

2010 Commuter Challenge Report

Introduction to the Challenge

The getDowntown Program (www.getdowntown.org) has organized the Commuter Challenge since 2005. The Commuter Challenge is a month-long competition in May between Ann Arbor Area organizations (focusing on downtown Ann Arbor) that encourages individuals to use sustainable transportation to get to work. Organizations compete against one another and log sustainable commutes online on the getDowntown website (www.getdowntown.org). Sustainable commutes include busing, biking, walking, carpooling, moped/motorcycling and telecommuting.

Every participant that logs at least one sustainable commute receives an Ice Cream Coupon to the Washtenaw Dairy (a local ice cream shop). Every time a participant logs a commute, they receive a point, which is added to the total points for their organization. Organizations win the Challenge if they have the highest average number of commutes/points in their size category. This average is based on the number of sustainable commutes an organization does divided by the number of sustainable commutes an organization could possibly do (based on the number of days each employee works).

Organizations who win the Challenge win prizes for Challenge participants such as pizza, free chocolate, movie tickets and more. Participants win a prize (an ice cream coupon) for logging at least one sustainable commute. There are also daily prize drawings during the Challenge that provide participants a random opportunity to win a prize (\$25 restaurant coupon, \$5 coffee card, etc) for logging a particular type of commute. Participants also set a goal for themselves during the Challenge and if they met that goal, they were entered into a drawing for an additional prize (a special membership to a local movie theater, 5 \$25 gift cards, and more).

Since the getDowntown Program is focused on serving downtown Ann Arbor employees and employers, most of the marketing and promotions efforts for the Challenge center around downtown Ann Arbor. However, the Commuter Challenge is open to all employers outside of downtown as well as the University of Michigan, which has campuses in downtown Ann Arbor as well as in other parts of Ann Arbor.

In addition to the online Challenge, the getDowntown Program organized events throughout the month of May. In 2010, events included Green Commute Day, Walk to Work Day, Bike to Work Day, Zipcar at the Farmer's Market, and the Commuter Challenge Awards Ceremony. In 2009 and 2010, every week during the Commuter Challenge focused on a particular mode of transportation including walking, biking, busing, carpooling and Zipcar.

The getDowntown Program also recruited Ambassadors to help promote the Commuter Challenge at their worksites and throughout the community. To learn more about the Commuter Challenge, please visit <http://www.getdowntown.org/programs/commuter> or check out our blog at <http://blog.getdowntown.org/tag/commuter-challenge/> .

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About the getDowntown Program

The getDowntown program (www.getdowntown.org) was established in 1999 to reduce traffic congestion and parking stress in downtown Ann Arbor by promoting transportation options for downtown employees. The getDowntown program promotes transit, bicycling, walking, telecommuting, carpools/vanpools and Zipcars and encourages downtown employees to choose an alternative to single-passenger auto commuting. Partners in getDowntown include the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, and the City of Ann Arbor. Learn more about the getDowntown Program at www.getdowntown.org/about.

2010 Commuter Challenge Statistics (as compared to previous years)

Number of Organizations Participating

2010: 164

2009: 138

2008: 117

Participating Organizations by Location

Location	2008	2009	2010
Downtown	59 (50%)	64 (46%)	96 (59%)
University of Michigan Affiliated	27 (23%)	30 (22%)	33 (20%)
Not Downtown and Not UM Affiliated	31 (27%)	44 (32%)	35 (21%)

Note: Since the getDowntown Program focuses primarily on downtown, the majority of Commuter Challenge participants should be downtown organizations. In 2010, we focused our efforts on recruiting businesses from downtown Ann Arbor to participate in the Challenge and our efforts clearly paid off.

