



Urban Options Green Commuting Stakeholders Dialogue
Summary Report
November 5, 2003

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Purpose

On Wednesday, November 5, 2003, Urban Options convened a group of people interested in promoting "Green Commuting" in the Greater Lansing area. The event was part of a series of seminars and discussions on alternative modes of transportation and the economic benefits of supporting them. The session included two additional presentations, one on "Non-Motorized Connectivity in the Greater Lansing Region," by Art Slobosky, and one on "Appropriate Transportation Advocacy," by Lucinda Means of the League of Michigan Bicyclists.

Following the presentations, participants engaged in a facilitated dialogue. The purpose of the dialogue was to generate a set of recommendations that can inform and motivate future action by Green Commuting activists in the Greater Lansing area. This report articulates the five recommendations that were generated in the session.

Participants

Scott Bauries
Tim Bogar
Brad Garmon
Pat Hudson
Todd Kauffman
Nancy Krupiarz
Kurt Livernois
Mark Mandenberg

Chysta Meadowbrooke
Lucinda Means
Christina Riddle
M.C. Rothhorn
Arthur Slabosky
Dave Smith
Mike Unsworth
Ron Whitmore

Process

The dialogue process began with participants brainstorming answers to a "Victory" question: **"If we are successful in advancing the concepts of Green Commuting in the Greater Lansing Area, what will be different here five years from today?"**

Participants then brainstormed answers to two follow-up questions concerning "Assets" (*What will help us get there?*) and "Challenges" (*What may stand in our way?*)

The final exercise involved each participant individually brainstorming answers to the Focus Question: **"Considering the ASSETS and CHALLENGES we have identified, what do we need to DO to achieve the Victory?"** Participants shared their brainstormed answers in small groups, and each group developed common answers to use in developing the session recommendations. Answers were displayed on an adhesive board, then arranged into clusters. The five resulting clusters of answers were used to generate the five recommendations included in this report.

The Victory

“If we are successful in advancing the concepts of Green Commuting in the Greater Lansing Area, what will be different here five years from today?”

- The area will have an integrated plan that links all modes of transportation and has clear goals.
- All communities will be linked by a non-motorized system (i.e. a person can travel from Williamston to Grand Ledge safely).
- There will be an alternative transportation system connecting Old Town, New Town, and MSU (e.g. light rail, bus line, etc.)
- The M-43 corridor, including the intersection with 127, will be friendly to non-motorized transportation.

- There will be bicycle parking at all commercial establishments.
- Businesses will have bike racks on all fleet cars.
- Area corporations will have bike commuter programs, and sponsor a bicycle racing team.
- Businesses will regularly promote biking to work and walking to work, and sponsor events that encourage these options.

- The State parking lot will be converted into a park.
- The State of Michigan will host and staff a Center for Appropriate Transportation, specifically targeted to state employees.
- The State of Michigan will sponsor “Live Near Your Work” programs, providing down payments on homes near the work place.

- Sidewalks will be interconnected, melding old and new design elements.
- Frandor will be revitalized by the creation of “islands” in the current sea of concrete, accommodating pedestrian and bike traffic, and more CATA stops.

- Lots of people will be outdoors, transporting themselves by appropriate means at all times of day.
- There will be traffic jams on the River Trail
- Cleaner air.

- Bike Parking (Class 1, 2, and 3) will be a requirement in every jurisdiction.
- Each municipality will require bike and pedestrian accommodations in any new site developed.
- MSU’s old campus will have its own personal rapid transit system, and private motor travel will be allowed by permit only.
- Tax abatements will be provided to those who live without cars.

- There will be multiple intermodal hubs for users of people using buses, bikes, and hiking trails, including necessary amenities like showers.

- Police officers will know how to prepare an accident report involving a bicycle.
- Every jurisdiction in the area will have a Bicycle Police Unit, fully supplying equipment and uniforms for the officers.
- There will be bike lanes on Michigan Avenue.
- Downtown Lansing will have a vibrant nightlife support by alternative means of transportation.
- There will not be yet another mall developed further out from Lansing.
- Alternative taxi systems will be explored: ricksha, bike-powered, etc.
- Car Share and Bike Share programs will be operational.
- It will be easy to access a bio-diesel outlet for diesel vehicles.

