

# IN TOWN WITHOUT MY CAR!

### Organization

Agence Métropolitaine de Transport (AMT)

### Status

Annual event on 22 September. First event held in Montreal in 2003.

### Overview

“In town without my car!” is an international event intended to educate citizens about the negative impact of cars on quality of life and on the environment. Since 2003, the participation of Montrealers has been increasing. On 22 September 2004, a sector in the downtown core as well as part of a neighbourhood that surrounds a shopping centre were closed to car traffic. People could participate in many activities and travel from one to another by alternative means of transportation. The event has positive results: widespread participation, less air and noise pollution and awareness of alternative methods of transportation.

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### Resources

- Agence métropolitaine de transport  
<http://www.amt.qc.ca>
- City of Montreal [www.ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://www.ville.montreal.qc.ca)
- Borough of Ville Marie
- Borough of Plateau Mont Royal
- Société de transport de Montreal (STM)  
<http://www.stcum.qc.ca>
- European Mobility Week  
<http://www.22september.org>

### Community Context

Inspired by a 1998 French initiative, the “In town without my car!” day is now an international event focused on raising community awareness of the effects of excessive car use. It also provides the public with information on the various methods of alternative transportation, specifically car pooling, subway, commuter rail, bus, taxis, bicycle, scooter and walking. This day focuses on changing behaviour: if each individual takes action, it is possible to improve the quality of life in the city and combat climate change.



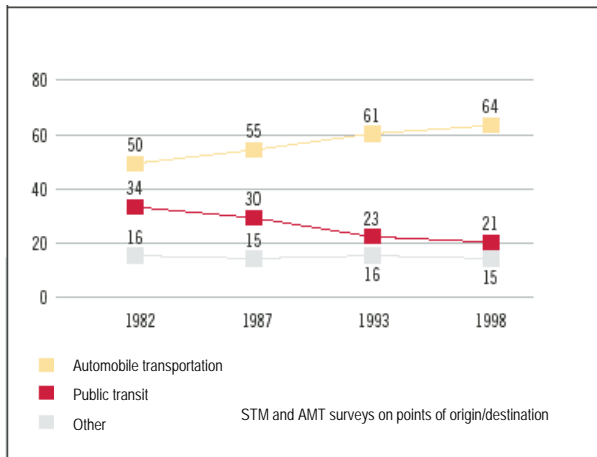
Logo for the international “In town without my car!” day.

The annual event occurs on 22 September and has been so successful that the European authorities have expanded the educational project from a day to a week, thus creating European Mobility Week.

In 2003, Montreal participated in the event for the first time, closing off an area in the downtown. The following year, the Plateau Mont Royal neighbourhood joined the project.

Montreal, like the 1,500 cities that organized events like these, is concerned about pollution and urban mobility. Between 1987 and 1998, the number of cars in the metropolitan region increased by 44%. Between 1998 and 2003, there was another 10% increase in the number of cars. In 1998, there were more than 6.5 million trips into

the downtown area each day; most (78%) were made by motorists without passengers. Inversely, for 20 years, the relative use of public transportation has been constantly declining.



*Changes in travel to Montreal  
(all reasons, 24 hours in %)*

Despite a decrease in the use of this mode, public transportation is still heavily used in Montreal. The metropolis has a varied public transportation network: commuter rail trains, buses, subways, car pooling, park and ride centres, metropolitan terminuses (combining several modes of transportation), reserved lanes for buses, taxis and car pools.

AMT, a public organization for metropolitan transportation, manages and finances this network. AMT’s mission is to increase public transportation in the region in order to improve the efficiency of individual travel while consolidating the urbanized centres and enhancing the quality of urban life. The “In town without my car!” day fits this mission like a glove.

### Issue

Montrealers are the least vehicle-dependant in the region; one third of households do not have cars. However, the nuisance of cars is felt and heard the most in urban environments!

Transportation in urban centres causes 78% of air pollution. Two-thirds of these pollutants are responsible for smog, a phenomenon that causes respiratory illnesses in young people and seniors. In some high-traffic neighbourhoods, noise can exceed 80 decibels! According to the World Health Organization, this amount of noise can make a person aggressive, and can have several other potential health effects. There may be hearing loss, sleep disturbances, or it may affect the cardio-vascular system. Transportation also represents the most significant source of personal greenhouse gas emissions: 40 to 50% in

Quebec. Compliance with the Kyoto protocol therefore lies in using transportation other than automobiles.

In some areas of Montreal, congestion of the road networks leads to overflow on residential streets.

### Downtown

Downtown Montreal offers 300,000 jobs, or 22% of the job destinations in the metropolitan region. More than half the workers (57%) travel there by public transportation. There are a dozen metro stations close to one another, several important bus routes and the commuter rail station. Nonetheless, the sector is still often congested, has high noise levels, and has more and more frequent smog warnings.

