

2011 Commuter Challenge Report

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to determine if the 2011 getDowntown Commuter Challenge caused downtown Ann Arbor employees to increase their use of green commuting during the month of May (the Commuter Challenge month). This report also analyzes whether the Commuter Challenge serves to influence green commuting behavior after the Commuter Challenge month has ended.

Commuter Challenge Overview

The getDowntown Program (www.getdowntown.org) has organized the Commuter Challenge since 2005. The Commuter Challenge is a month-long online competition in May between Ann Arbor Area organizations (focusing on downtown Ann Arbor) that encourages employees to try green commuting (walking, biking, busing, carpooling etc) to get to work. Organizations compete against one another and log green commutes online on the getDowntown Commuter Challenge website (commuter.getdowntown.org/challenge).

In 2011, organizations competed in the Challenge based on size and could win the Challenge by getting a certain percentage of their employees to participate. GetDowntown awarded prizes to the participants of the winning organizations. In addition, getDowntown awarded a prize to every participant who logged at least one green commute during the Commuter Challenge. Finally, getDowntown conducted daily prize drawings throughout the Challenge of all of the participants who logged a green commute on a given day.

The Commuter Challenge month is broken up into theme weeks, with each week during the month corresponding to a different mode of transportation (e.g. Walk to Work Week, Bike to Work Week, etc). During the month of May, getDowntown also organizes other events such as Bike to Work Day and Green Commute Day that encourage employees to try green commuting to get to work.

While the getDowntown Program focuses on marketing and promoting the Commuter Challenge to downtown Ann Arbor employees, the Challenge is also open to employees that work throughout the Ann Arbor area, including the University of Michigan. The getDowntown Program partners with the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (TheRide) and the University of Michigan Parking and Transportation Services (UMPTS) as a way to extend the influence of the Challenge. The getDowntown Program provides promotional materials to UMPTS and TheRide so that those organizations can promote the Challenge to their target audiences. UMPTS and TheRide also donate prizes and provide other in-kind support during the Commuter Challenge.

The main purpose of the Commuter Challenge is to motivate people who would normally drive alone to try a green commute while also rewarding employees who already do green commutes. It is our signature event and a great way to inspire employees to do something they have been meaning to do for a while.

The Challenge is conducted in May because the weather is usually favorable and is before many people go on vacation. The Challenge lasts an entire month because it typically

takes a while for someone to change their behavior. Giving someone a month to try a do a green commute and stick with it might give them the opportunity to get out of the habit of driving alone every day.

As a way to engage those employees who already do a green commute, the getDowntown Program recruits Ambassadors for the month of May. These Ambassadors blog about their experiences, provide assistance to new green commuters, and promote the Challenge at their worksite and to the larger community.

Data Collection

The data used for this report was collected by getDowntown in two ways. First, the getDowntown Program collected data as part of the Commuter Challenge itself. Since the Commuter Challenge is conducted online, employees input data and log commutes and that information is stored in a database that getDowntown can access during and after the Challenge.

