



Marketing & Education Initiatives for Encouraging Alternative Transportation Use in Decatur

Success of Decatur's Community Transportation Plan (CTP) will be measured by more than just a technical analysis of the transportation system. Success will be measured by the future transportation choices made by City residents and by improved access to the Decatur's numerous attractions.

The active living and alternative transportation components included in the CTP have many benefits for local health, economy, and the environment. New projects can be costly, however, and residents often need to make transportation behavior changes to fully appreciate the benefits of planned improvements. The degree to which the CTP influences residents to change their transportation habits will be enhanced with a strong Marketing and Education campaign.

An effective marketing strategy can help the City obtain local, regional, and even national recognition for pursuing an ambitious and forward-thinking transportation agenda. Marketing can help attract new development, support future funding requests, and support the City's long term growth. Long term marketing also offers a path for critical feedback and may improve the probability of implementation for future projects.

This document is intended to identify and define potential marketing and educational opportunities. This section outlines basic principles and objectives of alternative transportation marketing and then applies the principles to Decatur. Additional broader formal education programs and partnerships are explored.

Overview & Goals of Transportation Marketing

Bicycle and pedestrian marketing programs are critical to encouraging residents to use the existing system as well as helping build political support for future projects.

Cities, counties, and states across the nation have recognized that "information is as powerful as infrastructure" in helping to develop a multi-modal transportation system. Marketing involves identifying and assessing barriers to adopting alternative practices, providing information about products or services to address those barriers, and promoting their use within the system.

Marketing programs need to target specific goals, such as a segment of the population, a type of trip, or a reduction of a certain behavior. Many jurisdictions have had a wide range of experience trying to entice system users into adopting an alternative mode of transportation, usually to decrease automobile congestion or improve regional environmental quality. Building on these transportation demand management (TDM) programs, which are more often implemented at a regional level, bicycle and pedestrian marketing attempts to achieve similar goals of encouraging hesitant users to attempt pedestrian or cycling trips.

The following list outlines eight targets for marketing programs:

- **Know Your Audience:** Survey users and potential users of alternative modes to determine preferences, knowledge, barriers, and opportunities for changing travel behavior;
- **Target Individuals:** Provide individualized information that helps inform and encourage hesitant users, offering specific information and incentives to try alternate modes;
- **Establish Partnerships:** Build programs with local employers, officials, and businesses to help encourage alternate mode trips;
- **Promote the Benefits:** Highlight the many positive aspects of alternative transportation, including improved physical health, lower financial costs, and the prestige of mode choices;
- **Build a Toolbox:** Provide a system users guide with the necessary information about local routes, resources, and proper usage of alternative transportation modes;
- **Follow the Money:** Assess the costs, both financial and personal, of all modes and help make alternative transportation choices a lower-cost choice;
- **Incorporate Feedback:** Establish clear feedback channels within the marketing program to identify and overcome potential barriers within the system;
- **Connect to the Regional System:** Use marketing and incentives to connect local pedestrian and cycling trips to the regional transit system, creating linkages between all modes.

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Marketing strategies should be targeted at the portion of the population most willing and able to engage in alternative transportation modes. Programs should first identify the portions of residents who would never, might sometimes, or would often use an alternate mode of transportation. For many transportation users, schedules and distances are impediments to regular bicycling or walking. However, many residents recognize that for non-essential trips, such as leisure, recreation, or errands, the benefits of engaging in alternative transportation are lower cost or healthy exercise. Shifting even a few trips can help realize the many benefits of alternative transportation modes.

Marketing efforts should offer travelers a temporary and low-cost opportunity to test an alternative mode, such as providing free transit trips or a short-term event such as Bike to

Work day. Once users feel more comfortable engaging in a particular mode, they can be encouraged to gradually increase their usage as their experience and schedules allow. Marketing strategies work most effectively by promoting the positive aspects of an activity, such as lowering costs, increasing health, or the pure enjoyment of spending time outdoors.

Individualized marketing programs have been very successful at both identifying and targeting specific portions of the population who are most willing to adopt an alternative mode of transportation. By first surveying residents, individualized packets can be distributed – often by hand – which provide information and marketing materials specific to the resident’s location and interests. Individualized marketing programs also include an encouragement phase with promotional materials and coupons or free transit trips as well as an evaluation phase to follow up with program participants on their experiences.

Implementing a Marketing Program within Decatur

Know Your Audience: Survey users and potential users of alternative modes to determine preferences, knowledge, barriers, and opportunities for changing travel behavior;

The first aspect of marketing is understanding the needs and interests of the target audience. The Community Transportation Plan process has already completed a phone survey of city residents and evaluated the preferences, knowledge, and needs of a wide range of city residents. These results helped reinforce the planning process and highlight both the constraints and opportunities within the community.

