

The Manitoba Context for Establishing an Office Bike Fleet

Overview

The need

There is growing demand from employees for transportation choices at the workplace. Reducing the need for employees to drive helps to address this demand.

The solution

Establishing an office bike fleet allows employees the option to bike to meetings or other off-site events during the work day.

The benefit

Cycling provides employees a healthy alternative for work-related travel, prioritizing workplace and employee wellness, while showcasing positive environmental initiatives at the workplace.



Innovative Way to Promote Employee and Environmental Well-being

Office bikes are acquired by an organization for the use of employees, generally for work-related travel, such as cycling to a meeting. In Winnipeg, a number of organizations have successfully developed an office bike fleet program, including The City of Winnipeg, HTFC Planning & Design, Dillon Consulting, and Stantec.

There are many benefits to offering your employees the option to cycle. For employees who live too far to bike to work, or who did not bring their own bike on a given day, an office bike fleet provides a healthy option for work-related travel. By cycling, your employees reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality, reduce the need for parking, and decrease traffic congestion. It is also a great initiative to promote workplace wellness through extra physical activity that provides both mental and physical health benefits. Having an office bike fleet sends a positive message to staff and the greater community about the value of employee and environmental well-being, thereby creating a positive reputation for the organization.

Getting Started

Almost any organization can benefit from a bike fleet and make it work if there is sufficient enthusiasm among staff and management, and a well-executed plan.

Step 1. Gauge employee interest. To do so, create and distribute an employee survey (see [sample survey](#) by TravelSmart Australia). Including an incentive for completing the survey will help increase the number of employees who respond. Survey results will provide insight on whether this program is a good fit for your organization and the number of bikes that would be appropriate for your fleet.

Step 2. Secure support of management. Once you have support from employees, the next step is making a business case for this initiative to upper management. To make your case, you will want strong evidence as to how this will benefit the health and well-being of employees and the overall organization. An important part of this will be a cost-benefit analysis (see [Cost-Benefit Calculator](#) by TravelSmart Australia).

It was fun to introduce the bikes last summer. Something new for staff to make use of and they are being used fairly frequently for a range of uses.

—Elly Bonny, HTFC Planning & Design



Sample Forms

Some workplaces use a waiver while others have an End User Agreement and a Terms and Conditions form. You may also want to provide guidelines for locking the bike properly while out. All bike fleets should have a sign-out form.

- *Liability Waiver* ([sample 1](#), [sample 2](#))
- *Employee Agreement* ([sample](#))
- *Terms and Conditions* ([sample](#))
- *Incident Report*
- *Sign-out/in Form* ([sample 1](#), [sample 2](#))

Step 3. Determine who will manage the bike fleet. We recommend forming a steering committee of representatives from all levels (management, staff, and facilities management) to ensure the needs of all stakeholders are met and the program remains sustainable over time. A large part of this responsibility is promoting the program to all employees and encouraging its use. As for the maintenance of the equipment, this could be someone in the office that has a knack for tinkering with bikes, or you can hire someone to do scheduled maintenance checks. That being said, all employees who use the bikes should complete a **Two Minute 5-Step Safety Check** or **ABC Quick Check** of their own before they start cycling.

Step 4. Purchase the bikes and accessories. When purchasing the bikes, we recommend buying local. **The W.R.E.N.C.H.** (Winnipeg Repair Education and Cycling Hub) has a bike fleet program where you can get up to five high-end custom bicycles for your business. Each bicycle at The W.R.E.N.C.H. is built by hand to accommodate a wide range of riders with maximum comfort, utility and style. Plus, the bikes are made with 75% recycled parts.

You'll also want to purchase associated equipment, like adjustable helmets, quality bike locks, bike lights, and a bike pump. One workplace offering office bikes has a disinfectant spray to be used on the helmets after use.

Step 5. Establish safety measures. Now that you have support from the organization and the equipment purchased, it's time to establish the necessary safety measures.