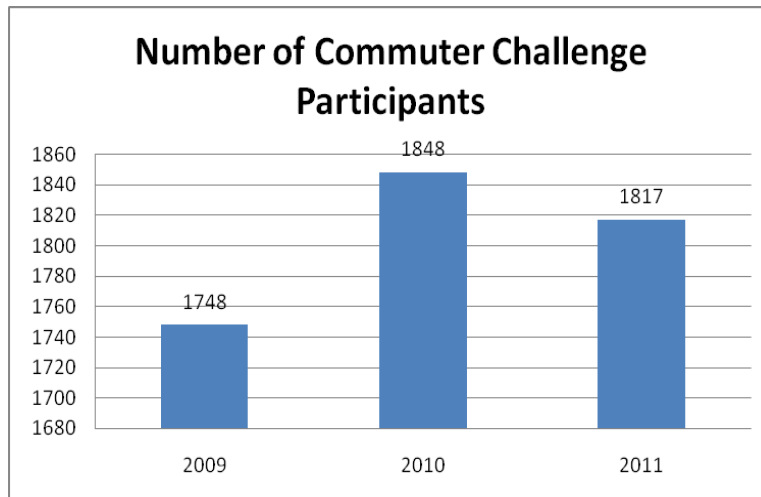
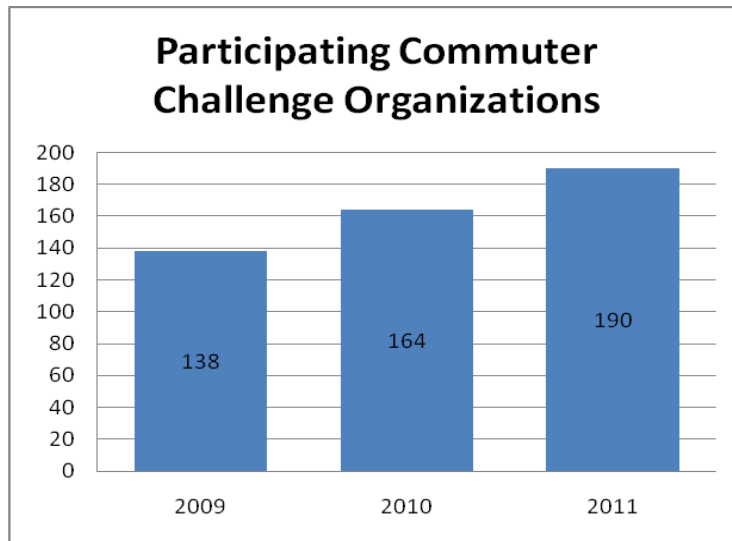
Second, the getDowntown Program conducts a follow-up evaluation survey at the end of the Commuter Challenge to gauge the success of the Challenge. All Commuter Challenge participants are invited to participate in the follow-up survey, and getDowntown typically provides a small incentive drawing for gift certificates to encourage participation in that survey.

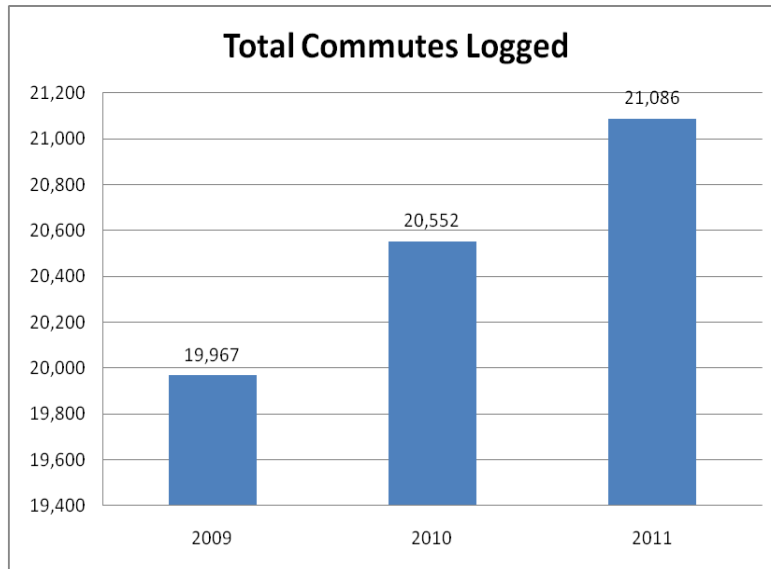
In 2011, 634 Commuter Challenge participants took the follow-up survey for a response rate of 35%. The survey sample from the follow-up survey had a similar breakdown of typical modes used as compared to the data collected from all participants when they signed up for the Challenge. This was especially true for the respondents who took the survey that worked in downtown Ann Arbor. The fact that the respondents to the follow-up survey had a similar breakdown of typical modes used allows us to be more confident that the survey is representative of Commuter Challenge participants as a whole.

