

Campaign Questions & Answers

Q: How will this campaign work to address traffic congestion?

A: First, there is no single action that will reduce congestion. Rather, we need a multi-faceted approach. The Drive Less/Save More Campaign is part of the overall solution.

The Drive Less/Save More Campaign will increase public awareness about transportation choices, especially trip chaining, to reduce single-person car trips.

If each household in the region eliminated just two single car trips week, there could be a four to five percent reduction in the number of cars on the road (a “car trip” is defined as a single, one-way trip).

Almost half of the single person trips made by people today are non-work related. The goal of this campaign is to get people to think about travel options and encourage drivers to trip chain. This can translate to better traffic flow and more efficient use of our transportation system. Simply put, fewer trips mean better traffic flow.

However, does this mean that you can get to work in half the time it takes you now? With our population increasing and economy doing ok, the answer is most likely, no. But by trip chaining, an individual can personally deal better with congestion at hand.

Q: How does social marketing work? Do these sorts of campaigns effect desired behavioral change?

A: Research has shown that the first step to individual behavior change is awareness and knowledge. Then the person starts thinking about how the desired behavior may apply to him or her. The next step is to try the behavior. That’s the goal of the Drive Less/Save More Campaign. The Drive Less/Save More Campaign will increase public awareness of transportation choices, especially trip chaining.

These sorts of campaigns are proven to work. Consider the efforts to promote the use of seat belts and child safety seats, or encouraging women to avoid alcohol during pregnancy. Here in Oregon, sustained social marketing initiatives have dramatically reduced smoking rates. Since, the anti-tobacco program began in 1997, there has been a 42 percent decline in per capita cigarette consumption.

Also, more people and businesses are recycling in Oregon today as a direct result of sustained public awareness efforts.

The use of paid media is an important part of an effective campaign because it reaches a lot of people. It is a highly effective way to increase awareness and inform the public. For example, TV ads for the Drive Less/Save More Campaign in 2006 are designed to reach almost 98 percent of adults ages 25 to 54 at least 18 times during a six-week period.

Q: What is the campaign's budget?

A: First, let's talk about what congestion is costing us. One recent study conducted last year for the Portland Business Alliance found that congestion will cost the regional economy \$844 million in annual losses by 2025 unless investments are made to reduce congestion. That's \$782 per household.

In comparison, the Drive/Less Save More Campaign, a two-year program, has a budget of about \$945,000 per year, or about 50 cents per person in the greater Portland area (including Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Yamhill and Clark Counties). This is a relatively small amount when compared to the hundreds of millions of dollars needed for road expansion and improvements.

For example, the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan includes nearly 1,000 projects estimated to cost \$10 billion, yet the region only anticipates receiving \$4 to \$5 billion in revenue during the next 20 years. These capital costs compete for the same funding sources used by the state, regional and local governments to operate and maintain the existing system. According to the state transportation plan, Oregon needs \$533 million a year just to maintain the current infrastructure not improve it.

Clearly, we will never have enough money to do all we want to do with roads and transit. So, this campaign gives individuals some control over the congestion in their lives. Trip chaining gives individuals a way to personally deal with congestion and traffic planners a way to increase traffic flow.

This campaign can help save tax payers time and money by aiding them in making better transportation choices. Combining errands and making one trip instead of several each week can save considerable dollars. For example, by cutting just a 10 mile trip, drivers whose cars get 22 mph could save about \$365 a year. If you could cut 20 miles worth of trips a week, the savings would be more than \$700 a year.

Q: Why is this campaign a good investment?

A: A campaign that helps drivers save money at the gas pump, time on the road and improves traffic flow is a good investment. Research conducted in the Portland metro area suggests that nearly two-in-three residents could easily take one less single person car trip each week. And if every household would take two less single car trips a week, then the number of cars on the road could be reduced by four to five percent.

Q: Are congestion and infrastructure issues in the Portland metro area as serious a problem as funding for schools, public health care and fighting crime?

A: Traffic congestion now costs Portland-area residents hundreds of millions of dollars a year in wasted time and wasted fuel. It reduces our quality of life and hurts our local economy. We simply cannot ignore the problems caused by congestion. It's important to note that this campaign is funded with federal transportation dollars that are earmarked for transportation purposes. We don't have the option of spending the funds on other priorities.

It is estimated that by 2025 we will be spending an additional 50 hours in traffic per year as our population and, consequently, congestion grows. Vehicle traffic is projected to grow by about 45 percent, and truck traffic will increase by 120 percent.

Q: Why not just build more roads to reduce traffic congestion?

A: While roads are also part of the solution, it's important to remember that it is the policy of both the state and the Portland region to reduce reliance on the automobile. Roadway expansion is unlikely to succeed as the only approach to relieving congestion. Roads are costly to build, and the public is unlikely to pass the large tax increases necessary to add the lane-miles required to keep up with growing travel demand. In fact, only five of 75 urban areas in the U.S. have been able to keep the difference between traffic growth and the addition of lane-miles to less than 10 percent.

Lane-miles simply cannot be added easily and quickly enough to match growth in passenger and freight travel. Furthermore, there is limited room available to widen roadways in the Portland metro area. For example, expanding one mile of a typical two-lane road to five lanes would require about five acres of land to be converted to public right-of-way, displacing any homes and businesses in that area. In addition, some regional facilities in the Portland metro area border sensitive environmental habitat or cultural land, and expansion in these areas may consume land that is irreplaceable.

We need a multi-faceted approach to congestion that involves a combination of roadway improvements and other complimentary "demand-side" strategies that will make our existing transportation infrastructure work better.

Q: Don't most people already trip chain?

A: While some people do actively trip chain, research suggests that less than half of us tend to not link trips. The Drive Less/Save More Campaign's goal is to get people thinking more about trip chaining and other travel options. Research shows that nearly two-in-three residents believe it would not be difficult to take one less car trip a week. It's just that many people do not think ahead and plan what trips they need to make.

Q: Why is mass transit part of this campaign?

A: This campaign is about choices. More residents in the Portland metro area are taking advantage of mass transit, carpooling, walking, biking and teleworking. Annual transit ridership has grown every year for the past 17 years. In fact, TriMet recently set new ridership records. According to TriMet, Portland-area residents on average make 186,000 fewer car trips every day by riding the bus and MAX train. That translates into 58 million fewer car trips each year.

When transit isn't an option, drivers can take advantage of trip chaining. Trip chaining not only offers many personal benefits like saving money on gas and time on the road, but it can also work to improve traffic flow. If we all would eliminate just two single-person car trips each week, the number of cars on the road could be reduced by four to five percent (a "car trip" is defined as a single, one-way trip).

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