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## EDITORIAL

# Employers deserve commute honors

**F**OUR OF MARIN's largest employers deserve credit for taking positive steps toward helping ease the frustration of the commute for its employees and local motorists.

Marin County, Autodesk, San Quentin Prison and the city of Novato earned spots on the Bay Area's Best Workplaces for Commuters Coalition's 2002 list for their impressive efforts to get their workers to commute in van or car pools and use public transit or for promoting their use telecommuting.

For instance, at Autodesk, workers who use public transit can pay for their fares through a payroll deduction that saves them money because it is tax-free.

The San Rafael-based firm also backs up its efforts to encourage workers to use transit or join car pools by guaranteeing them a company-paid taxi ride home if they have to leave work because of a family emergency.

At San Quentin, the prison has launched van pools that help make commutes from as far away as Sacramento and Modesto a little easier. About 100 of the prison's workers participate in the van pool program.

"This is one of the ways we feel we can assist to help ease the congestion on the freeways," prison spokesman

Lt. Vernell Crittendon said.

That's also the goal of the coalition, which includes the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Area Council, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Northern California Human Resources Association, RIDES for Bay Area Commuters, the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group and Yahoo Inc.

The EPA estimates that more than \$1.8 million in worker productivity is wasted every day because employees are struck in the daily traffic grind.

Many Bay Area companies are trying to do what they can to reduce that figure, which not only tells the tale of economic loss, but also reflects the wear and tear the commute has on workers' enjoyment of their jobs and the environmental damage caused by pollution generated by miles of bumper-to-bumper traffic.

These Marin employers deserved to be recognized as four of the 80 Bay Area workplaces that are making a difference, both for their workers and their community. Their efforts, large and small, are models of proactive workplace programs that are succeeding in helping take cars off our overcrowded freeways.