

2.3 Physical Activity Success Stories



Worksite Bicycle Program

the people

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) employs approximately 500 people at its headquarters in Augusta. The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting safety, access, and education to bicyclists in Maine.

the need

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) donated two 3-speed bicycles, with helmets, to Maine DOT in June, 2002. The goal of the donation was to encourage employees, who may not own a bicycle or cannot conveniently bring one from home, to use the bicycles during the work day. There was also a goal that employees would use the bicycles for small personal errands to nearby stores and restaurants. Finally, this was supported by the MaineDOT Worksite Health Coordinator as an additional means to encourage employee health and wellness at the worksite.

the idea

MaineDOT provides two 3-speed bicycles for employee recreational use at its headquarters.

the idea at work

The bicycles are locked onto bicycle racks outside the front entrance of the MaineDOT office. Employees can sign up at the front desk to use a bicycle and helmet and to receive the combination for the lock on the rack. E-mails are sent out to employees encouraging use of the program.

the cost

BCM donated the bicycles. The only cost that occurs is maintenance of the bikes, which is done by a local bike shop owner, or for any parts that are needed to keep the bikes in good running condition.

the results

Use of the bicycles was not as high as anticipated and was highest in the first months after receiving them in June 2002. There has not been any data collected on use up to April 2005 due to the idea that users, once having learned the lock combinations, do not always check in to sign the bikes out. The most likely factor that discourages use is the worksite location on Rt. 202 as well as the location in Augusta. While lower-speed country roads and streets exist in Winthrop, one must travel at least a quarter-mile on Rt. 202 to get to them. Although Rt. 202 has a wide shoulder, motor vehicle speeds in excess of 50 miles per hour intimidate inexperienced bicyclists. Other deterrents to use are that the bike sizes are not suitable to all employees, and there is a lack of knowledge regarding how to adjust the seat. Due to the large baskets on the front of the bicycles, some people are reluctant to ride them because they don't look "cool." Finally, one of the bicycles had recurring problems with chain slippage, and the negative experience of having to deal with replacing the chain continually, or walking back to the worksite, discouraged others.

Although dealing with minor breakdowns and maintenance issues, the bicycle program has received a wealth of positive reviews from its users. John Balicki, MDOT Bicycle Program Coordinator, recalls a quote from a user saying that "my friend and I grabbed a couple of bikes, rode to Hallowell for lunch, and it was so easy, fast, and fun using the bikes."

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