

eBay's Transportation Demand Management Program

Organization

eBay Canada, TransLink

Status

Ongoing. Program commenced 2005.

Overview

eBay's Customer Support Centre in Burnaby, BC has a shortage of parking facilities in the office park in which it operates. To address this issue and to reduce the number of single occupant vehicle commuters, eBay contacted the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink) to survey employees and make recommendations on how to improve their staff's transportation options. As a result of TransLink's findings, eBay established a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program that has boosted employee use of public transit by 7% while decreasing the number single occupancy vehicle commuters by 4%.

Components of eBay's TDM program include:

- A Commuting Committee of employee stakeholders
- A part-time Commuter Coordinator staff position
- Membership in TransLink's Employer Pass Program to provide transit pass discounts to employees
- Increased fees for onsite parking
- Parking subsidies for rideshares/carpools
- Umbrella loan program for employees who use transit or walk to work
- Cost-sharing partnership with neighbours to provide transportation to and from a nearby transit stop

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Resources

Information on TransLink's Employer Pass Program is available at:

http://www.TransLink.bc.ca/Transportation_Services/Fares_Passes/employers_pass/

Information on eBay's Rideshare Program is available at:

<http://ebay.ride-share.com>

Community context

eBay is a multi-national on-line auction company with a branch Customer Support Centre located in Burnaby, B.C., an 89 sq. km city located at the geographical centre of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). It is the third largest municipality in B.C. with a total population of just over 200,000.

The eBay Customer Support Centre is located in the Willingdon Park office complex in northwest Burnaby. The office park is comprised of seven buildings (totaling over 750,000 square feet). It is located a few blocks from the Trans Canada Highway and is bounded by major arterial streets to the south and east. Current plans for facility expansion will increase Willingdon Park's total leasable area to nearly 1 million square feet.

Willingdon Business Park, like many suburban office parks, is relatively under-serviced by public transit. However, transit options are available through two SkyTrain stations (Gilmore and Brentwood Town Centre), less than one kilometer



eBay is located in Burnaby's Willingdon Business Park

away. The two stations provide both bus transit and SkyTrain connections to destinations throughout the GVRD. There are currently no direct transit connections from the SkyTrain stations to the office park facility, so employees must walk from the stations to the office complex – an uncomfortable challenge during Greater Vancouver’s long rainy season.



SkyTrain Millennium and Expo Line Route Map

Policy context

TransLink established an Employer Pass Program (EPP) that allows companies to offer discounted annual transit passes to their employees when 25 or more employees are enrolled into the program. Companies often provide an additional subsidy on top of TransLink’s 15% discount. Currently, there are over 200 companies participating in the program and over 13,000 annual transit pass holders. TransLink also assists larger employers in developing Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and will conduct employee transportation surveys to help design them. It is through this program that eBay first developed its own TDM program. eBay also maintains a corporate policy to minimize company operations on the local environment.

Rationale and objectives

eBay’s Burnaby Customer Support Centre has a shortage of parking facilities. According to the terms of their business lease, eBay has been allocated 341 parking stalls, both above and below ground. Their current parking usage exceeds 380 spaces. Because of this over-allocation on parking

stalls, there is currently a wait list of over 30 employees who are seeking parking permits. No parking has become available since January 2007, leaving some employees on the waitlist for over 3 months.

For each of the stalls used, eBay is charged \$60 per month by the property management company, \$40 of which is charged to employees for monthly parking access cards. This subsidy on parking has provided an incentive to drive and not to participate in alternative commuting options, thus proliferating eBay’s parking shortage.

Recognizing the value of improving transit options for its employees, eBay established a Commuting Committee to examine employee transport and parking issues. Soon thereafter, the company hired a dedicated Commuter Coordinator to spearhead its transit planning efforts, focusing particularly on TDM.

The objectives of eBay’s TDM program are:

- To reduce eBay’s footprint on the local environment
 - Decreasing the number of employees who drive
 - Reducing impacts on local air quality
- To promote a healthier and more active workforce
 - Employees more fit and relaxed
 - Less sick days and use of health benefits
- To establish eBay as a great place to work

The eBay Customer Support Centre opened in Burnaby, BC in March of 2004. Within a year of operations, employment grew from 100 staff to over 600. This placed a strain on parking options as there were only a limited number of spaces provided in the office park lease. To help alleviate this situation, eBay contracted TransLink (Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority) to establish an Employer Pass Program (EPP) in order to provide discounted transit passes to their employees who signed up for the program.

To determine the best course of action for the eBay Centre, TransLink first conducted a survey as part

of their Onboard Commuting Options program. Based on the results of the survey, TransLink made a series of program recommendations to eBay, the following four of which the company chose to implement:

- To join TransLink's Employer Pass Program to provide an additional 15% discount to staff transit passes;
- To join the Jack Bell Rideshare program as a corporate group;
- To implement a monthly \$40 fee for onsite parking; and,
- To create a commuting committee to oversee all of its commuting programs.

