

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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### **Smart Commuting Saves Money and the Environment**

It was National Bike/Walk to Work Day earlier this month, and we saw a lot of two-wheel and two-legged commuting across the state. What started out as a celebration of the hobby of bicycling has expanded into an opportunity to focus on using alternative modes of transportation to reduce our impact on the environment. And the most effective way to do that is to zero in on the one thing we use our vehicles for the most: commuting to work.

Enter “Smart Commuting.” Smart commuting is about finding a way to get to work that reduces single occupancy vehicle travel. This can happen through carpooling, walking/biking to work, using public transportation, or telecommuting (when available). Why is it “smart”? It saves money, reduces traffic and lowers emissions. It’s also a fun and social thing to do!

**Consider the money:** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average commute is 30 miles round-trip, and the average fuel economy is 22 mpg ([U.S. Department of Transportation](#)); at \$2.73 per gallon that equals \$3.72 a day. Now, multiply that by 5 days a week for 48 weeks (52 weeks in a year minus 4 weeks of holiday, vacation, sick), and you’re looking at \$892.80 per year just in gas. Factor in wear and tear on your vehicle, and it really starts to add up.

**Consider the traffic:** The number of “vehicle miles traveled” is on the rise in New Hampshire; in 2016 that total was nearly 13 million, according to the state Department of Transportation, which predicts the VMT will rise by 1% every year. Reducing the number of single occupancy cars on the road will reduce congestion and traffic, take some of the pressure off of our roads and bridges, and start to bring that number down.

**Consider the emissions:** The largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions in New Hampshire is the transportation sector. The U.S. Department of Energy says burning one gallon of gas produces 20 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> ([FuelEconomy.gov](#)). Using the same calculation from earlier, that amounts to about 27.2 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per day.

There are organizations dedicated to “encouraging and assisting people to choose sustainable transportation options,” such as CommuteSmart NH, which provides information and resources for people interested in carpooling, among other things. On the group’s website, [www.commutesmartnh.org](http://www.commutesmartnh.org), you can find resources such as a Rideshare Portal, Emergency Ride Home Program and Volunteer Driver Program.

For the month of June, CommuteSmartNH is welcoming businesses and employers to join a statewide challenge to reduce single occupancy vehicle commuting. These businesses can create teams of employees who will log any trip to work that was not driving in a vehicle alone; for example: walking, biking, public transportation, carpool, telecommuting (working at home), or any combination of these options. Large businesses can even create multiple teams and have some friendly interagency competition. For more information about the challenge, go to <http://commutesmartnh.org/june-statewide-challenge/>

Whether taking part in the challenge or not, there are small, simple steps you can take to reduce your carbon footprint. Think about some changes you can make – whether to your commute or other parts of your daily life – that can make a difference.

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