While getDowntown does collect overall statistics for the Commuter Challenge, a large portion of this report is focused solely on downtown Ann Arbor employees, since the mission of getDowntown is to provide commuting resources and programs to this audience.

Overall Statistics

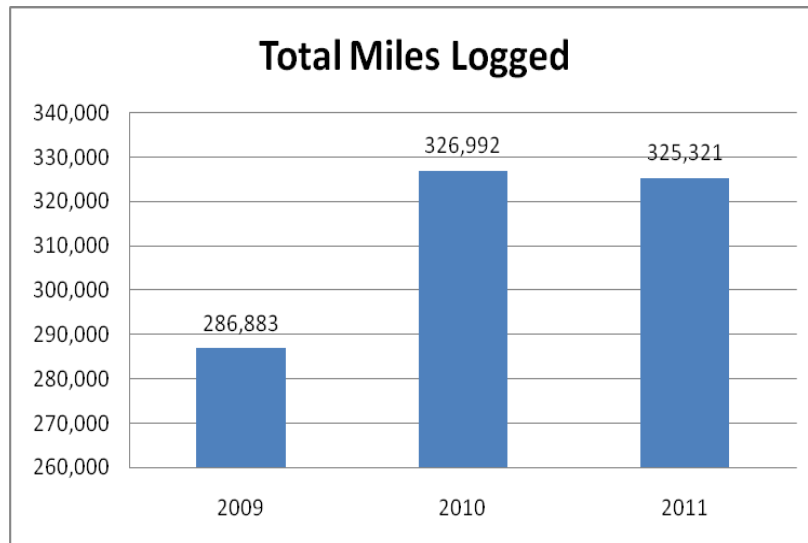
Here are the overall statistics of the Commuter Challenge, compared to previous years, where applicable:





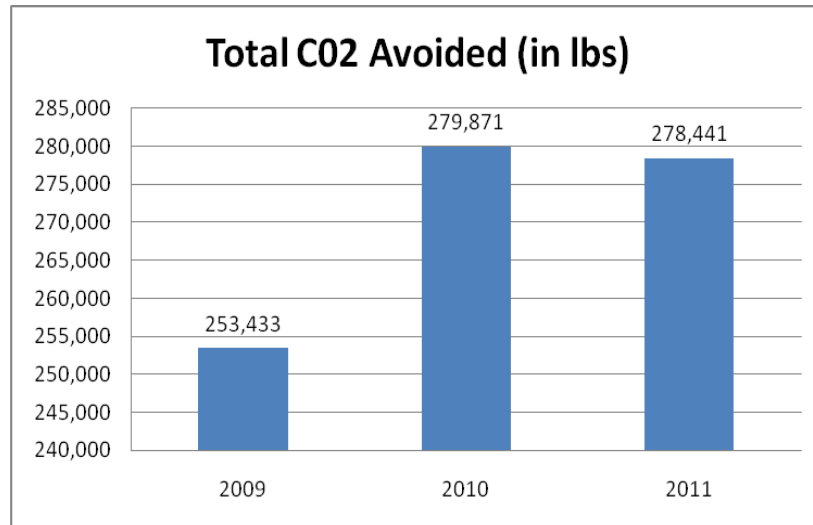
Putting it in perspective . . .

- 21,086 commutes is equivalent to doing a green commute every day for 58 years!
- If those 21,000 commutes were driven by single occupancy vehicles, it would be enough cars to fill the Detroit McNamara Terminal almost 2 times. That's a lot of cars!



