

**UPCOMING ENROLLMENT DEADLINES:**

**Next:**  
**Thursday, April 19, 2012**

**Future:**  
**Friday, May 18, 2012**  
**Monday, June 18, 2012**

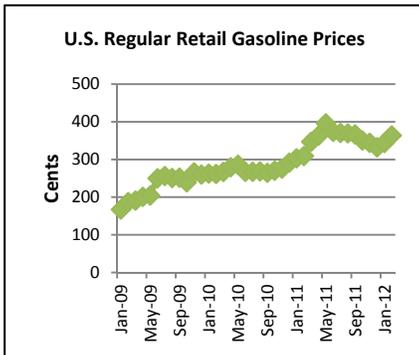


**QUESTION OF THE MONTH:**

**Does every participant need to sign for their benefits at distribution?**

*Yes, every participant should sign a certification form when they pick up their benefit.*

**GAS PRICES ON THE RISE: HOW TO PREPARE**



All signs point to gas prices rising in the coming months and into the summer. Historical trends have shown that there is a direct correlation between the price of gas and enrollment in the Transportation Incentive Program (TIP). The TIP offers a great alternative for Department of the Navy employees to reduce the impact of these rising prices at the pump by

using mass transportation. Even if the current maximum benefit of \$125 does not cover all the cost of mass transit, it goes a long way to reducing overall commuting expenses. For example, if an employee lives 30 miles from work and drives his or her personal vehicle that gets 25 miles to the gallon to commute each day. With an average price of gas at \$3.80 per gallon, the gas expenses alone would be \$180 per month, not including the wear and tear on the vehicle. Compare that to a local vanpool that charges \$150 per seat. As a TIP participant, the employee would be eligible for a TIP benefit of \$125 cutting their commuting cost per month from \$180 down to only \$25 – a savings of \$155 per month!

As gas prices rise, TIP Reviewing Officials/Points of Contact (POC) should ensure that information about TIP is readily available. Print the TIP "Welcome Aboard!" document to distribute to prospective participants. The "Welcome Aboard!" document provides an overview of the program by explaining the application process, outlining eligibility requirements, describing benefit distribution procedures as well as provides a place for the local POC's contact information.

The TIP "Welcome Aboard!" document can be found at: [http://www.fmo.navy.mil/documents/Divisions/FMO3/TIP/TIP\\_WelcomeAboard.docx](http://www.fmo.navy.mil/documents/Divisions/FMO3/TIP/TIP_WelcomeAboard.docx).

As gas prices rise, employees will be looking for relief. So increase awareness of the benefit program by posting flyers or the "Welcome Aboard!" document around the base or by sending out an e-mail to remind personnel of the benefits of the program.

**SENATE PASSES HIGHWAY BILL**

On March 14, 2012, the United States Senate passed a bill "to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes." Included in the other purposes of this highway bill was an adjustment to the tax code that would allow the Federal government to provide transit benefits up to \$240 per month. So when does it take effect? When can will I get an increased benefit? Unfortunately, the answers to those questions are not yet available. The House of Representatives must take up the bill and pass it. If they do, and the bill is substantially different in any way, the bill will be referred to a Conference Committee made up of members of the House and Senate to work out the differences. If they find agreement, then the bill would go back to each chamber for another vote before heading to the President's desk for signature. The transit benefit language of Senate Bill 1813 would need to survive this legislative process. If the President does sign this language into law, the Office of Financial Operations will provide an update with how the law will be implemented. On March 30, 2012, the President signed a temporary highway bill funding transportation projects for an additional 90 days. The temporary extension did not include any changes to the transit subsidy maximum benefit.



**CHECKING INVOICES FOR STOCKPILED BENEFITS**

Benefits must be used to pay for a Qualified Means of Transportation during the month they were intended for, or they must be returned to the Department of Transportation (DOT). For example, if a participant receives \$125 in transit benefits for the month of April, those benefits can only be used for the month of April. If the benefits are not used, the benefits must be returned to DOT. Participants and POCs are not permitted to stockpile benefits to use in a future period. This is something that can be easily monitored. Many invoices and receipts represent the payments that are made using transit benefits. POCs can compare the invoice to the benefits that were distributed to the participant. For example, if there are 7 participants in a vanpool, and all receive \$125/month in the form of one \$120 voucher and one \$5 voucher, in most cases this should be reflected on the invoice. If anything other than this is reflected (with the exception of personal funds to cover any additional costs) then either previous benefits are being used, or they are receiving too much and benefits need to be returned. If there are any questions about this, please contact the Office of Financial Operations for assistance.

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