

Smart Commute Bike to Work Day 2012

Smart Commute is a workplace-based transportation demand management program of Metrolinx and the municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area. It comprises 11 independent, local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) whose funding is derived from various sources. The funding contribution from Metrolinx ranges from 40% to 50% of each TMA's total budget, and this helps to leverage funding from municipalities, fees from employers, sponsorships and grants. The relationship between Metrolinx and each TMAs is governed by a funding agreement. To date, more than 219 employers with 561,600 employees have signed on to the Smart Commute program.

History

Metrolinx and the TMAs have worked together to facilitate and promote Bike to Work Day events to the Smart Commute network of employers since 2008. For the last three years, Metrolinx has partnered with the City of Toronto to align Bike to Work Day with the Group Commute, a successful 20+-year-old event held in downtown Toronto, to build a critical mass that spans the region. In 2012, the goal is to remain aligned and increase the number of local events and the number of participants at these events. Local events include group commutes, bicycle breakfasts, workplace seminars and incentives such as commemorative t-shirts, bike repair kits, ankle bands, etc. In previous years, events have been held in Brampton, Burlington, Hamilton, Mississauga, Markham, Newmarket, Oakville, Oshawa, Pickering, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Vaughan and Whitby.

The success of these events has helped build momentum over the years. In 2008, more than 2,500 commuters participated in Bike to Work Day events across the region and the numbers have increased steadily each year. In 2012, we expect to attract close to 4,000 participants. The marketing and promotions efforts of the TMAs reach significantly higher numbers of GTHA residents.

Leveraged benefits

	Metrolinx	TMAs
Financial investment (including staff time)	Non-Responsive Information	
Paid media buys	\$18,000 (see below)	\$3,500 (3 placements)
Earned media	2 placements	25 placements
Sponsors	Non-Responsive Information	
Social media followers (Twitter, Facebook, Google+, etc)	800	5400
Other investment	Non-Responsive Information	

Marketing and Promotion

As an event that seeks to elicit behaviour change, marketing, promotions and incentives are critical to its success. The Metrolinx marketing and promotions plan for Bike to Work Day is built around five strategies:

1. Paid media

Advertising will be booked as follows:

- Print Advertisements – Community newspapers: 1/8 page B&W + 1-colour ads (1 insertion each): Newmarket-Aurora Era-Banner, Hamilton Spectator, Oshawa/Whitby This Week, Mississauga News, Richmond Hill/Thornhill Liberal, Oakville Beaver, Brampton Guardian
- Online Advertisement: 1 week banner ad on TheWeatherNetwork.ca, geo-targeted to GTHA

2. Earned/In-kind media

Significant efforts are made to secure earned and in-kind media coverage in the lead-up to and following the event.

- News Release - Focus on benefits of cycling – cost savings, stress reduction, fun – and share “I Bike” stories that illustrate how everyone can make biking part of their commute
- Media Advisory - Interview Opportunity with Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig on May 28 at Clarkson GO Station (event-day morning) as cyclists arrive and receive t-shirts
- TMAs - To support release and advisory distribution, TMAs may pitch story to local media
- In-kind advertising (no cost): Metro, 24 Hours, and T.O. Night.
- Cross promotion with GO Transit customers (messaging on electronic PINS boards, On the GO e-mail subscribers, posters mounted in GO stations
- MTO Highway boards messaging

3. Visibility/event profile

Visibility and event profile are built through:

- The distribution of 8,000 posters and 2,000 postcards across the region
- The purchase and distribution of 2,500 branded Bike to Work Day t-shirts. These t-shirts create an immediate visual impact at local events. Metrolinx and Smart Commute brands are further enhanced over the course of the year as the shirts are worn throughout the year. Centralized purchasing by Metrolinx provides an economy of scale that would not be possible if each local initiative purchased these items individually. It also ensures consistent branding and messaging throughout the GTHA.
- Social media – Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn

4. A pledge

A key element of our promotions will center on encouraging people to pledge to bike to work (or to tell a friend about it or assist a new cyclist). The online pledge form will also capture data on the entrant's usual commute mode and how they learned about the event.

5. Prizes/sponsorships

Prizes for the 2012 event are being sponsored by:

- VIA Rail (a VIA Rail trip for two to Quebec City)
- Welcome Cyclists (a weekend getaway for two people to St. Catharines).

We are also seeking other sponsors to reduce the cost of the t-shirts. However, securing sponsors in such a challenging approvals environment is difficult and a potential risk to Metrolinx's reputation.

Non-Responsive Information