

Air Quality -- Alternative Transportation

This tip sheet corresponds with Green Star Award Standard # 6 – Encourage the Use of Alternative Transportation. Another useful tool is “Becoming a Green Star: A Waste Prevention Guide for Anchorage Businesses.” You can find the guide online in pdf and html format at www.greenstarinc.org/guideindex.php or request a hard copy from Green Star.

What are the Alternatives?

The single-occupancy vehicle, or SOV, is the standard mode of transportation for more than 95,000 Anchorage commuters. Alternative means of transportation include taking the bus, van/carpooling, bicycling, skiing, and walking. With Anchorage’s extensive trail system, it is possible for a large portion of the workforce to walk, bike, run or ski to work.



The Power of Walking

Walking provides numerous health benefits. With 60% of Anchorage’s adult population in the overweight or obese category, promoting physical activity in the workplace can improve health and productivity. Anchorage encourages Municipal and business employees to take 10,000 steps a day. Taking 10,000 steps is roughly equivalent to the Surgeon General’s recommendation to accumulate 30 minutes of activity most days of the week. A person who walks 10,000 steps a day will burn between 2,000 and 3,500 extra calories a week and greatly reduce his or her risk of heart disease and other health problems.

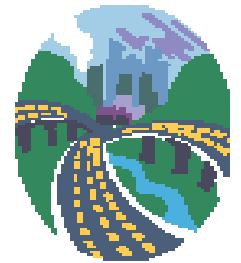
Visit www.muni.org/departments/health/environment/airq/Pages/default.aspx for more.

Benefits of Alternative Transportation

Encouraging commuters to ride the bus or team up through car or vanpools is one of the most effective methods of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality in Anchorage.

Unfortunately, commuters often think it’s an all or nothing deal. Not so! If every one of us chose alternative transportation even once a week, we could immediately eliminate 1/5 of the vehicles on the road.

You can even combine commuting methods. For example, if the nearest bus stop is not as close as you’d like to your home or office, bring your bike for that extra leg of the trip. Buses are equipped with bike racks on the front for just this purpose. Or take the bus in and catch a ride home with a coworker, or vice versa, if scheduling one method of transportation in both directions doesn’t work.



Surprisingly, studies show that when commuters leave their cars at home it not only benefits the employees, but also employers and the community as a whole.

How They Did It

ABR Inc., an environmental research and services consultant with offices in Anchorage and Fairbanks, earned its Air Quality Award in 2004. As an incentive to its employees, ABR offers \$3/day for non-motorized commutes and \$1.50/day for carpooling. This has saved employees money but also has reduced ABR’s overhead and operational costs by limiting parking expansion needs and minimizing maintenance and snowplowing.

Benefits of riding the bus, or car/van pooling include:

- Reduced absenteeism and tardiness,
- Improved air quality,
- Reduced personal stress,
- Reduced traffic congestion, and
- Decreased car ownership costs through less fuel consumption and lower repair costs (from fender benders to regular wear and tear), lower insurance rates and longer vehicle life.

Mass Transit

It's always more fun to share a drive with another person. People Mover makes this option easy by providing a free, confidential, on-line matching service for local commuters. The program is good for riders from the Valley, Eagle River, Girdwood and the Anchorage Bowl.

People Mover also operates a commuter vanpool for the Anchorage Bowl and the Valley. The vanpool is very popular, with the Valley program providing 21 vans serving 273 people — thus reducing traffic by 252 automobiles daily! In addition, Valley residents can find out more about the door-to-door bus service provided in the Valley by MASCOT.

Public Transportation Options

People Mover
www.peoplesmover.org

People Mover's Ride Match
<http://ridematch.muni.org>

Valley MASCOT: www.matsutransit.com

Valley Mover: www.valleymover.com

Federal Commuter Choice: www.fta.dot.gov



Carpooling Tip

Consider posting an alternative transportation board with a list of interested carpoolers, a map of Anchorage, and a bus route map in your workplace. This can help employees visualize carpooling options. Or use People Mover's free online ride match service at <http://ridematch.muni.org>.

People Power

Walking, skiing, and biking all offer exercise as well as transportation. Here are some tips for making these activities more appealing:

- Be sure to keep sidewalks around your workplace cleared and ice-free.
- Trail maps are available at Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation offices, Kincaid Chalet, the Bike Shack at Westchester Lagoon, REI, and bike shops around town.
- Encourage your employer to recognize and reward employees who get to work in a healthy way.
- Organize the purchase of reflective vests or arm-bands, small flashlights, and ice cleats for safe winter walking.

Government Incentives

As an employer, you can provide bus passes for a discount or free to employees. Employers who purchase bus or van passes and provide them to employees at reduce or no cost may be eligible for tax breaks under the Federal Commuter Choice program (Internal Revenue Code [26 USC 132(f)]). In Anchorage, the People Mover Employer Sponsored Pass program allows employers to buy monthly bus passes for employees at a discounted rate.

People Mover also conducts an annual survey that provides valuable information to the Anchorage Public Transportation Department on commuter patterns and characteristics.

Start A Walking School Bus



The Walking School Bus is a program of Green Star, developed to help

promote air quality. The concept involves adults walking groups of elementary or middle school students to and from school in a group. The group is equipped with safety gear, like reflective vests or arm bands.

Several schools in Anchorage are implementing the idea to help reduce vehicle traffic to and from the school. Contact Green Star for details about how to start a Walking School Bus.



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