One of the biggest concerns for employers in Centre County, and for those seeking employment in the State College area, is the need for transportation for employees living outside the immediate area, or even in different counties, where traditional public transportation is not currently available. According to the Community Transportation Association of America, lack of transportation options has been cited in many formal studies and anecdotally as a barrier to employment.

Centre County is fortunate to have a number of resources to aid employers with this issue, with the largest being through the CATACOMMUTE program, operated by the Centre Area Transportation Authority.

CATACOMMUTE provides a number of services designed to assist long-distance commuters in finding a consistent and reliable shared ride with others who travel at the same time to a similar destination. These services include the RideShare ride-matching service, CATA’s Vanpool program, the Emergency Ride Home program and the Park & Ride program.

RideShare
RideShare is a free online ride-matching service helping to match long-distance commuters with similar commute travel patterns in an effort to assist participants in finding and developing carpools and vanpools. (It’s very similar to an online dating service, only in this case for commuters!) In Fiscal Year 2017-18, the program supported 80 carpools and 45 vanpools from approximately 2,850 individual database requests, with those commuting from over a dozen counties across central Pennsylvania.

Vanpool
The Vanpool program consists of 37 active vanpools, each comprised of groups of 6 to 15 riders, and has to date reduced 1.3 million vehicles on the road, saving commuters over 50 million miles driven, and over $5 million in fuel costs, all the while reducing combined CO2 emissions by 447,410 metric tons. Existing vanpools travel into the State College area from Altoona, Cresson, Penns Valley, Snow Shoe, Tyrone, Lock Haven, Lewistown, Huntingdon and Philipsburg. Vans for the program are provided by CATA and costs are shared by vanpool participants.

Emergency Ride Home (ERH)
The Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program, for a nominal annual fee, provides up to four taxi rides home per year for those in registered carpools and vanpools, who, due to unexpected circumstances, cannot ride home in the car or vanpool in which they came to work (ex. mandatory overtime), taking the fear out of being stranded in possible emergency situations. Last year, the Emergency Ride Home service provided 576 trips home.

Park & Ride
Finally, the Park & Ride program provides inexpensive commuter lot parking on the Penn State campus for those working in downtown State College, with easy access to CATA’s free Loop and Link campus bus service.

For additional information on any of the services listed above, and for new vanpool group subsidy qualifications under the Pennsylvania Vanpool Incentive Program Grant, or to request a presentation of these services to your employees, visit the CATA website at www.catabus.com and click on the CATACOMMUTE logo, or contact Terri Quici, CATA’s Commuter Services Manager, at 814 238-CATA(2282) ext. 5134 or rideshare@catabus.com.