

# WAY TO GO, SEATTLE! PROGRAM EVALUATION

Innovative neighborhood-based trip reduction projects to create a more efficient transportation system.



Many of the projects provide direct net economic benefits, considering readily measurable impacts such as congestion and facility cost savings. In addition, these projects help achieve broader strategic objectives as well as positively expose residents of Seattle and beyond to the benefits of neighborhood-based trip reduction.

These evaluations and recommendations are provided by Victoria Transport Policy Institute and CH2M HILL.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Way to Go, Seattle!** is a trip reduction initiative intended to make the city more livable by helping citizens make smart transportation choices. It is an umbrella of several diverse and innovative programs that include the Way to Go, One-Less-Car project, which provides participating households financial incentives to give up an extra car; the Roosevelt High School transportation demand management project; travel management programs at the U-District and Wallingford shopping districts; and grants for events such as Way to Go to the Zoo.

## FINDINGS

This study concludes that the types of projects undertaken and sponsored by **Way to Go, Seattle!** can help address a variety of specific problems including traffic and parking congestion, consumer costs, road and parking facility costs, safety, and pollution. This evaluation found that many of the projects provide direct net economic benefits, considering readily measurable impacts such as congestion and facility cost savings. In addition, these projects help achieve broader strategic goals, including improved mobility options, equity, community development, and environmental objectives, as well as providing positive exposure to residents of Seattle and beyond.

These programs can be viewed as a test marketing campaign for transportation choices. Most successful business enterprises depend on marketing to determine consumer needs and preferences, create appropriate products, test new approaches, provide useful information to consumers, and highlight the benefits of particular products. **Way to Go, Seattle!** is part of the region's innovative efforts to create a more efficient transportation system, and is a model that is already being used by other jurisdictions.

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## Way to Go, Seattle!

projects have saved an estimated 152,200 trips to date for what it would cost to build half a lane-mile of urban arterial (paving, curb, gutter and drainage).

The City is in a position to maintain its leadership role in the area of neighborhood trip reduction.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Seattle should continue to implement innovative transportation demand management programs when they are cost effective in terms of direct net economic benefits. In addition, the City should continue to try new transportation demand management programs and marketing strategies as long as there continue to be effective results and community interest. The basic message should be that typical Seattle households can reduce their vehicle ownership and use, and will be better off as a result. Community-based marketing campaigns such as **Way to Go, Seattle!** must continually use fresh approaches and methods. New strategies should be tried each year which reinforce the basic message.

## PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are specific recommendations regarding the existing **Way to Go, Seattle!** projects.

### A. Way to Go, One-Less-Car

*A project that offered financial incentives and information to help citizens reduce overall automobile use, try other transportation options, and rethink the way they use their cars.*

This project appears to be an excellent way to convey the message that typical Seattle households can reduce their automobile ownership and use, and be better off overall as a result. The two projects were well received by participants and the public, and resulted in a surprising number of households giving up an extra car. Unit costs of the project are likely to decline over time with greater experience.

#### Recommendations

- Continue program as long as there are motivated partners and the program meets City goals and provides cost-effective results.
- Develop a formal research plan to ensure data collection quality and consistency.
- Test different combinations of incentives and demographic groups (underway).
- Continue to develop resources that all households can use (not just participants) to make transportation choices.

### B. Way to Go, Roosevelt High School Trip Reduction

*An incentive, education, and promotion pilot program designed to inform high school students about transportation choices and encourage them to carpool, bicycle, walk, and take transit.*

This project appears to do a good job of identifying and responding to high school students' transportation needs and preferences. The project provided direct benefits to participants (improved transportation options), it helped young people develop less automobile-dependent transportation habits which may continue in future years, and it helped establish a precedence for similar programs at other schools.

#### Recommendations

- Continue to expand program to other schools where conditions are suitable.
- Continue to develop partnerships with the Seattle School District, King County, Metro, and retailers to distribute investment and support expansion.

- Use demonstration project findings to develop transportation demand management programs that encourage students, teachers, staff, and parents to make smart transportation choices.
- Develop a formal research plan to ensure data collection quality and consistency.
- Encourage schools, the School District, and their contractors to investigate employee and client transportation needs and preferences, and find ways to support the use of alternative transportation.

