

Green Commuting Handbook

A Workplace Guide to:

- ✓ Increase productivity, job satisfaction & reduce absenteeism
 - ✓ Increase employee retention
 - ✓ Reduce parking costs
- ✓ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Produced by:



303 Portage Ave, 3rd Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B4

Tel: 925-3772 Fax: 942-4207

Email: tdm@resourceconservation.mb.ca

Website: www.resourceconservation.mb.ca

Green Commuting Options – Encouraging Transit, Walking, Cycling, Carpooling, Telecommuting at the Workplace

How can Resource Conservation Manitoba help encourage and support green commuting at your workplace?

RCM provides a number of services...

(1) **Online resources:**

www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/TDM/index.html

- Sample Commuting Survey
- How to Build Support
- Setting Goals
- Information on Green Commuting Modes
- Creating a Green Commute Plan
- Rolling Out the Plan
- Evaluating Your Plan
- Green Commute Resources (such as 10 Step Green Commute Plan, Benefits of Green Commuting, Case Studies)



(2) **Green Commuting Display** - available for loan to workplaces on a short-term basis

(3) **Presentations** – brown bag lunch presentations, newsletter articles on Green Commuting or specific modes of travel (bike, walk, transit, carpool)

(4) **Individual Trip Planning** – individual trip planning service for employees delivered by RCM staff or choose to ‘train-a-trainer’ at your workplace (call for details)

For more information on how to develop and implement Green Commuting initiatives at your workplace, give us a call!

Beth McKechnie

Workplace Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Tel: (204) 925-3772

Email: beth@resourceconservation.mb.ca

Resource Conservation Manitoba

303 Portage Ave, 3rd Flr

Winnipeg, MB R3B 2B4

www.resourceconservation.mb.ca

INTRODUCTION

Why a Green Commuting Handbook?

Workplaces influence an individual employee's choice of how to commute through the provision of subsidized car parking, availability (or lack) of bicycle parking; company policies such as dress codes, flex time, emergency ride home, subscribing to EcoPass transit program or offering the option to telecommute; safety issues related to overtime; and wellness programs to address employee health.

In other words, workplaces are already dealing with issues related to commuting, but often without a formal strategy or a framework for responding effectively. Creating a strategy for green commuting can support a whole series of human resources issues and make them work for the workplace and its employees.

Benefits from promoting green commuting at the workplace include:

- Increasing productivity, reducing absenteeism and improving employee retention (loyalty) – active transportation increases physical activity and reduces stress
- Reducing costs for on-site parking when more employees choose green commuting options
- Helping to meet corporate social responsibility objectives, including environmental management systems and standards such as ISO 14001
- Potentially reducing injury rates, workers compensation costs, and claims against group benefit plans with healthier and more physically fit employees
- Improving environmental stewardship
- Enhancing image and profile in the community
- After-tax cost savings for employees

The Green Commuting Initiatives program at Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) is available to assist workplaces that are interested in developing a green commuting plan. Call our staff at 925-3772 or check out our website at www.resourceconservation.mb.ca.

GETTING STARTED

What's the issue and what's the plan?

1. Understanding the issue and seeing the opportunities

Employee Commuting Survey

The first step is to know the commuting characteristics of your workplace. Conduct a survey to determine current employee travel patterns at your workplace, and to identify the barriers and opportunities influencing their decision whether to use green commuting options.

Find out:

- How many people drive alone to work and where are they coming from?
- How many carpool, take the bus, walk or cycle?
- How many employees would change their mode if offered incentives like a transit pass subsidy, an emergency ride home for carpoolers who have to work late or a family member is ill, or a commuter cycling course?

These sorts of questions can be answered by the employees in the form of a survey, which will provide the baseline data of current commuting habits and test attitudes towards changes that you might want to introduce.

Need assistance?

- Use or modify the sample survey on our website (www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/TDM/TDMpdfs/Sample%20Employee%20Commuting%20Survey.pdf)
- Make your own survey using a program like Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com)
- Contact RCM to assist with an online survey customized to suit your needs. Our surveys offer a built-in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions calculator constructed with Manitoba-specific data (contact us at 925-3772 for more information)

Site Audit

Other information to be gathered includes:

- The availability of on-site or nearby facilities such as showers and lockers for cyclists, inline skaters and walkers
- Transit service (nearby routes, stops, shelters, service levels)
- Parking availability for both cars and bicycles, cost (and subsidy), and policies
- Common trips made by employees for work purposes

- Company vehicles and use; and
- Personal vehicle use for company purposes, reimbursement terms and arrangements.

All of these contribute to the commuting characteristics of the workplace and impact on the individual employee decision whether to drive alone or green commute.

