



commute options

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



2020 Annual Report

Commute Options is dedicated to innovative transportation options that connect people of all ages to the places they go – employees to their workplaces, students to their schools, and neighbors within their communities. We champion active transportation and infrastructure improvements, fostering essential partnerships, and educating the community on transportation options.

Mission Statement

Commute Options increases access to transportation options across Oregon.

Vision Statement

We envision communities using safe, convenient, and reliable transportation options that result in healthier individuals, a cleaner environment, and a stronger economy.

2020 Staff

Brian Potwin - *Executive Director*

Kim Curley - *Community Engagement Coordinator*

Kersey Marion - *Project & Administrative Coordinator*

Whitney Bennett - *Safe Routes to School Coordinator*

Kathy King - *Special Projects Coordinator*

David Hopper - *Walking School Bus Coordinator*

2020 Board of Directors

Marshall Greene - *Board Chair*

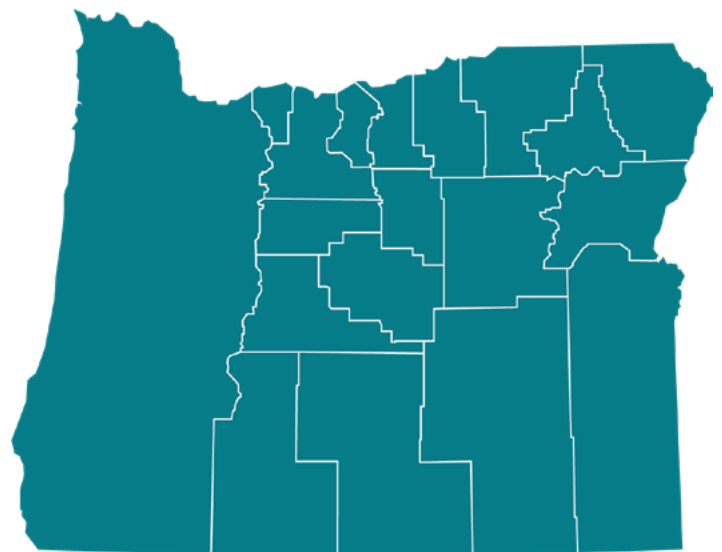
Janet Gregor - *Treasurer*

Ashley Mohni - *Secretary*

Neil Baungard - *At Large*

Zechariah Heck - *At Large*

Gregg Morris - *Former Board Chair*



In 2020 we worked in 18 counties, including Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, and Wheeler Counties

2020 – A Year to Remember

Commute Options was not alone in having to pivot our programs to meet the new challenges resulting from COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Outreach efforts in person were not possible. Other ongoing programs had to adapt or be on hiatus. On the upside, we learned more about the benefits of remote working by large segments of our service area that will be useful to incorporate in our work going forward. We are grateful to our staff, board members and partners for stepping up through these unprecedented times and to help us prepare for a return to in person activities.

What we Do

Commute Options focuses on increasing the share of car/vanpoolers, cyclists and transit riders by educating commuters, engaging local employers and advocating for transportation investments. Throughout the year, we actively work with schools and student populations to offer safe routes to schools and prepare school age children to be safe wherever they walk and roll. Further, our engagement efforts reduce CO₂ emissions, help our communities be more livable, and support our region to stay on the cutting edge of transportation innovations.

