

Student Essay for Behavioral Change Project

Environmental Studies 303: Human Ecology and Sustainability

Instructor: Rebekah Green, rebekah.green@wwu.edu

I consider myself to be fairly environmental conscience person. I mean my major is Environmental Planning. I recycle everything I possibly can, I unplug anything that's not in use, and I try to conserve water to name a few. So that's why it seems hypocritical of me to drive almost everywhere I go and a lot of the time I'm by myself. This appeared to be the perfect opportunity to eradicate that unnecessary and unfortunate behavior. I decided that I was going to try and reduce my CO₂ emissions by trying to walk everywhere I could. When walking wasn't possible and I was going to need to have a better way of transportation, I would ride the bus, that way my CO₂ output would be shared with 50 other people. When taking the bus was just not a plausible option, for example going a long distance, if there was an issue with time, or I need the car to haul a large amount of something, then I would take my car as a last resort. Climate change is a very serious threat to our world and our CO₂ emissions are one leading cause for it. Although I'm just one person, the CO₂ I emit does add to the global output and if I emit less than the total is less and we are that much closer to lessening our impact. I love knowing that I did what I could to lessen my contribution to our destruction of our Earth and its ecosystems. It's also important that when I call myself an environmentalist, I truly am being one in every aspect that I possibly can.

My baseline measurements consisted of documenting where I went, how I got there, and the total miles I was traveling. Because I was trying to limit use of my personal car, when I did drive I recorded the total mileage per day. For walking, I didn't record the mileage at the time because I don't have a tracker that calculates that for you. However I did go to Google maps and estimate the mileage (the trips I estimated where walking home). I did the same strategy for the bus to track my miles.

In the log (shown at the bottom of this paper), all the trips and mileages are recorded and totaled. The study period is from January 12, 2013 through January 30, 2013, with 1/12-1/18 being the week of unchanged behavior. After the two and a half week span, I took a total of 11 bus trips and 29 car trips for totals of by bus, approximately 22.6 miles and by car 114.6 miles. In

addition to walking around campus, which I did not include as “walking”, I walked approximately 4.5 miles. Those trips were mainly to my apartment from my friend’s house. Now we’re going to see the data broken down into weeks. The first week I walked 1.8 miles, took 5 bus trips for a total of 8 miles, and drove my car for 15 trips, totaling 30 miles. I found that I drove to the grocery store much more than I needed too, especially since I live within walking distance from Hagen. I would go for one or two day’s worth of food instead of for the whole week or even for two weeks. Personally, if it was more convenient for me (meaning being faster, warmer, and not having to exert much energy) to drive then I would take my car and I didn’t carpool at all. Also because it was the first week of school, I hadn’t started my social life really, meaning I wasn’t driving to my friend’s houses or out somewhere like I do in the subsequent weeks. So I believe if I was to begin this study now, the week where I didn’t change my behavior, I most likely would have driven almost everywhere, with the exception of school. I then changed my behavior for almost two weeks and during that time I walked 2.7 miles, rode the bus for 14.6 miles or 6 trips, and drove my car 83.8 miles or 15 trips. More specifically, during week two I walked 1.8 miles, rode the bus 6.8 miles, and drove my car 71.9 miles. Week three I walked .9 miles, rode the bus 7.8 miles, and drove 11.9 miles. The miles I drove in my car are very high during week two because on Friday the 25th, my friend’s and I carpooled all day and we decided on my car to be the vehicle. So I wasn’t just driving myself around, eliminating the chance of my friends using their cars and emitting extra CO₂. My stepmother also made a trip up to see her friend and I, so I ended up driving twice to have dinner with her. The third week is more accurate to a normal week of my life, therefore it was easier to make the change and see a great reduction in the miles driven in my car.

