



GREEN TEAM PROJECT

Empty the Parking Lot Campaign

Overview: In this Green Team Project, students explore alternatives to traditional transportation as a way to reduce the negative impact of low-occupant vehicles on the environment and on public health. They take the lead in creating an “Empty the Parking Lot Campaign” for their school that educates the community about the harmful effects of single car transportation and encourages the use of more sustainable alternatives.

Grade Level: 9-12

Suggested Time: one school day, plus preparation

Learning Goals: Students will understand the environmental impacts associated with single car transportation and be able to make more sustainable choices.

Suggested Materials:

- carpool lists
- public transportation maps

Background: Automobiles in the United States are the single largest source of air pollution. They release a number of harmful chemicals into the atmosphere, including: carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides, sulfur oxides, and reactive hydrocarbons. Each of these chemicals has been shown to affect the environment and public health in harmful ways.

Project Steps:

- 1. Form your Green Team.** Gather your group of interested classmates, teachers, staff, and other school members.
- 2. Learn** about the harmful effects of automobile use on the environment and on public health. Identify sustainable alternatives available in your community and your school. Visit the library or go online to research from the listed resources.
- 3. Determine your strategy.** Discuss with your teammates a plan to educate your school community about the harmful effects of single car transportation and to encourage them to make more sustainable choices.

Possible strategies include:

- Designate one or more days to be an “Empty the Parking Lot Day.”
- Meet with your school officials to get administrative support and ideas.
- Draft a participant pledge and gather signatures.
- Conduct a school-wide education initiative utilizing various media (i.e. website, blog, tweets, posters, classroom presentations, informational tables, flyers).



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- Hold a contest by homeroom, grade, or school-wide to encourage participation.
- Establish a “green point” award system to recognize school members when they complete a task or reach a goal (i.e. compile a carpool list, biked to school).
- Create an online carpool network for drivers and riders to connect.
- Find a retailer to offer bike locks at a discount to school members.
- Staff a help desk that works with students to map out public transportation routes.

4. Set a goal and determine how you will measure its success.

- Sample Goal: *The Elm School will decrease the number of cars in its parking lot on May 11 by 25% through the use of carpools.*
- Sample Measurement: *The Green Team will take daily tallies of empty parking lot spaces before, during, and after the event.*

5. Plan your project. Consider these logistical questions:

- *Which member of the Green Team is responsible for which task?*
- *How will you communicate your plan to your target audience?*
- *Should you contact your local newspaper or other news media to cover your event?*
- *Do you need permission from school officials or other staff?*
- *If you are running a contest, what is your prize and how will it be awarded?*

6. Implement your plan and document your efforts with photos or video.

7. **Report** your success by visiting GEF's National Green Week page online. Share your results, upload photos, video, or art, and write about your Green Team Project!

Resources:

American Automobile Association: Public Affairs

www.aaa.com

PBS NOW Science and Health: Air Wars

www.pbs.org

U.S. Department of Energy: Fuel Economy

www.fueleconomy.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov