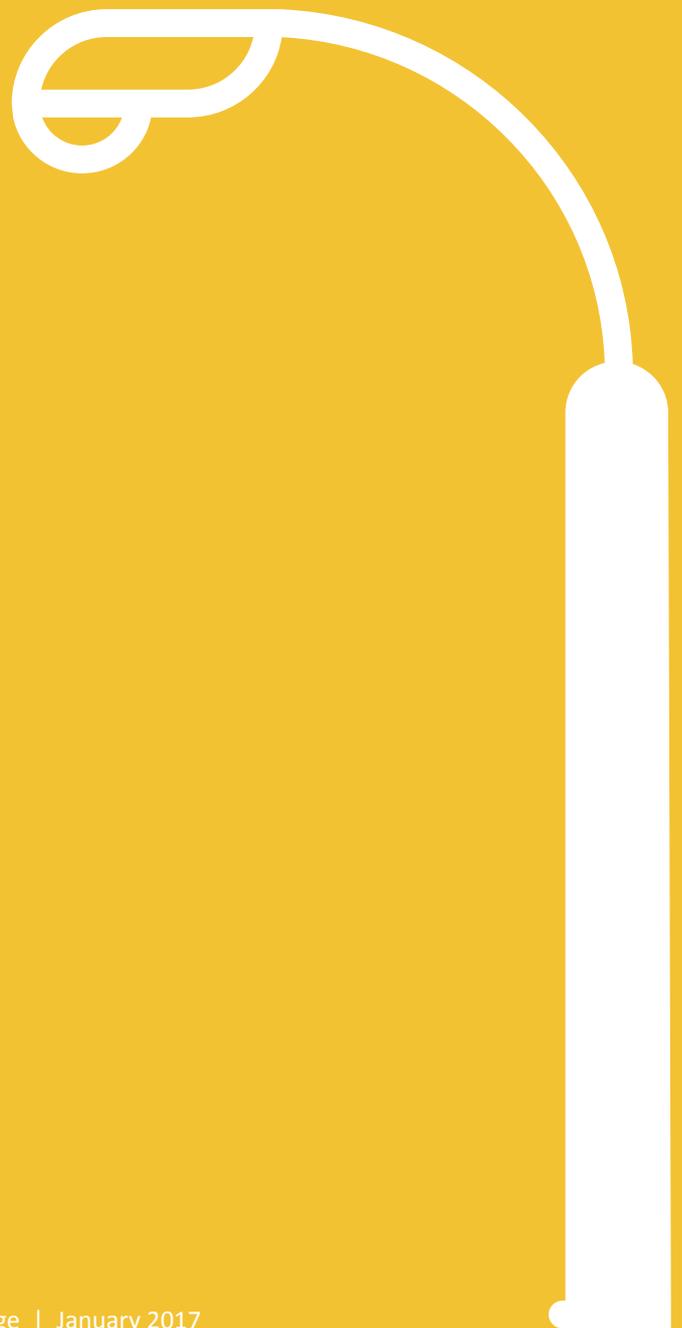




STUCK IN MY CAR

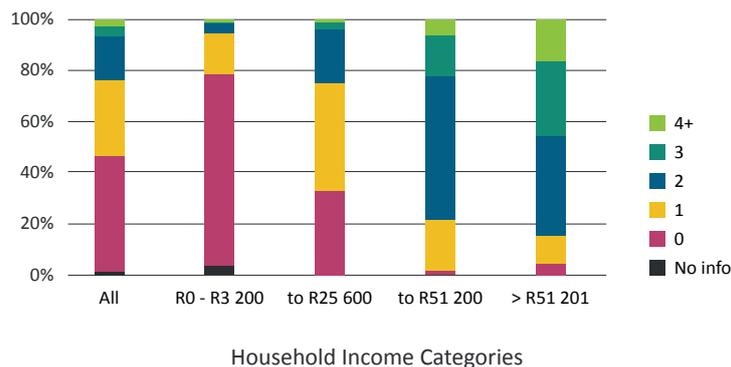
How to drive less
and not die trying





Introduction

% CARS PER HOUSEHOLD PER INCOME GROUP



Data sourced from City of Cape Town's 2013 Household survey report, Final draft

Cape Town's spatial development in the last five decades was, as with many cities, strongly influenced by the adoption of the car as the preferred mode of transport. The high proportion of urban land needed for roads and parking has resulted in a sprawling city where development density is low. Spatial development is also characterised by homogeneous zones, where residential neighbourhoods house few work opportunities and business districts have few homes.

