

Transit Benefit Ordinances

Steps to Developing & Implementing

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Steps to Develop & Implement a Successful Transit Benefit Ordinance Campaign:

1. Map out a rationale for how this ordinance would benefit a city/region/state in terms of environment, traffic congestion, parking issues, tax savings, and increased transit usage. Use this information when approaching anyone potentially impacted by the ordinance. If the term “ordinance” might be unpopular, work to frame it in other terms. Berkeley called it “The Tax Relief Action to Cut Commuter Costs (TRACC)” to give the right impression.
2. Identify one or more legislators that will sponsor legislation to appropriate governing body. Meet with the staff to see whether the legislator would be interested. Map out the process of passage of the ordinance.
3. Once at least one legislator is on board, work with their staff to identify a department within the governing entity that will work on administration of and compliance to the ordinance. Meet with senior staff of this department to facilitate understanding of roll and responsibilities.
4. Hold a roundtable to get members of the public thinking about the future of transportation in city/region/state and have a keynote presentation on the success of the ordinance in other cities. Invite politicians, business groups, employers, advocacy groups, labor, etc.
5. Direct the staff person to the existing ordinances as templates for drafting the proposed legislation. There are several key decisions to make: 1) Minimum number of employees for an employer to fall under the regulation; 2) Penalties for non-compliance; and 3) Transition period until full implementation and enforcement. Identify a point of contact to work with legal counsel to make sure that the proposed legislation is compliant with other codes and state laws.
6. Identify key individuals with the government and external advocates that are willing to collaborate with business leaders/groups and other officials within the jurisdiction. For example, draft case studies, including the city/region/state, to show actual payroll tax savings and program costs to give naysayers concrete proof that this is a money-saver.



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7. Organize at least two focus groups with local business (one for large employers, one for small) to get input and feedback on the concept. This will also help the legislator make the case that the ordinance has been vetted by individuals within business community.
8. Follow up from the roundtable: Solicit input from local business groups such as chambers of commerce and merchant associations. If they support, ask them to write a letter.
9. Work with labor councils, environmental groups, and transit agencies to further build support for passage with their constituents. They will most likely be immediately supportive. The key is to have a balance of business interests and other civic contributors.
10. Be prepared to offer supporting testimony at legislative body meetings.

Once passage occurs:

- Develop compliance materials. Work with the department responsible for compliance on educational material and a public relations plan to get the word out to employers.
- Write a press release to give to local media, and to business groups to post on-line on in their newsletter. The call to action should explain:
 1. The benefits to the community
 2. The overall tax savings
 3. Where employers can get assistance to set up a program. Hold employer trainings. Develop sample PowerPoints and FAQs to help employers start their own program
 4. How employees can receive the benefit from their employer.
 5. Map out compliance process internally.