Have employees review pages 72-75 of the **Driver's Handbook** and sign off that they understand and agree to adhere to the rules of the road. It would also be a good idea to provide all employees with a safety document, like MPI's **Bike Safely**, and provide them with a training session/safety presentation. Green Action Centre offers lunch hour **presentations** on cycling skills among other commuting topics. Some workplaces also require their employees to conduct a bike safety test (see this **Bicycle Competency Assessment** by TravelSmart Australia for an example) and review a **Safety Checklist** before using the bike.

Some insurance providers cover fleet bikes as long as the bicycle is owned by the workplace. Check with your insurance provider whether they cover the user and workplace in the event of an incident.

Lessons Learned Locally

Considerations

Here is valuable feedback from some local workplaces that have set up an office bike fleet.

Promote

Be sure to promote the office bike fleet to ensure the bikes are used to their full potential.

Equipment Condition

We found including a spot on the equipment sign-out/sign-in form to report on equipment condition is helpful.

Helmets and Locks

Our sign-out form includes helmets and locks. It is helpful for keeping track of all equipment and to find any equipment that goes missing.

Insurer Requirements

For general liability insurance to cover bicycle use at our workplace, the insurer required the following:

- Only employees can use the bikes;
 - Employees must sign a waiver of use;
 - The waiver must have a witness line;
 - The waiver must state that wearing a helmet is mandatory;
 - A contract had to be established for maintenance with an outside professional; and
 - The bikes can not be ridden in the winter as the insurer considers that a much higher risk period.
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Positives

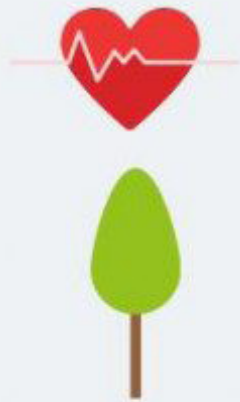
- Partnering with The W.R.E.N.C.H. was a very positive experience. It was a good opportunity to connect with and support a local organization. The bikes were made from refurbished parts, which fits with a sustainability approach. The bikes from The W.R.E.N.C.H. were also much more affordable than elsewhere.
- An office bike fleet is a great program for employees visiting from other cities, so they have access to transportation during the day to get to meetings.
- When the program is well managed, it is utilized frequently for a range of uses, like getting to meetings, going for lunch, running errands, etc.
- Employees enjoy the opportunity to incorporate more fitness into their day, get to meetings faster, and support a culture of office sustainability.
- It's a great way to get people thinking about the benefits of cycling (that there are alternatives to driving a car to meetings), plus it's a way to save a few dollars on parking and gas.

Challenges

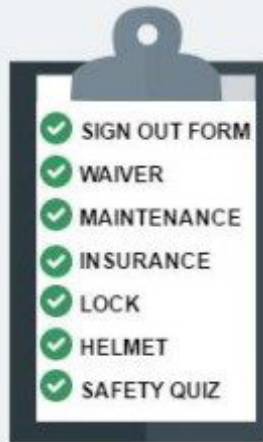
- The requirements of insurers can be quite restrictive. It would be great to give clients or colleagues access to the bikes (e.g. to go out for lunch with an employee) but this is not allowed by the insurer.
- Our annual insurance premium for the bikes is equivalent to the price paid to buy the bikes in the first place. Consider whether the value of replacing the bike is worth purchasing insurance.
- Bike theft is always a concern, even with quality locks and cages.
- Access to a shower has been identified as something staff would like in order to participate in the program.
- Enforcing safety protocols and/or having staff comply can be difficult (e.g. wearing a safety vest).
- Extending participation in the program beyond the people who already enjoy cycling can be a challenge.

HOW TO START AN OFFICE BIKE FLEET

in 5 easy steps



Make the case



Make a plan



Buy some bikes



Use the bike(s)



Spread the word