Top Accomplishments

- 1. Launching Vanpooling Program:** In partnership with Cascades East Transit (CET), Commute Options started offering to employers a new vanpool program so workers with similar schedules and routes can share commuting in a SUV or van provided by Enterprise. Our subsidy program helps employers buy down the cost of a van lease by about half each month.
- 2. “Get There” Takes Off:** In 2020, the revamped “Get There” rewards program was fully implemented and saw a dramatic bump up in participation. Enhanced awards and improved distribution system proved popular. Most notably, Commute Options transitioned to the Tango Card reward, which is 100% electronically distributed.
- 3. Broadening Community Awareness:** Due in part to pandemic restrictions, Commute Options stepped up our presence on social media platforms to keep people informed since in person events and meetings were not possible.
- 4. Leading Business Community in Remote Work Policies and Processes:** Formerly a “perk” only for some employees, our pandemic restrictions sent millions of people home to work remotely. Commute Options was a leader for the business and school community as people transitioned quickly from the office work routine to a successful work from home environment. As shown, remote work accounted for nearly half of the trips logged by participants in 2020.
- 5. Traffic Gardens:** With schools closed or limiting on-site education due to the pandemic, Traffic Gardens became an excellent tool in offering self-led pedestrian and bike safety education. A traffic garden is a miniature replica of a neighborhood street network made out of spray chalk. Students and families have access to this play space to practice their safety skills and learn about bike and pedestrian infrastructure. In Fall 2020, Commute Options installed one of these at Healy Heights Apartments near Bear Creek Elementary School.

Top Accomplishments

- 6. Get There Challenge:** Get There Challenge was revamped in 2020 due to COVID 19 restrictions and limitations on in-person gatherings. Challenge participants unlocked achievements in the Get There tool to earn points toward entry into weekly and grand prize drawings. Achievements included fun activities and skill builders (many that can be done from home), in addition to logging remote-work days and trips made by foot, bike, transit, carpool and/or vanpool.
- 7. Helmet Fundraiser with MOD Pizza:** Commute Options hosted a fundraiser for takeout at MOD Pizza and raised \$50 to go toward the Safe Routes to School helmet fund. The helmet fund provides support to purchase helmets to give away to students that need them during our bike safety education.
- 8. Statewide Transportation Options Work:** ODOT awarded the agency with a 5 year contract to perform Transportation Options outreach in 17 Oregon counties, from the Cascade mountains to the Washington, Idaho, and California borders. Stephanie Anderson Stroup of Enterprise, Oregon joined our team of contractors to conduct community outreach in ODOT's Region 5 territory. The initial offering in the region was the Get There Challenge, which saw several new registrations in Baker City, Joseph, Pendleton, and Ontario. Many thanks to Kathy Fitzpatrick and Pamela Ruddock for representing Commute Options in north and south ODOT Region 4.
- 9. Oregon Friendly Driver Virtual:** OFD online The Oregon Friendly Driver program went 100% virtual in 2020, with two types of offerings. One is the completely online course, with a pre- and post-test and video instruction. The other way the program was delivered is through a team training webinar scheduled at the convenience of the group. This live webinar lasts about 75 minutes and has question and answer time built in.
- 10. New Executive Director.** As the newly appointed executive director, Brian Potwin has completed his run through every level at Commute Options. His tenure began in 2007 as a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) volunteer before moving up to a coordinator position. He went on to hold the roles of active transportation manager, Bend Open Streets manager, deputy director, and since January 2020, executive director. In addition, Potwin serves on the statewide SRTS leadership committee, based out of Salem.

Programs



get there rewards

Get There, launched by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and its partners across the state, helps commuters and employers shift business practices and work habits one trip (or not) at a time. Commute Options' [Get There Rewards](#) program changes personal travel behavior, improving health, saving money, and reducing parking needs. By offering financial incentives, the Get There Rewards program encourages use of walking, biking, carpooling, vanpooling, remote work and compressed work week instead of driving alone. During 2020, the Get There Rewards program saw a massive increase in participation, due to COVID-19 restrictions and many partner companies changing from going to the office to working from home. Commute Options network had 60,000 remote work trips logged on to Get There Oregon in 2020.



We celebrated essential workers and remote workers alike in our Commute Kickbacks + Telework Perks events throughout the year and rewarded participants with AirPods, gift cards, and other great prizes.

