

# SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS TIMES

## Peninsula companies are taking employee commutes into their own hands with new programs

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Huge Peninsula employers – including Facebook, Genentech and Stanford University – are leading the push to reduce traffic on Highway 101 and I-280 and to encourage greater use of carpools, public transit, bicycles, vans and even walking to get to work.

In many cases, they're also strong advocates for more high-occupancy vehicle lanes on 101, and possible new transit options, like a new railway connection near the Dumbarton Bridge.

Expensive and limited Peninsula housing options mean employees often live far away, so transportation has become a top concern for companies. For example, at Stanford Research Park, a group of employers banded together earlier this year to create a Transportation Management Association. The coalition of 18 employers – including Lockheed Martin, Hewlett-Packard, SAP and Tesla – joined the association and hired Jamie Jarvis, the research park's transportation manager, earlier this year.

The association has made Santa Clara Valley Transportation Valley eco passes available to 14,000 employees for free, providing access to Santa Clara County buses and light rail, along with Dumbarton Express buses.

Stanford University is also working on transportation for its campus, with nearly 14,000 professors and other staffers, 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students and more than 15,000 doctors, nurses, medical students and other staffers and volunteers at Stanford Health Care.

"That's not something Stanford alone can fix," said Brian Shaw, the university's director of parking and transportation. But it has inspired Stanford to move in multiple ways to keep folks out of their cars whenever possible.

That includes encouraging alternatives like Caltrain, which accounts for roughly 1 in 5 commuting trips to its campus, as well as bicycles, carpooling and a free van-pool program.

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Stanford's free Marguerite Shuttle connects the campus to Caltrain's Palo Alto station, along with Stanford Medical Center, downtown Palo Alto, Stanford Research Park, the SLAC National Accelerator Lab in Menlo Park, and Stanford Shopping Center.

Shaw said that the university is considering



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*Brian Shaw, Stanford's director of transportation, said the university encourages shuttles, Caltrain and other ways to get people out of their cars.*

the possibility of using shuttles to help solve its transportation challenges. As it is, hundreds of the controversial private shuttles ferry millions of passengers annually from San Francisco to the Peninsula and vice versa, keeping thousands of cars off freeways.

Most companies that use private buses are leery of disclosing details, due to the unpopularity of the shuttles in some quarters. But a few specifics have slipped out.

"We have more than 200 shuttles moving ... close to 4 million people a year" off Highway 101, Jeral Poskey, Google's head of transportation planning, told the SAMCEDA's annual conference in June. "That's more than 6,500 cars a day."

Figures from a survey by the Bay Area Council and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission indicate the number of buses and "boardings" have surged in recent years.

Between 2012 and 2014 alone, the number of private shuttle passenger boardings increased from 6.6 million to nearly 9.6 million, that survey found.

Still, many employers are offering more than private buses. Genentech says its alternative commute program, including shuttles, has eliminated millions of car trips and kept nearly 100 million pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

Facebook also boasts a sophisticated transportation management demand program geared to keep as much traffic as possible off local freeways and other arteries. "Nearly 50 percent" of Facebook's Menlo Park work force uses alternative forms of transportation to get to work, said spokesman Jamil Walker, including shuttle buses, carpools, van pools, bicycles and other options.

Facebook has contributed \$1 million in funding to San Mateo County transit planners to investigate ways to offset congestion between the East Bay and Silicon Valley, including use of part of the Dumbarton Rail Corridor for a new rail bridge across the Bay.

Building rail over the Dumbarton Bridge corridor seems like a no-brainer. The Facebook-funded study could look at use of a refurbished span on an old rail bridge south of the Dumbarton Bridge to ease commuting strains, whether by rail, bus service, a bicycle/pedestrian pathway or a combination of options.

An agreement with the city of Menlo Park calls for Facebook to fund up to \$2 million more for the Dumbarton Corridor study, plus another \$100,000 to explore transportation strategies for the area north of the Bayfront Expressway in Menlo Park.

Like Facebook, Google has been an active transportation leader. At its Mountain View headquarters, the company provides 1,000 on-site bicycles, has fleets of electric cars available, and is taking steps to boost use of alternative transportation options.

Half of its employees live within 11 miles of work, Google transportation guru Poskey said, and "on a good day we can have 10 percent of our employees, almost 2,000 people, biking to work." But that's not enough for the higher ups, he added.

They're asking him, "Why can't you double that?"