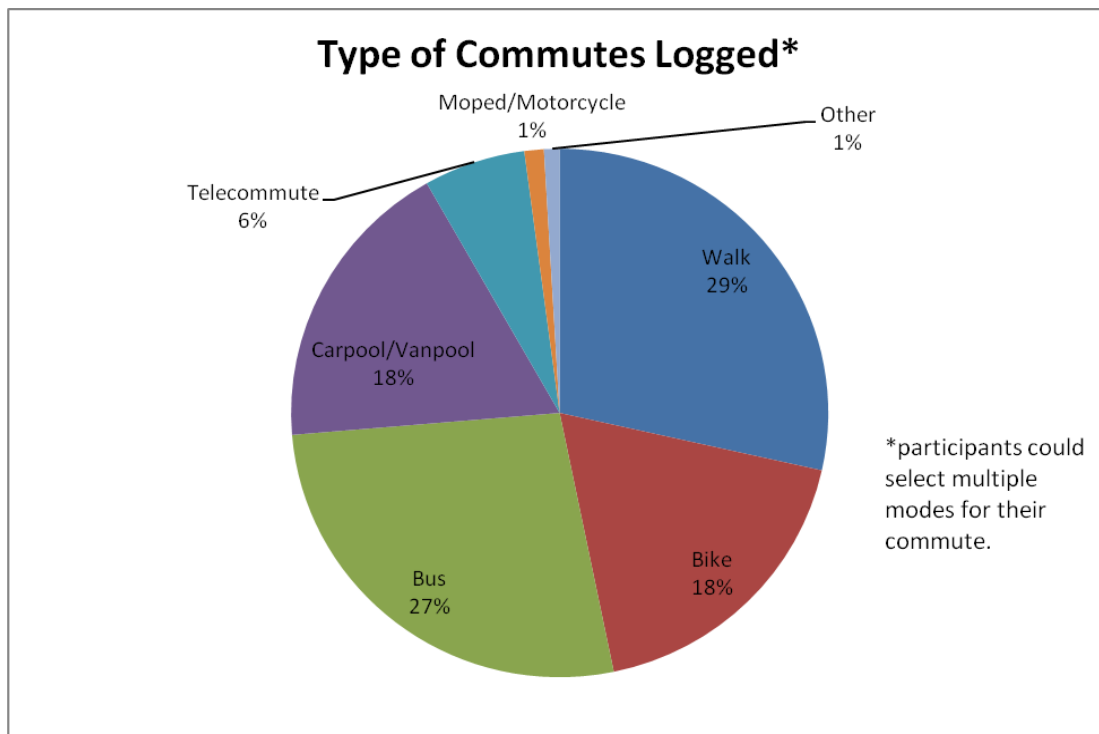
Putting it in perspective

- What is 325,321 miles? That's equivalent to driving around the earth 13 times!



Putting it in perspective . . .

- **278,441 lbs of CO2 is equivalent to:**
 - The annual greenhouse gas emissions of 25 cars
 - CO2 Emissions from 14,149 gallons of gasoline
 - CO2 Emissions of 294 barrels of oil
 - CO2 Emissions from the energy use of 11 homes for an entire year
 - The amount of carbon sequestered from 3,238 seedlings grown for 10 years
 - The amount of carbon sequestered from 27 acres of pine or fir forests



Key Findings

Overall Commuter Challenge participation

- Compared to the last 3 years, more organizations participated in the 2011 Commuter Challenge, while approximately the same number of employees participated as in 2010. This might be the result of a higher rate of UM promotion of the Challenge or because of the new Commuter Challenge system, which was slightly more complicated than in previous years.
- The total percentage of downtown Ann Arbor organizations (defined as organizations located within the DDA Boundaries) participating in the 2011 Commuter Challenge was down slightly this year over last year, indicating both enhanced promotion of the Challenge on the UM campus as well as a need for more promotion to downtown organizations in the future.

Participating Organizations by Location

Location	2009	2010	2011
Downtown	64 (46%)	96 (59%)	87 (46%)
University of Michigan Affiliated	30 (22%)	33 (20%)	63 (33%)
Not Downtown (In DDA Boundaries) and Not UM Affiliated	44 (32%)	35 (21%)	40 (21%)

Commuter Challenge participation by mode choice

- As part of the registration process for the Commuter Challenge, employees designate their typical commuting mode. This information allows us to see how people are getting to work before the Challenge begins.
- Compared to 2010, a higher percentage of Commuter Challenge participants said they typically drive to work alone when they signed up for the Challenge, a good indicator that the Challenge is doing a better job at reaching the intended audience.

