Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

In a Nutshell

Reducing VMT can be accomplished by implementing other tools in the OneSTL Toolkit. These tools include: bicycle and pedestrian programs, carpooling and rideshare programs, complete streets, great streets and transit-oriented development. Below are other methods for reducing VMT. The US national average VMT has declined in recent years, but traffic emissions continue to affect the environment and public health. Reducing VMT has the potential to improve regional air quality and shift travel to other transportation options that can promote physical activity and spur economic development.

The “How To”

VMT can be reduced in several ways, and in fact some of the most successful vmt reductions use multiple methods for reduction. The EPA has an excellent article on Transportation Control Measures. These measures include well-known measures such as bicycle/pedestrian commuting, but it also includes lesser-known programs. For instance, the article advocates for cities putting incentives in place to encourage employers to have flexible work schedules (including telecommuting) for their employees, thereby reducing greenhouse emissions. Another is for cities to improve their response time to traffic accidents. Traffic accidents account for 1/4 of all traffic congestion in the United States. If the response/clean-up time were faster, traffic congestion would drop considerably.

This article from New York State's department of transportation discusses how effective land use planning can be used to help reduce vehicle miles traveled. Several studies on land use planning are cited.

The Discover More tab also has a list of other One STL tools that can help lower VMT.

Planning & Zoning

Local government action will be part of a broader regional St. Louis plan. At various points in time, the Greater St. Louis region has been a non-attainment area for ozone pollution. East-West Gateway provides a thorough review of the history of air quality in St. Louis as well as current goals and programming.

USDOT's Federal Highway Administration provides the statutory language of several federal laws related to reducing VMT. The laws referenced include the Clean Air Act, the President's Climate Change Action Plan - 1993 and the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program.

The Discover More tab also has a list of other One STL tools that can help lower VMT.

Dollars & Cents

The various economic benefits of reducing VMT is available throughout more detailed information on other tools in this OneSTL toolkit.Cities and counties may need to invest in infrastructure improvements and/or public transportation improvements. Expenses on public transportation can be recouped through the increase in

public transportation users. Individuals who start using different forms of transportation will see savings from not having to purchase as much gas.

Measuring Success

Reducing VMT is a unit of measurement itself. A decrease in VMT carries many benefits, as outlined by resources within this tool on other tabs. Typically a local government would not calculate VMT themselves. The Federal Highway Administration offers information on the technical methodology on how VMT is calculated. They also offer a database on their transportation models and VMT methodologies in considerable technical detail.

East-West Gateway has information on our region's air quality measurements. VMT Per Capita is a performance measure being tracked by OneSTL.

Discover More

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) offer resources on the negative health effects associated with air pollution and the case for reducing VMT. East-West Gateway offers resources on the decline in VMT within the St. Louis region.

Other One STL tools that can lower VMT are:

- Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities and Programs
- Carpooling
- Complete Streets
- Density Bonuses
- Form-Based Codes
- Great Streets
- Mixed-Use Development
- Mixed-Use Zoning
- Parking Requirements - Reducing Minimums
- Transfer of Development Rights
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Universal Design & Multigenerational Communities