

Q: What is the Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit?

A: The Commuter Benefit allows eligible employees to pay for qualifying transit expenses on a pre-tax basis.

Q: Why has the City offer a Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit Program?

A: The City provided SmartPass allows benefitted employees to use VTA transit services (Light Rail, Buses and Express Buses*) free of charge. Having a Commuter Benefit offers an opportunity for eligible employees to pay for non-VTA transit services with pre-tax dollars. Both the SmartPass and the Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit support the City's commitment to expand opportunities for employees to travel by means other than driving.

**Effective January 1, 2018, the SmartPass will no longer cover the full cost to ride VTA's express buses. Pass holders will receive a 50% discount on the express bus fare, reducing the \$4.50 fare per ride to \$2.25. To obtain the discount, pass holders will need to pay with money loaded onto their Clipper card. If they pay with cash, they will be charged the full fare as the bus operator will be unable to confirm that they have a valid SmartPass. For more information about SmartPass, contact DOT at (408) 975-3705 or go to <http://www.sjcity.net/index.aspx?NID=1003>.*

Q: Am I eligible?

A: Eligible employees are full-time and part-time benefitted City employees classified at 20 hours per week or more. Part-time unbenefitted and airport employees are not eligible to participate.

Q: When is the Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit available for me to enroll in?

A: The Commuter Benefit will be available January 1st of each year.

Q: How do I enroll?

A: Complete and submit the Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit Enrollment/Change Form which is available within the Flexible Spending Account page of the Human Resources Benefits website: www.sjcity.net/benefits.

Q: Can I participate in the Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit anytime?

A: You can enroll in or cancel your commuter benefit election each month. Elections or cancellation of elections will be effective the first semi-monthly payday of the next month as long as your Enrollment/Change Form is received and processed by Human Resources before the payroll's cutoff date.

Q: If the cost of my transit increases or decreases, can I change the amount of my election?

A: You may change the amount of your commuter benefit election each month. Changes will be effective the first semi-monthly payday of the next month as long as your Enrollment/Change Form is received and processed by Human Resources before the payroll's cutoff date.

Q: Will I have to pay taxes on the amount withheld from my salary to pay for my transit expenses?

A: No, these amounts will not be included in your taxable income. Commuter benefit elections are exempt from State, Federal and FICA taxes.

Q: How much money can I elect to be withheld from my salary to pay for my transit expenses?

A: You can elect up to a maximum of \$182.50 per month withheld from your paychecks pre-tax (\$91.25 semi-monthly; deducted on the first two paydays of each month).

For 2019, Federal tax rules allow up to \$265 per month in pre-tax transportation benefits. The market value of the City provided SmartPass of \$82.50 per month is allocated towards the limit of \$265 per month. Therefore, the maximum employees may contribute for 2019 towards the Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit is \$182.50 per month.

Q: Is there a fee to participate?

A: The City will pay for the administrative fee of \$3.50 per employee per month.

Q: Will I receive a debit card?

A: Yes, you will receive a debit card that can be used to pay for your qualifying transportation expenses. After you enroll, you should receive your debit card within two weeks. Employees who enroll in the Medical FSA and the Commuter Benefit will receive one debit card for both accounts. If you are enrolled in the FSA and then enroll in the Commuter Benefit, your election amount will be automatically added to your existing debit card.

Q: When will my election amount be added to my debit card?

A: Your debit card should be loaded within two business days after each semi-monthly payday.

Q: What are qualifying transit expenses?

A: Qualifying expenses for transit services include subways, buses, ferries, commuter rail, and vanpools. Locally, this includes BART, Caltrain, Highway 17 Express Buses, ACE trains, and Vanpools. Expenses that are not eligible include parking, carpools, tolls, gas, and other driving related expenses.

Q: What if my transit provider doesn't accept a debit card?

A: You can pay the transit provider directly and then submit your expense for reimbursement by filing a claim directly with the P&A Group.

Q: How do I file a claim for a qualifying expense?

A: Claims can be submitted electronically through the P&A Smartphone QuickClaim feature, online electronic upload, or via fax or mail.

QUICKCLAIM: Submit a claim from your smartphone by logging into your account at www.padmin.com.

ELECTRONIC UPLOAD: Upload a claim from your computer by logging into your account.

FAX: Submit a claim form by fax to (877) 855-7105.

MAIL: Mail a claim to P&A Group at 17 Court Street, Suite 500, Buffalo, NY 14202

Q: When should I submit a claim?

A: You may submit a claim however often fits your budget and expenses.

Q: How often will I be reimbursed for expenses?

A: Typically, you will be reimbursed three to five business days after P&A receives your claim as long as there are funds available in the account. You can be reimbursed by check or direct deposit. Direct deposit is recommended as it provides for faster reimbursements and enhances your "green" status by using less paper.

Q: What happens if I leave my employer?

A: You can apply for reimbursement of any transit expenses you had incurred **up to the last day of employment**, provided you apply for reimbursement within 60 days after the end of the year. According to IRS regulations, any unused account balance you have must be forfeited and cannot be paid back to you.

Q: What if I have more questions?

A: You may contact P&A's Customer Service directly:

P&A's Customer Service:

Representatives

Call (800) 688-2611 to speak with a representative Monday – Friday, 5:30 AM – 5:00 PM (PST).

Live Online Chat

Live online chat is a real-time messaging system that's available to you at the click of a button. When you visit P&A's website at www.padmin.com, locate the live chat button and click on it to speak with a P&A representative online Monday – Friday, 5:30 AM – 5:00 PM (PST).

SMS Text Messaging Feature

After you are enrolled, the SMS Text Messaging Feature will be available to you. Update your P&A profile with your mobile number. Text **CLM** to the number 70626 and get a text message with your real-time account balance.