The combination of low densities and homogeneous land use has resulted in long travel distances, which means walking and cycling is not attractive for the vast majority of trips. The dependence many residents have on the car was, therefore, designed into the very fabric of the city.

Cape Town's low density also resulted in public transport being uneconomical to operate at a high service level across the entire city. Poor public transport doesn't just discourage car drivers from using it, it virtually compels poor households to purchase a car to improve access to opportunities. Improving alternatives to car use would also benefit many of those who rely on poor public transport services.

It is increasingly acknowledged that the car is not the panacea it once promised to be. Despite its many benefits to individual travel, it brings with it many hazards to the greater community. These range from emissions that contribute to global climate change to death and disability caused by accidents, and the social exclusion of the many without access to a car.

This graph shows how many households own cars across Cape Town. It indicates that while about half of all households do not own a car, almost 80% of households in the lowest income bracket do not own a car. This is in contrast with almost 85% of households in the highest income bracket owning one or more cars.

The number of cars on Cape Town's roads would increase by 27% (or almost 250 000) if 50% of low and low-middle income households without a car acquired one car. It is not difficult to imagine that conditions would be much worse for all drivers if many of the households in the two lower income categories also acquired cars, or households in the higher income categories acquired more cars.

Reliance on the car as the preferred means of transport for all who can afford it will lead to a decline in the quality of life for everyone in Cape Town. To this end, the City of Cape Town is working hard to roll out MyCiti services and cycle lanes to more areas, and to influence Metrorail to provide better rail services. However, while waiting for substantial improvements to reach us, there are already small steps each of us can take to reduce the negative impact of car driving on ourselves and those around us.

We start by acknowledging some of the factors that lead us to rely on our cars so much. Then we discuss some alternatives that may apply in different contexts. Finally, we provide some practical steps to take on your journey towards fewer car trips.

I AM TRAVELLING BY CAR



Most of us put a lot of time and effort into the decision of which car to purchase. And for many, it becomes the biggest expense we have after buying a house. A car has a lot of value for us as it allows for access to a wide range of opportunities and services, whether that be work, school, sport or the doctor.

Because of their value, we tend to use our cars as often as we can, so that the decision to use them for all travel becomes almost instinctive. However, there are many factors that influence our behaviour.

WHO DECIDES WHEN I DRIVE

When we rely on a car, finding a convenient parking bay becomes an important factor in choosing where we live. The complexity of using a car grows within a family context, since our travel decisions are often dependent on the needs of others. For example, dropping children at school, a partner at their place of work, or caring for someone at home before travelling could change when we leave home and which route we take. Living alone simplifies how and when we use our cars, but it also simplifies how and when we test alternative modes, as it affects few others.

Many travel decisions are also influenced by the broader community we live in. Women are not allowed to drive or cycle in some cultures, while many children are not allowed to cycle to school due to safety concerns. Many communities view owning a car as a social necessity, and could even frown up cycling or walking.

As an individual travelling by car, it may be insightful to understand why we make the travel decisions we do, and realise we may already be in a position to sometimes choose an alternative.

WHAT DO WE DRIVE TO, AND WHEN?

We travel to activities that vary in location, start and end times, and how often we participate in them. Some trips are compulsory, made regularly, and to the same place and at the same time; for example, going to work or school. When to start and end a day's work may be fixed for some, but flexible for others. For example, customer service staff have to start when "the door opens", while flexible working time is increasingly possible for office workers.

Shopping for food may be compulsory for one member of the household, while optional for others. Making shopping trips is usually not as rigid as the timelines for work or school, and with retailers closing later, shopping today is very different from what it was 30 years ago.

Optional (discretionary) trips, such as visiting friends or family, may occur frequently but do not have a fixed time. Meanwhile, attending events that have a fixed start time may happen infrequently. We often link activities while driving; for example, collecting children from school or grocery shopping en route from work.

WHERE DO WE TRAVEL FROM AND TO?

Some people can choose where to live, work and play, and even relocate when changing jobs or when children change schools. For example, if travelling to the city centre by car becomes unbearable, one person may move closer to work or another may find a job closer to home. Even companies relocate their offices to decentralised nodes to reduce the travel burden on their staff.

