Travel
Climate change impact and actions

Overview of topic
The transport sector is one of the fastest growing sources of global emissions. The combined impact of commuting, work travel and recreational trips add up in terms of climate impact, with transportation accounting for 25% of global energy use and the aviation industry individually being responsible for around 5% of global warming. While air travel is a significant source of emissions per passenger kilometer, short car trips are responsible for 75% of transport emissions.

When we consider travel emissions we most often focus on the choice we make about the mode of travel we are taking to go from point A to point B (train, plane, car, bike, etc.)—the “how” of travel. But consideration should also be given to the “why” of travel—why we are going the distances we are from point A to point B.

We can choose where we live relative to our place of work and the nearness to public transport. We can choose whether we live in walkable communities or ones that are vehicle dependent for almost all tasks. And in many places in the world, we can choose to be part of public processes supporting expanded public transport or improved infrastructure for biking and walking.

Did you know?

If the entire aviation sector were a country, it would be among the top ten carbon polluting nations on the planet.

Personal transportation makes up 14% of humanity’s carbon footprint.

- Using a bike instead of a car for short trips can reduce individual travel emissions by 75%.
- A passenger taking a flight from New York to London and back emits more emissions than an average person in Paraguay over the course of an entire year.
- Carpooling and using public transport reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, plus decreases habitat loss and promotes biodiversity through reducing the need for more roads and parking space.
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### Positive climate actions you can take

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<th>Today</th>
<th>Next month</th>
<th>Over the coming year</th>
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<td>□ Walk or ride a bike when traveling short distances.</td>
<td>□ Aim to fly economy and direct, where possible.</td>
<td>□ Look into electric or hybrid options when purchasing or leasing your next car.</td>
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<td>□ When running errands, especially by car, try to combine trips to reduce frequency and duration. Offer to pick up items for neighbors to save additional trips.</td>
<td>□ Purchase carbon-offsets that help cover the effect of your transportation footprint.</td>
<td>□ Opt for sustainable tourism—choose certified sustainable accommodations, tour operators, and destinations.</td>
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<td>□ Conduct virtual meetings, where possible.</td>
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<td>□ Before you buy or rent a new home, consider availability of public transport, and factor proximity to work or other frequent destinations into your decision making.</td>
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<td>□ Participate in public planning processes that address public transport, walkability and bike lanes in your community.</td>
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Additional Resources

Read

- WWF | Green travel tips (blog)
- Sustainable Travel International | Offset calculator (site)
- National Geographic | What are carbon offsets? Here’s why travelers are buying them (article)
- HSBC | A flying economy – the economic powerhouse above the clouds (article)
- Renew Economy | Complete switch to hydrogen fuel flights possible by 2050 (article)
- Bloomberg NEF | Electric Vehicle Outlook 2020 (report)

Watch

- Deloitte India | What is the biggest barrier to electric vehicle adoption (video)

2 WWF.
4 WWF.
5 Ibid.
8 WWF.

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