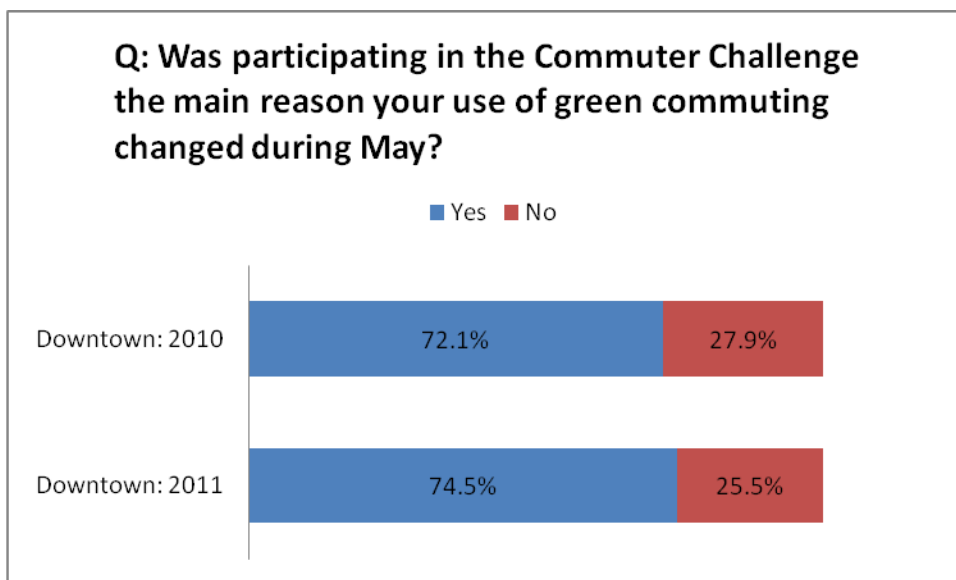
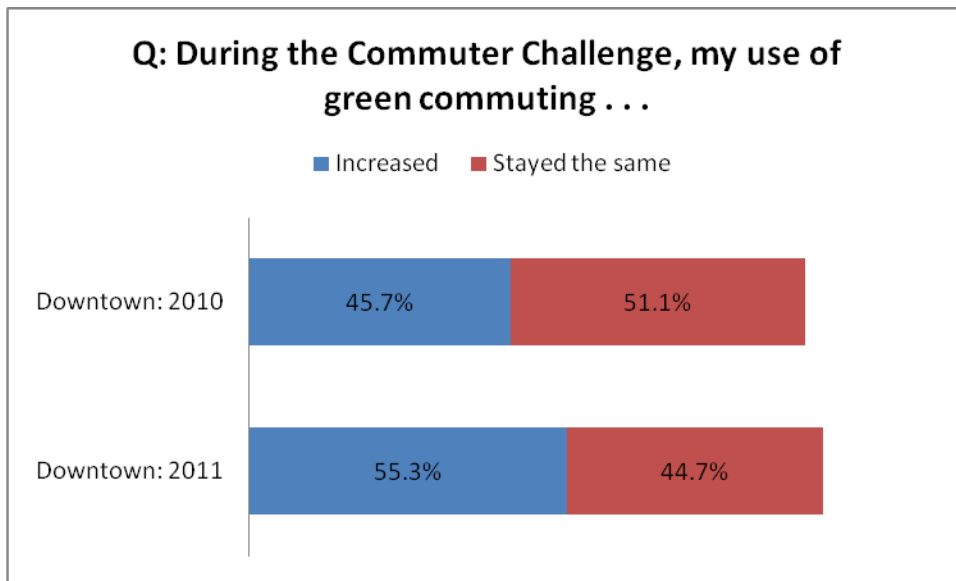
Typical commute for Commuter Challenge participants before the Challenge*

