



# a2b GO

## Walk/Bike Challenge

An active commuting challenge by Greater Wellington Regional Council and sponsors

### 2014 Final Report



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

The **a2b GO** challenge is a four week workplace competition for teams of four. Participants gain points for each active commute they make to or from work. There are also bonus point challenges which add a fun element to the challenge. The aim of the challenge is to promote sustainable transport and minimise reliance on private car use, so as to minimise congestion in the Wellington Region. The event was run over a four-week period from Go by Bike Day (12 February) until Walk 2 Work day (12 March).

The a2b GO challenge is the competitive arm of Active a2b a health and wellness programme. Promotion was therefore primarily done through the usual Active a2b communication channels (Facebook, emails, newsletters), and through workplace contacts. Participants from previous challenges, including *Spring to the Street* were also invited to participate. A DL flyer was printed and distributed at several Park n' Ride stations around the region, and at the Go by Bike day event.

The a2b GO walk/bike challenge attracted 318 registrants<sup>1</sup>. There were 91 teams registered, with 67 becoming full teams (of four members). Registration was lower than the previous year (528 registered, 99 full teams) although higher than 2012, when it was targeted towards walkers only and called "Streets Alive". There was a high level of engagement among participants, with 7,714 active commuting trips made by participants during the challenge.

A total of 37 workplaces were represented by the competing teams. Schools were not included this year due to a relatively low uptake in 2013; however one school team entered again within the workplace competition.

The evaluation shows that a significant increase in active commuting was observed amongst participants. Approximately 30% of participants were actively commuting more at the conclusion of the challenge than they were when they registered. Participant feedback was also generally positive, with 73% stating they would recommend it to others, and a further 22% stating they might do so.

## 1.2. Format of the a2b GO challenge

The overall goal of the challenge is to complete as many active commutes as possible over the four week period. Participants form teams of four, which helps to ensure participants have added pressure and incentive to keep on actively commuting. The challenge relies on the honesty of participants, who register their own trips to or from work, however checks and reminders are used to encourage honest performing.

To add to the fun element, and to increase the 'visibility' within the workplace, weekly bonus point activities are provided. This helps to bring team members together to complete the challenge, and also acts as an ongoing reminder to keep logging trips. Each challenge was posted on the website, as well as emailed out to all participants.

The four bonus-point challenges were as follows:

- Bonus Challenge #1 – Team Photo. Teams were asked to submit a photo of their team, representing active travel in some way, with points for humour and creativity.
- Bonus Challenge #2 – Know your Shortcuts. This was a team quiz, to identify locations showing shortcuts around the region (available to active commuters only).
- Bonus Challenge #3 – The Jeremy Clarkson Challenge. Teams were tasked to convert a colleague for a single active commute to or from work, with more points depending on the difficulty of the conversion.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact 341 were shown as registered, however, 23 of these never confirmed their registration after being invited by other members, and were not taking part in the challenge.

- Bonus Challenge #4 – Know the Benefits. Teams were asked to use the Walking and Cycling Journey Planner to tally the health and vehicle savings of their active commute.

There was a high level of engagement with the bonus point challenges. The photos were creative and often humorous and various people commented on the surprise at the level of health benefits shown. The Jeremy Clarkson Challenge received 14 successful entries (some very impressive conversions), indicating that others outside the challenge were also influenced by the competition. These challenges no doubt would have helped to give active travel a more visible profile within the workplace.

### **1.3. Changes for 2014**

The key changes implemented this year were:

- The name was changed from Streets Alive to a2b GO.
- Schools were not officially part of the challenge this year, so that limited resources could be focused towards workplaces.
- Participants were able to lodge any active commutes to public transport links. This was in order to open the challenge up to people who live too far from work to actively commute the whole way.

### **1.4. Sponsorship**

A challenge like this benefits from having valuable rewards on offer. All but one of the previous years' sponsors continued to support the challenge this year by providing the prizes. Sponsorship for the event was as follows:

- Top Team – a \$200 Shoe Clinic voucher for each member (50% contribution by GWRC)
- Second Team – an annual Zealandia membership for each member
- Top Workplaces (small, medium and large) – a Micro scooter each for the office

Spot prizes included four day passes to Zealandia, a Beautiful Bike bag and men's and a woman's cycling tops from Ground Effect.

