



State of Oregon
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Environmental
Quality

Employee Commute Options

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*DEQ is a leader in
restoring, maintaining and
enhancing the quality of
Oregon's air, land and
water.*

How to motivate employees

Creative, low-cost ideas for prompting trip reduction at the worksite

In Portland, about half of all air pollution comes from cars and trucks. That's why our region chose Employee Commute Options as a clean air strategy. When you help your employees find alternatives to driving alone to work, you reduce the following pollutants:

- Air toxics (benzene and others, known or suspected to cause serious health problems like cancer)
- Ozone (also called smog, a potent asthma trigger)
- Carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas that inhibits the blood's ability to carry oxygen) and Carbon dioxide (global warming gas)

You also help reduce traffic congestion which costs our region billions of dollars each year in lost productivity.

Employers have used many of the following low cost promotional ideas to successfully encourage the use of commute alternatives. These work best in addition to “core” strategies like transit subsidies, pre-tax transit pass sales and financial incentives for carpoolers, bicyclists and walkers.

Browse this list to get the creative juices flowing!

Recruit an ECO Committee

Recruiting an ECO Committee of fellow employees to assist the Transportation Coordinator with promotions, education and program planning can add a real boost to a worksite's efforts. ECO committee members act as salespeople and spread the word about commute alternatives in their respective departments.

Share Tasks

Maximize the unique strengths and interests of committee members. If a member has artistic talent, they can help design promotional materials or create a worksite ECO comic strip. Other members may be excellent fund raisers and can help solicit prize donations from nearby merchants.

Generate New Ideas

Several heads are better than one to create new promotional ideas for your ECO program. A broad representation of employees on your committee will help gain valuable insight into potential incentives which may convince employees to try an alternative commute mode.

Take Advantage of Oregon's Business Energy Tax Credit

Oregon offers a tax credit to businesses (expires December 31, 2017). Call the Oregon Department of Energy at 800-221-8035 or visit their website at <http://www.oregon.gov/energy/Pages/index.aspx>.

Lead by Example

Committee members should be active participants in the program. Not only will this help convince fellow employees to try a commute alternative, but it will send a clear message about the level of commitment by those directly involved in the program. Leading by example is a powerful sales tool. A member who bikes to work can offer to ride along with those thinking of trying it. A regular transit rider can introduce new participants to the transit system and ride along with them the first day.

Gain Management Support

Careful selection of committee members can assist in efforts to gain and maintain management support. Solicit the participation of one or more employees with the “ear” of top management, to assist in gaining access to and garnering support from management for the program. Better yet, identify a manager to be a part of the committee.

Logo Design Contest

You may want a logo for promotional materials associated with your ECO program. Why not hold a logo design contest? Open it up to all employees or committee members only. Announce the winning logo at an all-staff meeting. Present the winner with a framed copy of the winning logo and a prize that is relevant to that person's preferred alternative commute mode. For example if the winner is a regular carpooler, use of a preferred carpool parking space for three months; if a transit rider, a free bus pass for one or two months; if a bicyclist, a new helmet or gift certificate for bicycle accessories. Committee members could each receive a shirt or hat with the new logo embroidered or silk screened to identify them during promotional activities.

Identify Worksite Champions/Mentors

Identify a “worksite champion,” an employee who routinely uses an alternate commute mode and would do so even if it wasn't a regulation. Every worksite has them: the guy in marketing who rides his bike every day; the receptionist who wouldn't dream of a commute without her carpool buddies. If you can identify one person for each type of commute mode then you have found your worksite champions. In most cases these people will be happy to assist you by mentoring new commuters. Many people won't try something new simply because they do not understand how to go about it. A mentor can show those people how to purchase and validate a MAX ticket, how to read a bus schedule, how to use RideShare (<http://driveless.savemore.com/pages/carpoolmatchnw>) to find a carpool partner, or the best bike route to and from work.

Health and Wellness Program

If you have a health and wellness program at your worksite use that forum to promote bicycling and walking to work. If not, use a bike and walk to work program to start a health and wellness program. This program can be as simple as an informal group of employees who walk together during lunch. You can add other elements, such as installation of a bike rack or a rain shield over an existing bike rack. Employee showers and lockers may be an option for your worksite. Employees who live near the worksite could be encouraged to walk or bike one or more days per week. Those who live farther can ride transit to the worksite neighborhood and walk or bike the remaining distance. Distribute or post bulletins addressing the health benefits of these exercises.

Flexible Shift Times

Some businesses simply must operate during particular hours, or, as with many manufacturing industries, work goes on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. But, many businesses have some flexibility with starting and quitting times, at least within certain divisions or sections. You may want to consider allowing employees a fifteen or thirty minute “window” for their starting and ending times. Employees worry that without their car they are at the mercy of the bus schedule, carpool driver, helmet hair, etc. If employees know they won't be penalized for being a few minutes late and are able to make up time at the end of their shift, they will be more likely to try an alternate mode.

