

Improve Commutes & Sustainability

Here's how two Oregon employers are reducing environmental impacts and improving sustainability through greener, healthier, and more affordable employee commute solutions.



Robin Straughan, City of Hillsboro

Robin serves as Sustainability & Resiliency Manager at the City of Hillsboro, one of Oregon's largest cities with over 112,000 residents. She brings 25 years of public service to leading community climate resiliency initiatives. Robin's work centers on improving operational efficiencies and reducing environmental impacts. She personally advocates for sustainability by biking, taking transit, and working remotely.



How does sustainability fit into the City of Hillsboro's vision and operations?

We're the fifth largest city in Oregon with resident and daytime populations that've both steadily grown over the years. The City of Hillsboro places a high priority on livability, economic development, connectivity, and sustainability. We aim to deliver city services and sustainably grow, while cultivating Hillsboro's hometown livability and highly-valued quality of life.

How does commuting impact the environment and sustainability?

Drive-alone commuting is a major source of harmful air pollution that substantially adds to individual and collective climate impacts. Many thousands of workers commute in and out of Hillsboro. Our recent community emissions survey revealed transportation is the second largest local source of greenhouse gases. Reducing emissions by using cleaner, healthier, and more affordable commute options—taking transit, carpooling, vanpooling, biking, and walking, plus working remotely and on a compressed schedule—can net big environmental and personal gains.

How does the city support employee commute options use?

Our city employs over 1,300 workers whose jobs, work locations, and hours all vary. We provide employees with resources and incentives covering different commute and flexible work options so they can find what best meets their needs. We encourage employees to use Oregon's free Get There Connect tool to explore commute options, match up into carpools, and join statewide and local challenges to win prizes. We offer employees free universal transit passes and provide bike parking and fix-it stations for bike commuter use. We also have a bike fleet to reduce driving during the day. And, through our area's Get Home program, employees can get a ride when unforeseen circumstances come up.



What benefits has your employee commute options program delivered?

Our commute options program delivers environmental, economic, and social equity benefits—reducing emissions and traffic congestion, making getting to work more affordable, improving wellness, increasing job access, and supporting work-life balance are just a few of the positive outcomes.



Carla Chen, LAIKA Studios

Carla is the Sustainability Lead at LAIKA Studios, the stop-motion animation studio based in Hillsboro, Oregon, that's produced many acclaimed films, including The Boxtrolls and Coraline. Carla brings together her expertise in operations and continuous improvement to organize studio efforts into a more sustainable growth strategy. She's passionate about working with the local community and organizations that share values around environmental responsibility.



What's LAIKA's guiding approach to environmental stewardship and fostering greener commuting habits?

LAIKA is focused not only on what stories we tell but also on how to tell them, and that includes continually evaluating and improving behaviors and processes at our studio to be better stewards of the environment. We implement practical solutions that minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency to ensure studio accountability in reducing our carbon footprint. Encouraging and facilitating greener commuting habits among employees is an important arrow in our quiver, as transportation is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

How does LAIKA support employee use of commute options?

Through research, education, and action, we aim to inspire greener commuting habits among LAIKAns. Most employees work at our studio given the hands-on nature of creating stop-motion animation. We provide them with information about different commute options, plus offer incentives to encourage use. Employees can get a 50% discount on transit passes. Plus, we offer a monthly cash incentive for carpool drivers based on ridership, and they get preferential parking. We encourage bike commuting by holding a bike tune-up event in the spring and have onsite bike parking and fully-stocked shower facilities. And, through our bike borrowing program, employees can reserve and use bikes for personal and professional use.

How has your program benefited LAIKA?

Making it less stressful, easy, and enjoyable to get to work helps employee job satisfaction and retention, which are top priorities for us. Plus, employee commute options use reduces our emissions and helps us serve as a catalyst for sustainability in the community.



Any advice for other employers on building employee commute programs?

Get employees engaged in deciding what commuter benefits to offer—find out what appeals most to them. Create a plan covering what'll be offered, action steps and staffing, benefits, and budget. Key departments, like HR and facilities, and local experts can provide input and insights. Next, do a trial run and share the results with leadership to get longer-term buy-in.



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- ▶ **Employee Promotions & Support**

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