



Way2Go CLT – Final Report

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Sustain Charlotte is a nonprofit organization helping to advance a region-wide sustainability movement by serving as a catalyst for change. Our mission is to inspire choices that lead to healthy, equitable and vibrant communities across the Charlotte metro region for generations to come.

Relaxation, financial savings, better health, and a renewed sense of adventure were among the numerous benefits reported by many of the more than 1,500 area residents who participated in Sustain Charlotte's Way2Go CLT sustainable transportation challenge in 2017. Between March 1 and October 31, program participants reduced miles driven alone by nearly 600,000.

Participants tracked their miles saved by walking, bicycling, riding public transit, car/vanpooling, and telework/working from home. Some people participated as individuals while others joined teams organized by their neighborhoods, employers, or community organizations.

Each ten trips logged resulted in a chance to win prizes donated by local businesses, including restaurant gift cards, coffee, jewelry, artwork, and more. A trip planning function allowed participants to find bus and rail schedules, bike and walking routes, and cost of different modes of travel between any two locations.

The mean commute time for U.S. workers is 26 minutes one-way ([2012-2016 American Community Survey](#)). Long commutes are associated with generally poorer health outcomes compared to short and active commutes. People with long commutes are more likely to suffer from higher rates of obesity and blood pressure, as well as lower cardiorespiratory fitness. A causal link has been established between elevated psychological stress and even relationship challenges related to long commutes. As traffic congestion increases and the amount of time spent behind the wheel increases, it is reasonable to expect that the overall wellbeing of residents will decline.

Driving alone to work is expensive. Most traditional measures of housing affordability do not include transportation costs. However, the location of one's home is important. A home that is near transportation choices and/or near daily destinations is inherently more affordable than a home that is isolated. In the Charlotte area, the median household spends 51% of their income on combined housing (29%) and transportation (22%) costs. (<https://htaindex.cnt.org/map/>). Congestion cost Charlotte commuters an average of 23 (peak) hours spent in congestion and \$872 in 2017 ([INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard](#)).

The Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) predicts that approximately 250,000 automobiles will accompany the city's 400,000 new residents between now and 2040. Since new residents do not bring new infrastructure with them, it is reasonable to expect that traffic congestion during peak hours will continue to grow unless commuters are offered safe, accessible, and convenient transportation choices.

In 2016, 7.2% of work commutes in Charlotte were taken by foot, bicycle, or transit. CDOT has set a goal to increase this to 10 % by 2040 ([CDOT 2016 Transportation Survey](#)). Many area residents clearly have an appetite to drive less and travel by other modes. In 2016:

- 63.5% would like to drive less.
- 50.7% would like to bicycle more.
- 76.6% would like to walk more.

Way2Go CLT was designed to encourage decreased single occupancy driving for residents regardless of whether they live in an urban, suburban, or rural location. While not all residents live within walking or bicycling distance of their jobs and daily destinations, 56% of Charlotteans live within a 10 minute walk of a public bus stop. For those who are unable to access public transit, carpooling and vanpooling were encouraged.

Identification of Online Platform

The initial approach of trying to have a **custom app** created for the challenge proved cost-prohibitive.

Share The Ride NC (powered by RideShark) was evaluated to determine if it could be customized for the challenge. While it offers users the ability to log trips by any mode and

administrators the ability to set up incentives and challenges, it does not provide the advanced trip planning and real-time app capabilities that were critical to Way2Go CLT.

Sustain Charlotte began communicating with **RideAmigos** staff after finding the platform online and learning that it was popular among large employers. This platform offered several unique benefits that proved valuable to the project, including:

- Commute Tracker app, which allowed participants to automatically log their commutes in real time after installing the app on their iPhone or Android phone.
- Platform's integration of GTFS (General Transit Feed Specification) allowed participants to receive detailed trip planning information and schedules.
- Ability to search for potential carpool partners based on home and work locations.
- Easy setup of monthly challenges and incentives.
- An intuitive dashboard that allowed participants to log trips easily and see their impact in real-time in terms of money saved, greenhouse gas emissions prevented, and calories burned.

Partnership-building

Sustain Charlotte created a list of potential teams in October and November of 2016, approximately five months before the challenge launch date. This allowed time to setup and test the platform, develop marketing materials, plan social media and newsletter outreach, and meet with team leaders to ensure they clearly understood the project.

Particularly for the larger employers and those organizations with multiple locations, they needed several months of lead time to plan for team formation, internal marketing, and in some cases, permission from supervisors.

Participation in Way2Go CLT was open to all individuals and organizations throughout Mecklenburg County and the surrounding counties in North Carolina. Sustain Charlotte recruited new teams through direct emails, at events, at partner presentations, and asked existing teams to tell others in their networks.

