

Central Okanagan TDM Program: Partnering for Sustainable Transportation

Organization

City of Kelowna, Regional District of the Central Okanagan, Westbank First Nations

Status

Started 1999, ongoing

Overview

The Central Okanagan is one of B.C.'s fastest growing areas. With an excellent quality of life and a booming high tech industry the region's current population of 150,000 is expected to grow by another 80,000 by 2020.

To maintain livability and community mobility, the City of Kelowna forged a unique partnership with the Regional District and was later joined by Westbank First Nations to develop and implement a region-wide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. Administered by the City's Transportation Department, the TDM program is widely regarded as the most developed program outside of Greater Vancouver.

With a goal of reducing peak period automobile traffic in the region by 12% by 2013 relative to trend growth in traffic volumes, the City of Kelowna has implemented a number of TDM programs and policies since it was initiated in 1999.

Together the programs have helped the region reduce single occupant vehicle use in favour of increased transit ridership, increased cycling and pedestrian movement, carpooling, trip combining, and off-peak travel.

The TDM group has a regional operating budget of \$235,000. This supports 2.5 staff, and numerous programs.

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Resources

- City of Kelowna (www.city.kelowna.bc.ca)

Community context

Located in the heart of B.C.'s wine country about 400 kilometers east of Vancouver, the Central Okanagan region is one of the province's fastest growing regions, a major regional service centre and a year-round tourist destination. More recently, the area has become known locally as the "Silicon Vineyard," as the region's high quality of life and proximity to major markets has attracted over 200 high-tech firms over the past few years.

Currently, the Central Okanagan is home to 158,500 residents. The population of the region is expected to grow by an additional 80,000 by the year 2020 with a mix of job seekers and retirees fueling the majority of the growth. Kelowna is the largest city in the region with a current population of 103,400.



Transportation in Kelowna is constrained by lakes and mountains

Policy context

Beginning in 1995, TDM has been given formal consideration in both municipal Official Community Plans (OCPs) and regional planning documents in the Central Okanagan. Some of the key municipal and regional policy documents which incorporate and support TDM include:

- Okanagan Valley Transportation Plan (1995).** A long-range strategic transportation planning project initiated by the B.C. Transportation Financing Authority and the Provincial Ministry of Transportation and Highways that addressed system-wide needs to the year 2020. It recommended a more balanced strategy of not only supplying transportation infrastructure but also managing demand through TDM programs.

- **City of Kelowna Transportation Plan (1995).** The plan stresses adherence to land use policies that support transit, cycling and walking and the need to develop other modes of travel through TDM.
- **Central Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy (2000).** The strategy is a provincially mandated document that sets the long range planning direction and provides a basis for decisions regarding implementation of provincial programs in the area. Maintaining community mobility through TDM is a significant feature of the plan.
- **Kelowna 2020 - Official Community Plan (2004).** The OCP includes a TDM section that calls for a number of initiatives, including a TDM education and marketing program, a municipal trip reduction program and other employer-based trip reduction programs. Pedestrian, bicycling and transit initiatives are also highlighted.

Rationale and objectives

The Regional District of the Central Okanagan is home to over 91,000 registered vehicles. With each household traveling over 30,000 kilometers per year per car, the region has the unique distinction of being the most automobile dependent in B.C. Currently, 68% of Kelowna City Centre residents and 85% of suburban residents drive to work in single-occupant vehicles.

This auto dependence has strained the local transportation network – much of which can not be easily expanded due to the region’s lakes, mountains, narrow valleys and protected agricultural land. It has also led to increased road congestion, growing air pollution and has eroded the region’s enviable quality of life.

With estimates of an additional 200,000 auto trips per day in Kelowna alone by 2020, the region’s governments agreed that action would have to be taken to maintain the area’s livability over the long term and to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles in the region.

The overall goal of the Central Okanagan Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program is to reduce single-occupant automobile usage. In particular, the program seeks to:

- Reduce peak period automobile traffic in the region by 12% by the year 2013 relative to trend growth in traffic volumes
- Increase cycling to 10% of commuter trips
- Expand and improve local transit so that it accounts for 4% of peak trips by 2013
- Support legislative or policy changes that encourage a reduction in single-occupant vehicle travel (e.g., distance-based insurance policies, mandatory trip reduction

targets, beneficial tax treatment of employer bus passes, etc.)