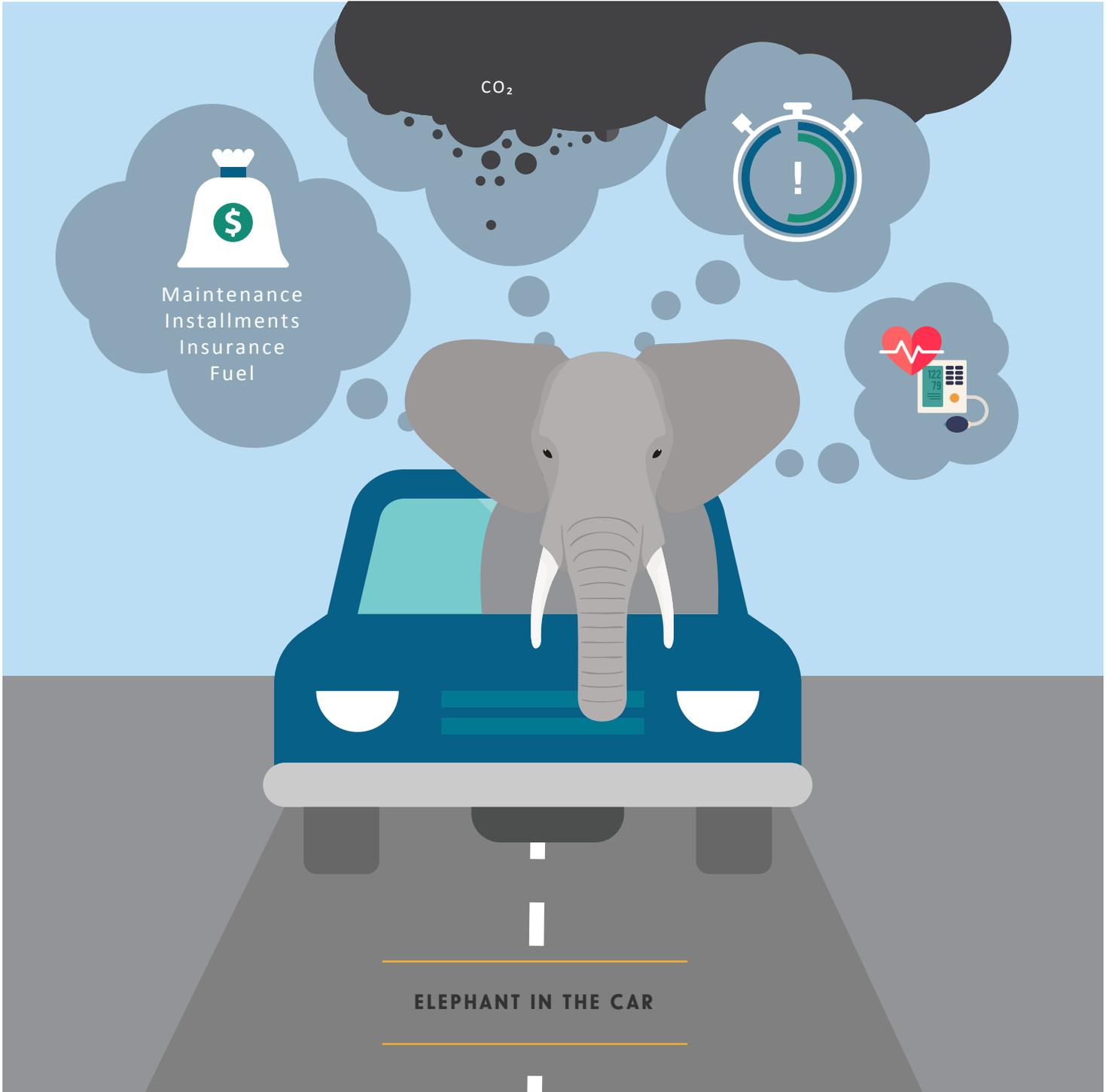
Regional shopping centres have become the standard for finding virtually all items we consume, as well as basic services such as banking, entertainment and places to meet friends. While many of our malls were designed for access primarily by car, some are quite accessible by other modes. Furthermore, while the corner shop has all but disappeared, smaller neighbourhood shopping centres are within walking or cycling distance from most houses in the city.

