

Beach Haven Community Transport

How many people living in Auckland know where the buses go from their nearest bus stop? And how many of those buses go close by their school, college or place of work?

That's what people of Beach Haven have been finding out through an innovative project commissioned by Auckland Transport. Personalised Journey Planning is an approach to reducing congestion that has proven successful overseas. It typically involves giving people detailed information about ferry, bus, train, walking and cycling options for trips that they currently drive. More than that, the approach also takes account of the way that people think about, or rather don't think about their travel options - often getting in the car day-in and day-out with little awareness of how improvements in public transport services, infrastructure or information could make their commute easier.

As Melanie Alexander from Auckland Transport says, "The Beach Haven project was implemented to help people understand their travel choices and present alternatives to solo-car journeys for their commute."

To achieve this, a behaviour change team went door to door in the early evening and asked Beach Haven residents how they currently commuted, including where they went and, importantly, what time they needed to get there. The team then scratched their heads to come up with the best option that meant no-one would get detention at school or in trouble for arriving late at work. Participants were then sent personal information on how, when, and where to make their trip.

For public transport this included information on the walking distance to the bus stop, departure and arrival times and how to access real-time information for their service. For walking and cycling trips, participants were given distances, travel time and the calories that could be burned along the way. Other options included information on driving smarter and carpooling.

After receiving this information, the team swung into action again and called residents up to find out if they were happy with the information and whether they would make a commitment to try the suggested way of travelling. Those that did were offered further support in the way of trial public transport passes or walking or cycling equipment.

The results for the project speak for themselves. Of the 1,431 weekly driving trips made by people that took part in the programme, 601 were changed to bus, carpooling and the ferry with around 10 people taking the healthy option and walking or cycling for local trips that they used to drive.

So, overall, that's 601 less cars on the road during the morning each week amounting to a reduction of over 6,900km. Auckland Transport calculates this as leading to a reduction of 109 tonnes of CO2 per year providing close to double the benefits of previous projects of this type.

Adding to the success of this project is the fact that householders liked taking part, with over 95% being very satisfied with the personalised approach. This leads to knock on benefits, where those that changed their behaviour might share their experiences with friends and neighbours - all helping to promote sustainable travel options as the first and perhaps even habitual choice amongst increasing numbers of urban commuters.

Since Beach Haven, Auckland Transport has implemented Personalised Journey Planning projects in other areas. As Melanie says, "We deliver similar programmes across Auckland to help raise awareness of travel choices in communities and promote the use of public transport, carpooling, walking and cycling."