



Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Employee Commute Options

How to motivate employees

Creative ideas for promoting auto 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 benefits and financial incentives for carpoolers, bicyclists and walkers.

Recruit an ECO Committee

Recruiting an ECO Committee of fellow employees to assist the Transportation Coordinator with promotions, education and program planning can boost a worksite's efforts. ECO committee members act as ambassadors and spread the word about commute alternatives in their 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 fundraisers and can help solicit prize donations from local businesses.

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.

Lead by example

Committee members should actively participate 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.

Management support

Partner with management to promote the program. Identify a manager to participate in the committee, coordinate communication with the leadership team, and identify opportunities to better support the program's mission throughout the organization.

Translation or other formats

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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 to identify them during promotional activities.

Identify worksite champions

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 coworker in marketing who rides their bike every day; the salesperson who wouldn't dream of a commute without carpool buddies. If you can identify one person for each type of commute mode, then you have found your champions who can help with mentoring coworkers. Many people won't try something new simply because they do not understand how to start. A mentor can show beginners how to purchase and validate a MAX ticket, how to read a bus schedule, how to use [Get There Oregon's carpool matching system](#) 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 certain hours, or, as with many manufacturing industries, work shifts occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Many businesses have some flexibility with starting and quitting times, at least within certain divisions or departments. Timing shift start and end times so they sync with nearby bus schedules can make it easier for employees to take mass transit. You may want to consider allowing employees a fifteen- or thirty-minute window for reporting to work. There are times when alternative commute modes can delay an employee, such as bus delays, carpool partners running late, or a flat tire on a bike. If employees understand they won't be penalized for being a few minutes late, they may feel more comfortable trying an alternate mode.

Bulletin boards

Bulletin Boards are a good strategy to get the word out to 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 near the worksite. Biking and walking would be an obvious choice for the summer season, but other occasions like road construction, 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 ideas, coordinate rides, and share experiences or concerns.

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. Modify this idea to fit your worksite's needs.

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 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. Include a raffle with inexpensive prizes or award the top carpool parking spots for the following quarter. 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 department. 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 workplaces 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, designate 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. National Bike Month in May is an excellent opportunity for this competition. This 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. Display weekly results in a central location. Create variations of these examples. You know your employees best, what motivates 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 resources and events

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

- [ECO Resource List](#)
- [Get There Oregon Car Free Challenge](#)
- [Metro Regional Travel Options](#)

Have a creative idea to share?

Send your great idea to ECO@deq.oregon.gov.

Contact

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