

DOWNTOWN: On the go!

A Program of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, City of Tacoma, & Pierce Transit

Transportation in Tacoma for the 21st Century Brown Bag Lunch & Interactive Discussion with Tacoma's Transportation Policy-makers

Volume 1, Issue 3

November 2009

YOU'RE INVITED:

Brown Bag Lunch & Interactive Discussion

Friday, Nov. 13th, 2009
12:00pm
Simpson Room
Tacoma Chamber
950 Pacific Ave.

RSVP...

andrew@transportationchoices.org



As we plan for the future of our transportation system, Tacoma and the South Sound face many tough decisions.

How do parking policies affect the city's goal to activate the streets with people and commerce? How do we extend the Tacoma Streetcar system? How do we reshape Pierce Transit's bus system? How does the City best connect regionally? How can we plan for a multimodal future?

To get at these answers and more, The Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, the City of Tacoma, Transportation Choices Coalition, Cross District Association, Tacoma Wheelmen, and others will host a brown bag lunch and interactive discussion with Tacoma's transportation policy-makers, including:

Eric Anderson, City Manager, City of Tacoma
Lynn Griffith, CEO, Pierce Transit
Ric Ilgenfritz, Planning Director, Sound Transit
David Hiller, Advocacy Director, Cascade Bicycle Club

Open to all—bring your lunch and your questions!

Did you know?

- On October 1st, Tacoma's candidates for mayor and council faced off in a debate on transportation and land use issues. The debate can be watched by Click! Cable TV customers through Click! On Demand until election day. Simply go to the "Free Click! Local" area of On Demand and you'll find it in the area: "South Sound Specials". If you are not a Click! customer but would like to watch the debate, DVD's are available for purchase for \$5. Email juliap@tacomachamber.org for more information.

Upcoming Events

Pierce County General Election

Tuesday, November 3rd
Access election info on Pierce County's election website.

Pierce Transit ReDesign Workshops

Nov. 2, 6-7:30pm ~ Puyallup
Nov. 10, 6-7:30pm ~ Sumner/Bonney Lake
Nov. 12, 7-8:30pm ~ North & West Tacoma
www.Pttomorrow.org for more info.

Conversations Re: Tacoma Series

October 12th @ 6:30pm
UWT—Carwein Hall, Keystone Bldg.
Register at www.retacoma.com.

Tacoma Transportation for the 21st Century

Brown Bag Lunch Discussion
Friday, November 13th @ 12:00pm
Simpson Room, Chamber of Commerce
See article pg. 1

The Downtown: On the Go! *Transportation Partnership* What is it? Who is it?

The *Transportation Partnership*, the counterpart to the Downtown: On the Go! Program, is a collaborative effort between the City of Tacoma, the Tacoma Chamber, Pierce Transit and 22 downtown Tacoma business/organization leaders and managers.

Through a collective voice, the Partnership seeks to identify and advocate for viable solutions to the parking and transportation challenges facing downtown businesses and commuters. Members of the partnership have agreed to meet monthly, working together on commute trip reduction strategies that will increase to 35% the number of employees using alternate (meaning non-single occupancy vehicle) commute options: transit, walking, biking, telecommuting, and car/vanpooling.

Transportation Partnership partners include the following (feel free to pat management on the back for their involvement):

Franciscan Health Systems
Downtown Merchants Group
CH2M HILL
Brown & Brown Insurance
Tacoma School District
BCRA
Neil Walter Company
Colliers International
Multicare
Regence BlueShield
Russell Investments
Propel Insurance
BLRB Architects
Hotel Murano
Simon Johnson LLC
Columbia Bank
O'Connor and Associates
True Blue Inc.
Eisenhower & Carlson, PLLC
Group Health Cooperative
DaVita Inc.
University of Washington Tacoma

The Food Commute

Challenge Yourself to *Eat Local* at Thanksgiving!

