

# Oregon Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit: Case Study

## OREGON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

### WESTSIDE TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE & NIKE

#### PARTNERS IN A SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

#### Featured Category

##### Cost Effectiveness



#### Location

Washington County, Oregon

#### Milestones

- » **1992-1996:** Nike begins commuter program “Nike Bucks”
- » **1996:** New state DEQ mandates
- » **1997:** WTA is formed
- » **1997 - present:** Nike’s TDM program continues to expand and evolve

#### Applicable GHG Reduction Strategies<sup>1</sup>

- » [Transportation demand management](#)
- » [Transit pricing](#)
- » [Parking management](#)
- » [Bicycle facilities](#)

### Unique Attributes

- Nike employs a full-time Employee Transportation Program Manager who tracks and manages the various components of their TDM program. This person also serves as a liaison between Nike employees and upper management - providing a two-way channel for information sharing and feedback. The program manager also corresponds with other employers and agencies and is the “go to” person for communication both within and outside the company. Having an employee who is devoted full time to the TDM program focuses more energy on the program and allows it to be flexible and responsive to employee suggestions and needs.
- Nike’s relationship with the WTA has provided valuable support and allowed Nike to expand and evolve its TDM program. The WTA conducts an annual survey of Nike employees to assess the commute mode split. The survey is required by TriMet as part of the universal transit pass program, but allows the WTA and Nike to customize the survey to include other questions related to their TDM program. This information is also provided to DEQ to meet the monitoring requirements.

*This case study is an illustration of strategies from the Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Toolkit, and is intended to help local jurisdictions explore actions and programs that can reduce GHG emissions from transportation.*

<sup>1</sup> Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Toolkit Database, ODOT, 2011.

## Challenges

**Nike's large, master-planned campus presents a challenge that many companies face when looking into TDM programs: How do you make employees care about alternative commute options when parking is free and available?** Nike's experience

shows that the key to a successful program is to make it easy, low-cost, and flexible; including as many options as possible so employees can pick the combination that suits their particular situation. Flexibility is also important because employee needs and desires change, as do outside forces such as transit service and economic conditions.

**Nike has experimented with programs that reward employees who use alternative commute modes with "money" in the form of Nike Bucks and prizes.** With the first Nike Bucks

program, the company found it difficult to verify use of alternative modes and questioned the overall cost-effectiveness of the program. Nike Bucks was replaced by a somewhat similar program involving prizes that were awarded through quarterly and monthly drawings. Employees who logged alternative commute trips were entered into the drawings. However, Nike found that this program rewarded the same people repeatedly and reached a relatively small percentage of employees. Instead, Nike shifted the program's focus to providing more options and more incentives that would reach a greater percentage of employees and encourage new participants.



## Background

The Westside Transportation Alliance (WTA) was formed in 1997 and serves as the sole Transportation Management Association for all of Washington County. The organization works with its partners and employers to offer workplace services and programs that help employees commute to work by transit, carpool, vanpool, walking and biking. The mission of the WTA is to reduce single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips to work and “reduce greenhouse gas emissions, foster economic vitality and improve health”. The WTA is a non-profit organization funded by public agencies (primarily Metro and Washington County), private donations and membership dues. The WTA provides its members with an important network of support for their TDM programs, including: education, marketing materials, networking opportunities, regional and national context, and a venue for brainstorming and idea-sharing. In some cases, the WTA provides annual employee surveys for its members to help them be flexible and responsive to employee needs. With a small but dedicated staff, the WTA currently provides services to about 25 members, ranging from large employers like Intel and Portland Community College, to smaller employers such as Easy Street Online Services and the Beaverton and Hillsboro chambers of commerce.

One WTA member that demonstrates the “gold standard” for an employee TDM program is NIKE, Inc.'s World Headquarters near Beaverton, Oregon, which has been an active member of the WTA since its inception in 1997. In the early 90's Nike experimented with different ways to encourage employees to use alternative transportation for their commute. The Nike Bucks program, introduced in 1992, provided bike-riding and transit-riding employees with a monetary reward: vouchers that could be spent in Nike stores and the on-campus cafeterias. Then in 1996, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) mandated employers in the Portland area with 50 or more employees at one site to provide programs and incentives for employees to use alternative commuting options. Since that time, Nike worked to broaden their employee TDM program and provide a variety of additional incentives to support their culture of sustainability.