## **2. Data Collection and Evaluation**

Data was collected at registration and through a final evaluation survey. Bonus points were awarded to participants who filled out the initial survey (305 respondents) while the evaluation was completed by 144 people.

### **2.1. Distances of active commutes.**

Registrants for a2b GO were given the opportunity to earn bonus points upon registering, and were asked several questions including the distance travelled on their active commute. It was found that 9% of participants travelled for less than 2km on their active commute, 43% travelled between 2km and 5km, 25% travelled between 5km and 10km, and 22% travelled for more than 10km (Figure 1). This is comparable to last year, with just a slightly higher percentage travelling further, which may be due to the public transport option for longer commutes.

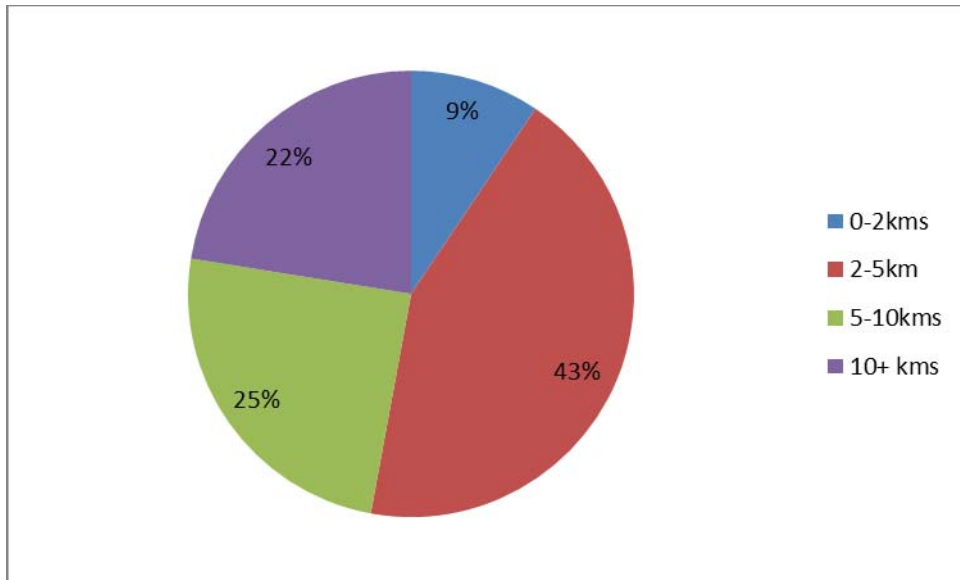


Figure 1: Distances of Active Commute for a2b GO Participants

## 2.2. Frequency of active commutes

Both the registration survey and the final evaluation asked participants about their frequency of active travel prior to and after the a2b GO challenge, respectively. In the evaluation, participants were also asked if they thought they were commuting more, about the same, or less than before.

Data from both surveys was matched using email addresses as identifiers (a total sample of 138). This allowed for two different measures of change of travel patterns. When looking at the number of active commutes over a week, comparing registration with the evaluation, it was found that 57% gave the same number (no change), 10% gave a smaller number (less frequent), and 33% gave a higher number of trips (more frequent active commute).

When looking at the evaluation response to whether people thought they were actively commuting more, less or about the same, 70% thought it was about the same, 27% thought they were commuting more, and only 2% reported that they thought they were commuting less.

These results, comparing the two methods of evaluation, are shown in Figure 2 below. In summary, it can be seen that approximately 30% of the participants who completed the evaluation were commuting more after entering the a2b GO challenge, which should be considered a success.

