the State of Arizona granted commuter benefits to all eligible state employees). The plan would also direct state agencies, such as the DEC and DOT, to encourage private and public employers across our state to offer commuter benefits to their employees as recommended by the US EPA and US DOT Best Workplaces for Commuters (BWC) program. The BWC program offers national and regional recognition and technical assistance to any employer who provides commuter benefits to their employees. Third, the state could offer tax

incentives to encourage employers to offer commuter benefits to their employees.

Offering commuter benefits to employees is one of the fastest and least expensive methods to reduce VMTs which will not only reduce oil consumption, but also reduce CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants, congestion, parking demand and consumption of oil resources. There is a drastic need for new ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Commuter benefits are very popular with employees and they result in little, if any, legal challenges or opposition. Additionally, the disposable income saved on commuting costs would be far better spent, and economically productive, in the local and state economy. Commuter benefits also support smart growth strategies. The DEC Bus Subsidy Program, Downtown Albany BID Commuter Ca\$h Program and the Cornell University Comprehensive Transportation Plan, as well as many employer commuter benefit programs, locally and across the country, have proven the effectiveness of commuter benefits.

At the national level, President Bush has called upon federal agencies to encourage their employees to carpool, telecommute and use public transportation. Additionally, the federal government is emphasizing the importance of telecommuting in regard to maintaining operations of agencies during an emergency. By making commuter benefits a priority, NYS would move to the national forefront for innovative leadership in energy and environmental issue thus demonstrating a real commitment to solving the energy crisis and global warming.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and to respond to any questions. I may be reached at 315-793-2746 or correspondence may be sent to my attention at NYS Public Employees Federation Division 169, Room 1404 State Office Building, 207 Genesee Street, Utica, New York 13501.

Sincerely,

Terry Tyoe
Division Leader
NYSDEC PEF/encon

Attachment

cc: Judith Enck
PEF/encon Stewards Council