HOW CAN I MAKE A CHANGE?

Just like recycling plastic and paper, and using water and electricity sparingly, using alternatives to the car would contribute to a more sustainable future. As with electricity, the aim is not to stop its use but to reduce the consumption of non-renewable resources and mitigate their harmful side effects (emissions, safety, social exclusion).

The core message is to understand "every little helps" and "each contribution matters". I.e. the cumulative impact of many small savings becomes significant. We may find we already have alternatives for one or more of the trips we make.

The decision is, therefore, not to relocate within walking distance of work or school, or to replace our car with a bicycle. A first step could be to just be mindful of opportunities that would remove even one car trip per week.



ELEPHANT IN THE CAR

Most of us enjoy the task of driving, as well as the freedom and even esteem it brings. There are also the aspects of driving highlighted by most car manufacturers when promoting their unique brand. However, there are also several factors that reduce the pure bliss of owning and driving a car. This “elephant in the car” has many familiar characteristics.



CONGESTION IS A THIEF OF TIME

The travel time from Bellville to the Cape Town CBD typically exceeds one hour in peak traffic, instead of 20 minutes outside peak, equating to at least a three-fold increase in time spent behind the wheel. The latest statistics from the City of Cape Town show the morning peak period is reaching four hours on the major freeways and arterials into the CBD. This means it still takes an hour to drive from Bellville to the CBD, but that now applies whether you start before 06:00 or after 09:00.

The option of leaving before or after the peak period is arguably no longer available for the same activities/trip purposes. To be clear, excessive levels of congestion are experienced in many parts of the city, and not only for persons travelling to the city centre.

The cost of congestion includes the productive time lost while sitting in traffic, as well as the additional operational cost of cars not driven optimally. Economists calculate that the socioeconomic cost of congestion can place a significant burden on the city.



THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC COST OF CAR USE

Virtually all middle and higher income families in SA consider the purchase of a car as a compulsory cost to the household. Many people aim to obtain the most convenient car that fits within their budget (arguably to make the increasing time spent in cars more tolerable). For middle to lower income households, the cost of a car competes with other, urgent priorities such as education and healthcare, often because a car increases the reliability of reaching work and other critical appointments on time.

Unsurprisingly, many households are sensitive to increases in fuel prices. Rail usage visibly increasing during 2011 when the price of petrol increased from under R8 to over R10 per litre in less than a year demonstrated this. Affordability is also a key reason why only about 35% of cars on South African roads operate with any form of insurance. However, this leads to an increase in the cost of insurance to those who do insure, or to other sectors of the economy.

Since SA has among the highest rates of accidents in the world, our car population places a significant burden on our economy.

Some people receive parking as a fringe benefit to their remuneration package. For most, however, paying for parking constitutes a significant cost associated with the use of a car.



BROADER IMPACTS OF CAR USE

Many studies have shown the negative impact traffic-related stress has on peoples' health and performance at work. In addition, we all know people whose “personalities change when they get behind the steering wheel”. Road rage is probably the most visible expression of the stress and frustration associated with driving.

Scientists have identified emissions from the private car as a major contributor to global warming, and harmful to pedestrians at street level too. They have shown poor air quality not only affects health but also the physical development of children. Despite major breakthroughs that reduce the amount of toxic gases emitted from vehicles, the high age of cars in Cape Town means there is a significant lag in seeing the benefits of new technologies.

It is foreseeable that renewable resources could one day power all cars, removing the effect of harmful emissions. However, the space used for roads and parking will remain the same. Higher density cities require less space for cars to make the same trips and can, therefore, make much more productive use of the land they occupy.



CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

Assuming you identified your unique reasons for driving, and concur the benefits come with costs – even though some are borne by others – you may still think you are unable to drive less. We believe a new look at some alternatives may present opportunities for at least some of the trips you make.

WALKING OR CYCLING INSTEAD OF SOME CAR TRIPS

Unless you have had your car adapted to compensate for a disability, walking is the “natural” mode available to everyone. It is also how you move to and from your car. It is the ideal mode for short trips, including those between nearby office buildings and shops in a mall. While there are limits on the range of walking for many, especially in excessive heat and on steep gradients, it can be faster than a car on distances of over two kilometres when you consider the time to find parking.

