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WENDY MAEDA/GLOBE STAFF

Software engineer Mike Reed stored his bicycle in a secure cage inside a Kendall Square parking garage.

Car-free commuting push pays off in Kendall Square

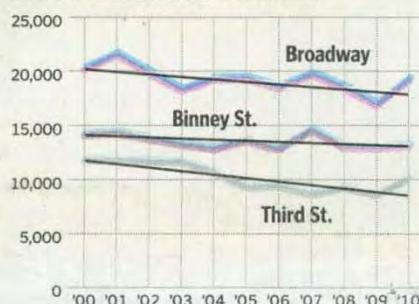
By Eric Moskowitz
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — Doug Taylor used to get to work the way most Americans do, driving alone. Then he switched jobs to one of the many Kendall Square companies that offer financial incentives for employees to leave their cars at home. After trying the commuter rail, the 48-year-old Medford resident soon discovered he could pocket even more by biking.

Though Taylor had not owned a bicycle since high school, he now pedals 12 miles most days, taking the T occasionally, driving rarely.

"I enjoy the freedom of doing it and the exercise," said Taylor, associate director since January of an economic

KENDALL SQUARE DAILY MOTOR VEHICLE TRAFFIC



SOURCE: City of Cambridge

GLOBE STAFF

research group at Ironwood Pharmaceuticals. "Between riding the bike and the amount of walking I've done to and from [the T], I've actually lost 12

pounds."

Taylor is part of a set of statistics so surprising it looks like a mistake. Despite the rapid expansion in and around Kendall Square in the last decade — the neighborhood absorbed a 40 percent increase in commercial and institutional space, adding 4.6 million square feet of development — automobile traffic actually dropped on major streets, with vehicle counts falling as much as 14 percent.

Although more commuters are churning in and out of Kendall each day, many more than ever are going by T, bike, car pool, or foot.

"As someone who has actually lived and worked here all that time, I can tell

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In Kendall Square, more workers prefer green commuting

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you **it's true,**" said **Tim Rowe, founder and chief** executive of the Cambridge Innovation Center and president of the Kendall Square Association.

Consider One Broadway, where the innovation center spans seven floors. In 2000, it had just one simple bike rack. Now, it has an electronically locked indoor cage and three indoor racks; outside, the city added sidewalk locking posts and reclaimed automobile parking for on-street bike racks, all of which are often full.

The trend has challenged longtime assumptions by developers and neighborhood advocates about the amount of parking and traffic a new building needs and generates.

"When you look at what's happened with traffic, it has not been the scary scenario that people feared," said Assistant City Manager Brian P. Murphy, **Cambridge's community development director.**

Part of the credit goes to broad trends: higher gas prices; the growing popularity of biking; the increasing number of professionals, especially in - **Kendall's "knowledge economy," who want to live** in urban areas and do not need to drive to work.

But the shift from driving in Kendall Square is about more than the luck of location and transit access. Since 1998, the city has required commercial and institutional developers who add parking spaces to actively discourage people from using them. The policy is supported by statistical targets and annual monitoring, tools that have **made Cambridge's Parking and Transportation - Demand Management Ordinance** not just a pie-in-the-sky resolution but a case study examined by local and national planners.

In Cambridge, any developer who builds or expands a garage or lot and winds up with at least five parking spaces must pick from an array of options to encourage greener transportation, from subsidizing MBTA passes, charging employees to park, and underwriting a shuttle that supplements the T, to offering bike tune-up days, building locker rooms and showers, and guaranteeing an emergency ride for those suddenly needing a car.

Developers with at least 20 spaces must meet city-set goals aimed at reducing the percentage of workers who drive.

At Ironwood, where the target is 50 percent, employees get \$100 a month toward commuting costs. If they drive, they can apply it to the \$220 a month they pay to park. If they take the T, they can spend it pretax on passes ordered through the company.

They can also board the EZ Ride, a bus paid for by employers and workers that connects Cambridgeport, Kendall, Lechmere, and North Station, eliminating indirect subway connections for commuter rail riders. It has grown from 200 to 2,500 daily riders since 2002.

And the employees keep whatever remains of their \$100-a-month subsidy, a sum that adds up for cyclists like Taylor. Those choices helped Ironwood reduce its drive-alone employees to 41 percent last year, down from 50 percent in 2007.

