

Employee Transportation at *Cirque du Soleil* Headquarters

Organization

Cirque du Soleil®

Status

Ongoing programs arising from the 2006 corporate environmental policy

Overview

After adopting its environmental policy, *Cirque du Soleil* implemented a number of programs and measures to reduce the GHG emissions generated by the personal travel of its employees working at its international headquarters, located in Montreal. There are three main buildings 2 km apart. A fleet of free self-service bicycles are available to employees, as well as a program that reimburses half the cost of monthly transit passes.

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Resources

www.cirquedusoleil.com

Environmental policy:

www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/~media/about/global-citizenship/pdf/Microsoft Word - CdS_Environmental Policy.pdf

Background

Cirque du Soleil is a Quebec-based organization providing world-class artistic entertainment. It has over 5000 employees, including more than 1200 artists from close to 50 different countries. Its mission is to “invoke the imagination, provoke the senses and evoke the emotions” of people around the world.

As a corporate citizen, *Cirque du Soleil* wants above all to take its place in society, with all the duties and responsibilities that come with it. Beyond philanthropy, it is a social responsibility approach that is at the very heart of the organization’s business and management strategies. Consequently, *Cirque du*

Soleil is focusing on its relations with its employees, its interactions with audiences and the surrounding communities, and its relations with business partners and suppliers, as well as the environmental impact of its activities. Thus, in the fall of 2006, *Cirque du Soleil* adopted a proactive environmental policy based on a philosophy of sustainable development. With regard to energy and transportation, the policy outlines:

- reducing the *Cirque du Soleil*'s impact on climate change, principally by ensuring responsible energy consumption throughout the company, by improving energy efficiency and by prioritizing renewable energy sources whenever possible;
- reducing emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by conducting an audit of its current operations for transporting goods, freight and people, and generating electricity.

Outside Canada, the organization is also making moves, such as :

- Promoting a Las Vegas transportation program for its employees.
- During tours, local travel by artists is on public transit or on a shuttle bus chartered by the company.

Cirque du Soleil educates its employees about the environmental issues related to its activities.

In Montreal, *Cirque du Soleil* uses three main buildings in the centre-north of the Island (see map on next page).

Almost 2000 employees work at the international headquarters (A on the map). Nearby is the artists’ accommodation building where artists passing through Montreal are housed during their acrobatic and artistic training. Administrative offices, with over 300 employees, are located at point B on the map, which is 1.6 km from point A. For work purposes, employees often have to move between points A and B.



Location of Cirque du Soleil buildings in Montreal. A: International headquarters and artist accommodation; B: Administrative offices. Distance from A to B: 1.6 km.

Problems

- Public transit service at headquarters is infrequent (every 30 minutes).
- There is a lack of parking space at headquarters and on the street.
- The company is growing constantly and the number of employees in Montreal varies with the international tour schedule.
- Availability of tax benefits for new initiatives.

Goals and objectives

- Relieve congestion in the parking lot at international headquarters as well as the parking spaces on nearby streets.
- Reduce the organization's collective environmental footprint.
- Provide an additional benefit to employees, as an employer of choice.

Actions

Cirque du Soleil has implemented a number of transportation companion programs stemming from its environmental policy, adopted in 2006.

Public transit program

A voluntary public transit program was implemented in 2007. Through the program, *Cirque du Soleil* pays half the cost of a monthly transit pass for permanent employees who sign up. They commit to using public transit for at least 70% of their trips between home and work in the course of a month. Electronic access to the parking spaces can validate if the commitments are being respected.

The program works in three-month segments, so that cyclists can opt out temporarily over the summer. Once a year, drivers who have never signed up for the program can try public transit for their commute to work by receiving a monthly pass paid for by the employer.

The Cirque uses different communication and awareness methods to promote the program:

- Occasional mentions in the daily internal e-bulletin;
- A Public Transit section on the intranet site displaying bus routes and schedules, an "all-around" trip planner, etc.

Since the Société de Transport de Montréal (STM) introduced the OPUS card, the program management was modified for the employer. Each employee pays the STM for their cards, hands the receipt to the employer, and is reimbursed on their pay cheques. Everything is integrated into accounting to calculate corporate tax credits.



The OPUS electronic card makes it easy to renew each month in advance.

Cycling

The Cirque promotes cycling by employees in three ways: through infrastructure, through awareness and through benefits.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Fleet of self-service bikes

The *Cirque du Soleil* provides employees with a fleet of about 15 self-service bikes. They can be used for travel between headquarters and administrative offices, for evening travel by artists in residence, or just to keep fit at noon hour. Any employee can borrow a bike for 24 hours. All they need to do is get a key from reception in either of the two office buildings.



A bicycle from the first fleet. Other types have been added since.

Cirque du Soleil also provides a 'conference-cycle' for its employees. It is a mobile work/meeting space that can accommodate up to seven people, who can take advantage of the site's outdoor amenities while working.