### The Borough of Plateau Mont Royal

Montreal’s “hot” urban neighbourhood, Plateau Mont Royal is the most densely populated neighbourhood in North America. It is noted for its commercial and cultural vibrancy, its rich architectural heritage and the involvement of its residents in democratic life. Citizens of the Plateau are, among other things, the least vehicle-dependant in the city.

Bordering on the downtown, this borough experiences very intense pressure from cars because it is a corridor to and from the northern neighbourhoods and suburbs. The extremely dense traffic provokes frequent traffic jams during rush hours. Pedestrians and cyclists have difficulty finding room on some arterial roads, specifically Mont Royal Street. This street was targeted for the car-free day.

### Rationale and Objectives

The “In town without my car!” day is an educational tool that encourages behavioural change. Public transportation represents a sustainable choice that benefits individuals and society both directly and indirectly. Here are some examples:

- An individual who uses public transportation rather than buying a compact car has an annual net gain of \$5,000.
- A more fluid movement of merchandise and individuals increases overall economic performance. Among other things, decreasing congestion reduces lost work hours, assessed at 588 million annually in the Montreal region.
- More than the automobile industry, the public transportation industry encourages development

of the local economy, since 95% of the money spent on it creates employment in Quebec.

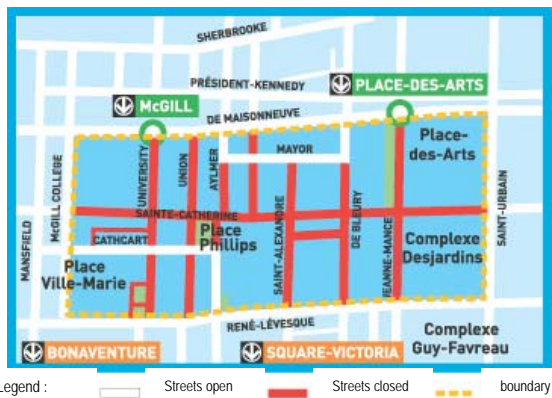
- Use of public transportation makes a significant contribution to decreasing greenhouse gases and therefore to achieving the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol.

Finally, a city that is less polluted and less noisy provides a better quality of life, which attracts new residents and is advantageous to those who already live there.

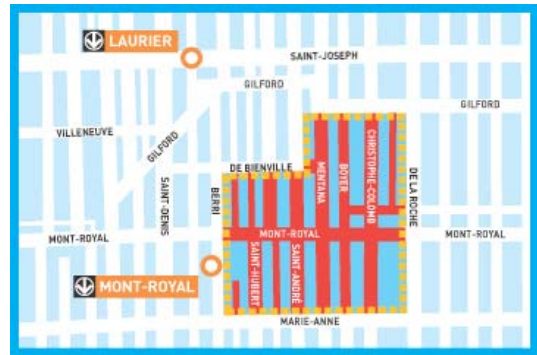
## Actions

Several months prior to the event, AMT distributed pamphlets, posters and an information sheet to downtown business owners. The borough of Plateau Mont Royal met with business owners in person in order to explain the value of the “In town without my car!” day.

On 22 September 2004, an important neighbourhood in downtown Montreal and another on Plateau Mont Royal were closed to traffic between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Street parking was prohibited. Citizens could get downtown and to the Plateau using transportation alternatives to people driving alone in their cars. Buses travelled the perimeter and a significant number of taxis were present.



*Downtown area (approximately 800 m in size) closed to automobile traffic*



*Area in the borough of Plateau Mont Royal (400 m in size)*

Many free activities (street performers, shows, exhibits of hybrid cars) were offered to citizens to enable them to rediscover the streets downtown and on the Plateau.



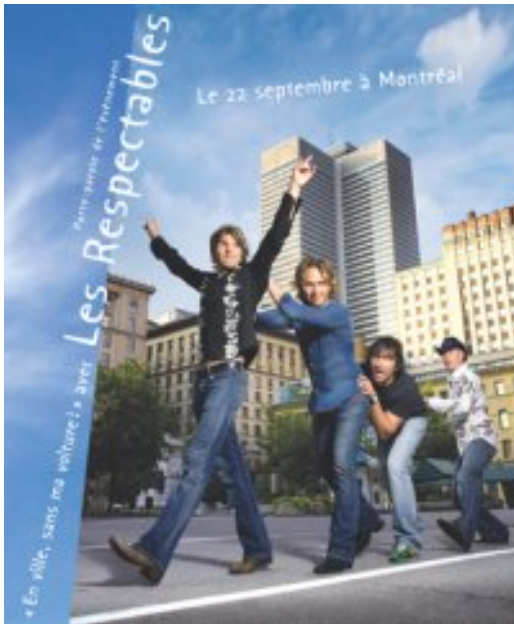
*Crowd at the downtown performance by Les Respectables*

The City of Montreal had invited all businesses in the area that open onto the street to display their products on the sidewalk in order to attract customers.

