

# Switching to low carbon commuting even once a week 'can make a real difference'

 Katy Jones | [Nelson Mail](#)

December 14, 2024

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Switching from a petrol or diesel-fuelled car to a bike, bus or travelling by foot or carpooling, would help cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions - with the UN secretary general calling for a 9% reduction a year to 2030, Mission Zero says.

BRADEN FASTIER

Getting out from behind the wheel of petrol and diesel-fuelled vehicles, even once a week, can make a big difference to emissions, a climate action group says.

Switching onto bicycles, buses or into walking shoes or a shared car once a week or fortnight would align commuters with [the urgent cuts needed in greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions to limit global warming to safe levels](#), Mission Zero said.

A survey by the Nelson-based non profit organisation showed 68% of people drove to work at nine employers in the city, with 87% of those using petrol or diesel engines.

A quarter of the 669 survey respondents walked or biked, 2% took the bus, and 5% worked from home.

Of those who drove, 59% drove alone, and 8% with others. 1% travelled by motorbike.

Last month, UN secretary general [António Guterres warned](#) fossil fuels (like petrol and diesel) needed to be phased out, to stand a chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees celsius.

Reductions of 9% a year to 2030 were required, as the world approached potentially irreversible tipping points - like the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet - he said.

People who drove petrol and diesel cars five days a week in Nelson could cut their commute-related emissions by 10%, by switching to a low emissions form of transport (or working from home) one day a fortnight, Mission Zero said.

Switching to one day a week would reduce their emissions by 20 per cent, the organisation said.

Trustee Marta Karlik-Neal said dropping just one drive to work a week could "make a real difference".

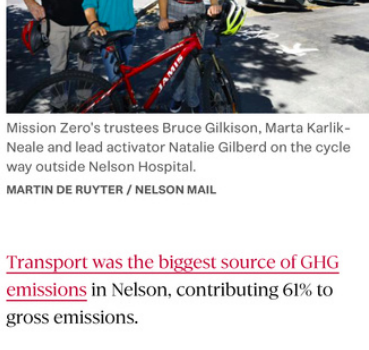
"That's particularly feasible for the 57% of petrol and diesel drivers who are travelling 10km or under each way."

Barriers cited in the survey to using low-carbon modes of commuting included weather, family and childcare responsibilities, and a lack of cycle-path infrastructure.

"Cycling is dangerous due to traffic, and I don't have a bike that's roadworthy," one respondent said.

"The bus timetable doesn't suit my hours, and I live too far away to walk," another said.

Other employees said driving gave them more downtime, with the convenience of having their own vehicle making it hard to switch to low-carbon options.



Mission Zero's trustees Bruce Gilkison, Marta Karlik-Neale and lead activator Natalie Gilbert on the cycle way outside Nelson Hospital.

MARTIN DE RUYTER / NELSON MAIL

[Transport was the biggest source of GHG emissions](#) in Nelson, contributing 61% to gross emissions.

Commuting to work accounted for between 10-25% of that, Mission Zero (an initiative of Businesses for Climate Action) estimated.

The survey was carried out at nine businesses in October, including Port Nelson, Nelson Airport, Sealord and Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora - Nelson Marlborough (including the hospital).

It was part of Mission Zero's [low-carbon commute project](#), funded by Nelson City Council, [aimed at helping businesses in Nelson encourage employees to choose low-emissions commuting modes](#).

Solutions suggested by respondents included financial incentives like bike purchase subsidies, flexible work arrangements, enhanced onsite bike and EV charging facilities, support for public transport and promotion of carpooling.

Mission Zero trustee Bruce Gilkison said Whakatū was a great cycling city, but "feedback suggests there are still some barriers to change".

"Making cycling safer, particularly for those travelling with children, is one way of transitioning drivers over to bikes," he said.

Mission Zero was running focus groups and workshops with the businesses to identify barriers and find solutions.

Annabel Scaife, Sealord Group communications manager said the survey showed significantly more of the company's staff were not using low carbon emission travel, than were.

"Now we have an opportunity to try to make it easier for them."

Nelson City Council said the results were an opportunity to look at how the council could encourage more low-emissions commuting.

Earlier this year, council staff said they couldn't take up an Audit New Zealand recommendation to measure more frequently the number of people who walked or bike to work and school, than the five-yearly census.

Audit NZ said drivers switching to active modes of transport and/or public transport was the most effective short to medium term strategy to address the city's growing congestion challenges.

Tasman District Council, Nelson Tasman Network Trust and Port Nelson were supporting the project through financial contributions.