2. Getting approvals/getting key people involved

This will vary depending on the workplace. Key players usually include Human Resources Manager, Environmental Officers, Facilities Managers, Public Affairs or Communications and Marketing staff, Corporate Social Responsibility or Sustainability Managers, and Union Representatives. If telework or telecommuting (working from home more than two days per week using Internet, phone and fax to communicate with co-workers) is something being considered, you may want to include Information Technology personnel.

Often the best champions for creating a company Green Commuting Plan are co-workers who already cycle to work or use some other green commuting mode and who are willing to commit personally. A core group that is interested in green commuting, personally or professionally, can bring together an advisory team that covers the other areas.

You may need to seek the approval of a Management Group. Approval in principle is the first step. As you develop a plan, you may need financial and other approvals.

Ideally, a Green Commuting Plan involves management and staff working together.

Need assistance?

- Contact RCM to assist in making the business case at your workplace, from both the management or employee perspective. Contact us at 925-3772 or tdm@resourceconservation.mb.ca.

3. Setting the Goals for your Green Commuting Plan

With the help of the key players you have assembled, begin to outline priority areas for action. Looking through survey responses to see what employees have indicated would help them change from driving alone to transit, carpooling, walking, cycling or other green commuting methods will help guide this process, along with results from the work site audit. Also, managers and others recruited for your green commuting advisory team might already have specific issues they want to see addressed, possibly stemming from complaints they have received from employees.

For example, you may want to focus on improving opportunities for active modes of transportation like cycling and walking through the installation of secure bike parking or showers. If parking pressures are an issue, you might want to focus on parking management through carpooling and a partially subsidized bus pass such as Winnipeg Transit's EcoPass.

Targets might include: increasing the number of employees choosing to ride transit, carpool, cycle or walk; reducing GHG emissions associated with the work commute; meeting health and wellness goals through active modes of transportation; parking management issues; or desired improvements specific modes (i.e. transit, carpooling, cycling, walking).

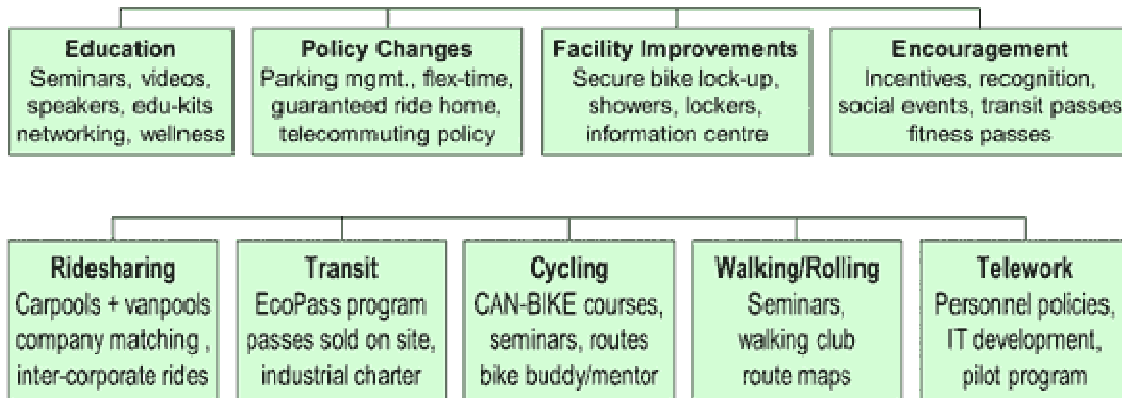
4. Making a Green Commuting Plan

Once you have set your goals and targets, you are ready to set a plan in motion to address priorities. The essential tools are:

- **Education** – e.g. providing seminars on walking, cycling, transit, carpooling, and creating a green commuting information centre on the company's intranet site or posted in a highly visible area of the workplace
- **Policy Improvements** – e.g. dress code, flex time, emergency ride home program, eliminating free parking, introducing telecommuting
- **Facility Improvements** – e.g. bike parking, showers and lockers
- **Encouragement & Incentives** – e.g. EcoPass program, prime parking spots for carpoolers, Commuter Challenge and Bike to Work Day participation

A variety of examples are summarized in the Green Commute Menu below:

Green Commute Menu



Other resources:

“Commuter Options: The Complete Guide for Canadian Employers”, Transport Canada
www.tc.gc.ca/Programs/Environment/commuteroptions/menu.htm

“Commute Trip Reduction: Programs that Encourage Employees to Use Efficient Commute Options”, Victoria Transport Policy Institute
www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm9.htm

5. Ideas and Resources for Green Commuting in Winnipeg

a) Parking Management

Parking is a key area for a green commuting strategy since employees who drive alone to work often cite free or inexpensive parking as the reason they drive rather than take public transit. Efforts to raise parking fees for existing lots are often met with a backlash of resentment. Some ideas to promote positive parking management include:

