

CarShare Vermont Case Study

Encouraging employers and their employees to adopt sustainable transportation practices

Background

Thanks to funding from the High Meadows Fund, CarShare Vermont recently initiated a new project to encourage the Burlington business community to adopt more sustainable transportation practices. The goals are to:

- 1) increase understanding of the transportation challenges faced by the business community so our group (and our allies) can better address them;
- 2) encourage businesses to reduce vehicle miles traveled, while meeting their own organizational objectives: carbon reduction, employee wellness, cost savings, etc.; and
- 3) recruit at least ten new business members to CarShare Vermont.

In addition to our organization, we will work closely with area transportation service providers and advocates, including the Chittenden County Transportation Authority, Local Motion, Go Vermont, the Campus Area Transportation Management Association (CATMA), the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization, and others.

Target market and behavioral goals

Businesses are an especially important market for our group. The greater Burlington area employs more than 85,000 people, 74% of whom drive alone to work every day. At the same time, our region has the most extensive public transportation in the state, accompanied by a decent bicycle and pedestrian network. We are fortunate to have a truly multi-modal system that can make driving unnecessary much of the time, especially if we can find ways to reduce the need to commute by car.

While our project is aimed at business community broadly, we are honing in on those businesses that *meet some combination of the following criteria*; they:

- are located near a CarShare Vermont pod or a transit route, so they have ready access to transportation services
- require use of vehicles for work travel
- have a shortage of parking near their site
- promote a socially responsible image and agenda

Through a concerted outreach campaign and personalized contact, **we are working to encourage these businesses to adopt sustainable transportation practices and policies**, such as:

- providing alternative transportation benefits in lieu of parking
- using CarShare Vermont for work-related driving needs
- providing bike parking
- offering incentives to encourage alternative commuting

What we've learned so far

Through preliminary market research with a range of businesses, we have confirmed that many employees drive to work not out of necessity but due to inertia. They are accustomed to getting into their cars every day and are hesitant to give up that convenience. Many employees report that they need their cars in case of an emergency—this seems to be more perception than reality. Further, auto travel in and around Burlington is relatively easy and cheap. Consequently, people are not deterred from driving by such impediments as traffic or high parking costs.

From the employers' perspective, we have learned that many businesses are similarly challenged by inertia. Also, many do not understand how much they spend on employee transportation (including parking) and how services such as CarShare Vermont could produce significant savings. General lack of awareness is also a challenge; our market research shows that some businesses know we exist but have no idea how to engage us or combine our services with other modes.

Strategy

Based on our market research, we are developing a tailored CarShare Vermont brochure for businesses. Key informational points include cost savings (with comparisons to similar businesses), environmental benefits, employee benefits, employer benefits, community benefits, and testimonials. We also plan to create an employer guide that outlines how to combine CarShare Vermont with other services, creating an opportunity to cross-market with our partners.

We will soon be hiring a dedicated employee to conduct business-to-business outreach and help implement our own outreach campaign. We believe personalized contact is essential to our effort, as is generating buy-in among key decision-makers. Through this initial convening, we are bringing together our partners in transportation and businesses so that we can all learn from each other; we hope to plant the seeds for ongoing collaboration.

We need your help

Focused questions for discussion at the March 29th event:

1. What do we know about the barriers and motivations for employers to create, promote and manage programs and incentives to encourage employees to change their transportation behavior? We will share what we know from our work to date, but we are also interested in adding your experience and ideas.
2. What can we do to better mobilize employers to act? What are the leverage points? What's the pitch? Can you suggest fresh or enhanced strategies?
3. What indicators can CarShare Vermont use to measure our progress?

Thanks! We look forward to seeing you on March 29th.