In October we hosted the Get There Challenge which boasted 1,626 participants throughout Oregon, over 8,600 achievements unlocked, and thousands of new users logging 18,639 trips for a total of 165,986 miles! Challenge participants learned bike and walk safety skills, beefed up their understanding of transportation options, and spiffed up their home office with tips from Comcast Business.

This challenge highlighted people's ability to log trips while remote working. People were settling into their home offices and changing their daily routines. The 2020 Get There Challenge celebrated those positive changes, and rewarded people for their remote work and other transportation options trips.

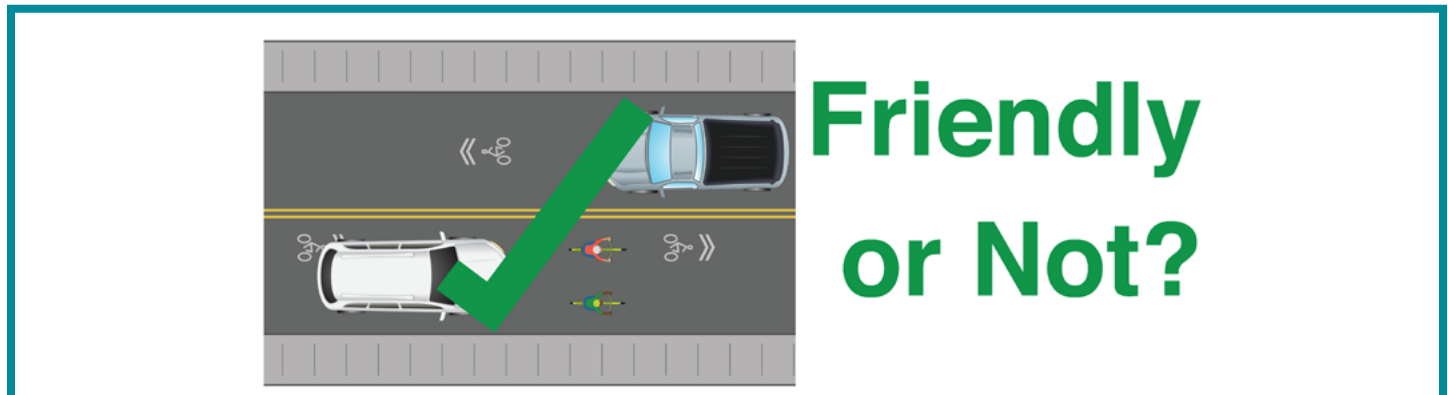
By the end of 2020 Get There Rewards incentive choices expanded with the addition of the Tango Card which offers a global catalog of the most popular gift cards, prepaid cards, and donations that can be sent directly to a recipient's email address.



New in 2020 was the virtual delivery of the [Oregon Friendly Driver](#) program. The Oregon Friendly Driver program is a course for people who drive that helps to educate on how to safely use the roadway with people who are walking and biking. Since the global COVID-19 pandemic necessitated restrictions for gathering in person, Commute Options migrated to Live Webinars and developed an Online Course. Both the Live Webinars and the Online Course include pre- and post-tests. Participants learn about:

- The safest ways to utilize the roadway network
- The rules of the road for people driving, people riding bicycles and people walking
- How to avoid common crashes
- How people riding bikes use the road and how people driving can respond
- How to use roadway features: sharrows, bike lanes, and rapid flashing beacons

Last year 94 participants successfully completed the class, received an Oregon Friendly Driver certificate, and became a more friendly driver on our roadways.



A slide from the *Oregon Friendly Driver* Live Webinar

SafeRoutes

Oregon Safe Routes To School



One of Commute Options' foundational programs, our [Safe Routes to School](#) program is part of a national network of providers bringing walking and biking education and encouragement to students. We do this through a combination of virtual and in-person walking and bike safety instruction across Central Oregon, as well as virtual and in-person encouragement events throughout the year.