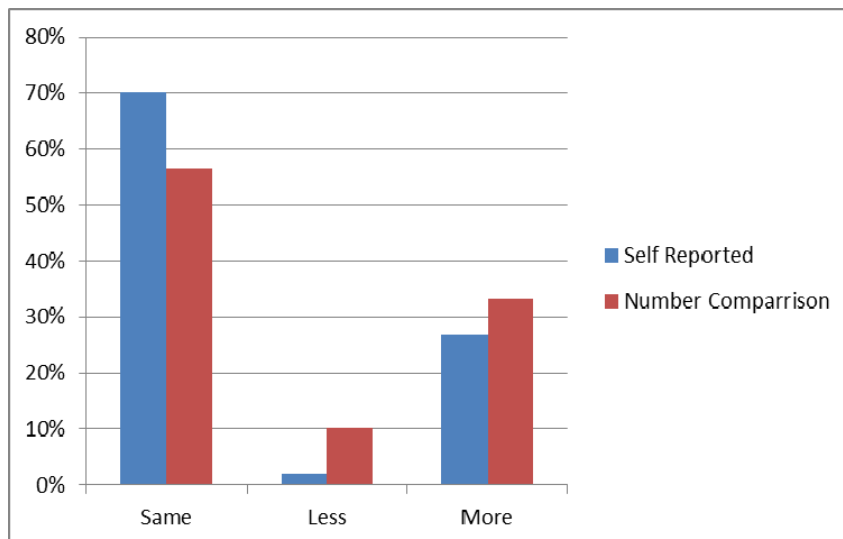


Figure 2: Changes in Frequency of Active Commuting

### 2.3. Estimated total increase in active travel

An estimate can be made of the total additional active kilometres travelled per week before and after the a2b GO challenge<sup>2</sup>. If we assume that the survey respondents are representative of all participants, then this would give an additional 249 active commutes per week. The average commute distance was 7.35km. This indicates a total weekly increase of 1,829km of active commuting after the challenge compared to before the challenge.

A more detailed analysis of the change in active commuting is given in the chapter below.

### 2.4. Contribution to overall change in active travel

The figure below shows a2b Go participants categorised by trip distance<sup>3</sup> (from home to work). The blue bar shows the percentage of participants commuting in each distance range. The green bar shows which commuters were most likely to increase their active commuting. The red bar shows the overall contribution to the change in active commuting by distance.

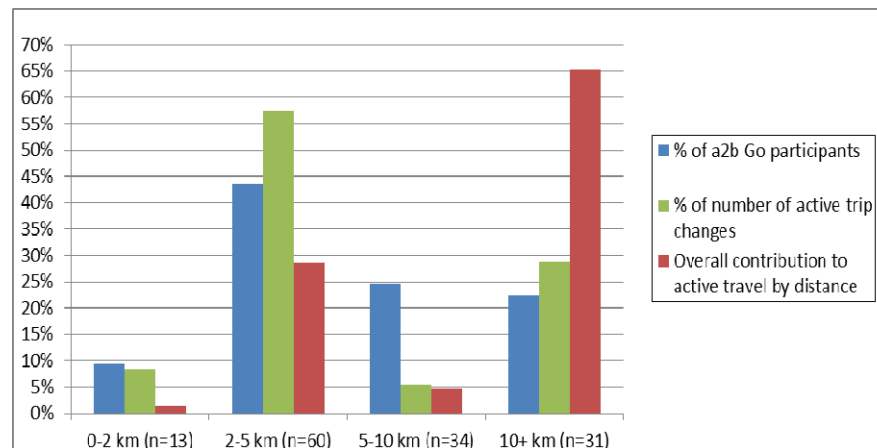


Figure 3: a2b GO participants and contribution to the increase in active travel, categorised by home to work distance.

The chart shows that 43% participants lived 2-5km from work, and that they were also the most likely group to increase their active commute. More than half of the 'new' active trips were done by people from within this category. There were not a large number of people commuting less than 2km, and as could be expected, they did not change their travel pattern significantly (most already actively commuted every day).

When people live 5-10km away, which nearly a quarter of participants did, there was less of a change in behaviour among this group. Perhaps it is seen as a less manageable distance for many people to actively commute on a regular basis.

For the larger distance however, there was a significant increase in both the number of active trips, and the overall contribution. However, these are the people who are more likely to be taking the train or bus as part of their commute, thus the overall contribution may be exaggerated. Nevertheless, it still indicates that there was a significant change in behaviour among this group.

In 2013, there was a larger increase in the 5-10km category, and a small change in the 10km+ category, which again indicates that the change in rules allowing a connection with PT did add an incentive for those living further away from work.

<sup>2</sup> This is done by scaling up the evaluation responses to cover total registrants, and multiplying by the average trip distance. It is only an approximation, as the evaluation respondents are likely to have been more active in the challenge, and also the distance for the change of behaviour might be more or less than the average figure.