**C. U-District Access Package and  
D. Wallingford Tools for Small Business**

*Neighborhood business district-based projects that provide tools for employers to reduce automobile use by their employees and customers.*

These are two examples of trip reduction projects that have the potential of providing significant benefits. Both target commercial districts with significant traffic and parking congestion problems, and where local environmental quality has important commercial value. They also provide direct benefits to participants.

However, neither project has been very successful at reducing automobile use, nor have they provided a strong marketing message that is likely to reduce automobile travel by non-participants.

**Recommendations**

- Improve programs by creating standard transportation demand management program guidelines and resources suitable for any commercial center.
- Encourage and support a full range of travel options (walking, cycling, ridesharing, transit, and telework).
- Integrate programs with parking management plans, pedestrian improvements, and commercial area marketing.
- Ensure that program implementation resources are adequate. Consider implementing a Transportation Management Association (TMA) model at these and other commercial centers.

**E. Way to Go, Car Smart Earth Day**

*A promotional event in conjunction with Earth Day to educate Seattle residents on transportation choices and encourage them to try an alternative to the automobile.*

This program is intended to encourage residents to try transit and submit innovative transportation improvement ideas. It is difficult to determine what effect it had on residents’ attitudes or travel behavior, but the relatively modest response suggests that its impacts are small. This may indicate that more resources and new strategies are needed for this type of broad education effort.

**Recommendations**

- Test new activities and materials with potentially broad public appeal that convey a positive message about reduced automobile use, and information on how it can be done.
- Emphasize both community benefits and direct benefits (health, financial, and livability) to participants.

**F. Way to Go, Car Smart Communities Grants**

*Grants that let community members implement their own ideas to reduce neighborhood traffic, from bicycling and walking guides, to event-related promotions, to special transportation services.*

This program included a variety of grants supporting a wide range of activities. It is difficult to provide a detailed conclusion about the value of each grant project, because they have diverse goals and methods, and several have yet to be completed.

**Recommendations**

- Continue this program largely unchanged in the way projects qualify and are selected.
- Incorporate explicit objectives concerning what messages and transportation changes are desired in order to improve project effectiveness.
- Continue to be flexible in scope and ready with support so that innovative projects can be implemented.
- Establish a more rigorous and structural benefit calculation methodology to improve the reliability of reporting.

Investments in the **Way to Go, Seattle!** program will leverage additional savings in trip reduction, unlike investments in roadway widening which will produce residual costs, such as parking, air and water pollution, and vehicle operating costs.

## FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Funding decisions are difficult to make considering the diverse nature of project concepts and benefits. Generally, the City should direct available funding toward trip reduction projects that return the highest benefit for the cost invested (highest benefit/cost ratio) or best address community objectives. If available funding for the **Way to Go, Seattle!** program were reduced, benefit/cost performance should be considered first and projects that also directly fulfill community objectives should receive priority. It is important that the City continue funding the program to maintain the ongoing benefits that many of these projects offer and to receive the positive response it merits as a national leader in this area.

If additional funding is available for this program, the City should invest in expanding those projects that return the highest benefit and focus on improving the benefit/cost performance of promising and popular but under-performing projects. Improvement can be made in most cases through better planning, promotion, and execution – all of which can be addressed through additional staff resource commitment to the program. Additional funding can also be used to expand program capacity to support more projects throughout the city. One very promising note for the program is its proven ability to attract grant funding to augment the City’s investment.

The recommended project priorities listed here reflect the results of the evaluation. The City should consider these priorities when deciding whether to continue existing projects and in attempting to replicate successful grant projects.

### Recommended Priority Projects

Prioritized order based on Benefit/Cost and Qualitative Ratings.

- Way to Go, One-Less-Car
- Way to Go, High School Trip Reduction (*Roosevelt High School*)
- Way to Go, Special Event Promotions (*Way to Go to the Zoo*)
- Way to Go, Neighborhood Business District Projects (*U District Access Route 74*)
- Way to Go, Bicycle Education (*Bike-to-Shop*)

Three scenarios are proposed for the City’s consideration, as shown on the following page.

### Scenarios for City Consideration

The following is a summary of scenarios proposed for the City’s consideration.

