

# The Boston Globe

By David Rattigan, Globe Correspondent  
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Salem is a great walking city, and residents and people who work there have traditional transportation options: commuter rail, bus line, Salem State shuttle, and a ferry to Boston.

But its roads still overflow with traffic, particularly at peak periods.

So it's not surprising that the city became the first municipal partner for the North Shore Transportation Management Association, a new group that is trying to reduce gridlock and the region's carbon footprint through alternative commuting methods.

"It seems like it's a perfect time to be looking at those things," Mayor Kim Driscoll said. "We don't have anything in our region that asks, 'How do we get to employment sectors? How do we get to places where students are going? Is there a better way to get people to where they want to be, that's good for them, saves them money, and also helps the environment?' I think there are a lot more options for us to think about."

The local alliance is focused on Salem, Lynn, Danvers, Peabody, and Beverly. Its first board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday.

There are 11 associations in Massachusetts, according to North Shore executive director Andrea Leary, a transportation management consultant who also heads the Merrimack Valley group that serves the greater Andover area.

The employers and municipalities in the associations increase the use of ride-sharing, biking, shuttles, and other transportation alternatives by identifying which are best suited to their commuters, and then promoting and managing them. A current promotion, Fire Up Your Foot Power, encourages commuters to log their weekly walking or public transportation miles into a database that will calculate their savings on gas, as well as carbon dioxide emissions. A Green to Work promotion set for the fall promises cash prizes for those who change commuting habits.

Driscoll uses the examples of Salem State College, North Shore Medical Center, and Shetland Park, an oceanfront business center in her city, and the Cummings Center in Beverly as places where the TMA might survey commuters about their willingness to accept alternative transportation, and what types would work best.

The TMA could then facilitate those programs, Driscoll said, as well as advocating with the MBTA or bus lines for changes that would better suit the needs of members.

"Connecting people with those concepts and ideas, that's really what the job of the TMA is," Driscoll said.

The mission of the TMA dovetails with her company's efforts to reduce its environmental footprint, said Jennifer Dolin, manager of sustainability and environmental affairs for Danvers-based Osram Sylvania, the alliance's first corporate partner.

Dolin noted that the company's three Danvers locations are at 100 Endicott St. - just off Route 128 - and two at Cherry Hill, none of which are particularly close to public transportation.

In 2006, when gas prices hit \$3, Osram Sylvania sent a survey to its 700 local employees, asking about work and transportation habits and gauging interest in alternatives. The company received a response from 62 percent of employees, and learned that more than 50 percent worked the same hours and 91 percent drove alone to work.

"They basically told us people were very interested in exploring other options, particularly if there were incentives available," said Dolin. "They were interested in knowing who works at the company who lives near them."

Among the reasons to consider alternative transportation, environmental savings was cited by 75 percent, and time saved was another reason, said Dolin. She noted that many were swayed by a TMA-sponsored initiative that guarantees reimbursement of cab fare for a ride-sharing employee left without one in an emergency.

"As the price of gas has increased, we're starting to see more interest," said Leary. "Now your commute is eating into your disposable income. People are looking for alternatives, and more willing to carpool, to try a van pool, use public transportation. A lot of companies are exploring tele-work programs, and tele-work can be great for some employers because it reduces the amount of space they have to lease."