Businesses were invited to support this initiative by informing their employees of the event. The businesses involved could then participate in a draw for public transportation passes.

AMT organized a wide-reaching information campaign to promote the event. The popular rock group *Les Respectables* are spokespeople for the event; they composed the song: *Un p'tit geste pour changer l'monde* [one small action changes the world].





*Promotional poster for Montreal's "In town without my car!" day*

Quebec's Ministère de l'Environnement was present with its mobile lab to analyze air quality and sound levels. Police officers patrolled the perimeter on bicycles, motorcycles, on foot, on horse and by electric car.

## Results

An appraisal of 2004's "In town without my car!" day demonstrates encouraging results both with respect to public education and quality of urban life.

At the height of the day, the event drew more than **25,000 people to the downtown**, close to twice the participation of the previous year.

That day, in the areas closed to car traffic, Environnement Québec measured **less air and noise pollution**:

A 90% decrease in both nitrogen monoxide (NO) and carbon monoxide (CO) was recorded between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., compared to measurements made by the City of Montreal's environment department that day, at the perimeter, at an intersection with normal automobile traffic flow.

The noise measurement recorded during the calmest period of the day (1:30 p.m.) was 50 decibels (dB), compared to 80.5 dB, at the same location and time, one week later.

After the event, surveys conducted on the site, as well as regionally, demonstrated a **general increase in awareness of the issue**.

Of the people interviewed on-site during the "In town without my car!" day, 89% knew about the event before entering the affected area. Among the participants who usually travel by car exclusively, close to 40% used an alternative mode of transportation, 68% said that the event encouraged them to consider modes of transportation other than cars for their daily travel habits.

Among respondents from greater Montreal, 13% of people who usually drove their cars alone used mass transit (subway, bus, commuter rail, car pooling, etc.) on 22 September. Car pooling was the most common alternative.

Of motorists who usually use cars only, 39% acknowledged that the event encouraged them to consider modes of transportation other than cars for their daily travel.

The vast majority of respondents on-site and in the region wanted to see the event take place again in 2005.

## Participants

The Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT), in co-partnership with the City of Montreal, the boroughs of Ville Marie and Plateau Mont Royal, and the Société de transport de Montreal organized this day. The Ministère des Transports du Québec was the principal sponsor. Several organizations also participated in the project, including:

- Public transportation organizations in the metropolitan region: Association des Conseils Intermunicipaux de transport, Réseau de transport de Longueuil, Société de transport de Laval.

And several other partners: Association québécoise de lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique, Montreal Taxi Bureau, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi, bicycle repair workshop, Centre d'expérimentation des véhicules électriques du Québec, Communauto, Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montreal, Corporation Saint-Laurent / Earth Day, Department of Community Health, Éco-quartiers: Peter McGill, Sainte Marie and Saint Jacques, Environment Canada, Équiterre, Fédération des producteurs de pommes du Québec, Fédération québécoise de la marche, Groupe Vélo, Réseau de surveillance de la qualité de l'air, Réseau environnement, Health Canada, Sierra Club - Division Québec, Federal Bridge Corporation Limited, Tandem Ville Marie Est and

Ouest, Transport 2000, Voyagez Futé, as well as several daycares and schools in the region.

## Resources

A total budget of \$285,000 was required to hold this event. A smaller event last year cost the same. Sponsors: City of Montreal, the borough of Ville Marie and the Ministère des Transports du Québec contributed \$65,000 to the total cost. The City also provided free emergency police and fire services.

The table below presents the costs related to 2004's "In town without my car!" day.

Summary of expenditures	
Press conference (2)	\$12,000
Fees for communications and project managers	\$79,000
Activities	\$46,000
Production/Promotion team/Printing of communications tools	\$45,000
Media buys	\$75,000
Other: (Information officer – security – Red Cross – towing – insurance, etc.)	\$28,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$285,000</b>

## Timeline

- January – April** Met with partners  
 Recruiting sponsors  
 Preparation of preliminary program  
 Discussions for defining a perimeter  
 Setting up work teams
- May – August** Preparation of information materials  
 Logistics completed  
 Distribution of information throughout the area
- August** First press conference: description of the event, explanation of its history, objectives and implementation
- September** Unveiling of the programming and spokespersons
- 22 September** – Event
- October** Preparation of event review and presentation to partners  
 Decision to hold the next edition

## Lessons learned

- The success of the "In town without my car!" event lies in a **detailed, ongoing information and communication program**, from June to September.
- It is essential to **dialogue with business owners** so that they become more involved in the event. Despite the actions taken to decrease the impact of the event on sales, some business owners were still unhappy.
- **Alternatives to single-occupant car use are worthy of further development, specifically** car pooling, which is an increasingly popular option.

## Next Steps

It never rains but it pours... The day will be held again in 2005, possibly with a larger area in the downtown, and in new areas elsewhere in the City. AMT is also suggesting extending the hours of closure to automobile traffic during this day and offering citizens more activities.