Scenario	Associated Costs
1. Maintain Existing Programs (150,000 direct trips reduced)	\$335,000
2. Expand Programs to Meet Citywide Demand (100,000 direct trips reduced)	\$410,000
3. Continue Leadership - New Innovative Projects (130,000 direct trips reduced in new markets)	\$700,000

For the near term, the second scenario is recommended with additional pursuit of grants to fund innovative pilot projects. Under this scenario, there is the potential to double the number of trips directly reduced to over 100,000 which would equate to over 1,000,000 vehicle miles in direct reductions. New innovative projects, which are recommended in the third scenario, should be pursued in any event if grant funding can be secured. These would provide additional opportunity to reduce 20,000 to 30,000 annual trips in new markets.

These costs represent total costs and not net additional costs for the projects. A broader education program modeled on Seattle’s successful recycling effort would require significantly more resources. Determining actual net additional costs would require further staff capacity for the second and third scenarios. Additional outside consulting and resources would also be required to support program expansion.

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION

To improve the evaluation of future **Way To Go, Seattle!** programs, a standardized data collection and analysis framework should be adopted. A standard form with a simple “user guide” should be developed to help program managers collect data. This would allow better planning and management while projects are underway, as well as improved evaluation after they are completed.

### STUDY METHODOLOGY

The report that accompanies this Executive Summary describes the results of a detailed evaluation of the **Way to Go, Seattle!** program, as well as projects and their results as of March 2002. Results for projects still underway were estimated or projected.

The study uses a benefit-cost framework to evaluate impacts that can be quantified and measured in monetary units, such as program costs, congestion reduction benefits, consumer cost savings, facility cost savings, increased traffic safety, and reduced pollution. A benefit-cost ratio value was developed for each project to determine its net value to society. More qualitative evaluation criteria—such as economic development, equity, and whether transferable knowledge was gained—were evaluated using a five-point rating system, based on how well each project satisfied the objectives we presented in the qualitative criteria.

### Evaluation Criteria and Definitions

The following is a list of criteria used in the evaluation process:

Quantitative (Benefit-Cost)	Qualitative
Program Costs	Participant Mobility Impacts
Participant Financial Benefits and Costs	Community Objectives
Transportation Impacts	Economic Development
Vehicle and Pedestrian Congestion	Equity Impacts
Roadway Costs	Stakeholder Response
Parking Costs	Public response
Safety, Security and Health	Lessons Learned
Energy and Emissions	

**1. Total Miles Reduced** - These are reduced vehicle miles resulting from the project, including *direct reductions* by participants during the terms of the project, *ongoing reductions* by participants due to their experience with the program, and *indirect reductions* by non-participants who respond to information and resources provided by the program.

**2. Total Costs** - This includes project administrative costs, financial incentives and grants, and any expenses by other government agencies to support the project.

**3. Total Benefits** - This is the sum of estimated monetized benefits (benefits that can be measured in monetary units).

**4. Benefit/Cost Ratio** - This is the ratio between benefits and costs. A ratio greater than one indicates that total project benefits exceed total costs.

**5. Participant Mobility Impacts** - These are changes to participants’ travel, including improved mobility options (such as better walking and cycling, and improved ridesharing and transit services), and changes in travel patterns that result from project incentives. Since these projects are optional and rely on positive incentives, participants will only change their travel patterns when they are better off overall as a result.

**6. Community Objectives** - This refers to whether a project supports community strategic planning objectives, such as improved transportation options, reduced automobile dependency, reduced vehicle traffic, equity objectives, and urban neighborhood redevelopment.

**7. Economic Development** - This refers to whether a project tends to increase regional employment, business activity, redevelopment, and other economic development objectives.

**8. Equity Impacts** - This refers to whether a strategy tends to help achieve a community’s equity objectives, including increased fairness, and whether it tends to benefit disadvantaged groups.

**9. Stakeholder Response** - This refers to the feedback received from participants, affected businesses, program staff, and anybody else directly involved in the project.

**10. Public Response** - This refers to the response to the project by the general public, news media, and public officials.

**11. Lessons Learned** - This refers to the quality of knowledge gained by the project, and its transferability to other applications.

## EVALUATION RESULTS

Three of the six **Way to Go, Seattle!** projects yield net benefits as analyzed. The three projects that evaluated to less than a benefit-cost ratio of 1.0 were the Wallingford Tools for Small Business, Car Smart Earth Day, and the Car Smart Communities Grants. The Car Smart Communities Grants project, however, consisted of 22 individual projects, many of which scored well above 1.0 in terms of benefit-cost (8 of 22), while others scored low because they are not yet complete so their full benefits have not yet been counted. Two of the projects (Way to Go, One-Less-Car; Roosevelt High School) evaluated extremely well against qualitative criteria.