- Introduce higher parking fees and use the increased revenue to subsidize bus passes.
- Provide reduced parking charges and/or premium parking spots (e.g. closest to the door) for carpoolers.
- Allocate premium parking spots in winter to those employees who voluntarily cycle during the rest of the year.
- “Buy-out” employee parking spots by offering a free bus pass instead to reduce parking pressures at the workplace.

b) Public Transit

Public transit is the mode that most green commuters choose. There are several ideas for promoting transit use to a worksite, but one of the most effective is the EcoPass Employer Sponsored Bus Pass Program offered by Winnipeg Transit. For a successful green commuting program, bus fares should be subsidized to at least the same extent as parking to motivate those employees to take the bus instead. In some cases, employers have been able to work with Winnipeg Transit to place a transit shelter at the bus stop closest to the worksite.

Ideas to encourage transit use:

- Subscribe to Winnipeg Transit's Eco-Pass program (<http://myride.winnipegtransit.com/en/special/ecopass/>),
- Contact Winnipeg Transit about placing a transit shelter at the bust stop closest to the worksite,
- Flexible work schedules,
- Transit information and bus passes sold on-site,
- Promotion of the Navigo Online Trip Planner to help identify bus routes (<http://winnipegtransit.com/NavigoPlus/TripPlanner.jsp>) and
- Provision of bus tickets as an alternative to personal car use for work purposes.

c) Ridesharing / Carpooling

Carpooling can produce a substantial reduction in the number of cars arriving at a workplace each day with a small amount of encouragement. At BC Tel's (now Telus) Burnaby headquarters, 35% of employees routinely engage in carpooling as part of a program that started in the early 1970s.

Facilitate carpooling by:

- Matching participants,
- Providing an emergency ride home (usually a limited number of taxi chits per year) for carpoolers that have to work late or leave early for family emergencies, and
- Providing premium parking spots or lower parking charges for carpoolers.

Other resources:

Commuter Connections (www.carpool.ca), Pathway Intelligence Link (www.carpooltool.com), and Ride Shark (www.rideshark.com) provide web-based ride-matching and carpooling information services.

d) Fitness and Wellness Promotion

If your workplace does not have showers and lockers on-site for active green commuters (cyclists, joggers, walkers) to use, consider exploring a corporate arrangement with a nearby fitness centre or other workplace.

Alternatively, a subsidized gym membership for employees who pledge to cycle to work could provide short-term access to showers and lockers where none is available currently.

e) Cycling

Workplaces can facilitate more cycling by providing facilities such as showers and lockers, and secure bicycle parking, which is much less expensive to provide than car parking. Providing bicycle parking is important because it sends a message to employees that cycling is valued equally with driving.

Outdoor bike parking should be located close to key building entry points and ideally, provide shelter for the cyclist and bike from sun, rain, wind and snow. Making use of an existing building for at least one side of the compound saves more costs and if you can find a spot between two buildings, you might only need to provide one side with a gate.

A common way to create a highly secure bike cage is to convert a storage room or to enclose an automobile parking space with chain-link fencing. Provide spare capacity beyond existing riders as the availability of secure bike parking typically increases demand.

Providing proper bicycle racks within a bike cage provides a second line of defense. All racks should be securely mounted to the ground or wall with tamper-proof bolts. Several local companies manufacture and/or sell several styles of bike racks for both outdoor and indoor use, including:

- Woodcock Cycle (Tel: 253-7225, Web: www.woodcockcycle.com)
- Bike Stop Bike Racks (Tel: 1-866-999-7770, Email: info@bikestop-racks.com)
- Urban Park (Tel: 1-800-775-0018, Web: www.urbanpark.com)

Public bike corrals (secure bicycle parking cages) are available in three downtown parkades: <http://theparkingstore.winnipeg.ca/theparkingstore/where-can-i-park/bicycle-parking.stm>

The Downtown Winnipeg Biz is providing a 50% subsidy on the cost of a bike rack and will also handle installation. Contact Stephanie Voyce at 958-4621 or email stephanie@downtownwinnipegbiz.com

Other resources:

“Bicycles at Rest: A Bicycle Parking Best Practices Resource”, Capital Walk & Bike Society
www.bicycleparkingonline.org

“Guidelines for the Design and Management of Bicycle Parking Facilities” City of Toronto
www.toronto.ca/planning/pdf/bicycle_parking_guidelines_final_may08.pdf

Cycling education is another area for action in a Green Commuting Plan. Some would-be commuter cyclists are hesitant about riding in traffic.

