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Destination Green

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Destination Green: It’s Within Reach

NECSC Presentation
October 27, 2009
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University at Albany
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University at Albany Transportation Study

- Rationale for study
  - Future trends, current opportunities
- Incorporation with sustainability initiatives
- Description of project
- Lessons learned
- Keeping it relevant
- Factors beyond your control
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What forces and trends will we have to live with?

- Increasing gas prices
- Search for alternatives by campus community
- Not as many opportunities for new transportation technologies
- Reliance on cars as a main means of commuting
- Increased emphasis on cutting carbon emissions
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Which things can we influence?

- Availability of alternative transportation strategies
  - Carpooling, vanpooling, car sharing, mass transit, bike sharing, safe opportunities to bike/walk

- Communicating options available in a successful manner
  - Awareness and accessibility of information
  - Pamphlets, fliers (electronic and yes, hard copy), special event days, incorporation with established outreach such as orientation (both employees and students)
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Where do we want to take our sustainability efforts?
- Incorporate into the culture of the institution
- Garner a level of importance on par with other established divisions at the senior staff level
- Increase awareness and accessibility
- Garner a large support base among campus community
- Establish key partnerships
- Secure adequate funding
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How do we want to do it?

- Gather data to support the need for sustainable efforts
- Develop both internal and external partnerships
- Seek funding through multiple sources, i.e. grants to conduct studies
- Get senior staff on board to be aware of needs and support efforts
- Develop student and employee based organizations around sustainability
Reasons for project

- Anticipating an increase in the need for mass transit alternatives, in part spurred by the experience of $4 per gallon gas and the reaction of our employees, the need to analyze our alternative transportation strategies was identified.

- A sustainable transportation package was researched by the office of environmental sustainability and presented to the director of parking and mass transit and the university comptroller.
Reasons for project

- One item identified was the need to document commuting patterns of the campus community

- Coincidently, the city transit authority and nearby state office buildings were conducting a transportation survey

- Also a grant to fund transportation studies was issued by NYSERDA
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- Overview of project
  - Funded through NYSERDA and DOT
  - Partnership between
    - Planning & Geography department
    - Parking & Mass Transit
    - Office of Institutional Research
    - Nearby state office buildings
  - Project began last spring and will continue through this summer
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- Overview of project
  - GIS analysis on parking permits issued on campus
  - GPS analysis on bus schedules
  - Analysis of current mass transit options
  - Incorporation of data from other state agencies
  - Campus transportation survey
  - Focus groups to analyze use and marketing opportunities
  - Final report
Current status of project

- Preliminary GIS completed
- GPS protocol completed
- GPS data being gathered
- Survey created, waiting for IRB approval
GIS analysis

- GIS: geographic information systems
- Parking permit data from fall 2008 obtained from Parking & Mass Transit
- Graduate student performed GIS analysis based on zip codes to determine commuting density patterns
- These patterns are being matched against mass transit routes
GIS analysis

- Data obtained from nearby state office buildings from commuter survey issued last fall
- Graduate student performed GIS analysis based on zip codes to determine commuting density patterns
- These patterns are being matched against mass transit routes
- These patterns are also being compared to University commuting patterns
GIS analysis

- Second level of analysis is being done based on street level address
- Another wave of analysis will be done on university permit data from this fall in order to observe any changes in patterns
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- GPS analysis
  - GPS – global positioning system
  - A protocol on gathering GPS data was developed by a graduate student
  - Undergraduate students were hired to ride bus routes (both university and city fleet) and gather GPS data
  - This data will be analyzed against stated bus schedules to determine on time reliability
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- Campus transportation survey
  - Completed in conjunction with professor of geography and planning, institutional research and advisory committee
  - Draft based on previous survey distributed at state offices and city transit authority
  - Survey to be issued online and results analyzed to better determine commuting use, patterns and services desired
Focus groups

- Focus groups to be conducted this spring in conjunction with professor of marketing
- Names will be generated in part through interested parties identified by survey
- Focus groups will concentrate on reasons why mass transit is not used, desired services and best practices to determine successful marketing strategies
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- **Final Report**
  - Ideally the report will entail
    - Current commuting patterns
    - Opportunities there are for collaborating with local entities to create a larger base of commuter demand for services
    - Routes needed to better address commuting patterns
    - Reliability of bus schedules
    - Identify communication and marketing strategies to encourage use of alternative transportation
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- Lessons learned
  - Partnerships are key to success
    - In our case: the department of mass transit, the local transit authority, a regional transportation committee and office of general services for NYS all cooperated in this endeavor
    - This was aided by having alumni in key positions, being part of key groups (such as the Capital District Clean Cities Coalition) and networking
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- Lessons learned
  - Lots of planning and setting a realistic timeline
    - Be sure to identify tasks need along the way: ex: IRB process, hiring of students, plan one semester ahead
    - Overestimate time needed: GIS
  - Planning: GPS, protocol developed first, implementation schedule developed
Lessons learned

- Having enough resources to complete task
  - Staff resources: professor in planning, director of environmental sustainability, parking and mass transit director, senior staff assistant from institutional research, senior staff assistant from IT, professor from marketing
  - 2 graduate assistants, undergraduate help
  - Technology: GPS units, GIS software, ability to survey online
  - Cooperation from other departments and outside entities
How we hope to keep efforts relevant

- Incorporate the gathering of permit data and distribution of survey into graduate planning curriculum
- Provide a continued analysis of commuting patterns and options available
- Continue to develop options for alternative transportation and communicate those efforts
- Revisit marketing strategies
Factors beyond your control (but some you can influence!!)

- Mass transit options available
- Schedule and location of current mass transit opportunities
- Supporting infrastructure for biking and walking
- Behavior of your commuting population
- Price of gas, mass transit and price of parking permits
- Availability of on campus parking
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