

Going to Worship: Bike There, Bus There, Rideshare!

Resource for Congregations

(Environmental Ministries, [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#), PC(USA))

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Many Presbyterian congregations host a Bike-to-Church, or Alternative Transportation, Sunday. From Saint Mark Presbyterian Church (North Bethesda, MD) to Swarthmore Presbyterian Church (Swarthmore, PA) to First Presbyterian Church (Cottage Grove, OR) to First Presbyterian Church (Urbana, IL), by getting to worship in different ways, churches are:

- staying healthy,
- building community,
- having fun and
- caring for God's creation

Using input and resources and learnings from their experiences, and from the national PC(USA) staff "Bike There, Bus There, Rideshare! Alternative Transportation Week" in October 2013, this guide was developed to assist in your planning of a similar experience in your own church.

Beginning to Plan

1. Gather a brainstorming group
 - a. When in the year might an event like this work best? Check with the church calendar and staff before confirming the date.
 - b. What modes of transportation are you encouraging? Bicycling, walking, carpooling, running, electric vehicles, hybrids, public transportation? Be clear how someone can participate.
2. Form a core planning group with people committed to meeting and sharing responsibilities! Many hands make light work (and fun community building, even in the planning stages).
3. Once the date is known, be sure to gather your planning group at least 6 weeks before the event to really start working. Decide how often, and how/when/where, you want to meet.
4. Send out "Save the Date!" information.

5. Use this guide and your own knowledge of your community to create a logistics and communications strategy and schedule. Outline tasks to be completed, who will complete them, and when they need to be accomplished.
6. Consider if your team members are sufficiently empowered and connected within the church to accomplish their tasks. If not, ask help from your pastor(s) or elders.
7. If you need more help, ask additional church members to do specific tasks:
 - a. Take photographs the day of the event
 - b. Welcome participants the day of the event
 - c. Provide snacks and drinks for participants
 - d. Set up and host the snack/drink/sign-in table the day of the event

Check with Leadership

8. Ask for input from your pastor(s), session, and committees
9. Adapt your plan as needed
10. Decide who, from leadership, might wish to be involved the day of
11. Be clear what, if any, requests are being made of church budget or staff time

Invite Participants and Communicate

12. Consider how an event like this supports the key values of your church. Whether faithful discipleship, physical health, community building, environmental concern, intergenerational fun, evangelism, or any combination of these things, communicate *why* you are doing this event.
13. In the congregation:
 - a. Consider creating and using consistent clip art to identify the event
 - b. Upload information on the church website
 - c. Include articles in the church newsletter, emails, bulletin inserts
 - d. Post information in a central space at the church
 - e. Ask for an announcement during worship a few weeks prior
14. In the broader community:
 - a. Consider inviting neighbors via a door hanger or postcard
 - b. List in the newspaper and area ministry newsletters
 - c. Send a press release to the local paper, and to your presbytery
 - d. Hang flyers in groceries, coffee shops, and other places of interest
 - e. If you are inviting the community to come to church on this particular day, work with worship and education and hospitality teams to decide what theological and scriptural underpinnings will be for this Sunday, so that newcomers understand a clear, consistent message from your Alternative Transportation Sunday

Facilitating Participation

15. If there is time and ability, use the church directory to sort by zip code, and encourage people to carpooling/walk/bike together.
16. Before or after worship the few weeks preceding the event, offer bike maps, bus maps, and assistance with route planning at a designated table
17. Teach a session on bike safety, routes, and carpooling options, if desired.
18. For bike safety, encourage bike locks, reflectors and lights, knowing one's own bicycle serial number, and identify a secure place for all bikes

19. For pedestrians, encourage safety in numbers and mindfulness of surroundings.
20. Consider making stickers for the day of the event to increase excitement and identify who participated and how. Some churches differentiate modes of transportation with colors or designs of stickers.¹
21. Make it fun! What would most celebrate those participating? Drinks and snacks when they show up? A full breakfast? Stickers? Being lifted up in announcement or prayer time? If you set a friendly competition, consider how it will work in your congregation's culture and be clear about what is and is not expected, and how your system of tracking points will work.²

Day of the Event Logistics

22. Arrive early to set up your sign-in sheets, snacks, stickers (if you have them)
23. Make sure at least one of the planning group (or someone else designated) has the job of being ready to welcome and celebrate people who have participated
24. Make sure at least one of the planning group (or someone else designated) is there to take pictures of those arriving. Ask, if possible, for a group photo.
25. Use a sign-in sheet to capture email addresses and possibly also the distance people came and what mode of transportation they used (if you wish to figure out how many carbon emissions were saved by participants not riding in a single-person automobile). Link here to a prepared Excel spreadsheet to figure out carbon emissions saved, or see footnote for suggestions.³
26. Celebrate in worship (with advance permission from appropriate parties).

After the event:

27. Email participants and thank them for their participation
28. Gather your planning team for final evaluation, particularly to harness learnings for next time
29. Calculate how many people participated, how many miles shared, and if desired, carbon emissions saved
30. Share the story with your church newsletter, emails, bulletin, web site
31. Send another press release to the newspaper with pictures of the event
32. Send an event write-up and photo to environment@pcusa.org for posting on the [Eco-Justice Journey Blog](#)

¹ Swathmore's stickers can be seen at: <http://www.pcusa.org/blogs/eco-journey/2013/9/19/earth-care-congregation-swarthmore-pc-bikes-church/>

² At PCUSA, ministry areas were awarded points per person per day participating. Individuals got entered into drawings for gift cards and the ministry area with the most participation got a great home-made, bike-wheel trophy and a pizza party.

³ If you are calculating carbon emissions saved per person, for not traveling in a single-occupancy automobile, the figures we used at PCUSA were: Bicycle 0.32 pounds CO₂/mile; Bus 0.71 pounds CO₂/mile; Carpool 0.55 pounds CO₂/mile w/ 2 people in carpool (per person), 0.367 w/ 3 people, 0.275 w/ 4 people, 0.22 w/ 5 people (all compared to riding in a single occupancy car the same distance a 1.1 pounds CO₂/mile) * includes CO₂ use to make vehicles and roads (or use a carbon calculator [like this one](#), for your own figures.) [Click here](#) and scroll to "transportation" for an Excel spreadsheet set up with some sample figures and formulas.