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## **Way to Go! Commuter Challenge Wins National Recognition**

### ***Vermont program encourages changing commuting habits***

For nearly a decade, a growing number of Vermonters have pledged to try a new way of commuting during the week-long Way to Go! Commuter Challenge. Their collective efforts this year resulted in the program receiving national recognition for the first time.

The Way to Go! program in 2010 received one of ten awards granted nationwide as part of the Federal Highway Administration's Exemplary Human Environment Initiatives (EHEI). The EHEI recognizes outstanding examples of transportation projects that either create or improve conditions for human activities while protecting the natural environment.

"We're excited and honored that FHWA recognized 'Way to Go!' as an innovative program," said Michele Boomhower, Executive Director of the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization. "'Way to Go!' keeps getting stronger and reaching more people thanks to the diverse and committed partnerships and supporters who host events, market the program to participants, provide incentives, and really spread the word about the program."

Way to Go! is an incentive-based event that encourages the use of cheaper, healthier, more earth-friendly transportation alternatives to driving alone. Way to Go! was recognized for its innovative marketing and outreach campaign to promote transportation alternatives.

For one week in May more than 3,000 Vermonters pledged not to drive alone. Together those commuters eliminated more than 220,000 vehicle miles traveled, conserved 9,758 gallons of fuel, and saved nearly \$30,000 in transportation-related expenses. Their efforts resulted in a net reduction of about 200,000 pounds of transportation-related pollutants, including 191,000 pounds of greenhouse gas-producing carbon emissions. The results from the last five years are more impressive when taken together: nearly 13,000 participants have eliminated more than 1 million commuting miles, saved nearly \$200,000 in transportation expenses, and prevented just under 1 million pounds of CO2 from being emitted.

The program, originally called Curb Your Car Day, began a decade ago out of a partnership between the Lake Champlain Committee and the Chittenden County Transportation Authority to get people out of their cars in an effort to reduce auto-derived pollutants from entering Lake Champlain. Now known as the Way to Go! Commuter Challenge, the program is a broad promotional campaign that encourages Vermonters to commute another way than driving solo, which benefits air quality, traffic congestion,

fuel consumption and expenditures, public health, and pollutant runoff. Way to Go! has grown from a Chittenden County-based event to a statewide program organized and funded by local, regional and state partners.

“With transportation being the largest contributor of carbon dioxide emissions in Vermont, we need to do all we can to help people better understand how their transportation choices affect the environment and their wallet,” said Scott Johnstone, Executive Director of the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, the statewide Way to Go! program manager and host. “Expanding ‘Way to Go!’ across the state is key to getting information about transportation choices to more people and encouraging folks to give them a try. It’s tough to break our transportation habits but Way to Go! provides the incentives to try new ways of travel.”

Businesses, schools and communities compete for awards based on the percentage of participation in Way to Go!. Participants receive instant coupons when people register, an end-of-event raffle offers prizes such as iPods, a Neuton® battery-powered mower, Burton snowboards, overnight stays, restaurant gift certificates, yoga passes, spa treatments, bike tune-ups, golf and ski passes and more. This year there was even interstate competition among branches of some businesses, including National Life Group.

For more information on the EHEI awards please see:

[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ehei/memo\\_2010awards.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ehei/memo_2010awards.htm).

For more information about Way to Go! Commuter Challenge visit [www.waytogovt.org](http://www.waytogovt.org).

*The Way to Go! Commuter Challenge is made possible by program manager and host Vermont Energy Investment Corporation and through the generous support of area businesses and the following partners and sponsors:*

*Sustaining Partners:*

*Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization; Earl’s Cyclery & Fitness; FairPoint Communications; Green Mountain Coffee Roasters; National Life Group; Resource Systems Group, Inc.; Go Vermont and the Vermont Agency of Transportation.*

*Organizing Partners:*

*AARP Vermont, Addison County Transit Resources, Campus Area Transportation Management Association, CarShare Vermont, Chittenden County Transportation Authority, City of Burlington, Community Climate Action, 10% Challenge, Green Mountain Transit Agency, Lake Champlain Committee, Local Motion, Marble Valley Regional Transit District, Quebec-Labrador Foundation, Rutland Area Physical Activity Coalition, Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust-- VEHI PATH, Vermont Energy & Climate Action Network, Vermont Natural Resources Council, and Vermont’s 11 Regional Planning Commissions*

*Program Sponsors:*

*American Lung Association of VT, Burton Snowboards, City Market, Courtyard by Marriott Burlington, Cynthea's Spa, Evolution Physical Therapy and Yoga, Merchants Bank, National Bank of Middlebury, Neuton Power Equipment, NRG Systems, Onion River Sports, Small Dog Electronics, Smart Growth Vermont and Sugarbush Resort and many others contributing regional prizes.*

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