

Area commuter-friendly firms lauded

By Brooke Bryant,
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From a local restaurant to the Valley's own federal prison, a number of Valley businesses have joined the Bay Area's list of best workplaces for commuters. The list, which now recognizes 103 employers, is compiled by a coalition of business, transportation and environmental organizations, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

One of the new inductees is Sweet Tomatoes, a restaurant off Hopyard Road in the Hacienda Business Park. The business park itself is listed on a separate list that lauds districts for their commuter benefits. Through the park, it provides benefits like transit subsidies, bike racks, preferred parking for carpoolers and a shuttle from transit stations, like the nearby BART station, according to coalition spokeswoman Keri Shoemaker.

Across the highway in Dublin, the Federal Bureau of Prisons also made the list for the first time, with transit subsidies of up to \$100 a month, carpool subsidies of \$50 per month per person, park and ride lots and bike racks and showers, Shoemaker said.

To be eligible, a workplace must provide at least one primary commuter benefit, three supporting benefits and a point of contact who distributes commute information to employees. A primary benefit includes things like a transit subsidy, a significant telecommuting program or cash stipends for employees who don't take advantage of free parking.

Supporting benefits can be carpool incentives, lockers and showers for employees who walk or bike to work, incentives for living near work or on-site amenities such as day care or dry cleaning that make it easier for employees to leave the car at home.

The employer also has to offer access to a Guaranteed Ride Home program, in which commuters who take transit to work and need to leave early in case of an emergency get a voucher for cab fare.

Other local businesses on the list include Aetna US Healthcare, Bishop Ranch Transportation Centre, ChevronTexaco and SBC Communications in San Ramon, Anixter, Applied Biosystems, California Indemnity Insurance Co., CarrAmerica, Hacienda Business Park Owner's Association, Intero Real Estate Services, Paychex Inc., PeopleSoft Inc., ProBusiness Services of California, Pronto Networks.

Others listed are Robert Half International, Roche Molecular Systems, Sierra Suites Hotel/Summerfield Suites Hotel by Wyndham, Standard Pacific Homes of Northern California, TechRP, Tyco Healthcare, Xign Corp. and Zenith Insurance Co. in Pleasanton.

The cities of Pleasanton and San Ramon also made the list of commuter-friendly employers.

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