How employers in our region can help us all ride out the Seattle Squeeze

Employers in our region have a key role to play in helping us all ride out the dramatic transportation impacts of the three-week shutdown of WA-99 through downtown Seattle and the ongoing traffic constraints that will follow. Public agencies and some large companies have encouraged telecommuting, altered work schedules, and other similar steps — but not everyone works in an office.

Here are some best practices for how employers can also offer some relief to the hundreds of thousands of people in our region who work in food service, retail, warehouses, caregiving, delivery, and other fields that require that a worker show up at a particular workplace in order to do their jobs.

What employers can do:

☐ Provide at least two weeks’ notice of work schedules.
   Employees will need extra time to plan their lives, accommodate caregiving needs, and adjust their commutes given the level of congestion and increased travel-time expected.

☐ Set a minimum shift length of at least four hours.
   Extended commute times will make short shifts particularly hard for employees, and fewer shift changes means less trips in the region.

☐ Do not rely on on-call shifts.
   Expecting employees to be prepared to come to work without notice and arrive within a short time of being called in will be practically impossible during this period.

☐ Accommodate workers who need to modify their availability.
   Employers should go the extra mile to adjust employees’ schedules to accommodate transportation challenges, and plan more shift overlap to account for added unpredictability in travel times.

☐ Establish employee-to-employee shift swapping systems.
   Employees should be allowed to trade shifts with co-workers (including those who work at different locations) so they can provide additional flexibility to each other.

☐ Waive discipline for employees who arrive late to work due to transportation.
   Employees should not be penalized for our region’s transportation squeeze, including through the application of “points” in occurrence-based discipline systems, algorithmic management systems, and similar practices.

☐ Contribute to employees’ transportation costs.
   Policies which make transit free to employees can greatly increase ridership, reducing traffic impacts for everyone.

☐ Audit for compliance with Seattle’s Secure Scheduling Ordinance.
   Large food, coffee, and retail chains doing business within the city limits of Seattle are already obligated by law to provide advance notice, pay for on-call shifts, accommodate transportation-related scheduling needs, and more.
What gig economy companies can do:

☐ Adjust pay algorithms to give more weight to time spent on a job.
  Short-distance trips may take far longer to complete than usual, so pay rates should reflect time
  spent on the job rather than distance traveled.

☐ Provide workers the estimated time involved in a given job.
  Workers will need this information before choosing to accept or reject a job so they can avoid longer
  trips if they have family obligations or otherwise require flexibility.

☐ Don’t penalize workers for declining jobs that don’t work for them.
  Nobody should risk their livelihood because they choose not to take jobs requiring long trips during a
  period of maximum traffic constraint.

☐ Waive application of customer star ratings to workers’ evaluations.
  Some customers will express frustration with extended travel and delivery times through in-app
  ratings. Workers do not have control over these conditions, so these ratings should not be applied to
  decisions on discipline, terminate, or other evaluations.

☐ Ensure access to company representatives when assistance is needed.
  Workers should have a place to go to resolve the situation if there is a transportation-related problem
  with completing a job.

Questions about how to best accommodate employees’ needs during the Seattle Squeeze?
Ask the people who work for you!

Endorsed by: