

WAT's Sustainable – Episode 07 Transcript

00:00:11 Jenna Phillips

WAT is up, Waterloo? Welcome to WAT's Sustainable? the official podcast of the University of Waterloo's Sustainability Office. My name is Jenna, and I am the host of this episode.

This is season 2 episode 07. We will be having another guest on our podcast to talk about: WAT is sustainable transportation? Today we have Kevan Marshall and Mat Thijssen on the podcast. Kevan works at the Region of Waterloo and part of his role is managing the TravelWise program. Mat is the Manager at the Sustainability Office at the University of Waterloo.

In this conversation, we talk about all the things related to sustainable transportation in Waterloo and in the broader community. We talk about the benefits of sustainable transportation, the variety of sustainable transportation options that exist, and what individuals can do to incorporate sustainable transportation options into their daily lives.

As always, make sure to subscribe to our podcast, follow us on social media @UWsustainable on Twitter and Instagram to stay in the know of all the sustainability content that we share. And if you have any questions, ideas for future podcast episodes or guests, you can email us at sustainability@uwaterloo.ca. I hope you enjoyed this conversation as much as I enjoyed it. Let's get right into it.

00:01:31 Jenna

Today I have two individuals with me that I'm really excited to have a conversation with about sustainable transportation. I have Kevan Marshall and Mat Thijssen, so why don't you two give a little bit of an introduction about yourselves.

00:01:44 Kevan Marshall

Thanks Jenna, I'm Kevan Marshall, I'm with the Region of Waterloo. I'm housed in our Transit Services group, so Grand River Transit. It's a department of the Region. I'm part of our Transportation Demand Management team and our Transit Integration. I'm also the project lead for the Region's TravelWise Transportation Management Association program, which is our workplace program with the number of participating workplaces throughout the community.

00:02:10 Mat Thijssen

Awesome and I'm Mat. I'm the director of sustainability for the campus and so all of the sustainability team's activities kind of are under my portfolio, and we work really collaboratively with lots of different units across campus on almost all of our sustainability initiatives. This will be my first time joining the podcast officially, but I've listened along and I'm happy to be here today.

00:02:37 Jenna

Great, thank you both so much. Kevan, I would love to know a little bit more about your work with TravelWise and Grand River Transit. First of all, what inspired you to start TravelWise? What was the need that you saw for it, and how did the university get intertwined into that?

00:02:58 Kevan

That's a really great question. So TravelWise is actually a program that has its roots before my time but has been something that the Region has been committed to since the early 2000s with the idea of trying to help people move more sustainably throughout the Region, try to maximise use of our public transit system as well as our growing active transportation network, especially in those early days. But what we also saw was the need in the community for workplaces looking for something to help support their employees to choose sustainable transportation or make that an easier choice for them to do in their day-to-day.

So the Region set up a pilot program - and I'm going to get the dates wrong - I'm going to say the 2010s to look at that program, but that had been kind of underway for some time. Stars were aligning with different employers about trying to do something like that. It came out of commuter challenge work where it was more kind of encouraging through competition and whatnot to encourage people to try different ways of getting to and from work, and then became something a little bit more formalised. And then finally we set were able to set a funding program as well as membership fees for participating workplaces to get access to some core services. The program itself has come to maturity I would say, where we've seen organisations big and small participating for a variety of reasons ranging from just simply trying to offer their employees some sustainable transportation benefits - I'm using quotations here - but the idea of more supports that make it easier for them to get to and from the office using transit and incentivise them to take transit, for example, or to know that in the case that if they bike to work that they could get home in the case of a sick kid that they had a pick up using our emergency right home reimbursement service.

When it comes to working with universities we were very fortunate at the post-secondary institutions here have an excellent track record of wanting to work very closely with the Region on a variety of initiatives, and especially those around sustainable transportation. We've seen our partnership with the university basically strengthen over the years, but the motivations I think are many, and I would actually refer to Mat to touch on his thoughts on why there's continued interest and why they've been such an excellent partner.

00:05:34 Mat

Yeah, thanks Kevan and full disclosure, before joining the University I was the program manager that actually helped launch the TravelWise program through Sustainable Waterloo Region in partnership with the Region at the time. So yeah, you're bang on the early description and I think it has certainly come a long way now under Katie's leadership. Bringing more employers on board and seeing it grow, and I think absolutely the services that are offered through the program are really kind of

backbone of it and I think brings a tonne of value to both the employer and the employees at the organisations who are participating.

I also think that what's exciting to me about the program is the service model, but also the kind of connection with the community, the resource sharing amongst other peer organisations, and recognising the role that employers or workplaces actually play in shaping commuter habits. So it's not just up to the City or the Region to decide how people get to and from work or up to the employee themselves, but the policies and programs that take place that an individual employer can also have an influence. Part of our sustainability plan touches on providing supports for both employees and students to get to campus more sustainably, so some examples of that can be having secure bike parking. That's a project that we have been expanding on, we worked with Parking Services, which has launched a program that you can - in normal times, not during COVID because it's kind of wonky right now – you can suspend your parking permit in the summertime if you want to bike or walk when the weather is really nice and you'll still be guaranteed your parking spot in the winter in worse conditions. So just making sure that there's that employer side supported environment and the TravelWise scorecard system and the way that it's incentivised at the employer level encourages businesses to take on some of those policies and really create a supportive environment to help their employees get to and from the campus in our case. Though I'm really pleased to see that the Region is really supportive of this and continuing to move forward. And who knows what it will be like come fall when things are continuing to ramp up here on campus.

00:08:01 Jenna

Great, thank you both so much. You both touched a little bit on the benefits of the program, specifically for individuals in our community, and you also both touched a bit on the importance for such programs for sustainability. I would love to know more from a sustainability perspective. What are some of the benefits that both public and active transportation, which are both considered more sustainable alternative transportation, what sort of benefits do these provide in comparison to something like single passenger vehicles?

00:08:32 Kevan

Yeah, that's a really great question. I think that the easiest way to kind of describe goes back to my Transportation Demand management role, which you know, I'm not considered the GHG/greenhouse gas emissions expert by any means, but just simply from the broadest or widest definition of that sort of job is to look at trying to maximize space on the roadways. So even if you just look at space, don't think about anything else, a car takes up so much space with a single occupant in it, that X amount of space, the roads simply can't handle it if everybody treats their to and from commute, to and from the office, to and from school, what have you in a single vehicle driving only themselves. The minute we start to explore options such as, well, in particular using bus or are a light rail transit system, that footprint of the vehicle might be slightly larger, but the amount of occupants that could be in that vehicle are so much higher that you're using up so much less of the road space, using up so much less land dedicated for parking at the end of the day, which could be freed up for new and exciting animated spaces or development or opportunity for people to

live or work. And then of course, the greenhouse gas savings. Each one of those cars driving a single person is releasing emissions whereas a single transit vehicle, particularly LRT which we have running on electric power, there's major savings from emissions piece there too. And of course for our active transportation network, a lot of those same things holds true whether you're walking or biking. Your footprint is so much smaller, smaller both physically, and also from an emissions perspective.

And then ultimately in most cases what we're seeing at the university, for example, where we're trying to provide more secure bike parking or other supports on campus, it might actually be much more convenient for you to get to and from your office as well too. So whether you're doing it for the greenhouse gas reductions benefit for your own personal ecological footprint, or rather you're just looking for a more convenient way and to get an exercise and also potentially get closer to your end destination than you would buy a car, there's a number of reasons why this can actually work in your favour.

00:10:59 Mat

Yeah, I'll add in there two other perspectives and there's so many actual ancillary benefits of this that you could probably have a laundry list. But two that always come to mind that you know when we talk with employees or students are the health benefits too and this is in almost all modes of non-driving travel, you are tending to be more physically active, so whether you're walking, cycling, taking transit, it usually involves some higher level of physical activity, which of course comes along with so many health benefits to the individual and then to the community. As well, on the emission side, not just carbon emissions but also air quality from a local perspective, the fewer cars that you have, the better the air quality in the community around you.

So that's another health-related impact that I think is really important to consider, and the last one that I'll touch on is connected to this space piece, but I think just the community vibrancy is something that I find is sometimes missed. We tend to focus on, you know, the space, the money, or the environmental benefits. But there's something about the connectivity that you have with the community when you move through something in a car versus when you experience it on a bike or on transit or something. I think it just builds a very different type of community, and I say that in the broadest sense of the word, you're connecting with people you're moving within something rather than an endpoint and a definite start point, and there's kind of a bubble in between that. You're not really experiencing it. So I think it's a really good community benefit in so many ways.

00:12:50 Kevan

Yeah, that's a really good point, Mat. I think there's a level of intimacy you get with your campus. For example, by exploring on foot or by bike, you know reaching there through using the Laurel Trail or one of our other great high-quality trails. You have an opportunity to potentially be off road and coming in and seeing your campus, seeing your workplace, seeing the surrounding community from a different angle than you wouldn't otherwise see from your view may not otherwise see from your vehicle or experience in quite the same way.

00:13:22 Jenna

Yeah, and that actually reminded me of something that happens currently in terms of building community. I go on walks every morning because that's one of my favourite ways to move, and I always pass this one person on a bike almost every day and we have been doing this for months now and we say hi to each other. That's not something that you would get if you were driving by somebody on the road. So having the trails really provides an opportunity for people to connect in that way and connect with their community. And I'm really glad, Kevan, that you brought up that convenience piece, because especially for students, let's say if you have a class at ends at 9:30 PM, the last thing you want to be doing is driving home. For myself, when the bus could pick me up right outside of my lecture hall and take me almost to the front steps of my student apartment, it just made the whole experience so much better and easier. I'm glad you brought that up.

00:14:13 Kevan

I would just add, the same thing holds true to transit in some degree, too. In my regular commute when I take transit, you start to see that the same folks every morning and the benefit of transit is you can kind of be in your own world if you want to, but you were doing that day in and day out for days on end, you do develop a sense of camaraderie with the same people doing the same travel pattern as you too. So yeah it does definitely make you feel like you're connecting with your fellow members of the community, for sure.

00:14:50 Jenna

Yeah definitely. For myself, I've only actually been in Waterloo Region since I started university, so back in 2017, but even since then I've seen the sustainable transportation scene evolve significantly, such as the creation of bike lanes and other things like that. I would love to know both within the Region and on campus, how has sustainable transportation evolved over the years and what are the goals for the future?

00:15:19 Kevan

Oh wow, if I had to summarise it, I would say I'm encouraged that we're on the peak here where we're going to see kind of a spark happen where this really does become the easy choice for so many people. I can touch a lot about the transit piece in a moment, but I did want to talk about the active transportation network for a second.

So I started with the Region in 2012 and over the years I've seen the network grow, and I've seen the network start to fill in as well too, both the cities have done significant investments and the Region has done significant investments in our trails and bike lanes, and even just sidewalks in our community too to try to better connect key destinations and where people want to go. And we've got to the point where a lot of that, especially the filling in the network, has occurred to the point where you can get to many destinations, even if you're in the more suburban area almost completely in higher quality active transportation corridors, whether that's on a multi-use trail or a bike lane with some protection.

But when it really came home to me was when we actually had, there's an arm's length provincial tourism group called Ontario by Bike and they reached out us to

plan a ride in Waterloo Region and the almost the entire corridor that they had for Waterloo Region was on either a multi-use trail through our high quality bike lane and they were able to get from Woolwich, from our townships into our community and beyond and back into Guelph, actually on some very high-quality routes. And I got to go on that ride with them and the one comment that I was so pleasantly surprised to hear was, some of the best experience for them was coming from the dramatic change from being in the rural township and being on these quiet bike-friendly roadways and then suddenly like a switch goes off: there's a light rail transit line next to them and they're on a high-quality paved trail where they are biking along next to it, and then suddenly they are passing through the university campus, and the next thing they know they are in our Uptown core. And this was a group of not just, you know, seasoned cyclists, but people from all ages and abilities. And they all had the same opinion that we were doing something different than others. And we surprised them, but pleasantly surprised them. And I think that's something where we're getting to that point where we need to really showcase the community and show what we have available now to it. And I think this is a great time to be a part of this.

00:18:04 Mat

Yeah, I think it's been exciting to watch that develop and I know if we look at the future focus of course, the Regional planning and the city planning, there's a tonne of work, there is still a lot of work on the books and on the forecast to be done so I know that it's nowhere near complete. But I agree it's been great to watch both expansion and infill of a lot of these facilities. Active transportation wise as well as public transportation, I just look around the university, protected bike lanes going up along the side of a couple of the major arterial roads there. As Kevan mentioned, some really great trails that service and kind of feed into the campus environment.