Commute	2010 Challenge	2011 Challenge
Drive Alone	25%	32%
Walk	23%	19%
Bike	18%	17%
Bus	19%	20%
Carpool/Vanpool	15%	12%

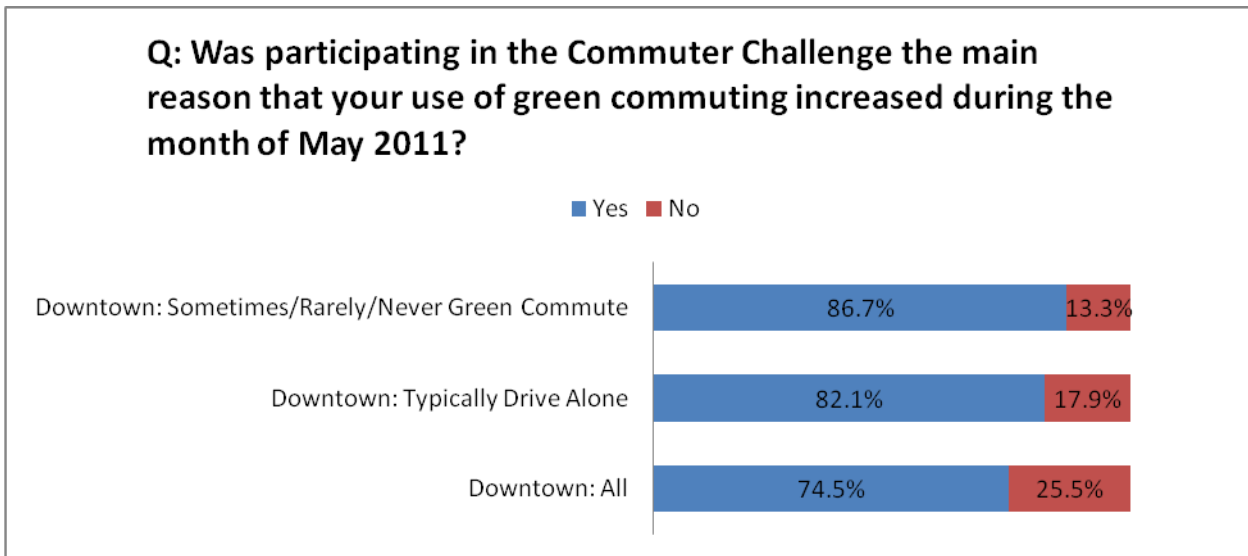
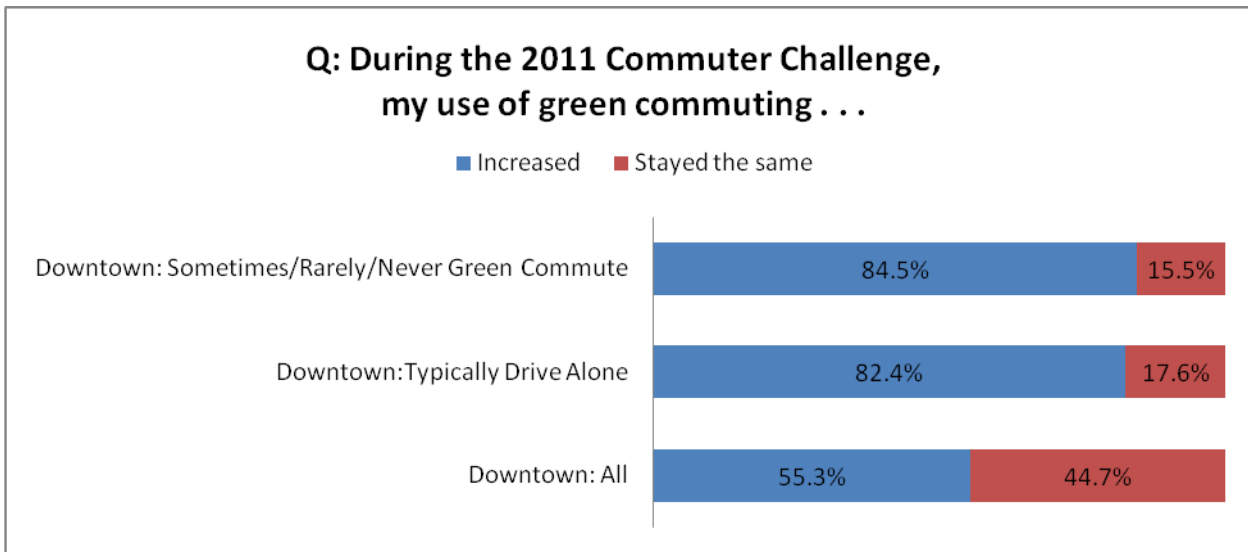
*Participants could select more than 1 mode