The survey revealed that clear opportunities for mode shifting with the City of Decatur come from the leisure and recreational trips taken within the City limits. The City has worked for decades to revitalize the downtown core and make the historic square a destination for eating, shopping, and attending a wide range of special events. The survey shows that 61 percent of respondents would be more likely to walk or bike to the downtown area with more facilities.



Using the survey results as a benchmark, the City should distribute a follow-up survey to gather information on the facility usage and implementation concerns. Critical feedback from system users can help inform future projects and monitor the effectiveness of City money. This survey can also help inform research on the health of the City and the effectiveness of encouraging residents to adopt regular active living exercise.

Target Individuals: Provide individualized information that helps inform and encourage hesitant users, offering specific information and incentives to try alternate modes;

Distinct audiences and messages are needed to reach niche groups. Moving beyond generalized marketing and education, increasingly sophisticated marketing approaches have been developed which target individual households with location-specific information. Known generally as Individualized Travel Marketing (ITM), this targeted survey and marketing approach has shown to significantly increase alternative transportation use. The program has been called TravelSmart in several cities and has been implemented and documented around the world, most notably in Portland Oregon as well as several British and Australian jurisdictions.

ITM programs begin by identifying three classes of household: regular alternative transportation users, interested but irregular users, and non-interested users. Individualized packets are created for interested households detailing transit options (nearest rail station, nearest bus routes and destinations, etc), alternative transportation routes (bike lanes, trails, etc), car sharing locations, and incentive programs available in the area. The packets can further include incentives and marketing materials from participating partners. For example, Flexcar could provide free test drives, MARTA could provide a free reusable Breeze card, and local bicycle or running shoe stores could provide coupons or promotional items.

Building and implementing a targeted marketing campaign for households across the city takes professional expertise at potentially high costs. With less labor, the City staff could create marketing and incentive materials for high-density residential locations such as condo buildings within walking distance of the downtown core. These materials could contain maps of walking routes to transit plus marketing materials and be geared towards residents of condos, who may be predisposed to alternative transportation options.

Establish Partnerships: Build programs with local employers, organizations, and businesses to help encourage alternate mode trips;

The City of Decatur has been very successful with a range of special events and economic development programs designed to attract residents and visitors to downtown shops, restaurants, festivals, and concerts. Coordinating with these programs can boost both the success of the events as well as the promotion of alternative transportation within the City.

The City can offer a range of incentives for taking alternative transportation trips to downtown. Partnering with retail shops and restaurants, the City could offer discounts for cyclists in conjunction with the current Thursday night extended shopping hours. Further, the City could designate the blocks of Ponce de Leon Ave between Commerce Dr and Church Street as a pedestrian mall closed off to automobile traffic on certain Saturdays. Bringing more walkers or cyclists to the downtown area increases sidewalk travel and helps expose retail and restaurant shops to increased business.

Festival events attract a large number of residents and visitors which potentially strains automobile parking resources. Promoting walking or parking trips to downtown decreases the need for parking spaces as well as lowers congestion and encourages physical activity amongst attendees. Having visible signage promoting walking and cycling,

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offering raffles for anyone attending the festival without a car, or offering shuttle service from neighborhoods to the downtown area can all help encourage residents to attend the event without a car.

Safe and convenient bicycle parking is a key requirement for encouraging and supporting bicycle travel within the City. As Decatur moves towards increasing the number of bicycle parking spaces throughout the city, local businesses and offices should be key partners to install and maintain high-quality bicycle parking racks. Many private businesses recognize the benefits of bicycle transportation and can personalize their bicycle parking facilities to attract attention or recognition around their locations. Signage and uniquely-shaped racks both serve as advertisements for businesses who choose to improve their local bicycle parking.

While permanent bicycle parking can be encouraged or required throughout the City, Decatur's success with event planning offers a prime opportunity for using temporary parking facilities to encourage bicycling to City events. Several manufacturers offer portable bicycle racks which are easily transported and assembled. The City can designate roped-off areas with volunteer attendants to offer "valet parking" for bicycles as well as monitor parking locations close to a festival entrance. The Atlanta Bicycle Campaign has a long-running initiative to offer monitored bicycle parking at most festival events within the City of Atlanta.



The City currently partners with the regional Clean Air Campaign to promote and support alternative transportation trips. The Campaign's Cash for Commuters and Commuter Prizes programs offer money or incentives for workers who log their daily commutes on the program website. The City of Decatur has offered smaller scale Smart Commute Days in the past, offering prizes, t-shirts, and lunches to city employees taking an alternate mode to work on that day. The City should continue to offer events and incentives to city workers to encourage alternative commuting within the city staff.