ASSETS	CHALLENGES
<p><i>What will help us get there?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current emphasis on appropriate land use and “anti-sprawl.” • Many organizations are working together toward a common cause. • We are reaching “critical mass” • State employees support non-motorized transportation. • Governor Granholm, and the current orientation of the Governor’s Council. • The local “Cool Cities” initiative. • The Michigan Environmental Council’s current policy orientation toward transportation and land use. • Transportation planners at the State and City of Lansing are NMT-friendly. • Tri-County Regional Planning Commission’s Regional Growth Study. • Neighborhood networks in Lansing. • People are looking to revitalize the downtown area economically. • TEA 21 Dollars • Non-motorized transportation is relatively inexpensive. • Education infrastructure: K thru Grad School • Forward thinking • Michigan Dept. of Transportation Summit 	<p><i>What may stand in our way?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad economic times. • Failure to see the financial value of alternative modes of transportation. • Business as usual – the “old boys network” • Uncoordinated planning in and between governmental jurisdictions and the departments within them. • Two-career couples living in “halfway” communities. • The wide dispersal of businesses and services in the area. • People’s mindset about walking and biking (e.g. getting in the car to travel two blocks). • The perception that “We don’t have the time” when in fact we do. • The feeling that there is some “second-class” about walking. • We need infrastructure investment to revitalize the downtown area economically. • Negative perception of Lansing schools. • Resistance, old thinking. • The danger of businesses overtaking the MDOT Summit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The participants next identified the actions that would need to be accomplished in order to achieve the victory as defined. These were grouped into five clusters, and used to formulate the following recommendations. Three of the five recommendations were identified as "catalytic," meaning that, if successfully implemented, they would automatically advance the other recommendations as well. These are listed first; other than this, there was no attempt to prioritize the actions.

1. ORGANIZATION AND COALITION-BUILDING (catalytic)

Organize a broad coalition of public and private partners who are supportive of sustainability and other issues related to green commuting.

There are a substantial number of organizations and people interested in the advantages of green commuting right now, but they will not have substantial impact unless they are organized and clear in their objectives. Policy-makers respond to communities that have organized well and can demonstrate broad-based support and credibility.

Support needs to involve both human resources and financial resources. We need to build strong, ongoing relationships with both businesses and government entities that have shown an interest, such as General Motors ("Body Care" program) and the State of Michigan. At the same time, we need to develop a corps of volunteers that can be mobilized for action quickly and efficiently.

We need to do more than talk, and more than plan. Action will result from conscientious and intentional relationship building within our community, and with people of influence.

2. STRATEGIC TARGETS (catalytic)

Identify and clearly define a set of targets for action that our partners can rally around, and apply collaborative energy to achieving them.

To take full advantage of the current community and political will in support of green commuting, it is important to work toward something tangible and visible that can get people energized and mobilized. When people can *see* the consequences of their effort, it lends credence and momentum to the pursuit of broader, conceptual goals. It also serves to bring new people into the movement, and further establish its viability in the eyes of policy-makers.

The coalition partners should identify some specific policy or facility targets around which action can be mobilized. These might include any of the following, or other targets yet to be developed:

- The requirement of bicycle parking at public events, on commercial properties, or in residential developments.

- The appointment of people who support non-motorized transportation to local boards and commissions.
- The requirement of local non-motorized transportation plans by local governmental jurisdictions, and staffed NMT Advisory Committees.
- Demonstration of connectivity before the approval of new development.
- Establishment of neighborhood kiosks for the display of art and information, encouraging foot traffic.

3. ACTION PLANNING (catalytic)

Develop a plan and structure within which the coalition can work toward its strategic targets.

As strategic targets are identified and prioritized, it will be important to set a framework for their achievement. This will require another level of organizational planning, in order to focus the community's energy and establish clear outcomes by which success can be measured. A viable action plan should incorporate at least the following:

- A coordinating structure within which various initiatives are organized.
- Ordering of tasks to be accomplished.
- A strong focus on *action* (as opposed to reiterative planning and process).
- Clear projected outcomes.
- Celebration of incremental victories.

4. POLITICAL ACTION

Develop tools to advance community activism in support of green commuting objectives

This recommendation is very much in line with #2 above, but calls for the support of ongoing advocacy by the community, above and beyond specific strategic targets developed as part of an Action Plan. The coalition partners should provide to interested community members the various arguments and rationales behind the principles of green commuting, so that they can be fluent and influential to others on an everyday basis. This would include arguments for each of the following:

- Safer trails and bike paths
- The environmental benefits of non-motorized transportation
- The economic benefits of non-motorized transportation
- The need for governmental regulation of issues like connectivity, NMT, etc.
- Sprawl reduction
- Support for implementation of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's plan

5. OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Change the mindset of the community at large, through the delivery of focused educational messages on the consequences of unbridled personal motorized transportation, and the benefits of NMT.

To achieve true “critical mass” in developing the community will to change the current orientation toward single occupancy automobiles, it will be important to have a different message, carefully developed and clearly articulated, reaching the public consciousness. Several actions that were generated by the dialogue suggested ways of doing this. Most, but not all, would require financial resources to implement:

- Billboards and print ads that promote the advantages of driving less (e.g. “Keep Dollars Local”).
- A focused public relations campaign.
- Speaker’s bureau.
- Hosting of an NMT-themed event.
- Educational programs in the schools.
- Publication of the results of all relevant meetings and events.