

Effective Strategies to Mitigate Transportation Demand

By Commuter Services

March 8th, 2021

The increase in travel demand has far outpaced road capacity and transit service.

Cities cannot build their way out of traffic congestion. That is not a sustainable planning approach. We cannot have unlimited lane roads. Rather, we must try to increase person-throughput on existing infrastructure.

More people bicycling as transportation, more people carpooling to work (as we know people already carpool when they are not working), more people using transit and more people teleworking is a cost-effective way to reduce demand for congestion-free roads.

There are two key effective strategies to reducing peak-time demand:

1. Employers offering infrastructure and incentives
2. Providing personalized, customized assistance to individuals to give them resources for utilizing a sustainable mode choice.

Employer Provided Infrastructure and Incentives

Employers who provide commute related infrastructure are three times more effective at mode shift than those who do not.

- bike racks
- covered and secure bicycle parking
- access to shower facilities
- bicycles for check-out so employees can run errands during lunch
- preferential carpool parking close to main entrances
- access to discounted transit passes pre-tax
- A transit information display with next bus information and bus schedules
- A safe place to wait for the bus that is plowed/cleared during the winter

Financial incentives including a pay not to park incentive (whereby the employee can choose their mode and receive the same incentive), subsidized or free transit passes, gas gift cards for carpoolers, subsidies for vanpools are each very effective strategies to convert drive-alone commuters into a sustainable mode choice.

Through surveying commuters, Commuter Services has learned 79% of drive-alone commuters indicate an employer provided commute benefit would have a significant influence on their commute mode choice.

Some employers implement commuting benefits when they learn how effective they can be, while other employers are compelled to implement travel demand management strategies via TDM ordinances and TDM policies.

Two cities along I-494 have become local and national best-practice examples of effective TDM. The City of Eden Prairie, MN implemented a TDM policy in 2003 whereby all office and industrial developments are required to submit a TDM plan and financial guarantee. The city holds the financial guarantee until the TDM plan is implemented.

The City of Bloomington, MN has a very effective TDM ordinance which was adopted in 2009 which requires all non-residential developments or redevelopments (including retail) to participate in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 TDM requirement. For both Tier 1 and Tier 2, the TDM requirement must be met before the building permit is issued.

Tier 1 TDM is for all non-residential developments or redevelopments with 350 or more parking spaces.

Tier 1 TDM plans require a financial guarantee to ensure the TDM plan strategies are implemented. The TDM financial guarantee is based on \$50 per code parking space.

Tier 1 requires an Annual TDM Status Report with measurement results.

The financial guarantee can be released after three years if a good faith effort has been made or the city can extend the financial guarantee.

Tier 2 TDM is a check-list of TDM strategies the developer/owner can select from a pre-approved list or suggest their own TDM strategies.

The following companies have implemented TDM plans with the assistance of Commuter Services:

The Mall of America

Best Buy

Lifetouch

Optum/United Health Group

Normandale Community College

Cushman Wakefield/NorthMarq

Marriott Hotel at Bloomington Central Station

Bluestem Brands

One Southwest Crossing

Prairie Oaks Corporate Center

Golden Triangle Tech Center

Coram

Windsor Plaza

TownePlace Suites

OATI

Friendship Village

and many others...

Providing Customized Individualized Travel Options to Commuters is a Proven Effective TDM Strategy

Ninety-five percent of the people who work along I-494 drive alone to work according to a study conducted by the I-494 Corridor Commission. In the same study, 30% indicated they are willing to take transit for their commute, another 30% indicated they are open to carpooling to work (but do not know someone to carpool with) and another 30% reported they are interested in bicycling to work.

Upon reviewing the results of the commute behavior study along I-494, the I-494 Corridor Commission hired staff to reach out to employers to assist their commuters with sustainable commute options.

In a typical year, Commuter Services holds 100 – 135 onsite commuter fairs with large to medium sized employers as well as multi-tenant office buildings to reach drive alone commuters to provide them with customized options.

Also in a typical year over 5,500 drive alone commuters switch to using a sustainable commute mode after receiving customized options.

This results in an estimated 56 million vehicle miles avoided as a direct result of our outreach to employers to reach commuters.

In 2018 alone, Commuter Services outreach resulted in the reduction of 23,234 metric tons of CO2 emissions.

It takes 1,161,692 mature trees to reduce the same amount of CO2 emissions.

Additional Effective TDM Strategies

Encourage cities to switch to parking maximums instead of parking minimums.

Encourage apartment and condo developments to unbundle parking so the buyer has the choice to purchase parking.

The “last mile” is a critical consideration for people who want to use transit. Electric scooters that can cross city boundaries, and dockless bikeshare are viable options.