Beyond special events, the City should continue to be a leader for promoting alternative transportation trips. Current benefits, such as free automobile parking, should be closely considered. Parking spaces could be offered for a small fee to city employees and potentially substituted with alternative incentives such as free MARTA trips or FlexCar memberships. Promoting alternative transportation trips amongst city staff will help demonstrate leadership and alternative transportation feasibility within the City.

Promote the Benefits: Highlight the many positive aspects of alternative transportation, including improved physical health, lower financial costs, and the prestige of mode choices;

The City has held several annual Bike to Work Days during National Bike Week in May. In March 2007, the City hosted a group of the Georgia Rides to the Capitol advocacy ride. These events attract hundreds of participants and highlight current facilities and advocacy issues surrounding bicycling and walking as forms of alternative transportation. Recent attendance at a range of annual events has helped Decatur establish itself as one of the leading jurisdictions for alternative transportation within the metropolitan Atlanta area.



The City should schedule annual events to attract and encourage cyclists and pedestrians to use alternative transportation for commuting and recreation. Car Free Day has been held for several recent years with mixed results. Wider advertising, partnering with local employers and retailers, and encouraging city staff to participate are all needed to tip the balance towards

bicycle and walking trips for just one day. The range of possible events is nearly endless, including continued Bike or Walk to Work Days, Car Free Day, or even partnering with local restaurants to hold a “Bicycle Built for Two Night” to encourage couples to cycle to restaurants for dinner.

Not only are alternative modes fun and healthy, success with bicycling and walking programs is becoming increasingly prestigious for communities across the nation. Positive recognition and awards can serve as valuable economic development tools and help support local businesses and developments. Especially within a city the size of Decatur, achieving notoriety for safe, comfortable, and convenient transportation can attract a range of new residents and businesses. The City has received several awards such as the PEDS Golden Shoes award. The City should continue to market new projects to receive recognition from environmental, development, and advocacy organizations.

One critical recognition program that the City should pursue is the Bicycle Friendly City designation from the League of American Bicyclists. This national-level recognition program includes cities from across the country, including Roswell, Georgia. Receiving a bike friendly city designation is a challenging task and speaks to a high level of commitment amongst the city and local residents. This can serve as national recognition for Decatur and become a prime marketing opportunity for future residents and developers.

Build a Toolbox: Provide a system users guide with the necessary information about local routes, resources, and proper usage of alternative transportation modes;

Looking farther into the future, the City should expand on public education and marketing materials to help inform City residents about the implementation of the plan and the new opportunities provided by expanded transportation facilities.

The City should also take initial steps toward updating the internet resources regarding the plan's recommendations. Web resources should include route finding, facilities locations, schedules for implementation of new projects, and technical documents regarding all transportation modes within the City. Separate educational pages should be targeted to specific user groups, such as cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, informing residents of the skills required to safely operate in the transportation network.

Information such as designated routes, bicycle parking locations, and upcoming events should be clearly publicized to help encourage riders of all ages. The City of Decatur currently has a BikeDecatur.org web page which can be improved with new logos and information pertaining to cycling within the City. The website should provide information about cycling within city and surrounding area, advertise for bicycle-friendly businesses, and serve as a point of contact for residents who observe dangerous conditions.

With the adoption of the City's bicycle and pedestrian networks, the first step for advertising the network is signage to mark the new routes and facilities. Signs along the routes with trail logos and wayfinding signage pointing towards parks, downtown, and schools will allow cyclists and pedestrians to navigate around and through the city. On routes not designated as official bicycle routes, especially around the downtown area, "Share the Road" signs should be placed to educate motorists about the potential presence of cyclists on the roadway.

Along with wayfinding signage, the City should publish maps to inform local residents about new bicycle and pedestrian routes. The City currently publishes a series of maps for short walks around the city and these should be more widely distributed and visible at local shops or restaurants. The data gathered in the transportation plan offers an opportunity to develop a bicycle suitability map, describing the quality of travel along City roads. Combined with maps of the new bicycle network, maps available throughout the City can highlight new facilities and encourage new cyclists to travel in the city. Local examples of suitability maps can be found for Emory University and the Clifton Road corridor as well as midtown and downtown Atlanta areas.

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Follow the Money: Assess the costs, both financial and personal, of all modes and help make alternative transportation choices a lower-cost choice;

A number of transit and alternative transportation modes are available currently within the City without any need for new infrastructure. MARTA, FlexCar, and the Cliff shuttle all operate currently and are growing in popularity. One key aspect of promoting alternative modes is allowing residents to experiment with bike or transit trips at a low personal and financial cost on a temporary basis. Partnering with public and private transportation providers currently operating in the area, the City can help offer free trips, reduced trial

rates, or even rental bicycles to help residents try alternative modes without having to make large commitments or purchases.