As with walking, cycling increases production of endorphins, which makes you feel better. It is the fastest mode for short trips and is the most energy-efficient mode of transport. Neither walking nor cycling produce harmful emissions, and they are free or quite affordable to most. People who cycle to work are more likely to be on time and are more productive during the day, compared to those using any motorised mode.

As a start, you could walk or cycle to a shop near your home or a meeting near your office, especially when you are not in a hurry and when it is safe to do so. Compare the time taken and how you feel with driving for the same trip. Consider walking or cycling with someone or in a group if you are not yet comfortable with the route or “rules of engagement”.

Support some of the groups lobbying for more cycle lanes, and insist local government builds these to a high standard. You could also lobby your elected councillors for better infrastructure and wayfinding signage.

Get your old bicycle serviced, or donate it and replace it with one appropriate for your current needs. Donating an old bicycle means more people could be cycling, which increases the pressure to provide more cycling infrastructure. Using electric bicycles has been shown to increase the likelihood of choosing to cycle over driving, as well as to increase the distance usually cycled.

CARPOOL/RIDESHARE

Carpooling reduces the stress of driving every day by sharing it with others. It reduces your fuel bill in proportion with the number of days a week you do not drive. It further allows for conversation, listening to music or podcasts or watching movies. Or you could agree to silence and catch up on work.

Technology makes it easier to find a suitable group and to change members as and when necessary. It makes coordinating when and where to leave easier, so that you spend less time waiting for others. And it makes sharing of dedicated parking space easier, although this may require some negotiating with your employer.

Arranging an alternative to when any member in a carpool needs to leave early or late is easy. Services such as Uber offer a viable alternative that did not exist a few years back. Compare the cost of an occasional Uber trip with what you could save on fuel every month.

Many companies are already thinking about ways to use parking space more efficiently. Solutions may come quicker if you also join the conversation. Want to find a central parking space for carpool members? Negotiating with land owners where this is suitable may lead to win-win for all parties.

Consider using one of several websites that facilitate carpooling by typing “car pool cape town” into your internet search engine.

USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR SOME TRIPS

Consider taking the train on a weekend visit to Simon's Town or Kalk Bay. Create gees by travelling by public transport to Newlands or Cape Town Stadium to support your team, or to take part in an Open Streets Day with your family. As with carpooling, taking the train opens opportunities to work, relax, read or have a conversation with others.

MyCiti has proved it provides safe and comfortable scheduled services in some parts of the city. Look out for when MyCiti is coming to your area and make suggestions for feeder routes, stop locations, frequencies and the like. You can also bring your bicycle on the bus outside peak periods.

The South African Police Service and Metrorail increased the presence of security on trains and stations more than 10 years ago. Consequently, rail travel is relatively safe, despite the poor perception that lingers among many non-users. Make your voice heard and tell decision makers where you think more security is needed.

PRASA started a programme to replace all the existing passenger train sets, and then expand the fleet, over the next 20 years. Make sure they know you are waiting for them, to the extent that they work harder to deliver better services even earlier.

Park and ride facilities across the city are very well used. Tell decision makers where more space or better security is needed for you to also leave your car at the station.

MORE PLANS FOR ACTION

Have you determined whether working remotely from your office on some days is viable in your organisation? This could save time and cost with very limited investment. "Hot desking" may be ideal for those tasks you need to do away from the hustle and bustle of daily office activities. If your job allows, consider working from home for parts of a day or some days to avoid travelling in peak.

How about putting alternative transport on the agenda of groups you already belong to, especially at your children's schools and your place of work?