Project Marketing

A comprehensive social media and newsletter content plan was created and implemented, including:

- Creation of icons for each mode of transportation and a project logo:



- Creation of a website for the project: myway2goclt.org
- Twice-weekly social media advertisements on Twitter (1,138 followers) and Facebook (2,573 followers).
- Twice-monthly summaries and advertisements in Sustain Charlotte's weekly e-newsletter (circulation of 6,078 people).
- Monthly emails directly to all team leaders and participants to share information about each month's challenge, reminders to log trips, and notification of prize opportunities.
- 10 live updates about Way2Go CLT at Sustain Charlotte's monthly mixers from February – November, including project overview, team rankings, and opportunities for individuals and teams to sign up on the spot.
- 14 presentations to employees at area businesses.
- 11 presentations to residents at area neighborhood associations.
- [Live interview](#) with the project leader on Charlotte Today (March 27).
- Promotions by video and in-person interview with the project leader at a Charlotte Knights game in Uptown Charlotte on August 31.
- 30-second video ad shown on large format screens in Uptown Charlotte to recruit new project participants and remind current participants to log their trips (September 1 – 28; donated by Orange Barrel Media).

The project was marketed with simple and clear reasons for participants to join:

\$360 billion

That's the unsustainable and avoidable global cost of car commuting, including costs to consumers and cities. And that's not even counting:

- Trillions needed for car-related infrastructure improvements
- Health costs of pollution and lack of exercise
- Productivity loss to companies due to staff downtime and stress
- Social costs of segregation and isolation
- The cost of one-person driving is simply too high, so let's change the game.

On the other hand, the **benefits of sustainable mobility are HUGE!**

- Savings: gas, maintenance, more
- Health: vitality, weight, disease
- Community: meet & enjoy people
- Time: read, work, browse, paint
- Carbon: 1 pound for every 1 mile

For commuting, errands and EVERY transportation need, sustainable mobility has become a global trend because it's a better lifestyle choice. And now, it's coming to Charlotte.

This is it. Charlotte is ready to shift gears. The sustainable mobility lifestyle is ready to roll. Let's do this!

Launch Event

Sustain Charlotte hosted a launch event for the media on March 1, 2017 to formally announce the beginning of the project's public involvement. A [media advisory](#) was widely circulated to local and state media outlets. NCDOT's Director of Public Transportation Debbie Collins gave opening remarks. Representatives of each sponsoring organization attended. Sustain Charlotte gave a brief visual presentation of the project's background, goals, and scope.

The launch event was covered extensively by local media, including written stories by the [Charlotte Observer](#), [Charlotte Five](#), [QC Exclusive](#) and the [Charlotte Business Journal](#).

Video coverage of the launch was provided by [WSOC](#).

Incentives and Challenges

For each 10 eligible trips that a participant logged in a calendar month, they received one entry (up to 4 entries per person monthly, which means 40 trips) in a random drawing to win prizes. Participants could log a trip taken by any mode of transportation, but only the following modes allowed them to earn points: walk, bike, transit, carpool, vanpool, telework. Carpooling was defined as having a driver and at least one passenger. Rideshare services (Uber, Lyft, etc.) were not considered eligible as carpooling unless there were at least two passengers.

The monthly prizes ranged in value from \$10 to \$160. Several of the prizes were purchased by Sustain Charlotte, but most were donated by local businesses. Each month, ten prizes (eight small and two large) were featured on the RideAmigos platform, Way2Go CLT website, and in the monthly participant email. The monthly emails reminded participants to log their trips to be eligible for the prize drawing.

Popular prizes included:

- Gift certificates to coffee shops, restaurants, bakeries, gift shops, etc.
- Locally made or locally themed crafts such as artisanal chocolates, glassware, jewelry, kitchenware, art, etc.
- Pairs of tickets and event t-shirts for Sustain Charlotte's Biketoberfest.
- Tickets to outings including the U.S. National Whitewater Center, Charlotte Knights baseball games, museums, etc.
- Annual memberships in Charlotte B-cycle bike share.

Each monthly challenge ran for a calendar month, with the exception of the Clean Commute Challenge which ran for two months. Participants were given a "catch up period" of three to five days following the last day of each month to log all trips taken in the previous month.

To select winners, the project team first downloaded a list of all participants at the end of the month and sorted out those who had met eligibility requirements. Both the eligible participants and the prizes were assigned consecutive numbers. Then, Microsoft Excel's random number generator was used to objectively match prizes to winners. Each prize winner was notified by email to arrange for pickup or delivery of their prize.

Teams

Over 100 teams registered and participated in Way2Go. They represented large and small businesses, neighborhoods, nonprofit organizations, colleges, community groups, and groups of friends.

See Appendix for a full list of teams.