This behavioral change was actually harder than I anticipated. I thought I’d be able to walk where I needed to and then take the bus and my car as little as possible. But then when I began tracking my behavior I realized that walking as much as I wanted to wasn’t going to be as easy. I live on 32nd street and walking to campus would take probably almost half an hour, meaning I’d have to get up that much earlier. I am very attached to my seven to eight hours of sleep. So I could go to bed earlier, however, I am normally up late doing homework. Unfortunately, taking the bus to get to school on time and still have my eight hours wasn’t going to change. I did successfully get my grocery store trips down to one however. I decided I needed

to eat everything I had before I went and bought more, which helped with the not driving for just a few items. I also noticed that I was more inclined to drive my car when I knew that I was going to be leaving somewhere late. My biggest fear is being taken, a little cliché I know, and so even if it wasn't too late and I could take still the bus I would still have to walk a little ways to my apartment. Therefore a couple times when I could have taken the bus I decided to drive. If I were doing this same study in the summer I would probably have walked or took the bus just because it's lighter longer and I'd feel safer. I believe many girls my age might feel the same way and that is why some might shy away from walking or riding the bus late at night. I also found myself at times deciding a distance was too far to walk so I'll take the bus, for instance going from our class in the Viking Union to my friend's house on 21st street, when that's clearly a distance I could walk. That didn't happen as much with my car over the bus because I really don't mind taking the bus, but it did on a couple of occasions. I think that is how a lot of people act in our society. Taking that extra time and effort to walk somewhere is just not something people are willing to do because of one, the laziest of our nation and two, people's instant success/gratification mentality. Walking would take more time then getting in ones car and being at the destination in a matter of minutes instead of a half an hour or longer. And with the bus, some find it inconvenient and taking more time then driving as well. They don't want to have to deal with everyone else on the bus and having to stop every 50 ft or so. That really says a lot about how depend on personal transportation our nation has become. And with the rising gas prices and depleting oil supply, it's something that we as a nation need to rethink. We need to become less lazy and more understanding of our current situation and what needs to be done in order to maintain a life even remotely close to the ones we're living now. In another 50-60 years peoples lives are going to look drastically different if they keep deciding that driving a personal car is a better and more convenient way of travel. Soon it would be so inconvenient because it will cost an arm and leg. I know for sure that I'm going to continue trying to limit my CO2 emissions as much as possible because it is an issue that matters to me. Plus by not driving my car, I save money, which in my book is always a good thing. I don't understand why people are so resistant to changing a behavior that ultimately saves them money? Especially since our nation and world has become one that is based on possessing money. Why constantly complain about gas prices and money issues when there are a few simple and easy solutions? Stop filling up your

tank, throwing you money away and bike, take the bus, or in the very least, carpool for Christ's sake.

Date	Mileage (Walking)	Mileage (Bus)	Mileage (Car)	Reason(s) for Trips On Bus or Car
1/12	0	0	0	N/A
1/13	0	0	9.7	Friend's House + Grocery Store + Home

1/14	0	1	6.1	School + Gym + Grocery Store (x2) + Home
1/15	.9	1	0	School
1/16	.9	2	1.4	School + Grocery Store + Home

1/17	0	2.8	13.6	School + Gym + Goodwill + Target + Home
1/18	0	2	0	School + Friend's House
1/19	0	0	16	Mall + Friend's House +Home
1/20	0	0	0	N/A

1/21	0	0	11.8	School + Visiting step mom + Grocery Store + Home
1/22	.9	2	10.3	Dinner with Step-mom + Home
1/23	0	2.8	1.3	School + Leisure + Home

1/24	.9	1	0	School
1/25	0	1	32.5	Movies + Red Robin + Lafeen's (all carpool 3 ppl) + Home
1/26	0	0	0	N/A
1/27	0	1	1.9	Friend's House + Library + Home
1/28	0	2	10	Dinner with Cousin + Home
1/29	.9	2	0	School
1/30	0	2	0	School
Total=	~4.5	~22.6	114.6	Bus=11 Car=29