Seasonal classes in bicycling safety, basic maintenance, and proper commuting techniques are currently offered through the metropolitan area. The City can partner with nearby bicycle shops and non-profit advocacy groups to subsidize the cost of educational classes for bicycling.

Incorporate Feedback: Establish clear feedback channels within the marketing program to identify and overcome potential barriers within the system;

One of the keys to maintaining a marketing campaign and continuing to promote the use of alternative transportation modes is gathering critical feedback and addressing problems or concerns that arise within the community. Building on the public comments and survey conducted for the Community Transportation Plan, follow-up surveys or public meetings should be held to specifically gauge public interest and concerns about alternative transportation facilities. Publishing and advertising a clear point of contact within city government helps to build public trust in programs and allows the City to adjust strategies and gauge the success of future initiatives.

Part of the effectiveness of addressing concerns of the community is having clear channels through which to voice concerns and maintain contact with the city government. Institutional changes, such as an active living coordinator and citizens' advisory committee, have been addressed directly in the Community Transportation Plan and should be a key support factor for a marketing campaign. Further, a hotline number or email address should be established and publicized so that residents who witness dangerous acts or infrastructure problems can quickly and conveniently convey their concerns to the City.

Connect to the Regional System: Use marketing and incentives to connect local pedestrian and cycling trips to the regional transit system, creating linkages between all modes.

Trips outside of the City of Decatur involve a wide range of destinations, including work and entertainment. Taking alternative transportation trips over seven miles requires significant determination and linking to the existing regional transit system greatly improves the accessibility and mobility of alternative modes. Decatur's political interaction within the regional transit system is limited but the city does have three rail stations inside the city limits. Establishing bicycle and pedestrian oriented linkages between the existing street network and City rail stations will help encourage multi-modal trips as well as more bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Partnering for Education Programs within Decatur

There is a fine line between marketing, informing, and educating. While marketing can help draw residents out onto the streets, more advanced skills are required to help walkers and cyclists safely navigate the transportation network. Education is critical to supporting both cyclists and motorists who can safely navigate the transportation system

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and effectively “share the road.” Teaching transportation skills is as useful for young cyclists as it is for adults.

Formal educational programs need to be addressed differently than the marketing opportunities outlined above. School curriculum, one-time classes, and community workshops are not programs that need to be designed and implemented by the City directly. Rather these areas offer key opportunities for long-term partnerships, especially with the city school system, recreation department, and local advocacy groups. The City can leverage funding opportunities and national education programs to help focus attention on educational opportunities within the school system or other groups within the city.

Building on the recent Safe Routes to School pilot program and bike to work days, the City should continue to sponsor and support Walk or Roll to School days for elementary aged children. With improved transportation facilities between schools, more children will be encouraged to walk or bike to school. The city’s school system should be prepared to offer bicycling and walking safety classes in conjunction with physical education classes. Walk and bike to school days can educate and encourage kids about proper safety skills for dealing with traffic. Small groups of kids, bike or walking “trains,” supervised by parents, should be organized to facilitate safe travel along the City’s streets and bicycle facilities.

Education extends beyond children to local adult residents and motorists. The City should build on school education programs to extend classes for parents and teachers that promote alternative transportation and encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation. Further, the City should sponsor bi-annual bicycle education classes hosted by the city and available for all local residents. Transportation safety workshops at local offices, business associations, service groups, churches, and neighborhood meetings can help educate all residents about the benefits and safety skills associated with bicycling and walking.

Finally, the City should sponsor continuing education classes for City staff members. All staff members should take bicycling education classes, such as the *Bike Ed* curriculum developed by the League of American Bicyclists. At least one city staff member, either in the city managers office or recreation department, should receive further training as a League Certified Instructor to lead classes hosted or sponsored by the City. Engineers and public works staff should receive continuing education focused specifically on bicycling and pedestrian facility design and construction.

The most ambitious opportunity for the city would be to institutionalize bicycle and pedestrian safety classes in the local school system. Bicycle safety classes can serve as “drivers ed” classes for children as young as the third or fourth grade and lay an



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important foundation for safe driving skills later in life. The city should sponsor and encourage a system-wide program for annual safety classes as part of school curriculum. This should be a long-term program for all of the city's school children. Classes can also be held for parents of younger school age children to inform them about the Safe Routes program, skills needed to navigate in safely traffic, and encouragement to let children bicycle or walk to school.

The city's small, local school system and active residents are a valuable resource for creating a range of educational programs designed to reach all of the city's residents. The city staff can play a valuable role by bridging the gap between transportation and education, providing funding or resources for educators, and helping to coordinate programs.