I think the other thing too, I also look back and I was a student at the University of Waterloo. I started in 2006, and back then we didn't have the U-Pass, I-Express had just launched, it was one route, the main corridor at that time. So just thinking a decade and a half the transit network is just leaps and bounds ahead of where it was back then, and so that's certainly something to celebrate. I think that's the value for the campus, is we are quite well situated within the transit network and within the active transportation network compared to many organisations, we've got a lot of great service, and I think that's certainly supported. A lot of the campus growth in our campus Master Plan really emphasizes the need for that sustainable transportation. We've got a pedestrian-focused campus, so to Kevan's earlier comment, you can't actually drive your car through the campus, it's been within Ring Road, but most of the parking is along the perimeter and it's a very pedestrian-friendly interior of the campus for that exact reason is that it's the experience that comes along with that.

00:20:18 Jenna

Yeah, out of the four years that I've been at the university, I've driven the campus maybe once. It's just very like you said, very pedestrian friendly. I'm always riding my bike, I'm always walking or taking public transit.

00:20:30 Kevan

Yeah Jenna and Mat, I think I wouldn't be allowed to get off this podcast if I didn't speak about the change that transit has gone through in the last few years in particular. In case anybody new to the Region or anybody who somehow missed the news, we launched Light Rail Transit in 2019, but what came along with the launch of our light rail line, which just to kind of recap we have 19 stations, we have one right on campus for the University of Waterloo Station. It starts in North Waterloo up bike Conestoga Mall and then heads right into the South end of Kitchener at Fairway Station and connects to our express service, our ION bus service, which connects down to downtown Galt in Cambridge, which will eventually be replaced by our stage two Light Rail Transit line. But Light Rail is only one piece of that bigger puzzle that we had to solve. So with the launch of Light Rail came a complete reorganisation of our transit network, and some of those listeners on the call today may have been working at the school or studying at the school for quite some time. And you know, we're all creatures of habit. When you start your first day, you look at what's available to you, and then you make those decisions at that point. And it is worth knowing that you have resource is at the campus through TravelWise and through the Sustainability Office that can help you be made aware of what's changed with that network and how we've made it easier to get to and from campus, how we've made it easier to get to and from other parts of the community.

That bus network redesign we did for the ION launch was almost more significant for us than the actual launch of Light Rail because it involved transforming all of our roots. We were looking at more than 30 routes changing, over 800 bus stops were affected. We were running around helping customers for quite some time, not just to kind of make people aware of where now they could get to. The actual transformation went quite seamlessly, but I think that's the biggest piece. We're still trying to communicate to the community. GRT is new. We've changed with the launch of Light Rail and where you can go now is definitely different than where you could go prior to the launch of ION and it's definitely you know some of our key pieces or those seamless connections to Light Rail, but also more convenient and faster direct routes through our community. So I'd encourage people to check out the GRT website or even just trying to plan your trip on Google Maps too. We've got all of our live information in there and you can see how it can meet your needs.

00:23:14 Jenna

Yeah, and I will be providing all of the resources for anybody who is interested in learning about this in our show notes. I can definitely attest that students should check out what is available to them, because even when the ION launched in 2019, I used to take the 7D bus from Environment 3 to King and Columbia area, and I used to take me right home, but it took a bit of adjusting to figure out what was the best route after that. So it's super important to check out what the roots are now and what's available to you.

I can only imagine though, as that transition was happening, there must have definitely been some challenges, and even more broadly for other Regions and other communities that are trying to promote more sustainable transportation options in their community. Some are just not as progressive I would say as the Regional Waterloo. They don't have as many options and services available. So maybe this could even help other Regions or community members: what are some of the sort of

incentives or tools to encourage more sustainable transit usage in Waterloo that both of you have found successful both in the Region and for the university campus as well?

00:24:20 Kevan

I could start and then if Mat wants to jump in here. I've had the opportunity to work with TravelWise for several years now, and one of our biggest incentives or one of the biggest driving factors for workplaces to participate in the program is our corporate Transit Pass Program. Our GRT Corporate Pass that we offer to TravelWise workplaces is available to any employee at, for example, the University of Waterloo. They can get our Corporate Pass Fare Card, which saves them 15% per month on the cost of an Adult Pass. So you have cost savings, but you also have flexibility. The program is set up now that you can get your Corporate Pass, load a pass for the month you need it. You can also load it every month if you want, you can set it up for auto reload, but you can use it for just those months you need it.