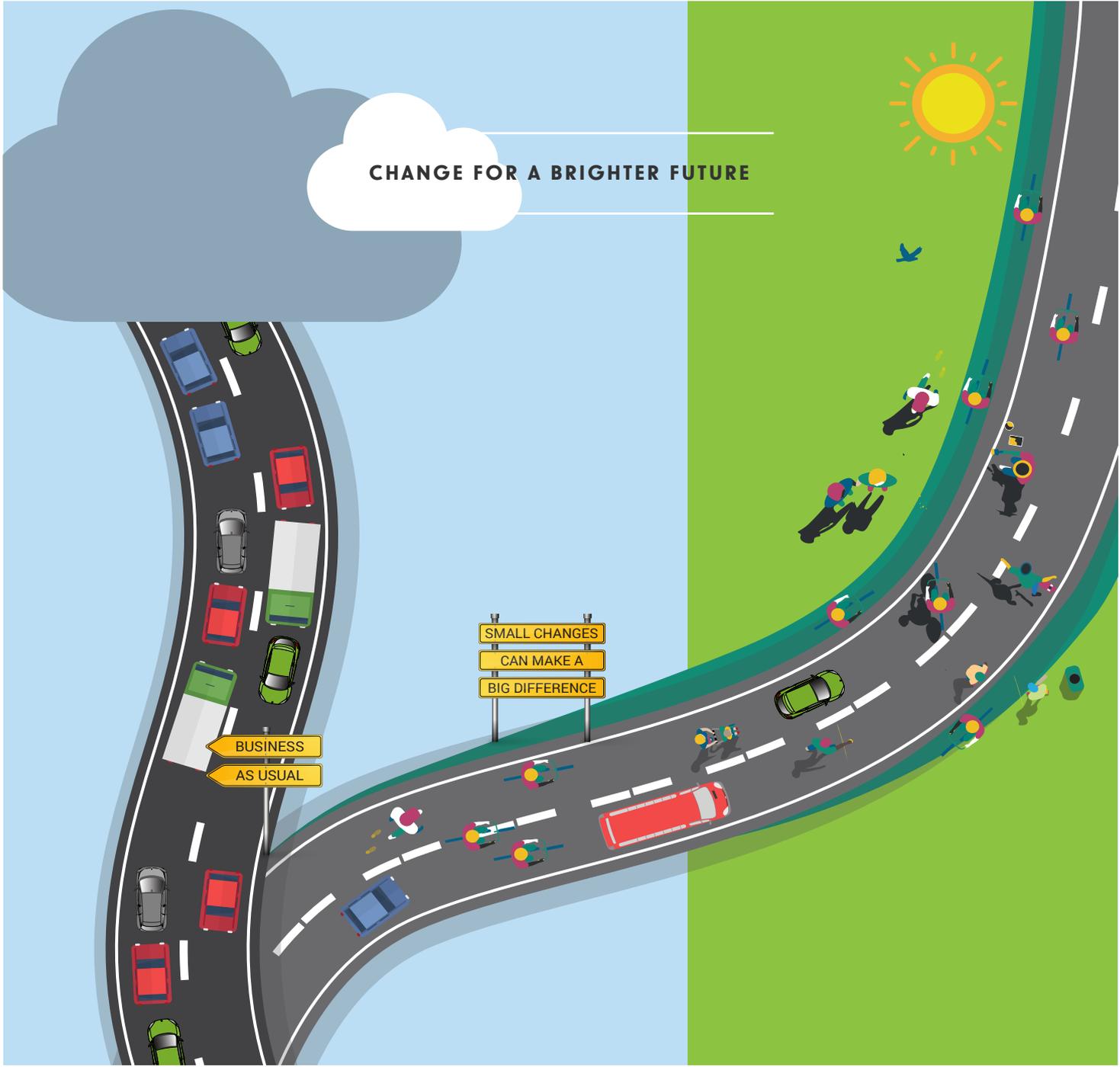
With a little bit of planning, you and your household may be able to combine some trips and save unnecessary travelling by car. Start by doing this for non-urgent trips so you can get used to the change. Measure how much longer it takes, or how much time you saved by not driving twice when once would do.

Find the name of your **local councillor** (www.capetown.gov.za) or contact the **Mayoral Committee Member for Transport & Urban Development** (brett.herron@capetown.gov.za).

Keep the number of Cape Town's Transport Management Centre on your phone to find or share information: **0800 65 64 63**.

Follow twitter feeds such as **@CapeTownFreeway** and **@OpenStreetsCT** for regular updates on traffic flows, or more information to help make different travel choices. Please use **#AtoBChallenge** to provide feedback, share ideas or problems with the suggestions you read here.

CHANGE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



BUSINESS
AS USUAL

SMALL CHANGES
CAN MAKE A
BIG DIFFERENCE

**The car has long
been a symbol for
personal freedom.
But if the reality of
congestion, searching
for parking and rising
fuel costs is getting
you down, maybe
now is the time to test
alternative modes of
getting from A to B.**



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