We don't often think about our food "commuting" to get to our plate, but it certainly does, and more than you probably commute in one month. According to the Worldwatch Institute, food travels between 1,500 and 2,500 from farm to table, a concept commonly called "food miles". If you consider that this average applies to each item on your plate (e.g. meat, broccoli, potatoes, fruit), and that it takes additional energy to preserve this food for its long commute (i.e. fertilizer and preservatives), that is *a lot* of carbon emissions produced and energy used.

What can be done? Quite a bit actually, and with just a bit of effort. Shopping at local farmer's markets (the Saturday Proctor market runs until November 21st, and Tacoma's other two markets return next May) is great start. Alternatively, you can buy direct from local farms, especially those that offer Community Supported Agriculture, or grocers that are committed to buying local whenever possible.



Unsure how to start? Begin with Thanksgiving!

Challenge yourself to "Eat Local at Thanksgiving" and fill your plate with local food (or at least a local turkey). Pledge to do so, find local farmers, and learn more at www.pugetsoundfresh.org/eatlocal. You will notice the difference in taste, will reduce carbon emissions, and will impress your family with your commitment to local farmers!

Additional Resources:

Eat Wild's *Pastured Products Directory* offers information on local farms growing turkeys and other meats. Check out their website: www.eatwild.com/products/washington.html

WSU Small Farms Team offers a statewide list of farms that grow specific foods. Check out their farm selection website: http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/farms/locate_search.asp

www.pugetsoundfresh.org/eatlocal

Community Engagement on the Bus

A Commuter's Story (submitted anonymously)

While riding my occasional bus home with my son, a woman using a cane for guidance boarded the bus and sat behind us. My son, transfixed by the cane, blatantly stared as only a young child can.

The woman, sensing his gaze, immediately sat up and began to explain the reason for the cane, how it was used, and allowed him to touch and experiment with its ability to fold and unfold. I watched as my son, only three years old, asked questions I thought him unable to ask at such a young age. And, I watched as a concept previously unknown to him became clear—sometimes people do not have eyesight.

Most importantly, I watched as he engaged with someone in the community he most likely would have never known. The bus provided that opportunity for him, and provides that opportunity for me on a regular basis. I get to smile at, talk to, and many times assist or be assisted by people in my community, and in such an unlikely place.

So yes, the bus takes longer, and no, I do not take it everyday. But when I do, I never regret the extra time. It's time to keep in touch with a world beyond myself, my work, my concerns... and on more than one occasion, it has provided me with a memorable experience that could never have happened alone in my car.

The Alternate Commute Case Study: Regence Blue-Shield's Telecommute Program

While the development and implementation of a telecommute program can at first seem overwhelming to a business endeavoring to do so, this alternative work arrangement offers a significant return on investment when implemented well.

Regence-Blue Shield knows the success of telework all too well. A leader in telework among downtown Tacoma businesses and beyond, 500 of their 6,300 employees across four Western states work remotely. Their program informally began in the late 90s, and eventually grew into a formal program with three telework options: full-time telecommuter, part-time telecommuter, and remote, which allows exempt employees to work from home when snowbound, ill, or in need of a quiet environment.

Regence (in line with many, many scholarly studies) has found that telework increases employee productiv-

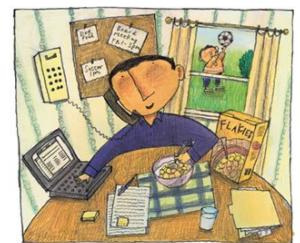
ity and morale. As well, full-time teleworkers bring with them the cost-savings perk of not having to maintain additional office space.

Regence knows that telework is not for every employee, and stresses that it should be portrayed not as an employee benefit, but as an alternate work arrangement. Employees chosen for telework should have the desire to work from home, the discipline to do so, and be outgoing and engaged enough to stay connected to the company despite their remote work location. Their prior performance should indicate potential for future telework success, and clear performance expectations, monitoring, and communication should be arranged between managers and their telecommuting employees.