Number of Participants (people who logged at least 1 sustainable commute)

2010: 1,848

2009: 1,748

2008: 1,482

Typical Modes for Participants (when signing up for the Challenge)

Commuter Challenge Participants

Mode	2008	2009	2010
Drive Alone	40%	39%	35%
Other or Multiple Modes	26%	24%	29%
Carpool	9%	10%	9%
Walk	8%	8%	8%
Bike	5%	5%	4%

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Bike, Walk	5%	5%	4%
Bus (incl Park & Ride)	4%	6%	8%
Moped/Motorcycle	1%	1%	1%
Telecommute	1%	1%	2%
Vanpool	1%	1%	.02%

Notes: When signing up for the Commuter Challenge, participants are asked to list the mode they typically use to get to work. This information provides us with a snapshot of the type of people attracted to the Commuter Challenge as well as an idea of how people typically get to work using a particular mode. It is not surprising that people who typically use a non-drive alone commute are more likely to sign up for the Commuter Challenge. However, it is also positive to see that many employees who typically drive to work alone are signing up and participating in the Commuter Challenge. It is also interesting to note that many people use a variety of modes to get to work, rather than just one or two.

Total number of Sustainable Commutes logged

2010: 20,522

2009: 19,967

2008: 16,609

Fun Fact

- If all of these people drove alone for those 20,522 commutes, that would be equal to filling up every downtown parking structure and lot in downtown Ann Arbor with cars for 5 days in a row!

Total number of Sustainable Commutes logged by people who typically drive alone

2010: 4,177

2009: 3,367

2008: 4,275

Note

- There are a higher number of commutes logged by drive alone participants in 2008 because that year we provided bonus points for people who tried something new. Participants earned 3 bonus points for every new sustainable commute they tried, thus increasing the number beyond what they participants actually logged.

Total Sustainable Miles logged and CO2 Avoided

2010: 326,992 miles and 279,871 lbs

2009: 286,883 miles and 253,433 lbs

2008: 247,413 miles and 211,760 lbs

Fun Facts

- What is 326,992 miles? That's like driving around the earth 13 times!

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- By not driving those miles alone, Commuter Challenge participants saved a collective \$441,535 for the month. That's like each person in the Commuter Challenge getting a \$239 bonus for the month!
- The amount of CO₂ (a greenhouse gas) avoided during the Commuter Challenge is equivalent to
 - The CO₂ emissions from 14,280 gallons of gasoline and 295 barrels of oil.
 - The CO₂ equivalent of the energy use of 10 homes for a year.
 - The amount of carbon sequestered annually by 27 acres of pine or fir forest or by 3,255 tree seedlings grown for 10 years.

2010 Commuter Challenge Survey Results

A week after the Commuter Challenge, the getDowntown Program emailed a follow-up survey (via Survey Monkey) to all Commuter Challenge participants. The survey is intended to collect feedback from participants about the Challenge and also to gauge the success of the Challenge. The following report outlines the results of the 2010 Commuter Challenge Follow-Up Survey and compares these results to previous surveys (where applicable). Notes are given to provide any additional insight about survey results. In many cases, we compared overall survey results with downtown respondents to better understand the differences between all respondents and respondents who work downtown (our main target audience).

Respondent Statistics

Commuter Challenge Survey Respondents

Year	2008	2009	2010
# of Respondents	324	685	669
% of all Commuter Challenge Participants	22%	39%	36%

Participants by Location (2010)

Year	Downtown Ann Arbor (Downtown)	Affiliated with the University of Michigan (UM)	Not Downtown Not UM (Not DT Not UM)
2010	46%	23%	30%

Notes: It is not surprising that many of the Survey respondents are from downtown Ann Arbor since that is where the Commuter Challenge is most heavily marketed because the getDowntown focuses on the downtown. However, it is also important to note that relative to the total number of participating organizations, the proportion of downtown Ann Arbor respondents was smaller than the number of downtown organizations participating in the Challenge.

2010 Commuter Challenge Respondents

For our 2010 Survey, we separated out respondents who had participated in the 2009 Commuter Challenge (see below) from respondents who had only participated in the 2010 Commuter Challenge. All 2010 statistics in this section are for 2010 Commuter Challenge participants only.

How did you hear about the Commuter Challenge? Top Three Responses.

Answer Options	2008 All	2009 All	2010 All	2010 Downtown
I participated last year so I already knew about it	n/a	46.2%	n/a	n/a
A co-worker	70.8%	51.4%	75.1%	77.7%
A Commuter Challenge Ambassador	16.3%	16.4%	16.3%	19%
An email from the getDowntown Program	20.3%	18.8%	14.5%	11.5%

Notes: Clearly the best way to reach people about the Challenge is through co-workers.

