

UPDATE ON FEDERAL TRANSIT SUBSIDY BENEFITS (HEADQUARTERS)

- The SmartBenefits® program, funded through a contract with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), provides commuter access to the WMATA system, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Maryland Transit Administration (MARC and Commuter Buses) and similar transportation options.
- NASA provided sufficient funds to SmartBenefits® prior to the lapse in Appropriations to enable the Agency contributions to the transit subsidy program to continue through February and possibly into March.
- For employees who have their benefits downloaded onto a SmartBenefits® card for use on Metro, monthly accretions will continue. Unused amounts on your card will be swept back into the Agency account at regular intervals. No action should be required on your behalf.
- Employee transit benefits for VRE, MARC, and Maryland commuter buses are also funded through SmartBenefits® but vary from employee to employee since the designation as to how to allocate the employee's order is dependent on the employee's set-up with the transit provider. For example, employees designate whether to order their benefit directly from the transit authority or from a third-party vendor, which is normally Commuter Direct.
- For some employees, the cost of a ticket exceeds the amount of the subsidy, and employees are charged by the ticket provider for the difference.
- Because Agency funds are available, and due to the uncertainty of a return-to-work date, Headquarters had decided not to halt the processing of recurring ticket orders.
- If you receive a monthly order (ticket) for February but do not want to be liable for your share of the cost, you may return the order and have it postmarked by the end of January to avoid being charged for the order. (See the Commuter Direct website <https://www.commuterdirect.com/> for a detailed discussion of return policies for various carriers.) Please keep in mind that if you do so you will NOT have a February ticket when we return to work.
- Commuter Direct is working with MARC, VRE and MTA Commuter Bus to make this difficult time as easy as possible for employees' commuting needs. Please contact them with any questions you may have.