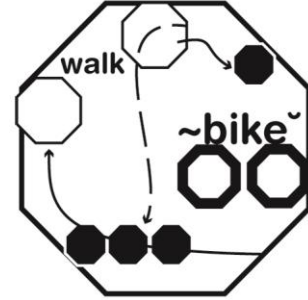


Active Travel Choice Programs



Background

Definition

Active travel choice programs, often called local and regional neighborhood programs, are aimed at increasing awareness and changing behavior related to how people get around their neighborhood. These efforts can be one-offs that are short in duration and tailored to specific places or part of a larger effort marketing the same message but spread across a wider geographic area.

Local and regional neighborhood programs are typically considered a transportation demand management (TDM) activity. TDM refers to activities that help people use the transportation network more efficiently, and help get the most out of transportation infrastructure and services by making lower cost, higher efficiency transportation options easier to use and more readily available. The [Regional TDM Action Plan](#) describes the strategic priorities that TDM implementers continue to pursue and recommends implementation actions for the Puget Sound Regional Council and the region's TDM Steering Committee to support and augment the work happening at the local level.

Health, equity and sustainability considerations

The health, equity, and sustainability considerations of local and regional neighborhood programs vary by the specific type of neighborhood program. Typically, these programs are focused on getting residents to use a mode of active transportation rather than driving alone.

Travel choice programs encourage individuals to think about all the trips they make and pledge to make changes where they can. These programs have proven to be successful in long-term behavior change because they go beyond education and tailor the program to the community, including understanding and overcoming perceived barriers and utilizing existing community resources and social networks.

The average adult who starts to take transit to work loses 6 pounds of body fat in the first year.

Active transportation, including walking, bicycling and taking transit can increase physical activity and improve health. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has drawn connections between active transportation and a reduction in obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, pulmonary and cardiac diseases, and even cancer.

Increased pedestrian and cycling activity reduces the reliance on driving and therefore reduces emissions from automobiles. A [5%](#) increase in neighborhood walkability is associated with 6.5% fewer vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita. Fewer vehicle miles traveled results in a reduction in fossil fuel consumption and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions. Projects that support walking are often designed in ways that have

environmental benefits, such as green landscaping, street trees and in some cases, the use of permeable surfaces.

Program and Policy Examples

Program examples

Many existing TDM activities focus on work-based trips as these trips constitute a larger portion of demand during peak hours of travel. Yet nearly 70% of trips in the Puget Sound regional are not work-related. The ability to influence how these trips are made is a great opportunity for local jurisdictions implementing local and regional neighborhood programs.

Travel choice programs help communities and individuals make the most of their transportation network. These programs present an inclusive approach to transportation demand management and encourage individuals to think about all the trips they make and pledge to make changes where they can. Healthy travel choice programs encourage the use of alternative and active travel modes, and provide information and incentives for busing, biking, carpooling, vanpooling, and walking.

While travel choice programs can vary based on the program focus and the needs of the community, successful programs share eight key program components. According to the [In Motion Toolkit](#), these include:

- *Pledging.* Participants commit to reducing their drive alone travel during the project time period (an average of ten weeks). Individuals are offered the chance to pledge to change two trips a week from drive-alone to any other travel mode,
- *Rewards.* Individuals are offered an additional motivation to engage in the program. Initial rewards for participation/pledging have usually consisted of a packet of transit vouchers for one week of bus travel to and from work or other destinations.
- *Prompting.* A minimum level of visibility can consist of posters at local business sponsors, and displays at local libraries and community centers. More is better. The most successful programs have included action posters on utility poles throughout the neighborhood, yard signs displayed by program participants, and a tabling presence at local events or community gathering spaces.
- *Direct communication.* A well-designed direct mailing is the primary communication tool with every household. Messaging is targeted based on input received during the project development phase, and should include a call to action and method of response.
- *Website/online support.* An easy to find website can be a key project resource. Methods for online registration, pledging and trip reporting help keep administration tasks under control. The website can also serve as a portal to other travel resources, and provide feedback on individual and project success.
- *Prompt customized information delivery to participants.* King County has used mail back of information packets, with the goal of providing requested materials within one week.
- *Partnerships with businesses or non-profits.* This can include providing visibility, such as sending emails or posting signs to advertise the program and the website. Businesses may also agree to provide incentives (merchant coupons) to reward individuals who follow through on their trip reduction pledge.
- *Evaluation.* In Motion has consistently had participants fill out a short travel questionnaire at the beginning and end of each project, allowing a simple evaluation of program effect.

How is it used locally?

King County Metro's [In Motion](#) program focuses on neighborhood-based outreach and trip reduction. In Motion addresses the potential to change any trip from drive alone to an alternative mode. The program demonstrates the effectiveness of community-based social marketing techniques in affecting people's transportation awareness and behavior. The In Motion program provides neighborhood residents with incentives to try driving less, raises awareness of alternate travel choices, and helps counteract the easy choice to drive for all trips. The program was designed to be easily adapted to other neighborhoods with minor modifications in message and materials. In Motion also relies on local partners, such as local chambers of commerce, sustainability groups, neighborhood organizations, and businesses to help support the program in the community and to contribute prizes and incentives.

As of 2014, In Motion has worked with 28 communities and over 13,000 residents across King County. These programs have helped to reduce over 2 million vehicle miles traveled, and saved close to 120,000 gallons of gas.

Implementation

Considerations for local implementation

Transportation demand management efforts should be concentrated in areas where there are local champions, transportation options are feasible, and people have compelling reasons to utilize other transportation options.

The majority of TDM activities are implemented at the local level. Local ownership keeps organizations engaged, aligns activities with community interests, and allows implementers to adapt activities to the needs of the community. At the same time, local and regional neighborhood programs can leverage existing models and tailor them to the specific needs of their community. While In Motion is one program, it has been deployed in numerous ways across King County to address opportunities in different places.

When implementing local and regional neighborhood programs, it's important to set goals and objectives for what the program is meant to accomplish, ensure participation and contribution from relevant stakeholders, and identify a means for measuring performance to see what works and what doesn't.

King County's [In Motion Toolkit](#) provides in-depth information on best practices and a step-by-step guide for developing and implementing a travel choice program.

Resources

King County Metro's [Transportation Resources Index](#) (2013)

King County Metro's [Successfully Changing Individual Travel Behavior: Applying Community-Based Marketing to Travel Choice](#) (2006)

MRSC's [Transportation Demand Management Resource Page](#) (2014)

Puget Sound Regional Council's [Transportation Demand Management Resource Page](#) (2014)

Rideshare [Online Scheduling](#) (2014)

Transportation Choices' [Strategic Plan 2012-2015](#) (2012)