<sup>3</sup> It is possible that some people, particularly in the longer distances are using public transport for part of their trip, as this was allowed, provided there was an active component of the trip above a certain distance.

### **3. Participant Feedback**

#### **3.1 Reasons to recommend the challenge**

Feedback for the event was mixed, but generally positive. A total of 73% of participants would recommend the challenge to others. General themes for why participants would recommend the challenge to others included:

- The sense of camaraderie/teambuilding in the workplace
- The challenge provided motivation and incentives to exercise
- The challenge promoted active commuting
- The fun element ('fun' was used in 34 responses!)

The 22% who answered "maybe" and 5% who answered "no" had two main concerns or reasons as to why they might not recommend the challenge:

- The points system was unfair (exclusion of kilometres travelled meant that those who lived further away were 'disadvantaged')
- It doesn't change the behaviour for people who are already doing it every day to begin with.

#### **3.2 Registering, logging trips and receiving assistance**

In regards to the ease of registration, 85% of participants found it 'easy' or 'very easy' to register, 11% were 'neutral' and only 4% found it 'hard' to register.

For the logging of trips, 79% felt it was easy or very easy, while 15% were neutral and 6% found it hard.

For receiving assistance, 65% did not require assistance. Of those who did require assistance, 75% found it easy to get, 19% were neutral, and 6% found it hard.

The above figures are generally positive, with only very low numbers reporting it as being difficult in any of the above categories.

#### **3.3 Bonus point challenges**

Participants were asked how they rated the bonus point challenges – whether it added to the fun, or if it distracted from the challenge (rated on a scale from 1-5). This year, 67% rated the bonus point challenges positively, 26% were neutral, while 7% rated it negatively.

This is an improvement on last year (57%, 31%, and 12% respectively). This can be attributed to better communication, relying less on social media (which some people couldn't access), and the sending of regular, weekly emails.

A selection of varying views on bonus point challenges are given below:

- "Bonus points aspects added to the fun and competitiveness but did detract a little from actual biking and walking"
- "I also felt that the bonus points counted for too much, particularly bonus points which relied on the subjective assessment of the judges"
- "Definitely stick with the bonus challenges"

#### **3.4 Participant experience and general feedback**

A total of 70% of participants had an overall positive experience, 27% thought it was ok, and less than 3% had a negative impression of the challenge. This is illustrated in the pie chart below.

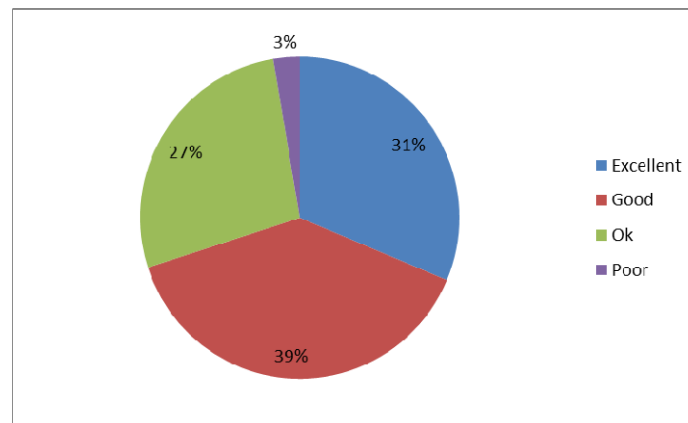


Figure 4: Overall satisfaction with a2b GO

The general feedback which suggested changes could be categorised under the following themes:

- Displeasure at the lack of recognition for the distance of active commutes.
- Displeasure at some aspect of the bonus point challenges. Most commonly, this related to just one of the challenges (different ones for different people), or the weight given to bonus points in comparison to trip points.
- Logging of trips – some technical issues, being able to log more than two points for a day, or being laborious to log multiple days at once.
- Making point allocations more transparent, to give more integrity to the challenge.

Overall, there was a lot of positive feedback, where people complemented the challenge or the way it was run.

### 3.5 How participants heard about the challenge

The predominant forms of marketing for a2b GO are through Active a2b (registration and newsletters), through workplace contacts, and through emails to past participants. There was limited budget available for wider marketing, but to complement the new rule allowing a link to public transport, flyers were distributed at a number of Park & Ride stations around the region.

