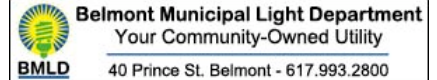
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Belmont: Leave the Car – Take the Alternative

Energy Committee's Transportation Subcommittee discusses how to inspire people to option out of driving and take up walking, biking, sharing and riding public transport.

By [Natalie Trusso Cafarello](#) | [Email the author](#) | 11:29am  [Print](#)

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As they look back on one win ("[Stretch](#)" code) and one issue tabled (the [tree replacement](#) bylaw) at the recent Town Meeting, Belmont's [Energy Committee](#) hinted towards robust plans for future climate conscious practices regarding how Belmont resident get about town.

When speaking of reducing emissions and one's personal carbon foot print in the area of transportation, the Energy Committee faces the challenge of reaching beyond just arguing on the side of sustainable living.

The committee recognizes that residents will need to first acknowledge the impact of their current mode of transportation on the environment, realize that alternatives to moving from point A to point B exist, and then set those alternatives into practice.

At their last meeting for the season, Thursday, June 9, the committee said they will need to employ grass-roots campaigning and social marketing techniques – championed by Doug McKenzie-Mohr, author of "Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing" – to spur residents to change their behavior.

"We may need to go the social marketing approach and raise people's awareness, to get people out of their cars," said Energy Co-chairman Ian Todreas.

This approach is needed, said committee members, since according to the 2000 census, a little over 10 percent of Belmont's workforce prefer public transport over their car.

Since the inception of the Transportation Sub-committee, one of the alternative mode of transport its members have been advocating to see in Belmont is the popular firm [Zipcar](#).

However Todreas added that competition to the alternative rental business has entered the market as [Mint Cars](#) (currently with two locations in Harvard Square) may be cheaper than Zipcar.

In either case, the firms popularity builds on the concept of giving people choice that do not want to be bothered with car payments and the daunting task of finding a parking spot in overcrowded cities.

Another alternate is one from Harvard Business School graduate Shelby Clark. RelayRides, available in Boston and San Francisco, claims that car owners can

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"This may work for a community like Belmont, for those people taking transit (to work) and their cars are just sitting there," said Todreas, "but there remains questions with how it works and the comfort level with other people driving their car."

In more practical ways to ease the transition in transportation, members are working on raising ridership at the Belmont Center Commuter Rail and have plans to beautify the location.

The committee will also be adding over 100 bike parking spaces for the town's school grounds, parks and playgrounds. Members are hopeful that more bike racks, along with a bike map in the works will promote the use of cycling as a mode of transport to school.

There are also plans on creating a walking guide to Belmont. Todreas informed members that the town's Planning Department is about to work with the pedestrian advocacy group WalkBoston to create a map of Belmont that would be similar to a current walking map of Malden.

"This is a tool that we can build on," said Todreas.

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