



Smart Commute Workplace Program – Custom Project Report

Last Updated: 2016-10

PART I: Please fill out the project information below

Project or Member Company Name Transit is Closer Than You Think Focus Group	
Project Address <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single Site <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Sites	
Service Delivery Agent Hamilton	Service Provider Hamilton
Service Provider P.O.# 170260	Project # HAM201718-03
Project Timeline 2018-02-17 to 2018-03-17 (1 month)	

PART II: Project Description

Smart Commute Hamilton has 24 employers across 35 worksites, representing over 92,000 commuters and post-secondary students. In an effort to understand what motivates employees to choose sustainable modes of travel and to promote transit and walking, Smart Commute Hamilton hosted a focus group on March 14th, 2018 to inform the development of a robust “Transit Is Closer Than You Think” campaign. Smart Commute Hamilton put a call out in the March Newsletter where individuals filled out a survey which identified potential focus group participants. Smart Commute Hamilton identified and invited 14 individuals that were interested in choosing a sustainable mode to get to work but had concerns or experienced barriers to trying a new mode. Of the 14 participants that were invited to the Focus Group, 9 people were available, and attended. The focus group discussed the barriers they faced, preventing them from choosing to cycle, take transit, walk, or carpool. The group also discussed the type of resources and a potential new campaign that would encourage other commuters that also experience barriers or challenges to choosing a sustainable mode.

Smart Commute Hamilton carried out the following activities to host a successful focus group session:

- Developed a short survey to determine participants willingness to participate in the focus group, interest in trying a new, sustainable mode, and identify barriers and/or concerns regarding sustainable travel;
- Analysed and segmenting possible participants;
- Secured 6-10 diverse commuters (different age groups, even number of males & females, different workplaces) to participate in the focus group;
- Secured a reward, venue, date, and time that worked for participants via the survey;
- Developed questions and discussion topics for the focus group;
- Facilitated and conducted the focus group;
- Developed a feedback form for the participants to provide anonymous feedback; and,
- Wrote a follow-up report on the findings of the focus group and shared the results with the focus group.

Ultimately, the focus group discussion provided invaluable insight to commuters who are willing to try sustainable modes, but cannot due to various challenges or barriers they face on their commute. Smart Commute Hamilton will take the group’s feedback and ideas into account when developing new campaigns, resources to be used by commuters, new custom projects and general programming in the Sustainable Mobility program at the City of Hamilton.

PART III: Results

Pre- and post-project mode share

	PRE	POST
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Drive alone	44.7%	40%*
Carpool	10.1%	10%*
Transit	21%	22%*
Cycle	8.9%	11%*
Walk	7.7%	8%*
Drop Off	N/A	N/A
Member Company Population Size	90,000	90,000
Response Rate	1.55%	1.8%*

Please indicate other project results or qualitative mode share results, if any

*NOTE: the pre- and post-project mode share is based on the 2017 and projected 2018 Smart Commute Annual travel survey results based on the outcomes of the Smart Commute Focus Group. The projected mode share is Smart Commute Hamilton's Annual Travel Survey result goal.

The focus group results and findings are summarized below.

Focus Group Priorities - The focus group identified that the following measures (ranked in order of importance) would support a shift to more sustainable travel choices:

1. Infrastructure
 - a. Additional safe, maintained, infrastructure such as bike lanes, trails, transit service, and carpool lots will encourage more people to choose sustainable modes.
2. Maintenance
 - a. Maintaining trails such as the Rail Trail free of ice, snow, debris, etc. will encourage more people to utilize the segregated route to get up and down the mountain in the winter months.
3. Incentives
 - a. Investing in valuable incentives to encourage sustainable transportation such as financial incentives, inter-workplaces challenges, CEO-driven campaigns, etc.
4. Gamification
 - a. Integrating gamification tools into the Smart Commute Tool such as Strava, FitBit, etc. to automatically log trips and earn points to redeem for prizes.
 - b. Prizes and incentives need to be of significant value in order to have the desired participation rate.

Cycling Barriers:

- Participants explained that attitudes and actions of vehicle drivers (such as passing cyclists too closely and honking at cyclists) are a major barrier to choosing cycling. Thus, new cyclists are more likely to participate in events such as bike to work day with a group of people as they feel safer in groups.
 - Suggestion: For future campaigns, highlight that cyclists are people too and benefitting all road users by not driving a vehicle every day cyclists reduce traffic congestion, emissions, etc.
- Participants believed that infrastructure is the biggest barrier, and if a safe route with a bike lane is not available, individuals are less likely to cycle.
- Maintenance of trails and cycling routes is important, particularly in the winter months.
 - A program or training of City staff and councillors on the benefits of maintaining routes in the winter time was suggested.