Safe Routes to School Education Program

Entering the 2020-2021 school year, all 20 of our program schools were closed to in-person learning. The Safe Routes to School Coordinator offered virtual walking and biking education through the promotion of the Walk and Roll E-Toolkit. Offering the education program virtually gave more students access to walk and roll education curriculum while in-person teaching was not an option. The virtual materials also allowed the education curriculum to be shared to all students and families across Central Oregon.

Spring Challenge Month

We organized a Spring Walk and Roll Challenge that ran the first 2 weeks of June. The challenge was based off our [Walk and Roll E-Toolkit](#), which was developed for online learning as a response to school closures in March 2020. We promoted at program schools and on our website to reach all students in Central Oregon. The challenge included a tracking form for students to track their participation in walk/roll activities and a padlet to share photos of their participation online.

Walk and Roll Anywhere Day

On November 11, 2020, with many of our program schools closed to in-person learning due to the Pandemic, we promoted Walk and Roll Anywhere Day to all of our program school communities encouraging students and their families to get out and walk and roll.

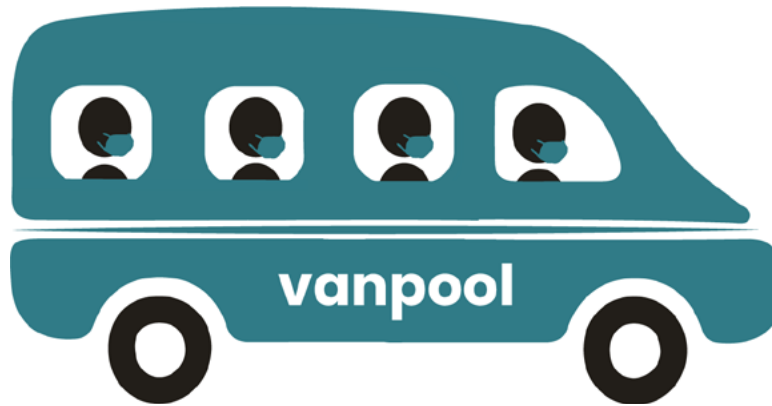


Walking School Bus

Let's Walk and Roll

The [Walking School Bus](#) program (s) is a program funded through Oregon Safe Routes to School, the City of Bend, and volunteers. Many school districts around the country have organized special or one-off walking school bus events, but we are the only program that offers mapped walking routes and a legacy of successful program implementation that has shaped the way we plan the Walking School Bus program. With schools closed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic we had 7 Walking School Bus routes active prior to school closures at the end of March 2020. Out of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic and the experience of successful implementation of the program in prior years, we developed the Walking School Bus Program Model 2020/2021 to guide Walking School Bus programs locally and statewide. The program manual includes COVID-19 safety protocols from the Oregon Department of Education's [Ready Schools, Safe Learners 2020-21 Guidance](#). This document introduces the Community-Led Model of the Walking School Bus, Walk to Lunch, and steps to implementation. The Walking School Bus Program Model document will be the formal resource for establishing the Walking School Bus program in future years.



