

## Policies regarding Domestic Partner Benefits

Information compiled February 21, 2007

**The Question:** Does your agency offer domestic partner benefits or not? What considerations went into your decision-making process? If you have domestic partner benefits, how is your program set up? Do you treat partners the same as spouses? Do you offer full-family coverage if a domestic partner brings children into the relationship? Are the premium cost-shares the same as they are for spouses?

**Ben Franklin Transit** says... Some of our trusts do include domestic partners (like the Healthcare Authority) while others do not (like the Teamster trust). It is not up to us; it is the Trust which decides. See above. No. Depends on the trust. I think so; would have to check.

**Clallam Transit** says... Not by explicit policy, but only as a result of how are insurance carriers deal with the issue. Have not dealt with the issue. As a result of joining the PEBB for health, life, and LTD insurance coverage, same-sex domestic partners are eligible for the same benefits as married heterosexual couples. So long as the same sex non-employee partner qualifies as a dependent under IRS section 152, the tax treatment of benefit costs is identical as well (i.e. treated as a non-taxable fringe benefit). Any employer (state agency, local government or K12 school) who uses the PEBB Health Care Authority for coverage has no choice about including or excluding same-sex domestic partner healthcare benefits. Opposite sex domestic partners must be legally married to obtain these benefits, however. Not in all cases. For healthcare insurance, yes (because PEBB set it up that way). The ability to obtain time off for a family emergency was limited to those connected to the employee by blood or marriage (thereby excluding domestic partners) until the ATU contract was changed effective 1/1/07 to allow time off (which is deducted from the employee's leave bank) whenever there is a close personal relationship (the discussion concerned being able to take time off to attend the funeral of a spouse's relative). Currently free bus passes are only issued to an employee's spouse and dependent children (thereby excluding domestic partners and their children). Only under the PEBB rules (i.e. for same sex domestic partners). Yes.

**Community Transit** says... We do offer domestic partner benefits to employees. Philosophically, it was an issue of fairness. From a business perspective, our interest was in attracting the best and brightest and making our workplace attractive to a broader range of people. But we were stymied for quite some time because we got our insurance through a pool whose governing body would not agree to offer coverage for domestic partners. When the State enacted the law making it necessary to give retiring employees access to health care at group rates, we moved everyone into the PEBB. Their rules include domestic partner benefits. Employees must fill out a domestic

partnership questionnaire and attest to the truthfulness of the information provided. Both partners must sign it. (Note that married people must similarly provide information about where and when they married, attest to the truthfulness and both sign the form). They receive the same coverage for medical insurance. We haven't broadened the program to encompass full coverage under all our personnel policies, largely due to political concerns. Yes, we do. Yes, they are the same. However, there are tax consequences to the employee with a domestic partner as compared with the employee who is married.

**CUBS** says... The City of Longview does not offer domestic partner benefits. Our Administration and City Council have chosen not to address the issue to date.

**Intercity Transit** says... The decision to offer benefits was not a decision we made. We have health insurance benefits from WA ST Health Care (same as state employees). The legislature/HCA made considerations, decisions, etc.

Domestic partner benefits for our employees are therefore offered through this plan. See their website at <http://www.hca.wa.gov/> for specific info.

**Island Transit** says... By state law, we are required to treat everybody the same. Our provider, Regence BlueShield, recognizes all domestic partners as the same. They are treated exactly like heterosexual relationships with the same contributions, etc.

**Jefferson Transit** says... Click here to view our Domestic Partner Policy. Click here to view our Domestic Partner declaration.

**Link Transit** says... Nope.

**Mason Transit** says... Yes. We polled other transits and considered market trends, there were a few transits that offered DP benefits, however most transits were looking into offering them. Also, we switched insurance carriers the first of the year and they allowed DP coverage which helped us determine market trends. There is specific criteria that qualifies a person as a "Domestic Partner" and a Declaration must be signed by the employee stating the relationship qualifies as such. Click here to view the Declaration we use. Yes. Yes. Yes.

**Pullman Transit** says... We have domestic partner coverage for medical insurance and for dental insurance. We do not have domestic partner coverage for vision. These coverages are provided because our insurance carrier provides them. We do not have a policy stating that those benefits are offered, but we do make that known during orientation. The insurance company doesn't differentiate between same-sex domestic partners and other domestic partners so I am assuming that children would be covered for same-sex partners, but we have not had that situation. There is no cost-sharing for benefits at this time.

**Spokane Transit** says... We do not offer domestic partner benefits. We are not considering this benefit in the future. It has not been a significant issue for us so we haven't had a need to consider them.

**Twin Transit** says... We do not have domestic partner benefits.

**Valley Transit** says... We currently restrict benefits to Spouses and Dependent Children. No benefits for domestic partners. If the PEBB were to provide this coverage and require that we offer it we would but our employer contribution would be limited to Spouses and Dependent Children.