So if you want to use it for the wintertime and the bike in the summer, that's perfectly fine. It's basically a monthly pass program, so there's no long term commitment necessary to participate in that. And that's actually changed, we brought in that flexibility a lot due to the demand and interest in trying to modernise that program for the realities that people have are taking various modes to and from their workplaces and want to have transit when they need it, but then also be able to walk or cycle as well, too. We didn't want to discourage the use of those other sustainable transportation options but more to supplement them. That's how we reframed the program, and it's worked quite well for us.

The other big one will touch on and then I'll give Mat a chance to speak here, I've also recently become more involved with our U-Pass program. So the U-Pass program is for the student groups at the Universities University of Waterloo, we have that agreement with the undergraduate group, so the Feds (now WUSA), we also have it with the students that fall under the Graduate Students Association and then as well as with one of your University Colleges, with Rennison. So those three programs allow for unlimited travel using your WATcard and you can use that for bus or the train any term that you're at this at the school. Well, actually all year I should say for clarity.

But yeah, you have access to that. There were some suspensions for most of those programs during the last year due to the pandemic, but we're currently working with the student associations to bring those back online for the Fall we hope. So stay tuned, but that is definitely - speaking as somebody who was actually up the road at Laurier when the U-Pass program came in. I'm sorry, I know I shouldn't probably mention that on this call, but you know, Mat and I can both attest to having that U-Pass program and just how it was almost like having angel wings in a community when you didn't have a car. You could go anywhere you needed to and I definitely made me quite well use of that program and I would encourage others to use it, too, not only to get to and from campus, but to really get a sense of what a community has to offer.

00:27:38 Mat

Yeah, absolutely. I think, Jenna, it's interesting because in all the time that I've been working on sustainable transportation, I'm convinced there really is no silver bullet tools that really immediately changes the way that people move around. I think all of our choices in this regard are shaped by the multitude of services and infrastructure and what's available around us. When you talk to employees - and this is beyond the university from my days with TravelWise too - if there's an inconvenience, which is often the flipside of what we were talking about earlier, if it takes a little bit longer, if it's not as directive a connection or what have you, even when there's health and money, and environmental benefits to doing something, that can be such a big driver. And so when we look at a lot of the behavioural change frameworks, it's all about how do we make things as easy as possible for people to do the behaviour that we want to see? And these can be a range of behaviours like walking, cycling, and taking transit. And how do we make some of the other behaviours that we might not want to see a little more difficult? This could be anything from, you know, taking some road space and allocating that for transit or for active transportation modes of travel. It really is about making the thing you want in your community the easiest option, and that's where you start actually getting significant shift.

So when we look at those big, I think audacious plans and you know whether it's the Regional Transportation Master Plan or any of that kind of subsidiary plans and the same at the municipal level with our cities, it's really about trying to build that supportive environment where those decisions become easy. I think incentives are certainly part of that; if it's way more expensive to ride the bus, then of course it's a more difficult sell, but I think one thing that we really want to drive home on that point is how expensive driving is and so often those costs are not hidden, but certainly dispersed and bundled, and you know, you pay for your bus pass and there's a very discreet cost that you're absorbing there.

But when you add in your ownership costs your insurance, your gas, all your maintenance and repairs and everything on your vehicle, it's probably one of the largest except for your mortgage or rent expenses in a family budget so yes, definitely driving home that the cost equation, but I truly think it's the 'build it and they will come' approach that we need. We need both municipal and organisational support to have this really take off. I think I think we're starting to see that now, especially over the last decade, scale to the level that we needed to and I just love looking at when we talk through our Climate Action Plan or any of the big stuff that we need to see on the emission's side or the sustainability side, half of our local emissions come from transportation, and if we're really going to push that, we've got to start seeing a really big transition in the way that we get around.

I think there's one other thing that I'll draw on from that perspective, too - and it doesn't have all of the benefits I would say of walking, cycling and transit - is electrification of our vehicles, and I think that's going to be a really significant part of how we will move around the Region 20 years from now. Hopefully far fewer internal combustion engine vehicles and a lot more electric ones, but I think that needs to be put in the kind of pyramid or a hierarchy of what's the most beneficial from a community perspective, and so at the end of the day, an electric vehicle doesn't have the emissions, but it's still a vehicle on the road still, taking up space and still potentially causing traffic and other things like that, but that does solve some of that

where there's parts of the community where it's really difficult to run efficient and reliable transit service in a way that everybody is going to be connected to. I think EVs will certainly play a role for those parts of the community as well.

