

Challenge Overview

Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Challenge on Decreasing Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Increasing Public Transit Ridership in Chicago

Detailed Description and Requirements

The Seeker, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, is looking for innovative and new strategies to dramatically increase the use of public transportation to reduce the environmental impact of the greenhouse gas emissions caused by automobiles. Specifically, the Seeker is looking for innovative approaches and strategies to increase ridership on the region's public transportation system to 1 billion rides per year. The Chamber estimates that a total of 800,000 new individuals must be convinced to ride public transportation to achieve this level of ridership. The Chamber of Commerce is targeting 1 billion rides per year because that was the peak level of ridership of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) in 1947; the year the CTA began operations.

The City of Chicago's "Chicago Climate Action Plan" indicates that reducing automobiles on the road and minimizing the number of miles driven will have a demonstrable positive effect on the City's greenhouse gas emissions. For example, by removing 185,000 cars from the roads a reduction of one million metric tons of greenhouse gas emission will be achieved or by driving in aggregate 2,500 fewer miles the City would see a reduction of one metric ton of greenhouse emissions.

The challenge is to create innovative approaches, financing, and novel customer solutions to make public transportation the "first choice" for daily transit needs. By boosting public transportation ridership levels to 1 billion rides, the City can decrease the number of cars on the road, the number of miles driven, and achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Solvers are asked to describe plausible plans for achieving the level of 1 billion rides per year. The plans must provide specific and actionable steps that can be taken by the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and key stakeholders. Vague, non-specific answers are not sufficient. The Seeker is looking for actionable, detailed plans with clear concrete reasoning.

Solutions for increasing public transportation to the level of 1 billion rides per year or 800,000 new riders can take on many forms. For example, proposals can include but should not be limited to: (1) aligning the CTA's capital program with the goal of increasing ridership to 1 billion rides per year; (2) improving the "user experience" on public transportation to make the rider's choice more attractive; (3) engaging the key stakeholders, including private sector employers, community organizations, local governments, in meaningful collaboration to better understand employer and community needs, expectations and requirements of the system in order to ensure that service delivery and quality are aligned with user demand; (4) exploring innovative uses of capital/funding to secure innovative products that appeal to riders; (5) identifying incentives for employers to encourage employees to use public transportation; (6) adopting an incentive structure at the CTA that rewards innovation and achievement of ridership goals; and (7) shifting the nature of the problem from a "subsidy model" to more of a "business model."

Of course, the winning solution will likely suggest a combination of multiple approaches to provide a comprehensive solution. However, very expensive plans are unacceptable unless there is a clear path to financing them. For example, it would be prohibitively expensive to recommend that new train stations/lines be constructed.

Project Criteria

The provided solution should accomplish the following:

- Develop a plan to increase public transportation ridership in Chicago to 1 billion rides per year, adding approximately 800,000 new riders to the system.
- Solutions should have reasonable costs that are explicitly estimated in the proposal
- The use of innovative technologies and strategies encouraged, but should be reasonable.

This Ideation type of Challenge has a guaranteed award of \$5,000 that will be determined exclusively by the Seeker. If multiple solutions are deemed winners, they may be each awarded partial awards totaling \$5,000.