The 2011 Commuter Challenge increases green commuting for downtown Ann Arbor employees

- Compared to 2010, more downtown employees surveyed said they increased their green commuting during the 2011 Commuter Challenge and that this increase was caused by the 2011 Commuter Challenge.



- Even more significant is that compared to all downtown employees, an even higher percentage of downtown employees who either typically drive alone or do a green commute 4 times a month or less said their green commuting increased during the Commuter Challenge and that it was the 2011 Commuter Challenge that caused this increase.



The Commuter Challenge and other getDowntown programs change commuting behavior throughout the year.

- To judge the success of the Commuter Challenge and getDowntown in changing commuting behavior over time, the Commuter Challenge follow-up survey asked respondents if in the past year they had increased their use of green commuting and if so, what caused that increase.
- **44%** of all downtown respondents who participated in the 2010 Commuter Challenge said they made a change in how they got to work in the past year, with **93%** saying they increased their use of green commuting.
- Of the factors that caused an increase in yearly green commuting use, getDowntown factors—the Commuter Challenge and the go!pass (an unlimited use transit pass sold to employers by getDowntown), were top reasons for this change. Gas prices and the desire to be more environmentally friendly also rated highly.

Top factors that increased downtown survey respondents’ yearly green commuting use (respondents could select more than one factor)

Answer Options	Downtown Respondents
Health and fitness	46%
Availability of a go!pass	42%
As a result of participating in the Commuter Challenge	35%
Gas prices	69%
Parking availability	35%
Desire to be more environmentally friendly	69%

→ getDowntown factors: 77%

The Commuter Challenge: Qualitative data

The Commuter Challenge follow-up survey also asked open-ended questions to gauge the success of the Challenge. Below are selected quotes from 2011 downtown Commuter Challenge participants. These quotes demonstrate that the Commuter Challenge did change commuting behavior for a wide variety of downtown Ann Arbor employees.

2011 Downtown Ann Arbor Commuter Challenge participant quotes:

“I just wanted to say, it was very enjoyable doing the Challenge and I will definitely keep riding my bike through the summer. I connected with my coworkers on an even greater level by being able to talk about bikes with them. It’s been a lot of fun!” -Sam’s Store Employee

“Thanks for doing this! This year I saw more people than ever try it [a green commute] for the first time.”-JJR Employee

“This was the push I needed to start taking the bus. Now I plan on taking it to work every day.” -Arbor Research Collaborative for Health Employee

“It definitely seemed as though more of my co-workers were talking about and using green commuting methods during the Challenge. Yay!” -Zingerman’s Employee

“This was the first time that I rode my bike for anything other than around the block - and I really loved it! I am now riding my bike to work 2 times a week and will continue to do so for as long as the weather allows me to.”-Google Ann Arbor Employee

Conclusion

Based on the data collected, it is clear that the getDowntown Commuter Challenge is successfully changing commuting behavior for downtown Ann Arbor employees both during the month of May and beyond. In the future, the getDowntown Program will continue to find ways to target the Challenge to downtown Ann Arbor employees in order to increase their participation in the Challenge. In addition, getDowntown will strive to make the Challenge an event for the employee who needs that extra motivation to try a green commute.