



**UPCOMING ENROLLMENT DEADLINES:**



**Next:**  
**Friday, December 13, 2013**

**Future:**  
**Monday, January 20, 2014**  
**Thursday, February 20, 2014**

**MAX BENEFIT REDUCED TO \$130 FOR JANUARY 2014**

The maximum benefit for the Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) will be reduced to \$130 for the January/February/March quarterly distribution. The \$245 maximum benefit established by the *American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012* (ATRA) is set to expire on December 31, 2013.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has published an inflation adjustment to the original mass transit benefit amount in Internal Revenue Bulletin 2013-47 dated November 18, 2013. The inflation-adjusted, new maximum benefit for the Transportation Incentive Program will be \$130 per month up from the \$125 maximum that was in place before ATRA. This adjusted amount will take effect on January 1, 2014, and will be reflected in the upcoming quarterly distribution. Participants who receive their transit benefits via the TRANServe debit card and who have a certified commuting cost greater than \$130 will see the reduced January amount loaded on their debit card on 10 December.



Reviewing officials should notify all participants of this upcoming change to the maximum benefit to ensure TIP benefit recipients can plan accordingly for their January commute.

There is always the potential that Congress may take additional action to change the maximum benefit amount. Any congressional action will take effect at the next regularly scheduled distribution.

Do participants need to re-certify their commuting cost or submit a decrease form to adjust their benefit amount? Participants are always required to certify to their actual mass transit commuting cost on their application (regardless of the maximum benefit). If a participant's commuting cost does not change then the participant does not need to take any action to update their record. However, if the price that a participant is charged is adjusted to accommodate any change in the maximum benefit, the participant is required to log into the Transportation Incentive Program System (TIPS) to update their certified commuting cost.

For example, if John Doe pays \$150 to ride a vanpool to and from work each month, he should have certified that his commuting cost each month was \$150. John Doe has been receiving that full certified commuting cost since the maximum benefit was greater than his certified commuting cost. His January transit benefit will be automatically reduced

to \$130 by the Department of Transportation. If John Doe's vanpool provider lowers the price that is charged from \$150 to \$130 to accommodate the new maximum benefit, John Doe is required to update his record in TIPS to reflect his new actual vanpool commuting cost.

**IF I AM ON TRAVEL IS THAT AN ELIGIBLE WORK DAY?**

Which days are considered eligible work days? And how might that impact my transit benefit? The Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.27 states that employees are only eligible to receive transit benefits on days that they use mass transit to commute to and from work. So what does that mean for someone who takes a vanpool? If you are only eligible to receive transit benefits on the days that you use mass transit, does that mean then that any day a participant does not ride his or her vanpool, he or she would be responsible to return a portion of his or her transit benefit? Some organizations take this approach and require participants to return benefits any day that a participant does not ride or require the participant to submit an exception request based on extenuating circumstances. DoDI 1000.27 does provide some flexibility to DoD components to grant exceptions when a participant purchases a monthly pass, but then is unable to ride every day in the month.

December 2013						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

The Department of the Navy has issued policy providing a blanket exception for up to fifty percent of the eligible work days in a month. This blanket exception allows for participants to not ride in their vanpool for up to fifty percent of their eligible work days for any reason to include: annual leave, sick leave, travel, jury duty, personal errands, etc. This blanket exception relieves the participant from needing to submit an exception request each time the employee is not able to ride. It also reduces the administrative cost of managing the program by eliminating the need to review thousands of exception requests each month.

Since the DON's policy requires participants to ride at least fifty percent of their eligible work days it is important to understand which days are considered eligible work days. An eligible work day, also known as a scheduled work day, is any day that the employee is scheduled to work or is required to take a form of leave to be excused. Eligible work days include days an employee is on travel or temporary duty (TDY), days an employee is teleworking, and any day that an employee takes sick leave or annual leave. For example if an employee works a regular eight-hour schedule in the month of December 2013, he or she is scheduled to work 21 days. Since Christmas is a Federal holiday, the employee is not required to take leave and therefore December 25<sup>th</sup> is not considered an eligible or scheduled work day in December. Days that are not considered eligible work days include: regular days off (RDO), holidays, furlough days, or any day the government is closed for inclement weather or official curtailment of operations.

Participants who do not ride at least fifty percent of their eligible workdays are only eligible for the pro-rated certified commuting cost for the days that they do ride.

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