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Change the Way You Travel

A hundred years ago, everyone traveled by foot, horse or bicycle. Today, thanks to the magic of fossil fuels, there are 700 million vehicles on the planet. Together, they are responsible for 2.8 billion tonnes of CO₂ a year, producing 7.6% of the world's CO₂ emissions.

Every time your car burns a liter of gas, it releases 2.34 kg of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Every time it burns a gallon, it releases 19.56 lbs.

If you are an average motorist, driving 20,000 kilometers (13,500 miles) a year in a car that consumes 9 liters per 100 km (26 mpg), you'll burn 2,222 liters (587 gallons), adding 5.2 tonnes of CO₂ to your carbon footprint. Can you reduce this and still get where you need to go?



MARTIN GOLDER

Victoria architect Martin Golder sits on his summer chopper. Originally a kid's bike, it sports a 750w wheel motor running on 48 volts, and is capable of some very exciting speeds.

There is no science on how we are going to adapt to 4 degrees warming. It is actually pretty alarming.

— Professor Neil Alger, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research

Walk or Cycle

Our ancestors walked around the world: our legs are designed by evolution for walking. For every mile that you walk or cycle instead of driving, you'll eliminate that much CO₂, while becoming generally fitter and happier. For shopping and deliveries, there are backpacks and bicycle trailers. If you cycle to work each day instead of driving a 20 mile round trip, you'll reduce your carbon footprint by 1.7 tonnes a year.

Ride an Electric Bike or Scooter

An electric bike uses almost no power, so your running costs will be close to zero, and they can zip along at 35 km/hr (22 mph), with a range of up to 50 km. An electric bike kit costs \$400 to \$1400. If you use green electricity, you'll have no emissions at all. The Vectrix electric motorbike can travel at up to 100 km/hr (62 mph) with a range of 55–90 km (35–55) miles, for only pennies per kilometer.

Take the Bus

In some cities, the bus service is superb, with electronic timetables that tell you when the next bus is coming. In others, it's an embarrassment, and you'll need a lot of citizen pressure to make it effective and reliable. (See #25.) For longer distances, inter-city coaches can be great, especially when they have laptop plug-ins and serve cappuccinos — and when nextbus.com tells you when the bus is coming.

Take the Train

This is a very comfortable way to reduce your emissions, and a great alternative to flying up to 800 kilometers (500 miles.)

Ridesharing

If you share a ride with one other person, you'll cut your emissions in half. Share with four people, you'll reduce them by 75%. For one-off rideshares or regular commuting, search on erideshare.com or Craigslist, with the name of your city. In Britain, Liftshare has become hugely popular, with more than 300,000 members in 2009.

Carsharing

In 2007, 200,000 people in North America were members of car share groups — 300,000 in Europe, where carsharing started. Philadelphia's PhillyCarShare, has 35,000 members, 10,000 of whom have given up their cars. Carsharing gives you the choice to use a car when you need it, while also using other ways to get around.

Teleconferencing

If you fly economy class from Los Angeles to Washington DC, a round-trip of 4600 miles, you'll produce 1.8 tonnes of CO₂e. (See #9) If you organize a teleconference, you will avoid the emissions as well as the time and hassle. If six people teleconference instead of flying, they'll save \$2,400 in return tickets, which could be put toward the cost of a top-of-the-line teleconferencing room.

Shopping without the Car

Carless people do it all the time. Your options include joining a carshare group; renting or buying a bicycle trailer; shopping locally so that you can walk home with a wheeled cart or a backpack; and joining a home delivery service such as Small Potatoes Urban Delivery (SPUD) in Western Canada.

- Carpool savings: carpool.ca/calculator.asp
- Carpooling (Canada): carpool.ca
- Carsharing: carsharing.net
- Electric bikes: electric-bikes.com
- Liftshare UK: liftsharesolutions.com
- Nextbus: nextbus.com
- Public Transit Calculators: publictransportation.org
- Ridesharing: erideshare.com
- SPUD: spud.ca
- Teleconferencing: tinyurl.com/y3q9vq
- Top Ten Reasons to Buy an Electric Bike: squidoo.com/electricbicycle

Actions

- Start a travel diary, and see how many trips you could do without a car
- Visit a bike shop and research the choices
- Research electric bikes on the Internet
- Research local ridesharing and carsharing possibilities

CO ₂ emissions from travel ¹	Grams per passenger km
Walk/Bike	0
Electric bike	6
Electric scooter	12
Rideshare, EV	23
Bus, full	23
Electric motorbike	25
Inter-city coach ²	29
Train, full	40
Rideshare 4 people	55
Bus, average	76
Train, average	92
Car, 9.5 litres/100km (25 mpg) driving alone	220