00:32:20 Jenna

Yeah definitely. You both touched on great points. As someone like I mentioned who's originally from outside the Region, and at that a Region where we did not - at least while I was living there when I was younger - did not have that many sustainable transportation options that were available to students or really anyone in the community, coming here was amazing. The fact that I could just hop on a bus with my student card and go just about anywhere. And yeah, cars are expensive and because my original Region wasn't that active transit or sustainably transit-forward, I did have to buy a car and it's so much money and I wish that more Regions were like ours where it is so accessible and it's just getting better every year it seems.

We talked a lot about what is going on at the University and in the Region to promote sustainable transportation and what both of you and your organisations are doing to do this. I want to flip it over and ask you, what do you think the individuals the community need to do now to support your organisations' goals? Almost like calls to action. If you could say something to our community right now, what would it be?

00:33:30 Mat

I'll maybe take a first stab at this one. I think one of the biggest barriers is the fear of trying something new. It can be a mental hurdle to jump over. You know, to get on your bike and go for a ride through the community, or to take the bus. I mean, we've got lots of people in our community who have never ridden transit before, so of course, the idea of pivoting to something different, there's maybe not a fear factor to it, but certainly a level of change that needs to be thought through. And so I would encourage you know where it's feasible to try something to try biking, if it's one day, or try taking the bus once, you might be surprised on how easy it is. I remember when I worked at TravelWise, I won't name the employer who did this, but they had two different offices, one in Waterloo and one in downtown Kitchener. They usually had a staff meeting where they alternated every other week between those two offices on where that meeting was hosted. Now of course, everything would be virtual, so it's a different scenario altogether. But instead of everybody driving up to the Waterloo office, they said 'this is crazy, we've got this new I-Express route. This was several years before ION, so let's just all hop on the bus and go up together instead of everyone taking their car and paying for gas and trying to figure out carpooling. And everybody was just shocked how easy it was to pay, I don't know what it was at the time, a few bucks to get on, and it was an hour-long meeting so they had the transfer coming back and it was just easy.

And I think that experience goes so much further than someone sitting there telling you how easy it is or good it is. Even in the program with TravelWise when we've done Bike Month stuff in the past - and maybe we'll do a little plug for some of the stuff that's coming up - but on the front of a lot of old transit buses, there's a bike rack that if you want to bike to the bus stop and then take the bus for the rest of your journey, there's a bike rack on the front. And of course nobody wants to do that for

the first time in the middle of traffic while there's a whole busload of people waiting for to figure out how to use the bus rack. So we brought that rack physically out to events and TravelWise has been doing this with employers across the Region to say 'hey, try it out, figure out how to use the thing' and that training or that experience ahead of time, so many people have said that that it was kind of 'aha' moment where you say, 'actually, I can do that and the bus stops too far away for me to walk, but if I can bike for five minutes,' then it suddenly becomes feasible. So yeah, just giving that opportunity to try something and experience it is that first kind of leap of faith that I think could get you in the door.

And the other point that I'll say is just get engaged with the people around you, because the Region and the city provide lots of opportunity for input and comment on different things that are happening. Programs, services, and infrastructure-wise. We get the NIMBYISM, the 'not in my backyard,' and you know, here's why we shouldn't do these, and I think there needs to be as long as you're in agreement with it, the strong 'yes' voices too can make a huge difference.

00:36:47 Kevan

Thanks, Mat. I think you touching some really key ideas. I'd probably take it one step forward and say you're likely listening to this while a pandemic is still ongoing in our community, or hopefully we're rounding a corner and you're starting to consider how that commute back to your office might look like. I think I mentioned earlier on the on the on the podcast here today that we are creatures of habit. You know, if you look at options pretty much that first day you start a job or you are moving to a new house and then that's kind of the decision-making day. And then you don't really think about it again, but I really want to stress that the Regions, cities and your workplace are making continuous investments in infrastructure and programs to make it easier to choose sustainable transportation as your easy choice. So take advantage of your points of contact. Contact TravelWise, contact the Sustainability Office at Waterloo, contact your student associations, too. We try to make all of this information updated as often as possible, but the biggest thing is we're all about to have another decision-making point in our in our lives. We could either choose to just hop in and do that same way we got to from work before, or I'd encourage you to take a couple of minutes and take a look at some resource of how you can maybe do that differently. Quickly Google where you live and where you're going and click the transit option. This isn't an endorsement for Google, please feel free to use whatever other trip planning tool you want - but all of our routes and real time transit information is located in most online trip planning apps, so please take a look. Try to make that trip and you can see how convenient and easy it can be for you.