Trip Planning Barriers:

- Participants believed that many people overestimate the amount of time and effort required to choose a sustainable mode to get around (people think that the distance and time required is much more than what is actually required)
- Transit Barriers:

- Participants believe that transit is not a viable option for many people due to poor levels of service, connections, and cost. In a few cases, it is faster to walk or cycle to a destination than it is to take a bus. It is also less expensive to park downtown than it is to purchase a monthly bus pass.
 - A bulk transit pass program would likely require more than a 10% discount in order for people to make the switch.
- Additional suggestions:
- Participants believe that working with CEOs at Smart Commute organizations to provide a top-down approach in addition to the bottom-up, grassroots approach would be beneficial to help set an example for using sustainable transportation and motivation.
- Participants believed that it would be beneficial to promote and highlight inter-corporation challenges.
- Participants explained that gamification is a good idea to incentivize people to use a sustainable mode of transportation, but the incentive needs to be large enough and tie into existing popular apps (Strava, Fitbit, etc.) so that tracking your trips is not another thing to do.

Additional resources that would encourage behaviour change (in no particular order):

- Trip Planning Workshops
 - Host a quarterly workshop for all Smart Commute employees and the public to receive assistance with using the Smart Commute Tool and other trip planning resources to identify a sustainable commute.
- Smart Commute Ambassadors – showing colleagues how to use the trip planning tool
 - Identifying employees to act as ambassadors of the Smart Commute program in addition to the Champion at worksites. The main point of contact at the workplace would be the Champion, and they would have a small team of ambassadors to work with to promote the program at the workplace.
- Multi-modal trip planning tool
 - Utilizing a true multi-modal trip planning tool would be useful to demonstrate the fastest way to get to work or around town may not be by car.
- Map highlighting difficult areas to navigate and how to get around/through those areas.
 - Create a resource that identifies gaps in various transportation networks (active, transit, carpooling) and how to get around those gaps.

Other ideas and comments:

- Advocate to the City to ask for a tax break for those that choose sustainable travel and incorporate other modes of travel rather than just transit – similar to the transit pass tax break.
- Install carpool lots that connect to transit.
- Utilize a company's wellness budget to fund employee SoBi memberships.
- Funding/payment plan towards buying a new bike or transit pass instead of subsidizing parking.
- Participants believed that Smart Commute Hamilton has a good, loud voice in the community to promote sustainable transportation.

PART IV: Project Costs

Total Project Cost	██████████	
Metrolinx Contribution to Date	███ Metrolinx Contribution Remaining	██████████
Comments, if any:		

PART V: Attachments

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final High Level Budget

PART VI: Lessons Learned

- **Participants felt that transit was less reliable, and can take longer than cycling or walking.** Participants did not believe that a campaign to promote transit would encourage the use of transit due to a high cost and poor reliability. Participants believed that creating a campaign solely for promoting transit would not perform well.
 - **Proposed Transit Discount Bulk Purchase Program would likely be unsuccessful with a 10% discount.** Smart Commute Hamilton proposed the idea of a 10% discount off of a monthly HSR bus pass to Smart Commute employees, but the Focus Group indicated that 10% would not be enough of a discount as it would still be cheaper to park at their workplace. Many workplaces offer free parking, and for those that charge for parking, monthly parking passes are less expensive than a monthly bus pass. There is potential if a larger transit discount was available, but this would require buy-in from employers as Smart Commute does not have the funding to sustain a program like this which is difficult to secure as the Smart Commute program is delivered at many workplaces on a volunteer-basis.
- **Workshops are a good way to engage with commuters, but Smart Commute Hamilton should take it beyond cycle safety training.** Smart Commute Hamilton hosted 9 cycle safety workshops leading up to Bike to Work Day in 2017 with 22 participants. However, there was interest from the Focus Group in going beyond cycle training to host a workshop on how to plan your sustainable commute. Smart Commute Hamilton will investigate hosting a workshop like this once per quarter – open to all Smart Commute employees and the public.
- **Employees would like to see public support from their senior management (e.g. CEOs).** In addition to senior management support, a “grassroots” approach from other colleagues on the ground would support the delivery of the program at the workplace, where senior management helps get the word out. While we ask for this type of support already in our campaigns, a bigger emphasis will be placed on gaining this support in 2018 campaigns through our renewed partnerships with many of our employers.

PART VII: Awards Nomination

FOR COMPLETION ONLY IF PROJECT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR A SMART COMMUTE AWARD:

- Describe how this project successfully influenced employee travel choices
- What tangible outcomes resulted from this project (e.g., improved recruitment or retention of employees; financial benefits/savings; impact on work/life balance)? Supply concrete examples
- Describe any innovative methods used to engage employees in this project
- Describe any legacy effects this project will have

N/A

PART VIII: Signatures

As a signatory, I have reviewed this final report.	Service Delivery Agent		
	Name: Peter Topalovic	Signature: 	Date: 29/03/2018
	Service Provider		
	Name:	Signature:	Date:

PART IX: Metrolinx Review and Approval

Approved by – Senior Advisor		
Name:	Signature:	Date:
Approved by – Manager		
Name:	Signature:	Date:
Approved by – Director (where applicable)		
Name:	Signature:	Date:
Comments:		