Telework success has prompted Regence to expand and improve its telework program, and they expect to

invest even more into home office technology. As Connie Schwepe of Regence notes, "Creating a virtual team where everyone can participate equally via conference calls, etc. is a challenge that we hope to mitigate with collaborative meeting tools and other technologies."

If you are interested in the potential for a telework program in your business, please contact juliap@tacomachamber.org for resources and additional support from Downtown: On the Go!



101 Reasons to Kick Your Car to the Curb

Reason #3: Sprawl



Cars have many advantages over other forms of transportation. They move from point A to B faster than most other modes (when congestion is not a consideration) and therefore offer the flexibility to live farther away from the necessities of daily living—work sites, grocery stores, banks, schools, etc.

But the ability to live farther and farther away from the city center, whether because of the desire to get out of the city or the need to find affordable housing, comes with significant disadvantages. Aside from reduced air quality and increased carbon emissions, one detrimental consequence of the car compromises the economic success of our urban core and significantly impacts our natural environment like no other—SPRAWL, defined as low-density, auto dependent, and many times exclusionary residential and commercial development.

The negative externalities of cars go well beyond those concerning emissions. Cars enable and exacerbate sprawl, and sprawl leads to land degradation, loss of resource and farm lands, storm water pollution due to increased amounts of pavement, income disparities, and extensive costs due to infrastructure installation and maintenance. These should not be forgotten when discussing why we need to get people out of their vehicles (and not just into electric cars).



It all began with the Sunday drive... urbanites leaving the cities to “get away” for the day. As developers realized the profit potential in untapped lands just beyond the urban border, they pandered to the desire of many city dwellers to live away from work and the perceived ills of urban life. For the first time, city

residents lined up to purchase “suburban” homes... homes less urban, not fully pastoral, yet with access to the benefits of both.

Over time, additional factors exacerbated the suburban phenomenon—crime, underperforming schools, racism, and homeownership and auto subsidies combined to push city populations further from the dwindling center. More and more suburbs formed, many now decaying inner ring suburbs bordered by even farther reaching outer ring suburbs.

“For the first time, wherever you go, it seems that the city is still there.”
-Dr. Mohammed Taher al-Sadek

The car and its seemingly endless energy source enabled this sprawl, offering the luxury to extend beyond city boundaries and well beyond necessary and predicted expansion due to population growth.

In the Puget Sound area, sprawl is present around major cities, though not as dramatically as in other states thanks in part to Washington’s Growth Management Act. While the GMA does offer some protection, it merely mandates boundaries for growth and requires agencies to plan accordingly. Within that boundary, it is largely up to counties and cities to work together to protect their natural resource and farm lands from sprawl. And as with any large-scale inter-agency effort, the difficulty of coordination and the property tax dollars incentive does not effectively inhibit sprawl 100% of the time.

We have all mourned the loss of a farm or wood to yet another strip mall. At some point, however, we have to ask ourselves how we as individuals make it stop. And one very good way is to recognize that owning a car, even an electric car, does not mean that an hour drive from suburbia goes without consequences—consequences such as sprawl that significantly impact the natural and physical environments around us.



DOWNTOWN: On the go!

Have an alternate commute success story you would like to share? How about a poem, limerick, or otherwise creative tidbit tied to transportation? Email juliap@tacomachamber.org and your story may be published in next month’s newsletter!

The Downtown: On the Go! Program

The Downtown: On the Go! Program is an active partnership between the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, the City of Tacoma, and Pierce Transit. Leveraging their resources and relationships, these organizations work together with employers, commuters, and the Downtown: On The Go! Transportation Partnership of 22 businesses to promote alternate commuting options. Together they aim to keep downtown Tacoma moving efficiently, growing in economic vitality, and improving in air quality.

In addition to the programs available through Pierce Transit, the Chamber offers resources and incentives specific to Downtown commuters and businesses. From informational presentations, individualized employee/employer consultations, commuter rewards, socials, and more, the Downtown: On The Go! Program supports you in exploring your commute options!



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