

Top cities for green commuting

The auto is still king for commuters, but cities that invest in alternatives are managing to get a fair share of their travelers to use other modes of travel. Here are the top cities in walking, biking, carpooling, public transit use, and telecommuting – and how far ahead they are of the national average.



BEST

PORTLAND, ORE. 3.5%
National average 0.4%

How did they do it?
Portland has 270 miles of bike paths and lanes, markets the merits of biking to residents, and has installed traffic-calming tactics like flashing lights and speed bumps. A culture of "bicycle fun" helps, as do guided bike tours of the best doughnut shops and sushi bars.

– Roger Geller, bicycle coordinator

Note: All figures represent percentage of workers over age 16.



BOSTON 12.5%
National average 2.5%

BEST

WALKING

MESA, ARIZ. 16.7%
National average 10.7%

How did they do it?
Major employers in Mesa have trip-reduction programs that offer incentives like gift certificates for carpooling and biking to work. A tax-funded ride share program promotes carpooling, and its website, sharetheride.com, helps commuters plan carpools.

– Steven Wright, communications director, City of Mesa

BEST

NEW YORK 54.6%
National average 4.7%

How did they do it?
New York's mass transit system was developed "with great foresight" to extend beyond the city limits. The city has spent billions of dollars over two decades on new subway equipment. The result? Over the past 10 years, ridership is up more than 30 percent.

– Jeremy Soffin, Metropolitan Transportation Authority

SAN FRANCISCO 6.3%
National average 3.6%

How did they do it?

Silicon Valley and other Bay Area tech companies support telecommuting to the office for San Francisco residents. For example, at least one-third of employees at the Santa Clara headquarters of Intel, which won the EPA Award for Best Workplace for Commuters in 2005 and 2006, telecommute to work once or more per week.

– Mark Pettinger, Intel spokesman

How did they do it?

Boston is a compact, older city, so many of its residents don't have to go far to get to work. It also has an extensive network of sidewalks and narrow streets that slow car traffic, so the city "feels comfortable for walking."

– Wendy Landman, WalkBoston, a nonprofit group that works with the city to promote walking

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