When Novartis moved into the renovated Necco candy factory in 2004, the city set its driving target at 44 percent, meaning the company had to persuade more than half its workers to use other modes of transportation. For those who drove, the pharmaceutical giant built a 350-space garage, but planned to use stackers to park more in double-decker fashion, said Susanne Rasmussen, **Cambridge's director of environmental and transportation planning.** Even with 1,200-plus employees there, Novartis, which provides up to \$125 a month toward T passes but charges \$250 for parking, has never needed the stackers. Just 33 percent of employees drove alone last year.

Though the city can impose fines and even shut down parking at workplaces that fail to comply, it has never needed those tools and only rarely must apply pressure to ensure compliance, said Stephanie Groll, manager of the Cambridge program.

Green-commuting benefits have become woven into the workplace culture of Kendall, offered even by companies not covered by the ordinance.

Companies have a vested interest in preserving the qualities that make Kendall attractive to employees, given its emergence as a vibrant, walkable neighborhood with amenities, said Stephanie Pollack, associate director of Northeastern **University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy.**

"If you work on [Route] 128, you have to get in the car to go get something to eat or go to the gym, and you don't do that in Kendall," Pollack said.

With high demand to locate in Kendall, the next test will be whether Cambridge can turn up the dial on the ordinance to invite even more development without clogging traffic.

The power may be out of Cambridge's hands. The - MBTA's financial woes limit its ability to meet bus demand in Kendall and to invest in upgrades to an antiquated Red Line signal system that limits the frequency of subway trains.

So a new kind of congestion — waiting for the T, jostling for position in bike lanes — is supplanting traffic worries, which officials call a good problem to have.

At the Broad Institute, where 24 percent of employees drove alone last year, scientist and veteran cyclist Mauricio Carneiro, 32, of Charlestown said he is having a harder time finding bike parking. And as more people toggle between the T and bicycling, depending on the weather, Carneiro is navigating among newcomers.

"In the summer, we'll get really crowded with bikes," said Carneiro, whose benefits include \$20 a month to spend on bicycle expenses such as inner tubes and helmets. But he wouldn't think of driving.

"It's my wake-up procedure," he said, "getting on the bike."

Eric Moskowitz can be reached at emoskowitz@globe.com.

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EDITORIALS

More buildings, fewer cars help drive economic growth

EVEN THE deepest believers in alternative transportation did a double take on hearing that car counts in Cambridge's Kendall Square had dropped by as much as 14 percent over the past decade despite the addition of more than 4 million square feet of commercial and institutional space.

Those statistics, from the Cambridge city government, have major implications for the entire Boston area, because they suggest that the urban center can grow considerably in both offices and residences without necessarily adding more roads and cars.

Cambridge's method is simple — demanding that developers who seek to build or expand parking areas make similar commitments to alternative modes of transportation, thereby helping to reduce vehicle trips and congestion. These efforts can include giving workers subsidized T passes, joining with other companies to provide shuttle services during peak hours, or even providing cash incentives for workers who walk or bike to work. Paying people not to drive may sound excessive, but it makes simple economic sense: Employers can spend hundreds of dollars per month to maintain a single parking space.

People often poke fun at Cambridge for its progressive policies. But city officials know what their residents value — clean air,

unclogged roads, lively streetscapes — and what they don't — car culture, parking lots, and commercial sprawl. In Cambridge, finding ways to eliminate car trips is seen as a basic city service along with public safety and education.

Boston, meanwhile, tries to achieve similar goals of reduced emissions and less traffic congestion through the imposition of a freeze on commercial off-street parking spaces in downtown, South Boston, and East Boston. Mayor Menino has declared that “the car is no

longer king in Boston.” But the freeze seems more an attempt to comply formally with clean air regulations than a creative effort to encourage greater pedestrian access and use of public transportation. Boston should look to Cambridge for some fresh ideas.

Stephanie Groll, who oversees Cambridge's parking-management efforts, said businesses and institutions are required to conduct periodic commuter surveys and traffic counts to ensure they are meeting their targets. And the city monitors compliance, retaining the right to shut down parking facilities and issue fines to companies that fail to limit traffic.

Groll said that she receives few complaints from businesses and institutions. In Cambridge, after all, fewer cars on the streets has become a sign that business is strong and growing.

Paying people not to drive makes simple economic sense.
