



The Daily Gleaner

Green Matters on the Road

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Summer is the ideal time to develop some new and healthy habits, and many things that promote better health for bodies, also improve the health of our environment. One such thing is active transportation. Walking, biking, rollerblading, or skateboarding means using your car less which saves money and time (stopped at traffic lights and construction zones), while reducing stress and greenhouse gas emissions.

Fredericton is a great city in which to commute by bike or by foot, with an extensive pedestrian trail, wide sidewalks and a well-maintained walking bridge. Public transit buses are equipped with bike racks, allowing cyclists to bike to work in the cool early mornings and take the bus home in the high afternoon temperatures. And many bike racks are located around city trails, parks, walkways, and buildings, with a dozen new ones to be installed soon.

I know many people who have chosen to walk or bike to work every day. Some travel three to four kilometres each way and they have discovered it is the quickest mode of transportation, as they avoid many of the delays of driving.

Another way to reduce your car use is to try carpooling or public transit a couple of times a week, or take your car to work but park several blocks away, avoiding traffic-congested zones and allowing you to walk a short distance. And if you are running errands, shopping or attending an event, think about how you might get there while leaving your car in the driveway.

When you do need to use your car here are some things you can do to ensure you increase your gas mileage and reduce your greenhouse gas emissions:

- Don't idle – if you need to stop your car for more than 10 seconds, turn off your engine. So remember, if you are waiting to drop off your returnable bottles on York Street, or picking up your children at day camp – turn off your car!
- Maintain correct tire pressure - an under-inflated tire can mean a 5% fuel efficiency reduction.
- Perform regular tune-ups - keeps your vehicle running at its maximum efficiency. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve your car's gas mileage by as much as 10%.
- Remove unnecessary weight from your car. If you have a rack on top of your car, consider removing it. The aerodynamics of a rack can reduce your fuel efficiency up to 30%.
- Slow down - driving at 90 km/h uses 30% less fuel than driving at higher speeds which means you also save at the pump
- To reduce ozone, fuel up when it's cool (in the mornings and evenings), and stop at the click.
- Drive gently - speeding, rapid acceleration and braking wastes gas, lowering your gas mileage by 33% on the highway and by 5% in the city.

You may already be driving a fuel-efficient vehicle, but if not, consider a hybrid or more fuel-efficient car the next time you purchase. There are many financial incentives and rebates for these types of vehicles now.

If you are wondering how much of an impact your 'active transportation' choices can have on the environment, go to www.greenenergychallenge.org (or you can link from www.greenmattersfredericton.com) and join the **Green Energy Challenge** online. This site shows you how making lifestyle changes can have a positive affect on the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. By joining the challenge you can collect points when you accept and complete a task to

reduce your carbon footprint. As your points add up, you are eligible to win prizes, including the grand prize of a 2008 Toyota Prius hybrid car.

So I challenge you - if you haven't already done so, put the car keys aside and try a new way of travelling that reduces your carbon footprint while improving your health and fitness.

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who looks for ways to conserve energy, waste less and challenge herself to do more for the health of our planet. In her weekly e-letter 'A Challenge to Inconvenience Yourself', she challenges people to live more responsibly and provides them with ideas about how to do it. If you are interested in signing up for her challenges go to www.greenmattersfredericton.com and check out the Green Matters Heroes section.