The 'conference-cycle' has a small round table in the middle. This specific vehicle can follow stay in the shade or follow the sun, as participants wish.

There are 200 bicycle parking spots at the international headquarters and about 20 spots at the artists' accommodations. Surveillance cameras are positioned so that security staff can see the bicycle stands.



200 bicycle parking spots. Some of this equipment is made from old bicycle wheels.

Fitness centre

At the international headquarters, there is a fitness centre available to all employees. There are three spinner bikes as well as regular stationary bikes. On-site trainers provide advice and an individualized cycling training program on request.



Staff fitness centre

Changing rooms and showers are available to all employees. The two biggest changing rooms (one for men, one for women), located at the fitness centre, have self-service day lockers.

AWARENESS

During its Environment Week, Cirque du Soleil invited Vélo Québec to set up an information booth about its Operation Bike-to-Work program. The employer also promoted cycling through its daily electronic bulletin, sent to every employee. In May of each year, when the fleet of self-service bikes become available, Cirque du Soleil conducts a fresh promotional campaign. Over the course of the summer, there are several other communications about cycling. And there are other activities as well, such as door-prize bike draws at a springtime event.

employees annually to opt for alternatives to driving alone.

Results

Public transit program

In September 2009, 300 people were using the program. This figure has been fairly stable for a year.

Cycling

In 2009, bikes were borrowed 450 times. It often happens that all the bikes are in use, and the bike stands are often full during the summer.

There are even a dozen people who bike to work year round. So *Cirque du Soleil* keeps the bike parking area free of snow during the winter. Showers and changing rooms are of course a must at that time of year.

Winter cycling is easier with the milder winters of recent years. Also, the City of Montreal maintains part of the municipal bike path system during the winter.

In the spring of 2009, over 80 employees took advantage of the free bike tune-up clinic.

Automobile parking lot

It is hard to quantify the impact of these measures on parking at headquarters. It was usually full before the measures described here were implemented, and it still is. Given the company's growth, the introduction of the public transit and cycling programs made it possible to prevent the parking lot problems from getting worse.

Cirque du Soleil has noticed an improvement in parking on nearby streets.



Vélo Québec awareness booth during Environment Week at Cirque du Soleil

BENEFITS

Every year during spring, *Cirque du Soleil* provides a free bike repair clinic for employees. Employees register for a half-hour session during which a mechanic makes repairs free of charge and explains basic maintenance. In the past, two to three professional mechanics were on hand at headquarters for two to three days. Since 2009, a new neighbour set up shop opposite the headquarters: Vélogik, a non-profit community bicycle workshop-boutique. The spring clinic now takes place there.



Free bike repair clinic for Cirque employees

Cirque du Soleil created a carpooling category in the intranet site's classified ads section—one of the most frequently visited sections. Carpooling is also promoted at events such as Environment Week. Finally, every year *Cirque du Soleil* promotes the "Transportation Cocktail" campaign, encouraging its

Taxi costs

Even without precise data, the company's analysis of the situation is the same as for parking. Given the company's growth, its transportation programs have made it possible to limit increases in the cost of taxi travel between headquarters and the administrative offices.

Partners

Vélo Québec and two local community rehabilitation enterprises:

- S.O.S. Vélo provided the first set of self-service bikes and the design for the bike stands (made from old bicycle wheels).
- Vélogik maintains the new eco-fleet and runs the spring bike tune-up clinic.

Resources

Public transit program

One person in the human resources unit coordinates the program, working a few hours a week on it. The intranet site gives access to a program-specific mailbox.

Timelines

2006 Adoption of environmental policy

2007 Start of public transit program
Start of self-service bike fleet
Start of spring bike maintenance clinic

2009 Purchase of new self-service bike model

Lessons learned

To meet the needs of its large number of employees, the organization has to offer a variety of programs. Since the distance between its main buildings is less than 2 kilometres, *Cirque du Soleil* found the implementation of a bike borrowing service very relevant, and is receiving many benefits from it.

The second generation of self-service bikes offer technical features that are more suited to users:

- no gear change;
- rear wheel brake controlled by the pedals rather than from the handlebars;
- low frame for smaller people;
- comfortable for backs;
- basket at front, and lock.



New model Éco-vélo 2009

Given Montreal's climate, the cycling season lasts 6 months for most people. When the public transit program started up, it was based on three four-month periods: January-April, May-August and September-December. This division of the year was not suitable for employees wishing to cycle in May and in September. The year is now divided into four three-month periods: January-March, April-June, July-September and October-December.

The public transit program could easily be transferred to other organizations, and indeed a number of other businesses have already drawn on the successful example of the *Cirque du Soleil* program.

Next steps

Participate in the Climate Challenge program and educate employees about it.

Public transit program

The program has reached maturity and is now ongoing.

Cycling

Increase the number of self-service bikes and the number of bike parking spots.

Participate in neighbourhood revitalization committees dealing in particular with safe active transportation.