Project Results and Impact

A total of 569,977 trips were logged by participants between March 1 and October 31, 2017. The environmental, health, and financial benefits were clearly measurable:

- 141 tons of greenhouse gas emissions prevented (equivalent to taking 23 cars off the road)
- 5 million calories burned
- \$140,000 in gas money saved

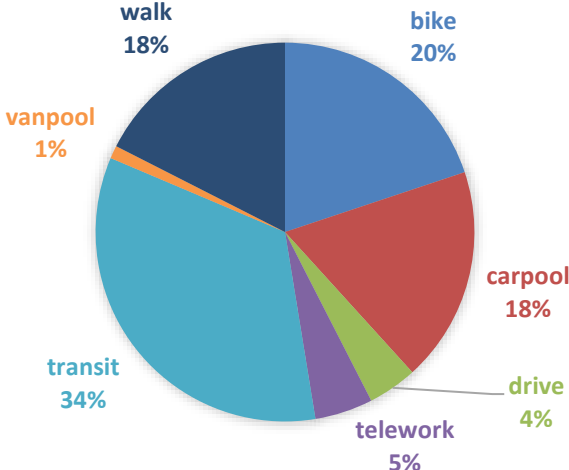
Modes logged by miles and number of trips

As shown in the graph and figures below, transit trips accounted for the most miles: 42%, or 241,631 miles. Walking trips accounted for the fewest miles: 2%, or 13,324. However, trips taken on foot were 18% of the overall trip count. 8% of total miles were covered by bike, but bike trips were 20% of total trips. This is not surprising, given the much larger distances that can be taken by transit relative to walking or bicycling.

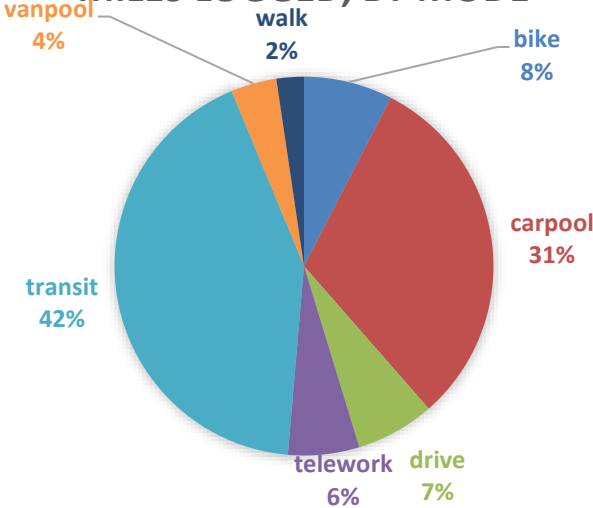
This pattern of low mileage but fairly high mode share for walking and bicycling underscores the importance of active transportation as part of an urban Transportation Demand Management plan. Each of these shorter trips by bike and foot meant one less trip taken by single occupancy driving, often in highly congested areas like Center City Charlotte and at high-demand times of day, like lunchtime.

| | bike | carpool | drive | telework | transit | vanpool | walk | | Total |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|--|--------------|
| Miles: | 43,263 | 176,485 | 38,364 | 34,646 | 241,631 | 22,264 | 13,324 | | 569,977 |
| % of Total: | 8% | 31% | 7% | 6% | 42% | 4% | 2% | | |
| Trips: | 10,507 | 9,718 | 2,224 | 2,616 | 17,949 | 583 | 9,255 | | 52,852 |
| % of Total: | 20% | 18% | 4% | 5% | 34% | 1% | 18% | | |

TRIPS LOGGED, BY MODE



MILES LOGGED, BY MODE



Individual Experiences, Collective Impact

As part of Sustain Charlotte's promotional efforts, Way2Go CLT participants were asked to highlight how the project has improved their lives. Participants shared photos and stories of how the challenge helped them save money, become more active, relax, and have fun.

Here are a few examples:

Kecia B. shared, "I am very passionate about riding my 65X Express bus to work! I've ridden the 65X Express bus for almost 5 years now and it has changed my life! Not only do I save on gas and adding miles to my car, I am no longer stressed out from driving in traffic when I get to work or by the time I get home. I just sit back and let my CATS bus driver deal with traffic!"

Alexander B. discovered the value of a new way of commuting: "I think this challenge is really great because people do need a little encouragement to convince them to try a cleaner commute. I think once you try transit or carpooling you see how easy and worthwhile it is. I think one overlooked advantage of transit is avoiding the stress of rush hour traffic. I can spend my commute reading, listening to music, or just looking out the window. It's time in the morning to gather my thoughts before work and time in the afternoon to unwind and decompress."

Melanie T. enjoys the financial savings and adventure of walking to work: "I enjoy my walk commute to work. I get to look at all the new things being built around the city as well as enjoy our beautiful city. I try to walk different routes to take it all in! You don't get to see things like that when you are driving since you go by so much faster. It takes me just as long to drive to work as it does to walk plus it saves me a TON of money not having to pay for parking. I have friends that live and work uptown and drive to work and to me that is just crazy!"

