

San Jose Mercury News

35 CENTS | FINAL EDITION | FOC...
SERVING NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SINCE 1851

WWW.BAYAREA.COM

OCTOBER 24, 2002 | THURSDAY
THE NEWSPAPER OF SILICON VALLEY

Bay Area employers praised for offering commuter benefits

COMPANIES AND GOVERNMENTS ENCOURAGE TRANSIT AND CARPOOLS

By Steve Johnson
Mercury News

A business and government group honored 83 Bay Area employers Wednesday for helping reduce traffic congestion by offering their workers everything from free lunches and movie tickets to additional vacation days and cash to avoid commuting via car.

On the list were a number of public agencies and cities — such as San Jose, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Palo Alto and Milpitas. Businesses included such firms as Apple Computer, Yahoo, Adobe Systems, Hewlett-Packard, Synopsys, Genentech, Equity Office Properties and Sun Microsystems.

It is the first time such a list — dubbed “the Bay Area’s best workplaces for commuters” — has been compiled, said Robin Snyder, an official with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which participated in the selections. She hopes more employers will be honored in subsequent years, as the program

becomes better known and more bosses realize the recruiting benefits of financing alternative ways to get around.

“We want to see some investment on the part of the employer, because that’s what it’s going to take to get people to leave their cars at home,” Snyder said.

The 83 were chosen from about 6,500 local employers asked to fill out forms detailing the things they do to discourage car use. To qualify for the list, employers had to offer their workers at least one of the following:

- A monthly vanpool or other mass-transportation subsidy worth at least \$32.50.

- At least \$32.50 in cash per month if they agree not to use the employer’s free parking.

- Work-at-home incentives that cut commuter trips at least 6 percent a month.

But some employers listed went a lot further.

Snyder said the city of Santa Rosa offers \$10 worth of movie tickets a month to employees who

shun cars when commuting. Yahoo of Sunnyvale guarantees its employees free rides home for emergencies, a shuttle service to a nearby Caltrain station, secure bike lockers and carpool vans, among other things.

And the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco offers extra days off work, according to spokesman Eliot Dobris. He said employees who get to work at least 10 days a month without using a car can earn up to three additional vacation days a year. Moreover, Dobris added, the Academy also offers cash incentives and takes employees who bike to work out for a free lunch at a restaurant once a year.

Besides the EPA, the list was put together by Yahoo, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Bay Area Council, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Northern California Human Resources Association, RIDES for Bay Area commuters and the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group.