



News Release

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Durham Reports Successful Pilot Results to Reduce Downtown Traffic Congestion *City Awarded Bloomberg Philanthropies' 2018 Mayors Challenge Champion Cities Grant Earlier This Year; Now Moves to Next Phase in the National Competition*

DURHAM, N.C. – Can a mid-sized city – where cars are still the most convenient mode of transportation and only 8 percent of people walk or commute to work by transit or bike – get residents and visitors to choose to commute by alternative modes to downtown Durham?

The results of Durham's recent five-week pilot test are now in, and the answer is ['yes.'](#)

When the City of Durham was named [one of 35 Champion Cities](#) selected for the [2018 U.S. Mayors Challenge](#), a nationwide competition that encourages cities to uncover inventive ideas that confront the toughest problems they face, the [City's Mayors Challenge Team](#) began a pilot testing phase to assess two low-cost methods that applied behavioral insights to nudge people away from single-occupancy commutes to downtown Durham, which is experiencing significant traffic congestion and parking woes.

“Durham wants to shape its future growth on the mobility options of people and not cars,” said Mayor Steve Schewel. “The ideas developed through the Mayors Challenge can help us divert scarce resources away from parking decks and toward a public transportation system that will truly further Durham's vision of shared economic prosperity.”

The goal of this “Test, Learn, and Adapt” phase of the pilot project, which used \$100,000 in Bloomberg Philanthropies grant funds and partnered with Duke University's Center for Advanced Hindsight, Downtown Durham, Inc., and several downtown employers, was to work with 1,586 downtown employees and rigorously test two strategies aimed at reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips into downtown Durham by 5 percent.

The first strategy, a planning tool algorithm, created a personalized route with mapped options, time comparisons, and benefits. Commuters that received the personalized route reported using travel alternatives, instead of driving alone, 12 percent more than employees that did not receive it.

The second, a GoDurham bus lottery, created a game that made riding the bus a fun competition. Commuters that were invited to play the weekly bus lottery reported commuting by alternatives 19 percent more, and reported a higher level of happiness and lower levels of stress during the pilot.

The City's team also promoted alternative transportation at several events at City Hall during this timeframe by giving away GoPasses, the City's transit benefit for GoDurham, GoTriangle, GoCary, and GoRaleigh, to approximately 200 downtown employees and City staff, and provided information to those employees about transportation apps, such as TransLoc Rider, which provides real-time bus information.

The City's team will continue its “test and learn” approach through the fall, building on feedback from the pilot to improve strategies that can reduce drive-alone commutes. Their next event is set for September

19 as part of [Try Transit Month](#), where they will bring a GoDurham bus to City Hall and educate City employees and others in attendance about how to ride the bus, including with a bicycle in tow.

The City has now submitted its application to compete for additional grant funds to further implement and expand the tested methods that worked well. In October 2018, Bloomberg Philanthropies will announce four cities to receive \$1 million and one city that will receive a grand prize of \$5 million, to bring their ideas to life. If the City wins the next grant, additional testing will focus on testing methods to further reduce the number of cars in downtown Durham by another 5 percent, or about 800 vehicles, to help change the Bull City's mobility habits to more efficiently use existing transportation infrastructure.

For more information about the City's Mayors Challenge Team, visit the project website at <http://www.durhammayorchallenge.com>, which includes a [video](#) about the purpose and results of this pilot project, or contact Transportation Planner Maureen Devlin with the City's Transportation Department at (919) 560.4366, ext. 36462 or by email at Maureen.Devlin@DurhamNC.gov.

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