New roads alone will not solve the region’s transportation challenges

Actions

In 1998, the Regional District, the City of Kelowna and the Province developed a business plan for a regional TDM program. Key elements of the plan included a regional structure for the program, measurable goals for reducing single occupant vehicle use and a range of tools to accomplish those goals.

The business plan was followed up in 1999 by the signing of a partnership agreement between the Regional District and City of Kelowna to implement the TDM program. In the agreement, the Regional District takes on Regional TDM as a new function and contracts the City of Kelowna to provide the service. In 2000, Westbank First Nations, located within the geographical boundaries of the Regional District, joined the TDM program as a participating partner.

Regional TDM programs and policy initiatives are now coordinated by a TDM Working Group in the City’s Transportation Division. The Working Group’s mandate is to reduce the need to build new roads by reducing vehicle trips and road space demand through programs and policies that influence travel choices and the amount and timing of travel.

Since 1999, the TDM division has been instrumental in realizing a number of new programs, plans and initiatives. Some of the highlights include:

- **Bicycle Network Master Plan and Sidewalk Master Plan.** Both plans were developed for the City of Kelowna to inventory existing supply, identify future projects and establish a quantitative method for prioritizing these projects. Currently, the City of Kelowna boasts over 220 kilometres of bike lanes—one of the highest ratios per population in the country.
- **Transit improvements.** The City of Kelowna, the Regional District and BC Transit have completed numerous transit improvements, including the construction of a new transit station to act as the hub for the regional transit system. In addition to the transit station, three double-decker buses were added in the fall

of 2002 to handle existing overload routes and a neighbourhood service is to be introduced in the fall of 2004.

- **Parking management.** The TDM group works carefully to ensure that parking supply and pricing policies are compatible with regional TDM goals and objectives, particularly in the City of Kelowna. In the city, a parking policy has been adopted that sets the minimum monthly parking charge in City owned lots and facilities at 10% above the monthly cost for a transit pass to give a financial incentive to commuting via transit.
- **Cycling improvements.** The Kelowna Regional Transit system was the first in B.C. to have its entire fleet equipped with bicycle racks. The City of Kelowna also cost shares a bicycle rack program that allows businesses and community organizations to provide quality, secure bicycle parking for staff, clients, shoppers and visitors. In 2002 the City of Kelowna installed bike lockers in town centres, which are rented monthly to commuter cyclists. City development standards also now require that new commercial and multi-family residential developments to incorporate bicycle parking and storage into their designs.



A cyclist unloads their bicycle at Kelowna's main transit terminal

- **Alternative transportation feasibility studies and programs.** In 2001, the City of Kelowna conducted a feasibility study to develop a commuter cycling/pedestrian trail next to an existing operational rail line. The "Rails with Trails" is currently under development. The City is also exploring developing a commuter rail program for the rail line, given that the right of way extends from the north end of the city to the downtown core.

The City of Kelowna has authorized the City Land Department to commence negotiations with CN for acquisition of the right of way required for the commuter cycling/pedestrian trail. The commuter rail option is a long term strategy which is being recognized in the Okanagan Valley Transportation Plan currently under development.

- **Carpooling.** At the beginning of 2004, the TDM division launched a regional carpooling initiative in partnership with Carpool.ca, Canada's fastest growing rideshare program with over 6,000 registrants. The on-line program helps both drivers and riders find carpool matches.

"Carpool.ca takes about two minutes to use," says Jerry Dombowsky, Transportation Demand Supervisor. "The site is free, easy to use, secure, and contains information on commuting costs, carpool etiquette and a variety of other resources."

- **High school trip reduction programs.** Working in partnership with a Vancouver-based environmental organization the City of Kelowna is supporting an innovative trip reduction program that targets high school-aged students. The "off ramp" program trains and supports secondary school student leaders in developing strategies and activities to encourage their peers to travel to school by walking, cycling, skateboarding, in-line skating, transit or carpooling.
- **Public awareness programming.** The TDM division supports and coordinates numerous public awareness campaigns throughout the year to educate and gain support for TDM principles and goals. Events include the national Go Green Week, Clean Air Day and the Commuter Challenge. Other events include International Walk to School Day, Environmental Mind Grind, Mayor's Environmental Expo, Family Environment Day and a Summer Environment Camp.
- **Social marketing strategy plan.** In the fall of 2003, the TDM Division commissioned an in-depth research project to develop a strategic plan for marketing Transportation Demand Utilizing Social Marketing tools and methods. Recognizing that changing attitudes and behaviours requires more than awareness raising efforts, social marketing identifies barriers and opportunities and involves people in a personal way. The strategic plan, which will be complete mid-2004, will be the blueprint for future marketing efforts by the TDM Division.

