

Should You Become a One Car Family?

By Laura Asermily, Walk/Bike Council of Addison County Member

One of the biggest expenses for any family is transportation. It seems that most families own as many cars as there are drivers, or more. Could you get by with just one car?

An increasing number of Addison County families are **shedding or reducing their number of household cars**. This approach reduces their fossil fuel footprint and improves their financial and mental health.



May Poduschnick and her son

For example, you can spot the Poduschnick family of Middlebury, and other one-car or no-car families, smiling and hopping on bikes with baskets and paniers to run errands, get to and from school and work, and recreate.

Many, like Melanie Kessler of Bristol, are **opting for electric-assist cargo bikes** for primary transport, allowing them to shed or reduce their number of household cars. Some, like Susan Shashok of East Middlebury, use it to transport their product to markets and customers. Dave Cohen of **V-Bike Solutions** promotes electric-assist bikes as revolutionary and offers “**car-reduction therapy** for Vermonters.” He urges us to see the movie “**Motherload**” about

next generation cargo bikes. He also suggests people visit vbikesolutions.org to take an online tutorial of electric-assisted cargo bikes and how they're transforming bike culture and making one car families out of multi-car ones.

Consider the Savings. Every gallon of gas that your car doesn't use saves 1.3 pounds in greenhouse gas pollution. It also saves you money. But gas isn't the only cost associated with a car. Beyond the initial cost of purchasing a car, you can estimate saving about \$2,500 – \$3,000 per year by not having a second car. Annual savings include: auto insurance, routine maintenance: oil changes, tire rotations, alignment, replacement of tires, brakes, batteries, registration fees and parking fees. See this link for [five tips for becoming a one car family](#).

Transportation is currently Vermont's least renewable energy sector and the **largest source of pollution in the state, generating 42% of our greenhouse gas emissions**.

There are tremendous environmental, economic and equity-creating benefits at our fingertips if we get serious about transforming our outdated regional transportation system.

In December 2018, nine states (including Vermont) and Washington, D.C. announced their commitment to taking a more serious step forward to tackle carbon emissions from the transportation sector. The coalition, called the **Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)**, proposes a new regional low-carbon transportation policy that would cap and reduce carbon emissions from the combustion of transportation fuels and invest proceeds from the program into low-carbon and more resilient transportation infrastructure.

Vermont organizations working on walk and bike initiatives include **V-Bike Solutions, Local Motion, Go Vermont!, Walk/Bike Council of Addison County** and **Safe Routes to School**.

The Town of Middlebury plans an extension of its 17-plus mile sidewalk network to the expanding retail and employment district along **Exchange St**. This **multi-use path** will support increased use of alternate modes of transportation and improve safety for all users of this busy road. Residents and visitors have expressed a deep desire for a dedicated shared-use path along Exchange St for years. The goal is to reach from Elm Street to Bridge School at Route 7.

Walk/Bike Council of Addison County is a county-wide, citizen-led advisory group that is mapping a **Triangle road bike loop** best connecting our Addison County hubs of Bristol, Vergennes and Middlebury via New Haven. Council members work with state and regional agencies, municipal staff, schools and other interested community partners. Anyone interested should visit walkbikeaddison.org or email Adam Franco at adam.franco@gmail.com.