Participants were asked how they heard about a2b GO. They were allowed to select multiple answers. The figure below shows the number of responses for each option.

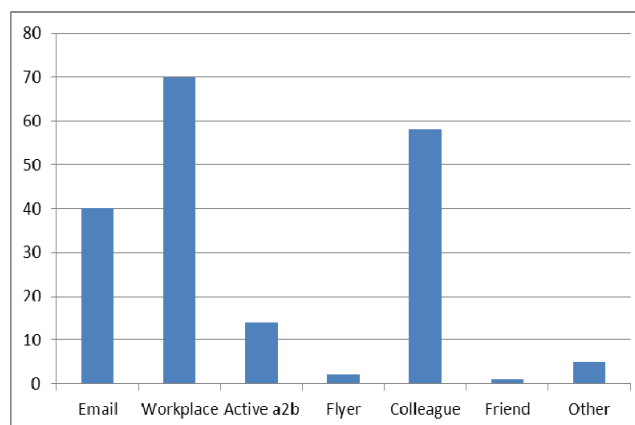


Figure 5: How participants heard about a2b GO.

Communication via workplaces was the most common channel, highlighting the importance of having workplaces help promote these challenges. Colleagues proved highly influential – presumably when participants recruited people to form a team of four. Email was the third most common, but indicates also



that many participants hadn't been part of Streets Alive (2013), or Spring to the Street, otherwise more would have received an email. A small number heard about it through Active a2b, showing that it does exist as its own challenge, not simply as part of Active a2b. The flyer wasn't useful for recruiting people and is not recommended to be used in future promotions.

## 4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on our experience as well as the feedback received. They are intended to guide the future development of the a2b GO challenge, to ensure it continues to improve and remain attractive to commuters and workplaces.

- Consider a weighted points system to include distance travelled (note that this was considered this year, but would be costly to develop, and make it increasingly similar to Spring to the Street). This could be included as a separate points' category and prize.
- Make some further refinements to the website to minimise technical frustrations. More specifically:
  - i) Ensure no more than 2 trips can be recorded for a day, and that they can't be logged before the competition start.
  - ii) Ensure 'Log more trips' redirects to the right place
  - iii) Check that clicking on the a2b GO icon takes you to home page
  - iv) Consider having a limit to how far back trips can be logged (like no more than one week past)
- Make some minor rule changes. For example, set a cap at 10 trips for a week, so weekend trips are allowed, but only if it is in place of week day trips.
- Maintain the bonus point challenges with a few changes. Perhaps give more information from the start regarding points point allocation and what they will entail, so people don't feel hard done by. The bonus points on distance appeased some (those who complain about a single point regardless of distance) but upset others (those who then get less, when they can't do anything about it). Be clear about the purpose of this, and perhaps not have it as the last challenge.
- Continue with weekly progress email updates to communicate bonus point challenges and give reminders about logging trips.

## 5. Conclusion

From past experience running behaviour change programmes, the Council has found that competitions can be a valuable tool to encourage and promote sustainable travel. Many people find motivation through competition, and find that the team aspect acts as a further measure of support for achieving their goals. The a2b GO challenge also provides an additional tool to Active a2b participants and contributes to the success of the larger Active a2b programme.

The number of participants was lower than 2013, however the majority of participants enjoyed taking part in a2b GO, and found it helped provide motivation for an increase in active commuting. About 30% of those who took part recorded a noticeable increase in active travel. An estimated 249 extra active commutes per week were being made following the challenge.

As with last year, the highest proportion of participants lived between 2 and 5km from work. They appear to be the most likely target group for behaviour change. This could be kept in mind for workplace travel planners, who if possible, could specifically target their employees who live within this distance for active travel promotions.

As for previous years, there was some criticism of the points system (which gives one point per trip as opposed to per kilometre). The point-per-trip format used here, while not always popular, makes it more

accessible to people with a lower level of fitness, and hence it targets a different group of commuters than that targeted by Spring to the Street.

In summary, a2b GO is one tool within a wider collection of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable commuting. It complements the Active a2b programme, and has proven effective at increasing the amount of active commuting among participants.