More participant stories and photos are available at the [Stories + News page](#).

Key Takeaways

Throughout the project, staff noted what worked well and identified areas for improvement. These notes are intended to help other organizations that are considering a similar program.

- Begin forming teams well in advance of the launch date. Larger employers in particular need several months of lead time to secure institutional permissions and advance project marketing to internal teams.
- Identify and confirm a team leader (ideally 2 or 3 people). Clearly explain time commitments and roles.
- Offer a variety of small prizes (\$10 - \$25 value) and one or two larger prizes (\$50 - \$100) per month.
- Communicate with participants via email and social media. Keep communications concise and clear!

- Recognize the limitations of the Commute Tracker app and clearly explain them to participants. Even with good communication from the project team, not all users will use the app properly. This results in under-reporting of miles as trips go unlogged.
 - The app *only* logs trips between home and work (or any set of two points). Participants need to log any non-commute trips via the RideAmigos dashboard.
 - The app is linked to each user's account by a unique code. It was found that the app occasionally disconnects from the user's account. Because the app's logging of trips is so automated, a participant may not even be aware when their app is disconnected and their trips aren't being logged.

The Challenge Continues

The initiative's main funding came through a one year grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation through an effort to support pilot projects that will reduce vehicles on the road.

Sustain Charlotte staff met several times during the grant period with TDM staff from the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) to discuss co-promotion of Way2Go CLT and determine how it could continue as a permanent sustainable transportation challenge. Way2Go CLT was so successful that CATS adopted the platform after Sustain Charlotte's grant period ended in October. New participants can join the challenge and begin logging trips at way2goclt.com.

Appendix: List of teams

Employers:

- Duke Energy
- Bank of America
- BCBSNC
- Crown Town Compost
- Shook Kelley, Inc.
- Kimley-Horn
- Optima Engineering
- S&D Coffee and Tea
- TIAA
- NC Velo Bicycles
- Birdsong Brewing Co.
- Wells Fargo
- Alta Planning + Design
- CLT Airport
- Bicycle Sport
- Bike Source Team
- The Bike Gallery
- Uptown Cycles
- Moore & Van Allen
- Childress Klein
- Epic Capital Wealth Management
- HDR
- Bike Law
- Javesca Coffee
- Yellow Duck Marketing
- The Center for Intentional Leadership
- A3 Charlotte
- Gensler
- Northwood Office
- Duff-Norton
- AECOM
- Harper Corporation of America
- PSNC Energy
- Sherpa
- ai Design Group
- New Dominion Bank
- Geosyntec

- CCL Label
- Choice Translating
- Carolinas Healthcare System
- Carolinas Healthcare System Northeast
- Xylem Inc.
- Red Ventures
- National Gypsum
- Verdani Partners
- Protiviti
- Sealed Air
- MSC Industrial Supply

Neighborhoods:

- Third Ward
- First Ward
- Friends of Fourth Ward
- South End
- Colonial Village
- Sedgefield
- Yorkmont
- NoDa
- Villa Heights
- Plaza Midwood
- Cotswold
- Mallard Grove HOA
- Belmont
- Chantilly
- Prosperity Village
- Windsor Park Neighborhood
- Providence Pointe
- Madison Park
- Elizabeth Neighborhood
- Dilworth Neighborhood
- Thornhill Neighborhood
- MoRA - Monroe Road Advocates
- Plaza-Shamrock

Government:

- Mecklenburg County Government
- Charlotte Department of Transportation

- Charlotte Neighborhood and Business Services
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Storm Water Services
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Department
- LUESA (Land Use and Environmental Services Agency)
- City of Charlotte

Organizations:

- Sustain Charlotte
- AARP
- Safe Alliance
- QueenCity Bicycles Crank Mafia
- NoDa Run Club
- Carolina Thread Trail & Catawba Lands Conservancy
- Back Creek Presbyterian Church
- Run For Your Life
- Inline Charlotte
- Sierra Club - Central Piedmont Group
- Gavin's Charlotte Team
- Centralina Council of Governments
- U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)
- 30 Days of Biking
- Discovery Place
- Envision Charlotte

Academia:

- University of North Carolina Charlotte (UNCC)
- Wildcats Ditching Their Cars (Davidson College)
- Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC)

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) Express Routes:

- West & Northwest CATS Express Bus Routes 85x, 88x
- South & Southwest CATS Express Bus Routes 41x, 45x, 61x, 62x, 82x
- North & Northeast CATS Express Routes 48x, 53x, 54x, 77x, 80x
- Southeast CATS Express Bus Routes 40x, 46x, 52x, 64x, 65x, 74x