Bulletin Boards

Bulletin Boards are a good “soft sell” strategy to get the word out to your employees. This can be a fun monthly activity for the Transportation Coordinator, changing colors and graphics to match the seasons and holidays. You may want to highlight a particular commute mode to match the season or conditions at or near the worksite. Biking and walking would be an obvious choice for the summer season, but other occasions like road construction creating a headache for drivers can be a great time to highlight transit options. Additionally, you can reserve a section of the Bulletin Board for funny commuter stories (“the funniest thing happened on the way to work today...”) and photos.



Transportation Blog

Cyclists, carpoolers and transit riders often feel passionately about these lifestyle choices. Give employees a forum for sharing their ideas with an intranet transportation BLOG where participants can offer up ideas, share experiences and even gripe from time to time.

The Commuter Card

The Commuter Card recognizes employees who routinely find another way to work and to encourage others to give it a try. In this example the Commuter Card campaign ran for three months. Employees who used a commute alternative a minimum of six days per month in the three month period registered as an ECO participant and turned in a monthly participation form. At the end of the campaign period, qualifying participants received a Commuter Card. Each card was preprinted with discounted and free items from local businesses and was valued at \$30 - \$40. You can modify this idea to fit your worksite situation.

Personal Note of Thanks

Acknowledge each employee who signs up for your ECO program and those who purchase a bus pass for the first time with a personal thank you note from top management. Prepare the thank you notes once a month to ease the signature process.

Casual Dress Days

Allow employees who use a commute alternative during a special event or "find another way" day to dress casually. In addition to providing a no-cost incentive, casually-dressed employees will be recognized as alternative commuters.

T-shirts for Regular Participants

Reward employees who register and participate in your program for three months with a special alternative commuter T-shirt; after six months reward them with a sweatshirt. Set aside special days (last Friday of the month, etc.) for all participants to wear their T-shirt and/or sweatshirt. These employees will stand out in the crowd and may provide an incentive to fellow employees who still drive alone.

Ice Cream Social or Pizza Party

Give thanks and recognition to your regular commuters by throwing a quarterly party for "alternate commuters only." Include a raffle with inexpensive prizes or, award the top carpool parking spots for the following quarter, etc. Promote the event and publicize the results and resulting new participants, to encourage more employees to join. Use your party to match up potential new carpool or vanpool partners!

Staff Meetings

During staff meetings or other gatherings promote commuting alternatives and recognize special contributors. This might include your transportation coordinator, someone who acts as a mentor to new bicyclists or assists new transit riders to learn the local bus routes. Present these employees with awards or certificates. Don't forget to recognize management with awards for supporting your commute program.

Most Valuable Commuter

Create a recognition program that honors one commuter each month, or one from each section or division. Publish the name, photo and commuter story in your monthly newsletter. You could offer a free lunch to the monthly winner. Design a prize that has value to the employees at your worksite.

ECO cash

Design "ECO Cash" or "play money" to reward employees who use commute alternatives a specific number of days throughout the month. ECO Cash can be redeemed for prizes or used for entry into monthly or annual worksite prize drawings. If your budget is low, give away coupons



for casual dress days and/or a grand prize of a day off with pay. Employees who participate frequently will earn more ECO Cash and more chances to win or redeem funny money for prizes.

Challenges/Competitions

The competitive spirit exists in most work places and can be used to create successful, low cost promotions. Challenges within departments, between departments or companywide can stimulate employee interest, excitement and encouragement to try a commute alternative. Use your imagination to create fun events which could include the losers treating the winners to breakfast, lunch or a free car wash.

Rideshare/Carpool Referral Program

Use this idea to increase the number of ridesharing employees. Registered participants who successfully recruit a new member into the program will receive a \$25 cash award after the new member registers in the program and consistently carpools for three consecutive months. This strategy can be used with any alternative transportation mode.

Preferential Parking for Carpoolers

Carpooling is our region's fastest growing commute alternative and for good reason: a two-person carpool cuts driving costs in half. As an incentive, mark several parking places near the front of your building for carpools only.

Top Management Challenge

Solicit support from active participants who are also managers to challenge fellow managers to participate in alternative commuting for a specified time period. Bike Commute Challenge month is an excellent opportunity for this competition. This particular strategy will set an excellent example for all employees. It also provides a wonderful photo opportunity.

Involve All Employees

Divide your worksite into teams. Each week, the team with the greatest participation wins a prize. The losing team receives the "polluters of the week" award. Display weekly results in a central location.

You can create variations of these examples. You know your employees best, what is valuable to them and what will spark their interest. Use that knowledge to design a successful challenge at your worksite. Are you friendly with neighboring worksites? Why not challenge them to a commute showdown?

Take Advantage of Local Transportation Events and Resources

Piggyback your efforts with those of other alternative transportation advocates in the region:

- Bike Commute Challenge in September www.bikecommutechallenge.com
- Drive Less Save More www.driveless.savemore.com
- ECO Resource List www.oregon.gov/deq/aq/programs/Pages/ECO-Resources.aspx

Be Creative! Send your great idea to eco@deq.state.or.us

Alternative formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.

