

Metropolitan Planning Council

Commute Options Case Study

Goose Island Beer Company

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Founded in 1988, Goose Island Beer Company has grown to include two brewpubs in Lincoln Park and Wrigleyville, as well as a production facility in West Town. With the nation's largest barrel aging program and an emphasis on innovation, Goose Island's Fulton Street brewery now bottles and kegs over 30 different varieties of beer.

Participating Location

Chicago
Kinzie Industrial Corridor

Participating Employees

94

Transportation Options

Goose Island Beer Co. is served by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) **9 Ashland, 50 Damen, and 65 Grand busses** as well as the **Green and Pink lines** at the Ashland-Lake stop. There are **dedicated bike lanes** on Lake Street, Damen Avenue, and Washington/Warren Boulevard.

Commute Challenges

More than 54 percent of Goose Island employees live within 10 miles of work, but **55 percent drive to work alone** as their primary way of commuting. Though 26 percent of employees walk, bike, or use public transportation as their primary commute method, barriers including **security, flexibility for multiple trips, and commute time** prevent more from taking advantage of these sustainable options. More than half of Goose Island employees were unaware the company offers pre-tax transit benefits.

Commute Solutions

Short-term

The company repositioned **outdoor bike racks** closer to security cameras and expanded **indoor bike storage**. Goose Island participated in Active Transportation Alliance's Bike to Work Week and **hosted a series of events for riders** including a City of Chicago Bicycle Ambassadors safety seminar, bike tune-up day, and a group ride to the company's Clybourn Brewpub. The company **remarketed its pre-tax transit benefits** to current employees and is now highlighting them in the new employee training process.

Long-term

Goose Island formalized a **telecommuting policy** employees may use with managerial approval. The company will continue to enhance their annual **"Green Steps" program, a month-long event** encouraging Goose Island employees to use alternative forms of transportation.



Photos: Emily Cikanek

Traffic congestion costs the Chicago region **\$7.3 billion** annually in wasted time, air pollution, and impacts to the local economy. To address this, MPC is building support for a Chicago-area Transportation Demand Management strategy through the Commute Options pilot. In the first phase, MPC worked with 15 area employers to design incentives to encourage employees to try alternatives to driving alone.

In partnership with the Regional Transportation Authority, phase two will report on results, including how well each employer's program worked and what benefits it delivered to the company and the region.

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The issue: Traffic congestion

The Metropolitan Planning Council's *Moving at the Speed of Congestion* study found traffic congestion costs the Chicago region \$7.3 billion annually in lost time, fuel and environmental damage. For commuters, sitting in traffic diminishes productivity, increases stress levels and lowers overall quality of life. For employers, congestion decreases employee satisfaction and retention, and increases parking and health care costs.

The solution: Engaging employers in improving employees' commutes

Since 2011, MPC's Commute Options pilot has elevated the role of northeastern Illinois employers in helping their workers trade the stress and expense of driving solo to work for more cost-effective, energy-efficient and enjoyable commutes. Through the pilot, MPC recruited 16 employers—large and small, city and suburban—and surveyed their employees, ultimately learning a great deal about 6,200 area employees' current and preferred commutes. Based on those initial surveys, each employer received customized recommendations for strategies they could take—from installing a shower and bike racks to promoting transit benefits programs—to help their employees overcome their commute challenges.

For each employer, MPC is in the midst of conducting a follow-up evaluation to find out what strategies employers implemented successfully, how those changes impacted commuting behavior, and what the benefits have been to the employer,

employee and region. As the pilot comes to an end in December 2013, MPC is exploring whether and how northeastern Illinois might establish a permanent Commute Options program, known as a Transportation Demand Management strategy.

The benefits:

For employers

- Attract and retain skilled, valued employees
- Expand future labor pool
- Take advantage of corporate tax incentives
- Enhance company image
- Support sustainability efforts

For employees

- Limit traffic-related stress
- Save money by reducing vehicle maintenance and parking costs
- Potentially save time

For the region

- Reduce traffic congestion
- Improve air quality
- Improve community health and curb healthcare costs

For more information

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