

Park Those Commuter Blues

Choose the Greener, Less Traveled Path

These days we are challenged on so many levels – high energy prices, inflation, global warming, poor health. Is it possible to solve these complicated issues without investing more time or money? Choosing the path (as yet) less travelled by making simple changes in the way we commute to work or school can leave a lighter carbon footprint. Leaving your car home just one day a week can reduce your gasoline costs by 20 percent and add a dose of exercise to your weekly routine.

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Leaving your car home one day a week can reduce your gasoline costs by 20 percent and add regular exercise to your weekly routine.



CARPOOLING

Before the Internet, carpooling choices were limited by your employer or your residence. But new ride-matching Web sites allow you wide accessibility in finding suitable ride mates. Registered members are privy to even greater benefits like a guaranteed ride home in case of emergency. They are also offered access to large pools of subscribers to create a schedule to fit a changing lifestyle--whether you need a ride one day or every day of the week.

Delta College, centrally located in the tri-cities of Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland, will soon install a public posting board dedicated to carpooling. The public forum space will offer students the opportunity to post their transportation needs. Students can compare schedules with the intention of ride sharing to and from campus. Generating awareness is part of the initiative and a public board makes the opportunity more visible. If the pilot 'paper' system works well, it can later be applied to a campus electronic system.

Easy carpooling guidelines

- Meet in advance to work out details like costs and who drives when.
- Set ground rules (music choices, allowances for smoking or eating, side trips for errands).
- Arrange pick-up and drop-off places convenient for everyone.



- Calculate everyone's fair share of the costs.
- Keep in contact. Phone, e-mail, text message or blog when your schedule changes or you're delayed.

WALKING AND BIKING

Many commuters cite saving time as a major reason for driving alone, but walking or bicycling can actually save time, too. By combining two activities that normally occur in different parts of the day—commuting and exercising—we can fit them both into our busy lives.

Rather than being isolated in your car cursing at other drivers, you can be exercising in the fresh air. Once a routine of alternative commuting is established, the savings pile up and the pounds come off.

College campuses have much to offer as a hub, anchor, and destination for students, visitors, and the community by providing safe, close-to-home recreational and educational opportunities. To reduce the carbon footprint to access those opportunities, 'green' non-motorized trails are being planned. In only a couple of years, students and the communities surrounding Delta College and Saginaw Valley State University will have access to a four-mile long, twelve-foot-wide, trail.

The University Center Trail, expected to be in use by 2010, will connect to existing trails on each of the two campuses as well as

trails in the local communities. Students taking classes at either campus will be able to ride their bikes between each school rather than driving -- thereby reducing automobile use and our carbon footprint.

Many communities and businesses are making a visible effort to promote alternative commutes by installing bike racks in their green areas. Delta College just completed the installation of several racks (100% recyclable) whose finish contains no heavy metals, is HAPS-free (free of chemicals that cause serious health and environmental effects), and has very low VOCs (volatile organic compounds).

The keys to happy commuting lie with being prepared with the right gear.



Easy walking and biking tips

- Carry a change of clothes if you're headed for the office.
- Dress for all seasons. Wear waterproof outerwear. Carry a watertight book bag, backpack or briefcase.
- Outfit your bicycle for rain or shine.
- Scope out your route in advance. Choose less congested roads or paths for safety or beautiful scenery. Note what times you might encounter school traffic.**CF**