What motivated you to participate in the 2010 Commuter Challenge?

Answer Options	All	Downtown	UM	Not DT Not UM
The possibility of winning a prize	35.3%	28.7%	35.3%	42.3%
The free ice cream coupon	19.0%	17.0%	19.0%	17.3%
My co-worker(s) asked me to do it	41.2%	43.6%	41.2%	36.5%
Sounded like fun	47.1%	42.6%	47.1%	42.3%
Wanted to try getting to work using sustainable transportation	38.0%	40.4%	38.0%	53.8%
Other (please specify)	19.0%	14.9%	19.0%	19.2%

Notes: Respondents participated in the Challenge for a variety of reasons, with many people doing it because of peer-pressure from co-workers, because it sounded like fun, and to try to use sustainable transportation. Interestingly, with the exception of outside of downtown respondents, prizes did not seem to be a strong motivator for respondents.

Diving Deeper into the Data

To get a better sense of the impact of the Commuter Challenge, we asked participants if participating in the 2010 Commuter Challenge increased their use of sustainable transportation for the month of May. We asked this question of all respondents

According to the 2010 Survey, the 2010 Commuter Challenge increased sustainable commuting behavior for . . .

- 70%** of all survey respondents who said their sustainable commuting behavior increased in May 2010.
- 72%** of downtown respondents who said their sustainable commuting behavior increased in May 2010.
- 64%** of all respondents who said they typically drive alone and **68%** of downtown respondents who said they typically drive alone.

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- 82% of all respondents who never or rarely (less than 1 time a month) use sustainable transportation to get to work.

Behavior Change Over Time

We asked a series of questions in the 2010 Commuter Challenge to assess if the Commuter Challenge changed commuting behavior over the course of a year. To do this, we looked at participants in the 2010 Commuter Challenge who also participated in the 2009 Challenge.

Did you participate in the 2009 Commuter Challenge? (2010 Respondents)

Answer Options	All	Downtown	UM	Not DT Not UM
Yes	65.8%	67.1%	65.8%	74.1%
No	34.2%	32.9%	34.2%	25.9%

In the last year (since May 2009), have you made any changes in how you get to work?

Answer Options	All	Downtown	UM	Not DT Not UM
Yes	44.4%	40.1%	44.4%	55.3%
No	55.6%	59.9%	55.6%	44.7%

What commuting change did you make?

Answer Options	All	Downtown	UM	Not DT Not UM
Increased my use of sustainable transportation (walking, biking, carpooling, busing, telecommuting, Park and Ride, etc)	90.3%	89.5%	90.3%	90.1%
Decreased my use of sustainable transportation	9.7%	10.5%	9.7%	9.9%

Notes: A little less than half of the respondents who participated in the 2009 Commuter Challenge have increased their commuting behavior in the past year.

What factors influenced your decision to change how you get to work? Top Three Responses

Answer Options	Response Percent	Downtown	UM	Not DT Not UM
Desire to be more environmentally friendly	59.1%	52.2%	59.1%	60.0%
Health and fitness	47.4%	49.3%	47.4%	41.3%
As a result of participating in the Commuter Challenge	40.9%	40.6%	40.9%	44.0%

Notes: The Commuter Challenge was listed by respondents as one of the top three reasons for their commuting change. Also important to commuters are health/fitness and environmental friendliness.

Commuter Challenge Events

In addition to the online Commuter Challenge, the getDowntown Program also organized several events during the month of May. These events included Green Commute Day, Walk to Work Day, Bike to Work Day, and the Commuter Challenge Awards Ceremony.

Awareness of Events vs. Participation in Events

While most respondents (around 75%) were aware of the events during the Commuter Challenge, very few (around 21%) actually participated in these events.

The reasons people did not participate in events were because they are too busy, the events were at times they could not attend, and for various other reasons.