I'd also recommend you checkout the Region of Waterloo's bike page we've just recently updated our map for the community. It is focused on showing the network, but if you take the extra step to just kind of take a peek at where your particular workplace is, you could see what's available to make that trip a reality for you, too. We're all going to have the choice to make again and now is a great time to try to look at how that could maybe be done a little bit more convenient, easier, and healthier for you, too. I think we all are looking forward to moving our legs a little bit more or just seeing something other than our own four walls in our own home, so I encourage you to take a peek at that.

00:39:22 Mat

Totally. I miss my bike ride actually. I have beautiful trails that I can take for the majority of the way. I mean, my commute is shorter now for sure, but it's certainly not as nice.

00:39:41 Jenna

Definitely agree here. It's nice to walk every morning, but to not walk anywhere with a purpose, it feels less motivating. You actually answered a little bit of my next question, Kevan, and it was just what resources would you like to plug now for anybody in our community? And Mat, you can answer this too from the university's perspective. So what resources are available that would really encourage people in our community to use sustainable transportation options and become more aware of what's out there for them?

00:40:11 Mat

Yeah, I think those big ones I touched on. So the regionofwaterloo.ca/TravelWise has general program information, but I believe specific for the university, Mat can give him some more specific info for the employees there. For any students listening, probably the best resource would be the Feds (now WUSA) webpage or the Graduate Students Association for the up-to-date information on your U-Pass program. Of course we will have that posted on the GRT webpage as well for our transit information. GRT for when it comes to planning your transit route you can use our site of course too. We have that information live on our website, but you don't have to go much further than your current trip planning tool to find that information as well, too. So those are kind of the big ones on my end. The bike map I mentioned. I'll make sure to get that link it's to you as well.

00:40:58 Mat

Yeah, that's great. Thanks Kevan. And on the university side, if you go to waterloo.ca/sustainability/transportation we've got a list of all of the different programs and resources, including the TravelWise services that are available on campus, and you know, we have other things like secure bike parking. There's a program through Police Services where you can register your bike, so if it ever got stolen, they've got a record that they can look for in case it turns up and other tips on how to do secure parking as much as possible. So do check out that page because it has all of the university specific programs and I think links to some of the other city or Regional transportation pages that Kevan mentioned, too.

00:41:46 Jenna

Great thank you both so much. I'll make sure to provide all of those things in our show notes. And thank you so much to both of you for coming on the podcast and sharing your perspectives! I really hope it benefits not just the University of Waterloo community, but the broader community and inspires them to take more sustainable transportation options, especially when summer is just around the corner. This episode will be coming out in mid-June, so right before summer starts. It's a great time to get to know your active transportation options as well as your sustainable public transit options.

00:42:18 Mat

Thanks Jenna, that's it's been fun chatting. Kevan, really appreciate you taking the time to join us as well and as always, great to hear so much awesome stuff happening across the Region and continuing to build up that - I mentioned 'build it and they will come' and I think the Region is certainly working towards that.

00:42:39 Kevan

No problem is wonderful to chat today and I do appreciate the opportunity to chat with your listeners. And you can feel free to share contact information or whatever through our TravelWise program and myself and our colleague Katie was not on the call today. We both monitor that inbox and would be happy to respond to any questions that listeners may have, so thank you.

00:43:03 Jenna

That is all for our conversation today. I hope you enjoyed this conversation with myself, Kevan and Mat. All of the resources that we mentioned in the episode are shared in the show notes below, and I encourage you to explore the different transportation options that are available to you in Waterloo. And if you're not living in Waterloo right now, explore what options are available in your own community.

Transportation as we mentioned is a key part of promoting sustainability in the broader context. Everybody should do what they can to promote sustainability through their transportation choices.

Thank you for tuning into the episode this week. If you haven't yet, subscribe to the podcast. Do so now and follow us on Instagram and Twitter @UWsustainable. And if you have any questions or ideas for the podcast, email us at sustainability@uwaterloo.ca. Also, special thanks to Bennett Gallant for providing us with our awesome jingle music!

That's WAT's up, Waterloo. I hope you all have a great day, and we will see you in the next episode.