

What are ways to **change behavior**?

Sometimes, people need a nudge to try something new. Many TDM practitioners use behavioral science techniques to market TDM opportunities in ways that make them more appealing. While there are many great strategies, here are some of the most useful:



Fresh Start Effect

People are more open to changing their behavior at times when they perceive a “fresh start,” such as a new calendar year, moving into a new house, or having a child. Beginning a new job is another fresh start. Making sure employees have information about various commute modes and any incentives for not driving alone before their first day is a great way to capitalize on this opportunity.



Loss Aversion and Loss Framing

People dislike the idea of losing something they have more than they like gaining something they do not have. Therefore, rather than telling people they are entitled to TDM benefits worth \$XX, frame those benefits as something they will lose if they do not take action. “The company has loaded \$50 on your transit pass, but it will expire soon if you don’t use it.”



Sunk Cost Effect

Typically related to parking, having an employee pay for a parking spot should always be done on a daily basis. If employees pay for the spot for a week or a month at a time, they are more likely to see it as a sunk cost and feel the need to drive and use the spot to “get their money’s worth.”



Foot in the Door Techniques

In TDM, it is helpful to focus on small, incremental changes on which practitioners can build. The idea behind bike to work week is to get people to try something new. Many will go back to their previous commute modes. But some will like biking and continue to do it. Many large changes are made possible by starting with a small change.



Social Norming

One of the most powerful ways to influence behavior is to tell people an action is something that is being done by a large portion of their peers. Telling people something like, “Over 80% of our employees take transit, use active transportation, make a pooled trip, or telework each day,” helps normalize that behavior and set the expectation across the company.



Gamification

Finally, whenever possible, tap into the hardwired default for most people to love competition. This can be against one another, with leaderboards showing who has biked the most miles or eliminated the most vehicle trips. Or it can be against oneself, with set goals (e.g., a downloadable graphic that shows the number of trees necessary to capture the equivalent amount of greenhouse gas emissions someone has reduced).

What incentive programs are in TDM, and how are they used?

Incentive programs are designed to make using alternatives to driving alone an attractive choice. Incentives make other options more attractive due to convenience, cost-effectiveness, ease of use, or offering other benefits over driving alone. Examples include tax-advantaged, subsidized, or reduced-cost transit passes, preferential carpool parking, health insurance discounts for using active transportation, subsidized vehicles for vanpool drivers, etc.

What role do marketing and communication play in behavior change?

Marketing and communications can raise awareness of programs and services and capitalize on the fresh start effect. Targeted marketing and communications can focus on audiences that are receptive to the message and/or able to act on the message or both. Additional strategies include promotion, education, and community engagement and outreach.

What is habit formation?

Habit formation is the process by which behaviors become automatic. Habits do not require much conscious thought or effort to initiate, maintain, or complete. Using effective programming and marketing strategies to make TDM options habitual people will often create lasting behavior change.