Results

Given the breadth of programs and initiatives now underway, Kelowna's Regional TDM Program is widely regarded as B.C.'s most comprehensive outside of the Greater Vancouver area. The regional program has achieved a number of important results. These include:

- The fastest growing transit ridership in B.C. over the past ten years – now nearing 3 million riders annually
- An increase in bicycle commuters. Today, one in seven residents is a regular bicycle commuter (cycle at least a few times per week).

- First transit system in B.C. to have its entire fleet equipped with bicycle racks
- Winner of the 2002 and 2003 Commuter Challenge, a national competition which pits Canadian cities against one another to see which can get the most citizens to use alternatives to single occupant vehicles during the week long event. Over 6,500 people participated in the 2003, a figure representing just under 5% of the area population.
- Under a current promotion, the “Cash for Clunkers” vehicle scrappage program (for older polluting vehicles), over 80% of program participants have chosen a non-car option (two-year bus pass, bicycle purchase, footwear etc.).
- Between 2000 and 2003, the number of workplace “green transportation” coordinators increased from 20 to over 70.
- School District participation in green transportation educational programs and promotions like the Go Green Commuter Challenge poster contest has tripled among area schools since their introduction in 2002. The Mayor’s Environmental and Transportation Expo recorded over 2,500 elementary student participants in 2003.

Participants

Development and implementation of the region’s TDM initiatives has involved all of the municipalities in the Central Okanagan region and a number of other programming and funding partners. Some of the key partners include:

- Regional District of the Central Okanagan
- City of Kelowna
- Westbank First Nations
- Okanagan University College
- Carpool.ca
- Kelowna Cycling Coalition
- Climate Change Action Fund
- Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST)
- British Columbia Transportation Financing Authority
- BC Ministry of Transportation and Highways

Resources

An annual operating budget of \$235,000 supports 2.5 staff positions and provides resources for the various programs and promotions throughout the year.

Non-automobile transportation systems have also been supported by dedicated annual funding. The City of Kelowna provides \$600,000 annually for bike lanes and \$500,000 annually for provision of sidewalks. These contributions are separate from road development standards which require bike lanes and sidewalks on all new collector class or arterial roads.

The TDM group has been successful in acquiring numerous provincial and federal grants and contributions towards projects and programs. This participation is an integral part of TDM funding and currently averages over \$200,000 per year.

Timeline

The Central Okanagan Regional TDM Program has evolved over a number of years. Key events are outlined below.

- 1995.** TDM endorsed by Okanagan Valley Transportation Plan and City of Kelowna Transportation Plan
- 1998.** City of Kelowna and Regional District of the Central Okanagan develop regional TDM Business Plan
- 1999.** TDM Division created in City of Kelowna to manage regional TDM programs
- 2000.** Central Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy identifies TDM as a major community mobility tool
- 2004.** City of Kelowna update the transportation component of its OCP to incorporate additional TDM measures and strategic policy directions

Lessons learned

Some of the lessons learned in developing and implementing regional TDM policies and programs include:

- **Measure program results.** Measurement of programs is critical in order to effectively allocate resources. The right criteria need to be measured when delivering behaviour change programs. For example, the number of people requesting program information is irrelevant to the program success - the actual number of people who change their behaviour as a result of the program is what counts.

- **Include short- and long-term project components.**
TDM strategies need to include a combination of short term and long term components. Short term successes are necessary to maintain momentum, while long term programs are required for the major behaviour shift challenges.
- **Utilize local media outlets.** The media is a tremendous resource, and a great vehicle for influencing attitudes and behaviours. The media should be utilized as an advocate and partner.
- **Explore and utilize federal and provincial funding support.** Federal and provincial government funding sources are often available on a project specific basis (usually not continuing). This can be an effective supplement for your TDM program.
- **Build community awareness and support.**
Community based support and action groups can provide invaluable assistance delivering TDM programs.

Next steps

The TDM Working Group is working towards completing their Social Marketing Strategy Plan. Once completed, the plan will form the blueprint for future promotional efforts and programs.

Images are courtesy the City of Kelowna