



For workplaces participating in Greater Wellington's Travel Plan Programme

Guide to Guaranteed Ride Home Programmes

What is a guaranteed ride home programme?

Guaranteed Ride Home programmes guarantee a ride home for employees who walk, cycle, catch public transport or carpool to work in the event of an emergency or unexpected event. Typical examples of circumstances that qualify for a guaranteed ride home include personal or family illness or crisis and may also include situations such as unscheduled overtime and a carpool driver not being able to take carpoolers home as planned.

In these situations, the employer covers the cost of the employee returning home. This may be by public transport, fleet car, rental car or taxi, depending on the situation and the organisation's guaranteed ride home programme.



How effective is a guaranteed ride home programme?

The Victoria Transport Policy Institute in Canada makes the following comments about the effectiveness of guaranteed ride home programmes:

“Guaranteed ride home programmes can significantly increase use of alternative commute modes. One study found that the existence of a Guaranteed Ride Home programme (GRH) is among the most important factors determining the effectiveness of a Commute Trip Reduction

(Comsis, 1994). One survey of commuters found that 59% of rideshare and transit patrons consider a guaranteed ride home important in their decision to use alternative modes (K.T. Analytics, 1992). Another survey found that the availability of GRH has a value roughly equivalent to subsidized transit fares at a fraction of the cost (Hunt and McMillan, 1998).”

In a recent evaluation of Greater Wellington's Let's Carpool scheme, those using the service from an organisation that had also signed up for the Guaranteed Ride Home programme, had very positive feedback. 95.2% of people rated the Guaranteed Ride Home scheme as either 'very useful' or 'useful.'

How much will it cost?

Guaranteed Ride Home programmes often cost less than employers initially expect. Overseas research indicates that between 1-13% of eligible employees take up the offer of a guaranteed ride home every year. The higher rates of use are for programmes where overtime qualifies for a ride home versus emergencies only. Anecdotal evidence from medium sized New Zealand organisations currently offering guaranteed ride home programmes is that the take up rate is less than one ride a month.

Employers may also set a cap on the amount of subsidy provided for a single trip and the number of times a year an eligible employee may use the programme. In the example below a maximum of \$80 per trip is subsidised and employees may use up to four rides a year. If public transport passes and fleet car use are included as preferred options for non-emergency rides the average cost per trip may be significantly lower.

Guaranteed Ride Home Programmes can also be trialled for a set period of time such as one year. During this time the organisation can monitor the costs and benefits of the programme more accurately before committing to the programme long term.

Does a Guaranteed Ride Home programme incur Fringe Benefit Tax?

The payment of public transport or taxi fares to travel home is a fringe benefit and would also be subject to GST on the value of the cost provided by the employer.

However, an exemption may apply to fringe benefits in this category if the general employee exemption and maximum employer exemption are met. This exemption may apply when the total taxable value of all unclassified benefits to each employee, including guaranteed ride home payments, is less than \$200 in each quarter for each employee with a maximum of \$15,000 per annum for all employees. For more information please see the Fringe Benefit Tax Guide IR 409 at www.ird.govt.nz/fbt/

Template

This is a template of the communications you may wish to provide to staff on what a guaranteed ride home programme is and how it works. Comments on how to modify the template are written in *italics*.

(insert organisation name) Guaranteed Ride Home programme

The (organisation name) Guaranteed Ride Home programme guarantees you a ride home from work when unexpected circumstances arise.

You can feel comfortable taking the bus, train or ferry, carpooling, walking, or cycling to work, knowing that you will have a ride home in case of illness, family crisis, unscheduled overtime, or a missed carpool trip.

When can I use this?

The programme administrator may determine at its discretion when and in what circumstances this programme will apply, acting fairly and taking into account all relevant considerations.

Examples of where you may take a guaranteed ride home include but are not limited to circumstances where:

- You or an immediate family member suffers from an illness or severe crisis.
- You must work unscheduled overtime (manager's approval required) which means you will miss your carpool ride home or suitable bus, train or ferry.
- Your bicycle breaks down.
- Your ridesharing vehicle breaks down or the driver has to stay late or leave early.
- Any valid emergency.

and...

- You walked, cycled, took public transport or carpoled to work that day.

Examples of where the programme may not be used include but are not limited to:

- Personal errands
- Pre-planned medical appointments
- Emergency trip to hospital (call an ambulance)

- Business-related travel
- Anticipated overtime or working overtime without a manager's request
- Car or bicycle breakdowns that can be easily repaired on site (e.g. flat tire, dead battery, empty fuel tank)
- Weather emergencies, building closings or evacuations

Each employee is eligible for a *maximum of four* guaranteed rides home per year.

How does it work?

Choose the option below that best meets your circumstances:

Each organisation may choose to offer one or more of the following options, in the order of preference most appropriate.

Option One: Public transport

Take public transport if all of the following apply:

- You need a ride for reasons *other than* personal or family illness or crisis.
- There is a bus, train or ferry leaving within 20 minutes of your departure time that offers a reasonable service to your destination. Call Metlink on 0800 801 700 or go to www.metlink.org.nz to find the best route for you.

Insert instructions on where to collect a pre-paid public transport pass/ reimbursement form here.

Option Two: Fleet Car

Take a fleet car if all of the following apply:

- You need a ride for reasons *other than* personal illness or crisis. Another staff member may be able to drive you home in some circumstances.
- There is a fleet car available and you are able to return this at the appropriate time. Talk to (insert fleet manager's name) about whether there is a car available.
- You are 21 years of age or older, are able to drive, feel comfortable driving, and have a valid driver's license.

Insert instructions on how to make a fleet car booking here.

Option Three: Rental Car

Take a rental care if all of the following apply:

- You need a ride for reasons *other than* personal illness or crisis.
- Your journey is more than 30 kilometres (e.g. Further than Wellington City to Upper Hutt or Wellington City to Plimmerton)
- You are 21 years of age or older, are able to drive, feel comfortable driving, and have a valid driver's license.
- You are able to meet requirements of the rental car company regarding pick up and drop off times and locations.

Insert details on how to make a rental car booking with your organisation's preferred supplier here.

The cost of fuel is not covered by this policy.

Option four: Taxi

A maximum of \$80 of the taxi ride will be covered by the organisation.

Take a taxi if the following applies:

Insert instructions on where to collect a taxi chit/reimbursement form here.

- Your circumstances do not meet the criteria for any of the above options.

Once you have chosen your option, fill out the form below:

Guaranteed Ride Home form:

Name:

Reason for using Guaranteed Ride Home

.....
.....
.....

Mode of transport used: (e.g. public transport, taxi, fleet car, rental car)

.....
.....

Date of guaranteed ride home.....

Amount spent (please attach receipt):

\$.....

The cost code for reimbursements is xxxxx

I, the undersigned, have read and agree to follow the terms and conditions of xxxx guaranteed ride home programme.

Signature of participant

Signature of manager

Date:

If possible, please have this form signed by your manager before you use your guaranteed ride home. In the event of an emergency, please fill out this form within one week of using this service.

Please send this form to xxx.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Claire Pascoe
Sustainable Transport Planner
Sustainable Transport Team
Strategy and Community
Engagement Group
Greater Wellington

Greater Wellington
Regional Council
Wellington
PO Box 11646

T 04 384 5708
F 04 385 6960
www.gw.govt.nz/travelplans

DD 04 830 4309
claire.pascoe@gw.govt.nz

Publication date August 2007
Last updated November 2010