

## AMPO Award Honors H-GAC's NuRide and Safety Programs

On October 28, 2009 AMPO staff presented Alan Clark, Director of Transportation and Air Quality, with the *National Award for outstanding Collaboration in Metropolitan Planning* for the Agency's NuRide and safety programs.

AMPO is a nonprofit, membership organization established in 1994 to serve the needs and interests of "[metropolitan planning organizations \(MPOs\)](#)" nationwide. The AMPO Annual Awards are designed to honor those MPOs and individuals that have found ways to advance their organizations by embracing the planning process and shaping sustainable regions.

NuRide, the nation's leading incentive-based rideshare network, rewards people for sharing rides on both their daily commutes and their recreational trips. It also rewards commuters for using other commute alternatives such as walking, biking, or taking transit. The Houston-Galveston Area NuRide program is now in its third year of operation and is one of the largest and most successful virtual rideshare programs in the nation.

While there are a number of online ridesharing programs available, the NuRide program is innovative in a number of respects. NuRide is unique in that it provides a rewards program, which encourage continuous participation through the offer of sponsor rewards; these rewards span a wide range to provide something for everyone and include such things as free major league baseball tickets, store discounts, and theater tickets. During the month of June 2009, NuRiders in the Houston-Galveston Area redeemed fifty different types of sponsor rewards.

The implementation of the NuRide program in our region is also unique in that it is the only commuter program in the region that is operated solely on a pay-for-performance basis. Under the current contract, H-GAC pays NuRide \$0.10 per vehicle mile traveled (VMT) reduced as a result of ridesharing.

NuRide is exceptional in its reporting accuracy, it is the only ridesharing application to track every trip by point of origin, destination point, miles traveled, vehicles involved (i.e. the exact make, model, and year), emissions savings (applies the specific fuel efficiency and emissions profiles for each individual vehicle for each individual trip), number and identities of individuals on the trip, date and time of the trip, and trip status (i.e. planned, confirmed, unconfirmed). This data is stored in their system which can be accessed by H-GAC via the dashboard website (personally identifying data is not made available to H-GAC without user permission, per NuRide's Privacy Policy). Since NuRide captures this data for every trip, there is no need to make assumptions about ridership levels, emissions reductions, average days of use or other variables that other rideshare programs use to estimate savings and traffic reduction.

NuRide also differentiates itself by requiring employer involvement and in their willingness to work with employers. NuRide once required its members to have an organizational email address as a means of verifying their identity. This served as security measure, however, because some employers do not provide company email addresses to all employees, NuRide has created alternative means for an organization to identify their employee. Additionally, NuRide encourages competition between

employers, via three ongoing races that measure which organizations' employees report the highest number of trips, have the highest participation rate, and have the highest new enrollment rate during the HEB 15,000,000 Mile Commuter Challenge.



The “HEB 15,000,000 Mile Commuter Challenge” is the largest event of its kind and involves thousands of Houstonians who are choosing a smarter, greener commute. Participating commuters lessen traffic congestion and contribute to cleaner air while earning sponsor rewards from companies like HEB. Any NuRider who logs rideshare trips on NuRide during the challenge is automatically entered to win milestone prizes, including a grand prize of “Free Groceries for a Year” from HEB.

Houstonians have currently reduced over 13 million vehicle miles as part of the HEB 15,000,000 Mile Commuter Challenge. To participate or to learn more visit [www.nuride.com](http://www.nuride.com).

H-GAC’s Transportation Safety Program is a comprehensive effort to address the greater Houston area’s serious transportation safety issue. H-GAC staff works with local jurisdictions and agencies to help quantify the transportation safety problem, not just through identifying high crash locations but also by identifying the factors that lead to crashes in our region. The Program has also enlisted, through the activities of its Regional Safety Council, the participation of various transportation safety professionals from the areas of planning, engineering, law enforcement, the medical community, freight transportation, the legal profession, and safety advocacy to combine knowledge and resources to work at reducing the number of crashes on the region’s roadways.