- Check the City’s Leisure Guide Spring 2010 edition for City Cycling courses to be offered around Winnipeg (www.winnipeg.ca/cms/recreation/leisureguide.stm)
- Provide basic education about safe cycling by hosting a lunch and learn – Bike to the Future (Email: contact@biketothefuture.org); Natural Cycle (Tel: 957-5762, Email: cycleworks@naturalcycle.ca)
- Distribute Winnipeg cycling maps at your workplace, available from the Manitoba Cycling Association (Tel: 925-5686, Email: info@cyclings.mb.ca)
- Create an informal bike buddy program by pairing experienced cyclists who could ride with new cyclists.
- Host a bike tune-up session – Natural Cycle (Tel: 957-5762, Email: cycleworks@naturalcycle.ca); Bikes and Beyond (Tel: 669-5590, Email: info@bikesandbeyond.ca)
- Inform staff of Winnipeg Transit’s Bike & Bus program (<http://myride.winnipegtransit.com/en/special/bikeandbus/>)

Other resources:

“The Commuter Cyclist: Tips and resources to make cycling to work as easy as ...riding a bike”, Co-produced by Resource Conservation Manitoba, Manitoba Cycling Association and Bike to the Future
[www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/TDM/TDMpdfs/The%20Commuter%20Cyclist%20\(rev2009\).pdf](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/TDM/TDMpdfs/The%20Commuter%20Cyclist%20(rev2009).pdf)

e) Telecommuting

Telecommuting is growing in popularity and has been piloted successfully as part of a green commuting strategy at BC Hydro in Vancouver, and as a strategy to avoid an expensive building expansion at ISM, a subsidiary of IBM based in Winnipeg on Ellice Avenue. While the issues surrounding telecommuting are fairly complex on their own and require research and careful planning, the potential benefits in terms of productivity, space savings and prevention of harmful automobile emissions are enormous.

Excellent resources about telecommuting, also known as “telework,” are available from the Canadian Telework Association web site: www.ivc.ca and at www.secure-teletrips.com

f) Walking

Walking is an often under-reported mode of commuting. Many commuters “save” a walk for themselves by deliberately parking at a distance from their workplace and walking the remainder. Some get off the bus early to walk partway to their destination or choose to walk instead of transferring to a second bus. Others walk the entire distance between home and work as their primary mode of commuting. It is often seen as a means to relieve stress and improve health.

Creating a walking club as part of wellness and fitness programming or matching up walking buddies could encourage even more people to vote with their feet. With the development of Winnipeg’s Riverwalk System, walking has become attractive and viable for more downtown employees.

Combine walking to work with daily Transit service using Winnipeg Transit's Navigo On-line Trip planner. The service gives walking times and distances to and from home and workplace bus stops. (<http://winnipegtransit.com/NavigoPlus/TripPlanner.jsp>)

Other resources:

Winnipeg Trails Association – online Winnipeg Trail Maps. www.winnipegtrails.ca/trails-maps

6. Rolling out a Green Commuting Plan

To roll out a green commuting strategy you will need to clearly communicate your goals, the activities you expect to undertake, and your expectations. As a principle of education and outreach, it is better to involve your target audience than to tell them what to do. As an initial step, participation in the Winnipeg Commuter Challenge (during the first full week of June each year) would send the message that your company is serious about making changes that are fun, positive and that connect with the community.

Often workplaces motivate employees by involving a charity along with the activities. For instance, for each employee that participates in the Commuter Challenge, a workplace could commit to donate to an organization that promotes sustainable transportation. Or the company could commit to a similar contribution for each employee that gives up a parking spot to carpool or take transit or cycle.

Another visible signal that something new is happening would be to establish a Commuter Information Centre in a visible location (or locations) within the workplace. This is where you can post notices about green commuting events such as seminars and workshops, a Winnipeg Transit Systems Map and transit schedules relevant to your work site, the Cyclist's Map of Winnipeg, and a Rideshare Board. Links to electronic versions can also be displayed prominently on the workplace Intranet home page.

Small incentives and prizes also go a long way. The important consideration is the consistency of your message. If your workplace wants employees to leave their cars at home, that needs to be implicit in all of its policies and actions that affect commuting.

7. The Final Word

Green Commuting can be fun! Most participants in green commuting programs report that they save money, are less stressed, more physically fit, and have greater job satisfaction as a result. They see themselves as beneficiaries of a green commuting program, rather than environmental heroes or victims of a head office scheme.

In a world of competing interests that pull us in different directions, green commuting really is a win-win choice. Employees are better off, the workplace reaps productivity and loyalty benefits, and the community benefits from reduced emissions and vehicle congestion.

It's an opportunity waiting to happen at your workplace.

Contact Resource Conservation Manitoba at (204) 925-3772 for more information or to arrange a consultation.