

ROADBLOCK TO PROFITS:

The Hidden Costs of Commuting for South Florida Companies

Commuting – the subtle profit killer.

While the typical work day may span from 9 to 5, we all know the true labor begins during the dreaded commute. Road rage, traffic jams, pollution. Commuting can be an all-too-common unreliable drag. Each day, over 140 million American workers commute to work averaging around 27 minutes each way. In other studies, that number is closer to 40 minutes each way. These studies all highlight the same growing trend that commute times are increasing each year as workers venture further distances for better career opportunities.

Are further commutes causing negative health effects?

Numerous studies have shown the clear link between commuting and poor health, including a decrease in sleep, and an increase in stress and obesity. Now, there's an increasing amount of research showing that these effects extend into worker productivity, with serious implications for the bottom line.

Hell on Wheels

Within the commute exists a bitter irony: the job—the very reason for a lengthy commute—actually suffers as a result of the commute itself. *A recent study showed that longer commutes can increase absenteeism by about 16%, with workers arriving late and leaving early.* Part of this is due to the unpredictability of a car commute—there's simply no telling, from one day to the next, whether a 20-minute drive may become 40 minutes because of unforeseen traffic conditions. This, in turn, may lead to workers feeling flustered and edgy as they scramble to arrive on time, as well as more stressed and less focused on their tasks for the day.

Longer commutes also mean earlier mornings, which translates to less sleep. This sleep deprivation, according to Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, is likely to result in slower response times, leading to even less productivity. One study found that people would trade away five minutes of leisure time to shave off one minute spent in traffic. How does all this stress translate into dollars and cents? *Research studies by the Urban Mobility Report show that commuting slashes \$90 billion dollars in lost productivity a year.*

The study further suggests that the risk of employee disengagement could cost 34% of their salary, with much higher costs if these employees resign due to commuting stress.

Better Transportation = Better Commuting Habits

Increasing standards in the quality of mass transportation could hold the key to making commutes more predictable, comfortable, and conducive to good work habits. In South Florida alone, a proposed train station in Boca Raton is projected to offer an annual time-travel savings of over \$3 million dollars, totaling over \$90 million dollars over a 30-year period for area commuters. The intangible impacts of this on health, comfort, and work-life balance hold immense promise for businesses in the area.

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MINUTES

Spent commuting daily
(on average)

Long daily commutes can
lead to the following;

- ✓ Lack of sleep
- ✓ Feelings of anxiousness
- ✓ Increase of stress levels
- ✓ Lower productivity



Moving Towards a Better Commute

Commuting stress isn't merely a nuisance—it's a public health crisis which affects millions of Americans, families and entire companies. The good news is, remedies exist on an organizational level. Companies can develop commuter programs for employees that include pre-tax withholdings from paychecks for mass-transit alternatives, encourage a conducive pre and post work mindset, set aside a number of days a week for telecommuting, and encourage active modes of commuting such as walking or bicycling to work where possible.

Currently, commuting is a drain on both health and productivity. However, it doesn't have to be that way. By helping employees understand their options and adjusting their mindsets, the commute can become a tolerable, vital and highly productive part of the work day.



Commuting by the numbers:

- Over 140 million American workers commute to work each day, travelling on average 30-minutes each way.
- Longer commutes may increase absenteeism by about 16%.
- Commuting slashes \$90 billion dollars in lost productivity a year.
- The risk of employee disengagement could cost 34% of their salary.
- The **Brightline** train station in Boca Raton is projected to offer an annual time-travel savings of over \$3 million dollars, totaling over \$90 million dollars over a 30-year period for area commuters.