

Reading time: 3 mins

Earth Action: Cut Out a Car Trip

By [Gemma Alexander](#)NOV 11, 2022 [carbon footprint](#), [earth action](#), [transportation](#)

If you live in America, [transportation](#) is the biggest component of your carbon footprint. To honor Earth Day's 52 years of environmental action, Earth911 is presenting 52 Actions for the Earth. Each week through Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to invest in the Earth and make your own life more sustainable. This week, review your schedule and identify one routine car trip that you can eliminate.

Action: Cut One Car Trip

Transportation Emissions

The average American generates 3.5 times the global average greenhouse gas emissions, and our cars, pardon the pun, drive a lot of that generation – [about 28%](#) of our total GHG emissions result from transportation. Americans drive a lot [more miles](#) than any other nation – 30% more than second-place Canada. On average, Americans drive [13,474 miles per year](#) – equivalent to more than four round-trip drives from New York to Dallas – in cars that average [25 mpg](#), emitting [4.6 metric tons](#) of carbon dioxide each year.

Greener Options

What Do You Think?

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- Yes
- No
- I'm researching my options to decide

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American cities are infamously designed around cars. [Elsewhere in the world](#), urban centers are walkable, with extensive bike trails among neighborhoods and well-developed rail systems providing both intra- and intercity options. But America is not a lost cause. Last year, the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) provided unprecedented funds for more sustainable transportation: \$66 billion for passenger and freight rail, \$39 billion for public transit; and \$7.5 billion each for electric vehicles and [zero- and low-emission buses](#) and ferries. Cities are spending big money on [bike lanes](#). Cycling becomes more accessible to less athletic riders and residents of hilly cities with [electric bikes](#). While electric versions of [small vehicles](#) emit more emissions than their foot-powered counterparts, they are still much cleaner than cars. Look for ways to incorporate lower-carbon modes of transportation into your routines.

Cut One Trip

It's well known that a [gradual approach](#) makes it easier to eliminate meat from one's diet (another great [way to cut carbon](#)). But when it comes to transportation, once we've decided we need a car, we tend to drive for all of our trips, even when there are other viable options. This week, review your weekly schedule and identify one routine car trip that you can replace with a lower carbon mode of transportation.

Is there a public transportation option that serves your work commute? If you can't bike all the way to work, maybe you can bike or walk to the [park & ride](#). Carpooling — even once a week — is another way to get cars off the road.

Consider other routine trips as well. People usually want their cars to carry a load of groceries, but do you make regular trips to the convenience store? Can you set up a carpool rotation to take several kids to soccer practice in one car? Share a trip to the gym with a roommate or neighbor? Bike to the park or playground with the family on the weekend?

Look at distances — any routine trip that is less than a mile is a good option for walking. You might walk your child to neighborhood playdates. Walk from work to the gym and back before driving directly home. You might park once and walk between errands instead of driving around. Even if all your routes are written in concrete, you might be able to consolidate trips. Try some [menu planning](#) to reduce midweek grocery runs (and food waste). Or plan errands along your route home instead of going home and then heading back out later.

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By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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