

Honorable Mention

John Whelan

InnoCentive Challenge 7520002

Evaluation of Submissions

In response to your **Ideation Challenge** on “**Ideas for Increasing Public Transportation Use to Reduce Greenhouse Gases in Chicago**” InnoCentive is forwarding the following submissions to you for your consideration and evaluation.

My Solution:

Introduction & Background

When it comes to the daily commute or other travel, changing user habits is a very difficult thing to do. The cities that have been successful in modifying user behavior have focused on one of, or a combination of, three factors:

- 1) Improved convenience: easier access to public transportation stops, more frequent service, more parking at stations, etc.
- 2) Lower cost: once the cost of using public transportation drops below a certain threshold relative to the personal car, simple economics provides an added incentive for riders to use the train/bus
- 3) Fashionable and obvious: If it makes people feel good about doing something and it is not a major inconvenience to them, it is likely that their behavior will change. A good example of where this approach has been successful is the ‘blue bag’ program in Chicago

Understanding that addressing #1 & #2 above can potentially involve major investments or modifications to the cost structure of the public transportation system, I have decided to focus my solution on #3 – Fashionable and obvious.

Detailed Description of the Solution

The solution I am offering is a high-impact, low-cost, way to encourage people to use public transportation instead of their personal vehicles in order to reduce carbon emissions. It is comprised of the three steps below:

1) CO₂ Offsets

The City of Chamber of Commerce should immediately approach the Chicago Climate Exchange and have this “increase the use of public transportation” project categorized as an ‘energy efficiency and fuel switching emission offset’ program. This will give the City of Chicago the ability to sell carbon offsets on the open market realizing an immediate monetary value that will be linked to steps 2 & 3 that follow.

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2) *Chicago Carbon Credits*

In Chicago, most riders use a transit card called the “Chicago Card”. This transit card contains a computer chip and either deducts a monthly amount from the user’s bank account, or is ‘topped up’ by the user at a machine in a local Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) station.

I am proposing that every time a rider takes the train or bus, they receive a “Chicago Carbon Credit” that is added to their Chicago Card account. This “Chicago Carbon Credit” should be correlated in some way to the actual amount received by the City by selling the CO₂ offsets mentioned above. This will create a direct line of sight between the user’s daily action and helping the environment, making it an *obvious* choice to use public transportation.

When signing up for the program, users would select a local charity (Red Cross, Feeding America, etc.) to whom their accumulated Chicago Carbon Credits would be donated at the end of the year. This donation of Chicago Carbon Credits would be accompanied by a corresponding cash donation from the City, funded by their sales of CO₂ offsets earlier. The purpose of this Chicago Carbon Credit donation program is to make the user not only feel good about helping the environment, but feel good about helping some of their disadvantaged fellow citizens. This makes it more *obvious* to use public transportation.

3) *“Be cool...take the train!”*

Lastly, the City should revamp its advertising program with a singular emphasis on making it *fashionable* to use public transportation. The associated advertising campaign would have the tag line “Be cool...take the train!” or “Be cool...take the bus!” and be designed to connect the idea of helping reduce global warming (i.e. being ‘cool’) with being *fashionable* (i.e. being ‘cool’). Properly executed, the advertising program would give riders a clear understanding about their individual contribution to helping the environment, a desire to accumulate Chicago Carbon Credits, and, through the donation program, a way to feel good about helping their disadvantaged fellow citizens.

Conclusion

The set of steps described above is designed to increase use of Chicago area public transportation by making it *fashionable* and *obvious* to do so in a very tangible manner. This program does not require major investment for three reasons:

- 1) The Chicago Climate Exchange already exists and is a global marketplace for trading CO₂ offsets
- 2) Through the ‘Chicago Card Plus’ program, the technology infrastructure already exists to easily create and track “Chicago Carbon Credits”
- 3) The City of Chicago already has a substantial advertising budget designed to encourage riders to use public transportation. This would merely be redirected to the new campaign – “Be cool...take the train!”

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Lastly, if the Chicago Carbon Credit program became successful, there is a whole host of opportunities to potentially expand its use in connection with other energy saving activities that individuals can do such as insulating their homes or installing solar panels (or wind turbines) on their roofs. This might be part of a larger effort to rebrand Chicago as the most environmentally conscious large city in the world. What better way to attract the 2016 Summer Olympics?

John Whelan

Background

John serves as Director of Market Development for Axiom Consulting Partners. His philosophy is that the business is out there, it only needs to be found. John's deep understanding of the marketplace for professional services coupled with a talent for being able to 'get in the door' has accounted for his success in the management consulting industry over the past several years.

Previous Experience

Prior to joining Axiom, John was one of the top Business Development Executives with Grant Thornton's Chicago office. He regularly uncovered and helped to close numerous large financial consulting engagements with Fortune 1000 companies. Earlier in his career, John was the youngest ever North American Market Manager for Westfalia Separator (a large German capital equipment manufacturer) where he was responsible for driving several million dollars of annual revenues.

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