Nike's program includes a variety of services and incentives, including:

- » **Shuttle and taxi service.** Nike operates a shuttle to transport employees from the nearby MAX light rail station to the Nike core campus and off-campus buildings. There are currently five shuttles that operate on a fixed route and schedule, running approximately every 15 minutes. Recently, Nike introduced a free app for smart phones that tracks the shuttles in real time so employees know when to expect the next shuttle. The shuttle provides approximately 2,800 trips per week.
- The taxi service is an on-call program that transports employees to and from Nike's Evergreen campus, which is less populated and further from the MAX station. While this service is relatively new, it is popular (about 150 trips per week) and will likely be expanded. Both the shuttle and taxi services are free to Nike employees.
- » **Transit subsidy.** In partnership with TriMet, Nike provides all full-time employees with a free universal transit pass, which allows them unlimited rides on all TriMet trains and buses.
- » **Bike commuting services.** For employees that bike to work, Nike offers bike parking near all buildings, showers and locker rooms, and a variety of other incentives such as free bike tune-ups and tire repair kits. Nike also supports the Bike Commute Challenge<sup>2</sup> event every September and encourages individual departments within Nike to implement

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lovetoride.net/oregon?locale=en-US>

## Key Successes

- In 1992, when Nike first located their headquarters at the current campus, the SOV mode share was 98 percent. Today, the SOV share is 72 percent, far surpassing the DEQ requirement of a 10 percent reduction. Nike and the WTA are currently working to establish new mode split targets for the company that will reflect the company's plans for expansion and the desire to focus on less parking and more use of non-SOV modes.
- Nike has created a comprehensive and dynamic TDM program that sets it apart from others and has led to national recognition, including a "Best Workplace for Commuters" designation by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency<sup>3</sup>. Nike has emphasized the need for the program to be flexible and responsive to changes within the company and to employee needs and desires. The program offers multiple ways for employees to provide feedback, including face-to-face discussions with the program manager, the annual survey, the online TRAC system, and an employee blog. This helps the program stay current and tailored to employee needs.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/aging/press/listofco.htm>

## Quantifying GHG Reduction

The Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit<sup>6</sup> estimates reduction ranges for several of the strategies mentioned in this case study. Those strategies with quantified reduction ranges are:

- Transportation Demand Management (up to 1.7%)

While strategies are often combined to maximize effectiveness, the reduction ranges are not necessarily additive.

*The Toolkit is a component of the Oregon Sustainable Transportation Initiative (OSTI), which was formed to address the requirements of Senate Bill 1059 (2010).*

*For more information, please visit:*

*<https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Planning/Pages/GHG-Toolkit.aspx>*



their own bike share programs. The department bike share programs provide department-owned bicycles that can be used by employees to get from building to building on and off the core Nike campus.

- » **Carpool and vanpool.** Employees that use carpool or vanpool arrangements to commute to work are provided with priority vehicle parking on the Nike campus. Nike maintains an online trip-tracking and networking program called TRAC that allows employees to coordinate carpool/vanpool arrangements. It also provides a place for them to log all their alternative commute trips (biking, transit, etc.) and connect with other employees about commute options.
- » **Emergency ride home.** In conjunction with TriMet, Nike offers employees who use alternative commute modes a ride home in the case of sickness, family illness or other emergency. The program provides a free taxi ride to employees that need it.
- » **On-site services.** The core Nike campus has two child-care centers that provide scheduled and drop-in child care for employees' children. The campus also has sundry shops, cafes, dry cleaning, and a salon - all of which help reduce the need for employees to use their cars to access services.

## Conclusions

The WTA provides employers in Washington County with programs and services and is an example for jurisdictions that seek to support local businesses while working towards greenhouse gas reduction goals. Nike's TDM approach serves as a prime example of a comprehensive and effective program to encourage employees to use alternative commute modes. It is particularly useful as a suburban business model that strives to solve many of the commuting issues that tend to occur in a suburban setting (getting employees from transit to the site, for example). Nike is a large company and is able to provide a variety of incentives and services for its employees; however, each component of their program has its own value and can be implemented individually and tailored to a smaller scale. Employers who are in the beginning phases of creating a TDM program should consider the Nike model piece-by-piece and choose the elements and scale that are appropriate for them. Nike's experience reveals the value of supporting employee needs and providing them with options for getting to and from work. It is a cost-effective way to reduce SOV trips, while at the same time promoting better employee health, morale, and environmental responsibility. The Nike model also demonstrates the importance of having an active Transportation Management Association (the WTA) to support local employers.