It is estimated that the **Way to Go, Seattle!** projects reduced more than 1,522,000 vehicle miles traveled over the period evaluated, which ranged from 15 to 24 months depending on the project, or about 152,200 trips (assuming 10-mile average-length trips). This is comparable to the annual traffic carried by an urban arterial lane. The \$630,000 program benefit is comparable to the cost of building one lane-mile of urban arterial roadway. However, there is a big difference in ongoing benefits and costs: arterial widening and increased driving leverage additional costs (parking, pollution, traffic accidents, barrier effect, vehicle operating costs, etc.), while trip reduction leverages additional savings in those same categories.

### Key to Qualitative Rating Scale

- Provides most positive impact
- ◐ Decreasing degree of impact
- ◑ Provides no or negative impact

### Evaluation Results Summary

The following table is a summary of results for each of the criteria against which the projects were evaluated.

PROJECT	1. Total Miles Reduced	2. Total Costs	3. Total Quantitative Benefits	4. Benefit/Cost Ratio	5. Participant Mobility Impacts	6. Community Objectives	7. Economic Development	8. Equity Impacts	9. Stakeholder Response	10. Public Response	11. Lessons Learned
A. Way to Go, One-Less-Car	855,700	\$65,000	\$413,000	6.4	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●
B. Roosevelt H.S. Trip Reduction	128,300	\$108,020	\$113,700	1.1	◐	◐	◑	●	●	●	●
C. U-District Access Package	45,000	\$10,400	\$28,000	2.7	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐
D. Wallingford Tools for Small Business	1,250	\$9,050	\$4,000	0.4	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐
E. Car Smart Earth Day	5,000	\$8,750	\$8,000	0.9	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐
F. Car Smart Communities Grants*	179,227	\$162,100	\$67,200	0.4	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐

\* Summary – Detail for individual project benefit, cost, and qualitative ratings provided on next page.

## Car Smart Communities Grants Summary

The following table includes detail for the individual Car Smart Communities Grants projects.

PROJECT	1. Total Miles Reduced	2. Total Costs	3. Total Quantitative Benefits	4. Benefit/Cost Ratio	5. Participant Mobility Impacts	6. Community Objectives	7. Economic Development	8. Equity Impacts	9. Stakeholder Response	10. Public Response	11. Lessons Learned
F1. Fremont Bike/Ped Map	4,320	\$5,000	\$1,800	0.4							
F2. CarLess In Wedgewood Brochure/Map	2,592	\$1,600	\$1,100	0.7							
F3. View Ridge Bus Brochure/Map	1,944	\$1,700	\$800	0.5							
F4. Way To Go Seattle Documentary	1,080	\$5,600	\$400	0.1							
F5. Softball VanPooling	3,750	\$1,500	\$2,000	1.3							
F6. Bike-to-Shop	10,800	\$2,600	\$4,600	1.8							
F7. Bike-to-Shop 2	4,100	\$4,700	\$1,400	0.3							
F8. Summer Bike Camps	16,329	\$5,000	\$6,800	1.4							
F9. Explore 44 Directory	6,480	\$5,000	\$2,700	0.5							
F10. Car-Free Fremont 1	6,500	\$3,000	\$2,200	0.7							
F11. Danskin Shuttle 2001	4,320	\$1,000	\$1,800	1.8							
F12. Route 74 Promotion	14,266	\$5,000	\$5,900	1.2							
F13. Way to Go Zoo 1	6,480	\$2,500	\$2,400	1.0							
F14. Way to Go Zoo 2	35,640	\$5,000	\$13,200	2.6							
F15. Way to Go Zoo 3	3,456	\$5,000	\$1,500	0.3							
F16. Ballard Walking Guide	6,480	\$3,500	\$2,400	0.7							
F17. Car-Free Fremont 2	1,350	\$5,000	\$600	0.1							
F18. Burke Gilman Trail Signs	7,000	\$3,750	\$2,400	0.6							
F19. Danskin Shuttle 2002	4,320	\$5,000	\$1,800	0.4							
F20. Columbia City Bike/Ped Map	7,776	\$5,000	\$3,300	0.7							
F21. Youth Ventures Bike Club	10,800	\$3,150	\$4,600	1.5							

x = Insufficient data (project not yet complete)