In recognition of these achievements, TransLink presented eBay with the Award of Excellence as the Best Workplace for Commuters in 2005. This award was also given recognition by the Mayor of Burnaby and the Burnaby Board of Trade.

In May of 2006, TransLink conducted a second survey with eBay to determine the impacts of the commuting program. It found that single occupancy vehicle commuters had decreased by 4% and transit commuter numbers had increased by 7%. Based on the survey results TransLink identified an additional nine program options for eBay to consider to further reduce the number of SOV commuter. eBay elected to implement five of the recommendations.

In early January, 2007, the first of these options was implemented with the hiring of a dedicated eBay Commuter Coordinator. The coordinator is tasked with managing onsite parking, the Employer Pass Program, and all other commuting programs undertaken at the eBay Burnaby Centre. A month later, eBay increased its contribution to the EPP from 15% to 35%.

Currently, eBay is in the process of implementing the remaining three program options. They are:

- Increasing the cost of onsite parking from \$40/month to \$60/month, effective in April 2007.

- Providing a subsidy to employees who rideshare/carpool as a commuting option. Reduced parking rates of \$40/month will be shared among carpool participants and will be deducted from their payroll – with larger carpools offering cheaper per person rates.
- Establishing an umbrella loan program for employees who either take transit or walk to work. Employees can sign out an umbrella for the day under an agreement to return it the following day. This program is scheduled for launch in April 2007.
- Implementing a cost share arrangement with a neighbouring tenant in the business park to provide shuttle bus service from the Gilmore SkyTrain Station to the eBay Centre on Still Creek Drive. This idea resulted from the 2006 TransLink survey, when 40% of respondents said they would use transit if there were a shuttle to and from the nearby SkyTrain station.

eBay also has plans to establish a voucher program, providing employees who cancelled their parking passes and signed up for the EPP program with six free days of parking. This is similar to a cash out program without having to provide cash refunds.

Results

Between 2004 and 2006, eBay employees using transit passes increased by 7%. Employees commuting to work in single occupancy vehicles decreased by 4% over that same time span. To date, there are currently 100 employees enrolled in the TransLink Employer Pass Program. There are an additional five groups of employees participating in carpools/rideshares. With plans to increase its employer pass contribution to 50%, eBay expects this number to increase.

As a result of eBay's parking rate increases, the company's commuting budget has increased significantly – providing for the implementation of more sustainable transportation programs. This has allowed eBay to increase its contribution to the Employer Pass Program, establish partnerships for

additional transit services, provide value-added benefits to employees, and make corporate donations to local sustainable transportation projects beneficial to its staff.

Participants

eBay worked with TransLink to identify its transit needs and to establish its Employer Pass Program.

The company has also established a Commuting Committee consisting of 5 employees, each representing different commuting modes and various levels of management within the Customer Support Centre. The committee operates on a volunteer basis, with the company allowing for time to meet during paid business hours.

Currently 100 eBay employees participate in the transit pass program and five groups of employees have established carpools as a result of reduced parking costs for rideshares.

Resources

Recognizing the value of providing more sustainable transportation programs for its employees, eBay has hired a part-time Commuter Coordinator to oversee all parking, transit, cycling programs for the Burnaby Customer Support Centre.

eBay provides paid time for Commuting Committee members to plan program activities during business hours. Each member contributes between 5-10 hours per month.

eBay's Transportation Demand Management program is allocated a quarterly budget that is derived from the Burnaby Centre's parking revenues. eBay rents over 350 spaces for \$60 per month.

Lessons learned

While the full slate of eBay's TDM programs were only implemented in early 2007, there are some early lessons learned from the process. These include:

- **Engage relevant stakeholders:** TransLink's decision to conduct a commuting options

survey among eBay employees helped to determine the company's transit values and priorities through feedback from the most relevant stakeholders. This allowed TransLink to recommend programs that were well-received and well-utilized by staff, thus helping to achieve eBay's core transportation objectives.

- **Establish a staff position:** Prior to hiring a Commuter Coordinator, eBay's transportation programs were handled by committee, with one member addressing transit, one focusing on parking, and another on bike-to-work programs. This resulted in less efficiency, coordination, and communication. Therefore eBay established a part-time Commuter Coordinator position and hired someone with the appropriate skills and background to complete the required tasks. Establishing this position has led to the implementation of numerous program activities in a short period of time.
- **Monitor and evaluate:** TransLink conducted a second survey to determine how eBay's program changes had affected employees. The responses led to nine additional suggestions for improving eBay's transportation issues, five of which are currently being implemented.

Next steps

eBay's will continue to monitor and evaluate each of its Transportation Demand Management programs. In 2007, eBay will again participate in the BEST Commuter Challenge, a friendly competition between workplaces that aims to get employees to use sustainable modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling, transit, and carpooling. eBay will also be taking part in the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition's Bike to Work Week, an inter-workplace competition that promotes bicycle commuting among employees. eBay is also in the process of planning an Emergency Ride Home program for alternative commuters.