

Action Handbook: Ideas for Transition Projects

This handbook was designed to share ideas about projects and initiative that interested community members can start immediately and work toward developing a strategy for Transition in their community.

Only by working together on projects locally, such as building a community garden or starting a car cooperative, will we effect the change we would like to see in the world.

Each section of this handbook includes several synopses of project ideas for communities. For a more in-depth look at each of these project ideas, please visit the resource section on www.transitionus.org

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Revitalize your local food systems

Start a Food Co-operative

Help support local farmers and promote sustainable agricultural practices by forming a food co-operative to purchase and distribute organic and locally grown produce. Forming co-ops can make local organic food more affordable because as members of a co-operative your group will have more purchasing power. Individuals can pool their orders and receive discounts for large quantity orders. Projects can range in formality from smaller neighborhood buying clubs to registered co-operative organizations with managed retail space. They can start small with a group of friends and build to include the broader community.

Resources

Co-operative Grocers' Information Network: www.cgin.coop/manual.pdf
Cooperative Directory Service: www.coopdirectory.org

Develop a Garden Gleaning Project

Organize a Garden Gleaning Project to harvest fruit from backyards where the produce would otherwise go to waste. Project volunteers are matched up with property owners who do not have the time or capability to harvest the fruit on their properties. The harvested fruit can be shared between the pickers, property owners, community organizations and local food banks.

The Garden Gleaning Project can range from a few friends and a couple of fruit trees to a citywide organization that coordinates a large group of volunteers, runs workshops, hosts harvesting celebrations and produces preserves, juices, and jams. A Garden Gleaning Project can work both in urban and rural areas, wherever fruit trees exist but are not being used for their fruit by their owners.

Resources

The Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Project: www.richmondfruitree.com
The Fruit Tree Project in Vancouver: www.vcn.bc.ca/fruit



Rethink transportation

Start or Join a Car Sharing Co-operative

Start a car co-operative in order to offer car sharing as a viable transportation alternative in your town or area. Instead of each owning a personal vehicle, members of a car coop own a number of cars collectively for use when using alternative mode of transportation, such as cycling and walking, is not possible.

Car sharing greatly reduces personal automobile use, cuts the number of cars on the road and shrinks the financial and air quality costs of our society's over-reliance on private transportation. At the same time co-operatives provide the reliability and convenience of owning a private vehicle. Car co-ops can vary in size from a few friends sharing a car to 30,000 members sharing a large fleet of vehicles dispersed across an entire region.

Resources

Definition and history: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Car_sharing

CarSharing Network: www.carsharing.net

Cooperative Auto Network: www.cooperativeauto.net

Autoshare Toronto: www.autoshare.com

Boulder CarShare: www.carshare.org

Start a Walking School Bus

Organize a Walking School Bus so that elementary school children can get to school in a safe, healthy and fossil-fuel-free manner.

Walking School Buses are programs that allow children to walk to school in a supervised group along a predetermined route and pick up additional students at assigned stops. The program can provide an alternative to the conventional and congested vehicle drop off and encourage both supervising parents and children to get out of their car and back into community space.

The school bus program ensures that parents feel confident that their children are safe, while providing the opportunity for kids to socialize, exercise, and learn the importance of people-powered transportation at an early age.

Resources

The Walking Bus Website: www.walkingbus.com

The Walking School Bus Information Website: www.walkingschoolbus.org

Friends of the Earth: www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/walking_bus.pdf



Revitalize local culture

Produce a Documentary Film Meta-Project

Produce a documentary film about the work your group is doing, with a particular focus on the processes behind each project. The film can center on one project your group has completed and can outline the various steps it took to achieve your goals.

Alternately, your group may wish to outline several ongoing projects that you have been working on and show how the initiatives were started. Your film will serve as an outreach tool to inspire other groups to begin their own projects, a means of encouraging greater understanding of the challenges of peak oil and relocalization, and a call to action for those new to the issues. It is best to start documentary films during the initial stage of a project so that you have footage of each step along the way.

Once finished, these short documentary films can also be used for attracting sponsors and raising funds to support your ongoing activities.

Develop a Community Walking Tour

Organize a walking tour of your community. Highlight the region's pre-globalization history, discuss areas of concern, and demonstrate to the participants the possibilities and working examples of Transition and positive alternatives.

A knowledgeable guide will engage participants by introducing points of interest, explaining their significance, and share ideas about how the situation could be improved.

The purpose of the tour is to educate community members about the localized networks that used to exist in their community, to create awareness about the current positive and negative attributes of your region and to illustrate the potential your community has for building community resiliency.

Tours can also highlight working models if they exist already in the community, such as renewable energy, rain water catchments, food gardens, composting facilities, energy retrofits and other sustainable building techniques.

