



EcoMobility

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Local
Governments
for Sustainability

PRIORITY FOR ECOMOBILITY IN OUR CITIES. A SERIES OF LOCAL STORIES

Portland, Oregon, USA A leader in sustainable development in the United States

Summary: Though the primary mode of transportation for Portland residents is single-occupancy car trips, initiatives by the local government have increased information on alternative transport modes. Approximately 8% of Portland commuters travel by bicycle, which is ten times the national average and the highest proportion of any major U.S. city.

Shifting the pattern in the United States

75% of Portland residents commute by private vehicle, 12% by public transit, 8% by bicycle, and 5% walk. According to a Portland study, people who live in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods make four times as many walking and biking trips, three times as many public transit trips, take overall fewer car trips, and drive fewer miles than those in neighborhoods without walking infrastructure. The United States has been associated with high levels of automobile use, but Portland is overcoming that pattern by developing successful public transportation systems and increasing the quality of life in the city center. As a result, Portland residents travel approximately 17% fewer miles than the national average.

Light rail system leads to urban development

During the 1970s, there were plans to build an expressway through the city of Portland. The community collaborated to have a light rail system for public transit built instead. The introduction of this light rail led to an increase in the number of trips to the city center. The downtown area grew from 5% of the city's total retail to 30% because houses and businesses were built where parking lots would otherwise have been needed. The city has now developed a plan to control outward growth and redirect it towards the city center by ensuring that 85% of all new growth is within a five minute walk of a transit station.



Portland By Cycle rides help people new to cycling get experience they need on the roads

SmartTrips gives residents information for smart travel

In 2002, Portland introduced an initiative called SmartTrips, which aims to reduce drive-alone trips in private vehicles and to increase awareness and raise acceptability of public transportation and cycling. Upon request, residents receive a variety of materials for a program of a chosen mode of transportation. Portland By Cycle is one of these programs. This kit includes a bicycle map of the city and of the resident's neighborhood, a Portland By Cycle Guide with bicycle tips and rules, workshop schedules, a Women on Bikes brochure, a coupon booklet for local businesses, and a t-shirt or umbrella. On request, an Oregon Bicycling Manual, a City of Portland downtown bicycling map, and a bicycle helmet brochure can also be ordered.

Group rides and classes are held so infrequent cyclists can tour parts of the city and learn the best ways to get around on bicycle. A clinic is also held for women on bicycle handling skills, basic maintenance, and how to shop by bike. Thirty percent of area residents have either ordered SmartTrips materials or participated in an event or activity. SmartTrips projects have yielded an annual reduction in drive-alone car trips of 9 to 13%, which translates to a reduction of carbon emissions of 19 million pounds.

An increase in bicycle commuters

Since 1991, Portland has invested \$57 million in bicycle infrastructure. Consequently, the city has witnessed a 10% increase in bicycling every year. The number of workers commuting by bicycle increased 608% between 1990 and 2008. Bikeways have increased 297% from 79 miles in 1991 to 314 miles in 2010. Portland has improved safety for bicyclists by installing colored bike lanes on busy roads and designating right of way to a commuter on bicycle.

In the next decade, the city plans to invest \$100 million with a goal of achieving a bicycle modal share of at least 20%.

Vision for 2040

The city has also established an urban growth strategy that outlines plans for focusing growth in concentrated neighborhoods near public transit stations. Portland aims to reduce vehicle-miles traveled per resident in the metropolitan area by 10% in 20 years and 20% in 30 years. In order for this to be feasible, the city will improve connections of pedestrians and bicyclists to public transit and build more communities focused on public transit.

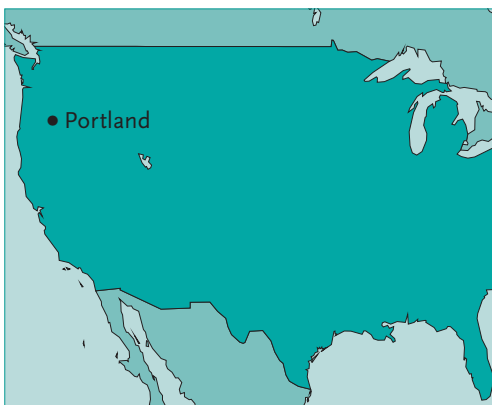


Portland SmartTrips consists of many programs promoting EcoMobility

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“Success is the trip not taken.”

Sam Adams, Mayor of Portland



Portland, USA

The City of Portland is the most populous in Oregon and the third most populous in the Pacific Northwest. The city has a population of 585,000 and the metropolitan area has an estimated population of 2.3 million. The major economic activities in Portland are manufacturing, high technology, and services. Portland is an ICLEI member since July 1991.

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