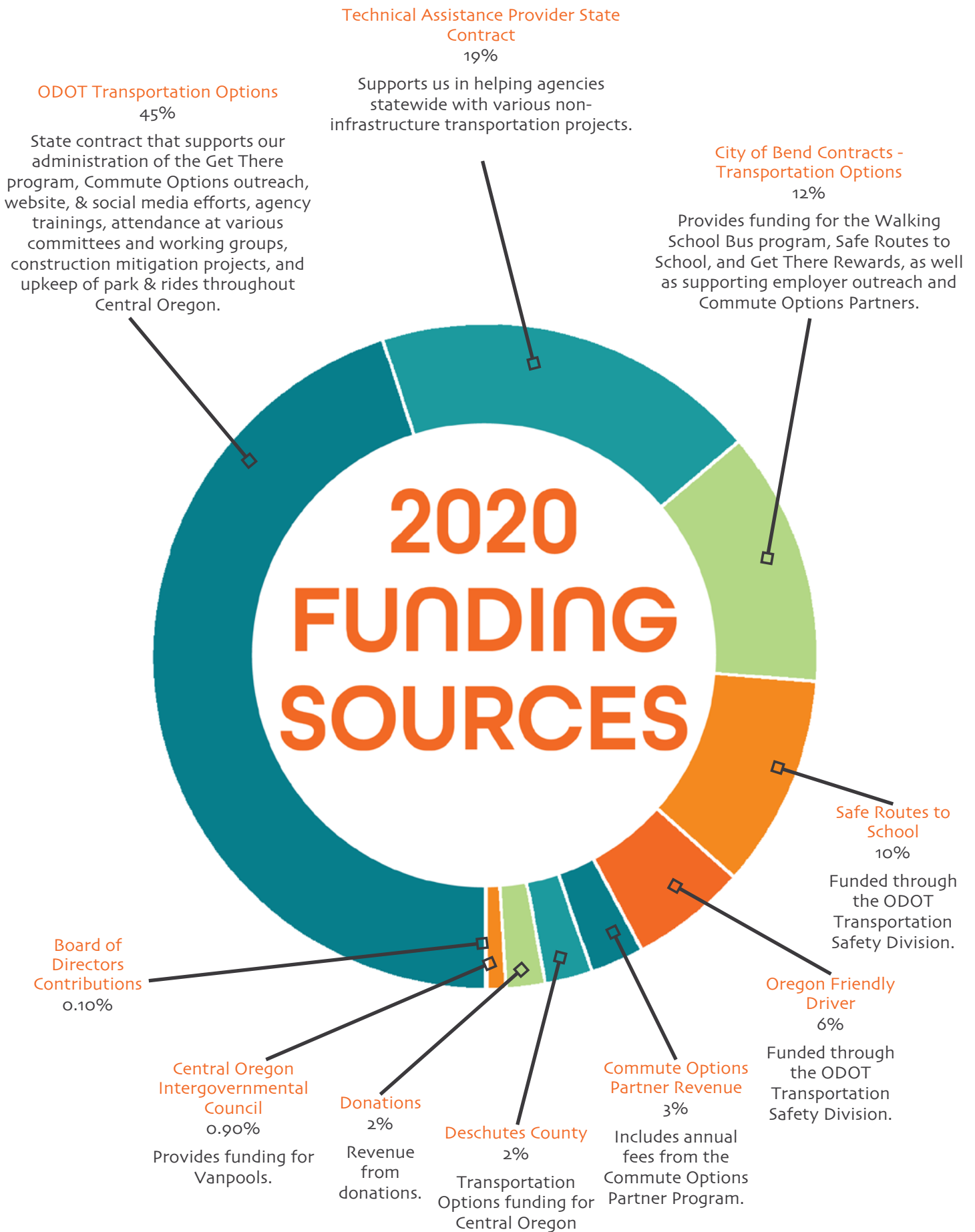


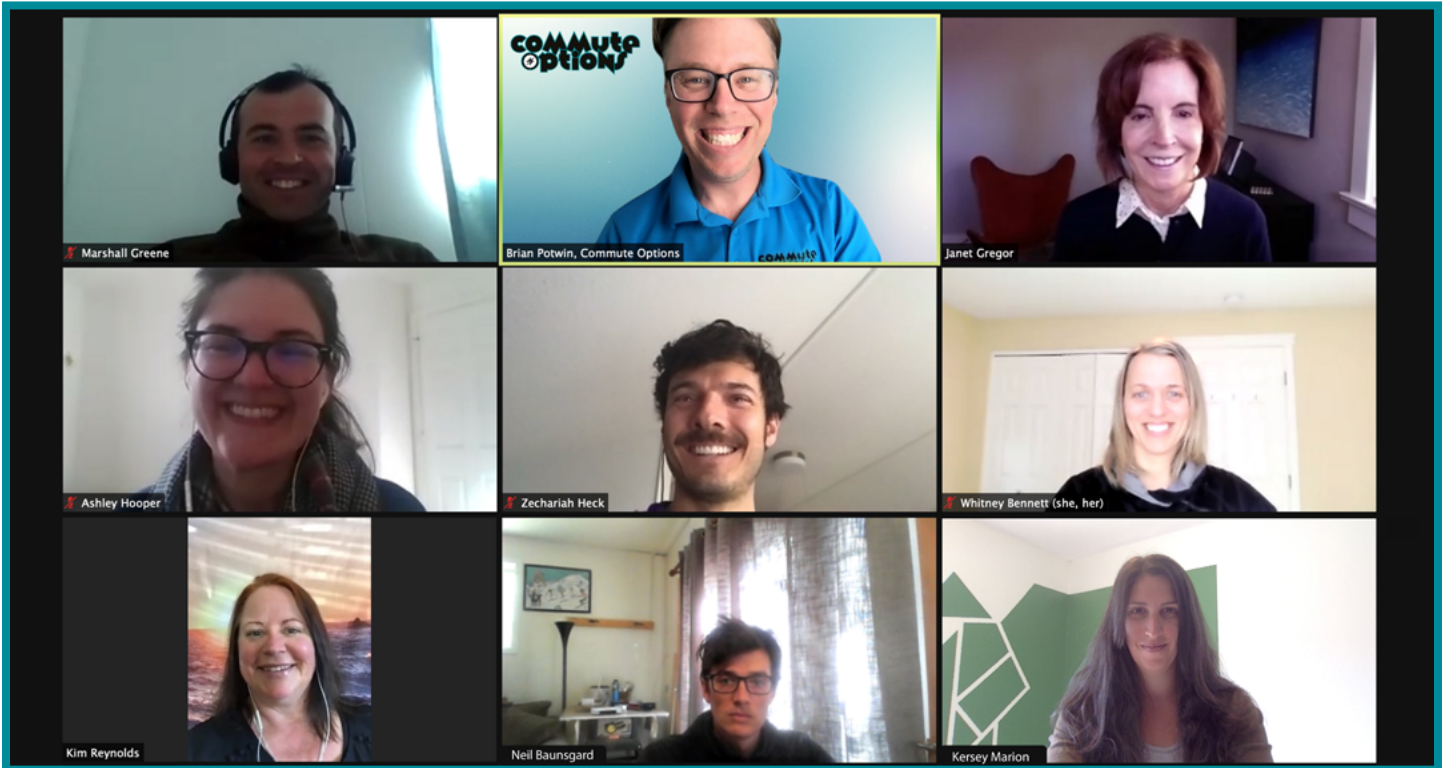
Commute Options launched the Deschutes County [Vanpool](#) Subsidy program in mid-2020 through a partnership with Cascades East Transit.

Vanpooling offers Deschutes County commuters a new option to get to and from work that saves workers time, money, and the stress of commuting. This program matches 5+ people with similar commutes and schedules to share a SUV or van. Our Vanpool program provides current model vehicles so riders can enjoy a comfortable and effortless way to and from work. The employer or the riders themselves pay a nominal fee monthly to cover the vehicle lease, gas, insurance, repairs and other vehicle costs. And to make it even more affordable, Commute Options kicks in funds to reduce the monthly lease cost.

Employers benefit from vanpooling, too. It is an easy way to help the environment by controlling carbon emissions, reducing parking needs and the number of solo drivers on the road. Employees arrive to start their workday in a better state of mind. And the IRS provides tax incentives for employers and employees for vanpooling. It's a winning situation for employees, employers and traffic congestion too!







Left to Right: Marshall Greene, Ashley Mohni, Kim Reynolds, Brian Potwin, Zechariah Heck, Neil Baungard, Janet Gregor, Whitney Bennett, Kersey Marion

THANK YOU!