The take home message for getDowntown is that it will always be more difficult to turn people out for events than it will be to have them simply log commutes on an online Challenge. At the same time, having even 20 people at an event is another way for people to learn more about the different commuting modes. In the future, getDowntown will continue to find ways to create “virtual” events (like Green Commute Day) where people can participate without showing up somewhere, as well as continue to hold some of the larger events, like Bike to Work Day, Walk to Work Day, and the Awards Ceremony, that help generate a spirit of community.

Open-ended Responses Themes: Downtown Workers

The getDowntown Program asked a number of open-ended questions as part of the Commuter Challenge Follow-Up Survey. Here is a summary of some of the themes from the open-ended responses of respondents who indicated that they work in downtown Ann Arbor. We choose to highlight the themes of downtown workers since these are the workers served primarily by the getDowntown Program.

2010 General Themes of Downtown Workers: What do you think would motivate you to continue to use sustainable transportation in the coming months?

For the most part, respondents felt that improvement in the different modes, such as later and more frequent bus service, better bike parking options, and better carpool options, would help motivate them to continue using sustainable transportation.

2010 General Themes of Downtown Workers: What did you like most about the Challenge?

the prizes

the stats

The buzz at work

prizes; the special "walk to work day" and "bike to work day" and bus week inspired me to do those activities instead of my usual routine; the bike rally was fun!

Teamwork

Increased awareness of using sustainable transportation

Motivation

Competition

Its Positivity

2010 General Themes of Downtown Workers: What did you like least about the Challenge?

Nothing (lots said this)
Too many emails (lots of people said this)
Trying to get others to do it as well
Forgot to log commutes
Want it longer than a month
Too complicated

Conclusions

While the responses to the getDowntown Commuter Challenge Follow-Up Survey only represent a portion of those participating in the Challenge, these responses to highlight what works and what can be improved about the Commuter Challenge. In general, the Commuter Challenge seems to do a good job encouraging people to try sustainable modes of transportation and clearly has lasting effects after the month of May. At the same time, participants in the Challenge do still tend to be people who are already using sustainable transportation. In the future, the getDowntown Program hopes to find more and better ways to engage more people who are new to sustainable transportation with the Commuter Challenge.

From the open-ended comments, it is also evident that many respondents feel that larger infrastructure issues (need for more frequent bus service, better bike paths, etc.) make it harder for them to use sustainable transportation. The getDowntown Program will continue to advocate for better infrastructure on behalf of downtown workers in order to make it easier for them to use sustainable transportation. However, the getDowntown Program also understands that there are some environmental factors mentioned in the survey (such as the weather and gas prices) that are beyond the control of our program.

Many respondents indicated that they'd like to see more information and events throughout the year related to sustainable transportation. The getDowntown Program is working to develop marketing and promotion programs that reach beyond the scope of the Commuter Challenge. It is our hope that we can continue some of the momentum started by the Challenge for the rest of the year by finding the right ways to engage commuters.

While the Commuter Challenge is not the only way to encourage commuters to try sustainable transportation to get to work, it represents an extremely effective tool to accomplish this goal. The getDowntown Program will continue to work to improve the Commuter Challenge and also use the results of the Commuter Challenge Follow-Up Survey to improve the getDowntown Program in general.

Participating Organizations 2010

Below is a list of organizations that participated in the 2010 Commuter Challenge. Organizations in **bold** are the winning organizations for their size category. Highlighted organizations are in downtown Ann Arbor.

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2010 Commuter Challenge Participants (by size)
Lee Lab
Literacy Coalition of Washtenaw County
Westphal Associates
Ann Arbor Cello School
Karen Moorhead
Keystone Media
Law Office of Noah L Levin, PLC
Suwanee Springs LLC
The Greenway Collaborative, Inc.
Main Street Area Association
Dascola Barbers
InSite Design Studio
INI
Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan
Fitzpatrick Structural Engineering, P.C.
Kerrytown Concert House
Ann Arbor Film Festival
Model Cities Legal Services
Mike Green & Associates
Blue Newt Software
Center for Simplified Strategic Planning, Inc
TST to Central
University of Michigan-Pediatric Education
Ann Arbor Civic Theatre
Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority
Kerrytown Shops of Ann Arbor, Inc.
The Mail Shoppe
Arts Alliance
Washtenaw Area Transportation Study
Washtenaw Coutny - Economic Development & Energy
Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss
University of Michigan - Women's Studies
Lecturer's Employee Organization
Alma Machinery Co., Inc
University of Michigan - Meisler Lab
Beagle Brain
Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice
Comet Coffee

