

# Employer Case Study

## Downtown Bellevue



### Courtyard by Marriott eases the cross-lake commute with FlexPass

The Courtyard by Marriott in downtown Bellevue offers 241 guest rooms and 12 suites, as well as a variety of meeting spaces. Open since 2005 on busy NE 8th Street, the hotel is doing its part to keep downtown Bellevue moving by encouraging transit use among employees.

*"Commuter Advantage really simplified the process of starting a program. After our initial consultation with TransManage staff, they did all the research to find the most cost-effective option for us and handled many of the administrative tasks related to acquiring transit passes-something our own staff would not have had time to do."*

**- Rick Tupper, General Manager**

#### Getting Started

Many Courtyard by Marriott employees travel across Lake Washington for their daily commutes, an inconvenience that began to take a toll on employee retention. When the Commuter Advantage program started offering free employer consultations in 2007, Courtyard was one of the first companies to sign up. As a result, they started a FlexPass program in January 2008 for both part-time and full-time employees, including unlimited transit rides, VanPool and VanShare subsidies and rides home in case of an emergency. Now, 20 of their employees ride the bus full-time and an additional 15 use it a few times a week.

Employees pay \$50 annually toward the pass, and many use it for more than just commuting-grocery shopping, classes at the University of Washington, extra curricular activities and more. They're happy to be paying less compared to driving alone, and they appreciate being able to take the bus when inclement weather rolls in, too.

When Marriott began to place an emphasis on promoting its sustainable business practices, adding the FlexPass program to the list was an obvious decision-it's an item that certainly gets the approval of meeting planners scouting "green" locations for their next event.

#### Program Elements

- FlexPass
  - \$50 annual employee contribution; remaining balance paid by Courtyard
  - Unlimited rides on Metro and Sound Transit
  - Emergency taxi rides home

#### Return on Investment

- 58% of employees use the FlexPass for their commute
- Improved employee recruiting and retention
- Enhanced sustainability "points" with meeting and event planners
- Increased parking available for customers

#### Keys to Success

##### ○ Commuter Advantage Consultation

With staff at the hotel already committed to other tasks, Courtyard would not have started a FlexPass program within such a short time frame if TransManage had not taken the lead.

##### ○ Sharing the Cost

Requiring an employee contribution helps them feel invested in the program and increases the likelihood that they will use the pass regularly.

##### ○ Management Support

Even as costs for transit passes have risen, Rick Tupper, General Manager, remains committed to the program because of its positive impact on employee retention.