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Fourth Ave. Birkenstock
Fuji Arts Inc.
Inner Circle Media
Energy Works Michigan
University of Michigan-Friends Gift Shop
Mitchell and Mouat Architects
Zingerman's Creamery
University Of Michigan - ADVANCE Program
Washtenaw Literacy
Abracadabra Jewelry/Gem Gallery
Angelini & Associates Architects
Wheels In Motion
University of Michigan-Chemical Engineering
University of Michigan - Psychology Student Academic Affairs
moosejaw mountaineering
Footprints
University of Michigan - Michigan Multimedia
Rosebud Sol McKesson Corp
Huron River Watershed Council
State Theater
The Whole Brain Group
University of Michigan - Volling Lab
Population Studies Center
Survey Sciences Group, LLC
EWRE PUORG
Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce
Above the Treeline
University of Michigan - NROTC
Resource Recycling Systems
Pure Visibility
Ann Arbor Credit Bureau, Inc.
Michigan Book & Supply
A3C - Collaborative Architecture
Ecology Center
University of Michigan - Global Change Ecology Lab
Sabor Latino
CDM Michigan Inc.
Vie Fitness & Spa
Bell Tower Hotel

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Campfire Interactive
re:group
Washtenaw Technical Middle College
University of Michigan-Merajver Lab
Lord, Aeck & Sargent Architecture
United Biosource Corp
SRT Solutions
AppLEcon LLC
WSG Gallery
Raymond James & Associates
Legal Services of South Central Michigan
Journal of Clinical Investigation
Washtenaw County-Finance Department
Ginsberg Center
Ann Arbor Observer
Carlisle Wortman Associates
Washtenaw County- Public Defender
Washtenaw County Treasurer's Office
Zingerman's Service Network
Washtenaw County - IT
National Wildlife Federation - Great Lakes Regional Center
Washtenaw County ETCS
DTE Biomass Energy Inc
DTE Gen Ops
University of Michigan - Kresge Business Administration Library
Potbelly Sandwich Shop
Menlo Innovations LLC
Amer's Delicatessen
Quinn Evans Architects
DTE Coal Services Inc
Recycle Ann Arbor
Ann Arbor Open School
UM-KECC
Braun Court
DTE Eng Corp Svcs LLC
REI Ann Arbor
University of Michigan - LSA Instructional Support Services
Michigan Tech Research Institute
Arbor Brewing Company

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Michigan Theater Foundation
DTE Energy Resources Inc
Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum
University of Michigan-Astronomy Department
AnnArbor.com
LimnoTech
Underground Printing
Alumni Association of the University of Michigan
University of Michigan - School of Kinesiology
Washtenaw Friend of the Court
Univeristy of Michigan-Newnan Academic Advising
Adaptive Materials, Inc.
University of Michigan - Nephrology
University of Michigan - Microbiology/Virology Lab
Hobbs+Black Architects
Bank of Ann Arbor
Workantile Exchange
People's Food Cooperative
Mathematical Reviews
DTE Energy Services Inc
Arbor Research Collaborative for Health
JJR
Western County Service Center
Forsythe Middle School
Shar Products Company
University of Michigan - CoE - AOSS
Douglas J Institute
JSTOR
DTE Energy Trading
Infor Global Solutions - Ann Arbor
ICPSR
Zingerman's Delicatessen
HealthMedia, Inc
University of Michigan - OUD
Washtenaw County - Towner Campus
Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
University of Michigan - School of Music, Theatre & Dance
Google
University of Michigan - Radiation Oncology

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Ann Arbor District Library
Ann Arbor YMCA
University of Michigan - School of Information
City of Ann Arbor
University of Michigan - MLibrary
U.S. EPA National Vehicle and Fuel Emissions Laboratory
University of Michigan - School of Dentistry
Thomson Reuters - Healthcare and Science
Toyota Technical Center