Resources

Maps of communities by walking distance - A Very Beautiful Place:
www.authenticbusiness.co.uk/archive/AVBP

Common Ground: www.commonground.org.uk

Green Map: www.greenmap.org





Get to know Your community

Natural Resources

Understanding your community and bioregion and its resources is a great starting point for deciding which projects to undertake as a Transition Initiative. An assessment of your local natural resources requires researchers to gather information and coordinators to compile the information in an accessible and useable form.

Map the natural features of your community and bioregion and include the location of arable land, weather, flora and fauna.

Society and Business

Along with taking an inventory of your community's physical features, it is valuable to conduct a community asset inventory. Do this by making a list of the community groups, public projects, non-profit organizations and businesses in your community that are working towards one or more aspects of Transition. This type of assessment is a valuable first step in identifying local capability and skills and will provide your region with a list of resources that might be incorporated into a process of neighborhood visioning or Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP).

The very process of creating an asset inventory encourages community members to start forming valuable connections and relationships with one another. Find a way to share this information with your neighborhood; your group could compile the information in a Local Community Directory (see Engage Your Community & Local Government on page 7).

Municipal and Regional Political Structure

Get to know the local municipal and regional political structure. Doing research into the organization of local politics will help your group identify key decision-makers and stakeholders--who holds sway in which areas and who to approach with different ideas and problems.

Compile a synopsis and contact information on all advisory committees, commissions and working groups. Research what laws and regulations exist that might influence Transition projects, through what processes they are managed and potentially how they could be adapted to address peak oil and climate change.

Get to know your community (continued)

Local Skills Database

Compile a database of who has what practical skills in your community. Local skills can be as simple as an expert knot-tie or as complex as how to build, install and maintain solar panels. They could be professional skills or casual hobbies. Organizing the information in an electronic database, will allow for adjustments as community members acquire new skills and people move in and out of the area.

Once established, the database will allow you to quickly locate skilled people in the area who can help your group conduct research or undertake action-oriented projects. A skills database can also be helpful when establishing local money or bartering systems. Developing this type of database and presenting the information in an effective way will help your community value and appreciate local skills and talents.

Local Needs Assessment

Collect current information on the amount of locally produced food, energy and water being produced in your region. Determine how much produce is transported into the region in order to meet local demand. Identify local sources of food, energy and water and calculate how much additional food, energy and water is required to create a self-reliant region.

Resources

Willits Economic Localization Project:
www.willitseconomiclocalization.org/Papers/Papers.htm

Conduct a Personal Energy Audit

Conducting a personal energy audit is a valuable way to understand how deeply complex and interconnected our society's relationship is with distant, unknown and non-renewable sources of energy. The exercise will help you become more conscious of how much energy you use in a typical day and help identify areas where you can reduce energy use and cut costs.

Set Goals for Reduction

Once you and your group members have completed personal energy audits, create goals to reduce the amount of energy used by each member of the group. By working together, the group will be able to support each other.

The single, most effective way to reduce general energy consumption is by sharing energy use. A large portion of individual energy use is through private personal mobility, namely cars, followed by electricity and heating. Taking action to substantially reduce the amount of electricity or heating used in an average home is a formidable, medium- to long-term task. Do research into local and federal grants and investment options to finance the retrofitting of homes for energy use.

Resources

Home Energy Saver Web site:
<http://hes.lbl.gov>

US DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy:
<http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips>

Engage your community & local government

Local Community Directory

Upon completing a Community Assessment Inventory, create a directory or guidebook that outlines the various businesses, services, manufacturers, organizations, media outlets and programs that are working towards Transition in your community.

This informative pamphlet, booklet or online resource will serve as a resource for individuals and organizations that want to know where to put their money, and how to support local businesses and initiatives. It can also provide information on how to get involved and what is needed in the area to create a more self-reliant community network.

Form a Community Coalition

Form a coalition for groups and organizations in your community that are working on Transitioning the local economy. The goal is to have a wide range of informed organizations who are interested in how their work fits into the bigger issues of the global energy crisis. Create the space for these organizations to get involved in effecting solutions.

Your group can assist coalition members to create new programs to start Transitioning, add new energy to the organizations' existing advocacy programs and help them connect with a network of organizations with similar goals.

Run for Municipal Office

Understanding your municipal government and how it works is essential for Transition. Running as a candidate in a municipal election on the issues of developing community resilience and addressing the challenges of peak oil and climate change will give these issues a higher public profile in your community, especially if you are elected. By asking the right questions, even during election time, you will be able to get other leaders to respond to the issues of peak oil and climate change.

Running for office is an effective vehicle to share information about Transition with your community. Regardless of the outcome of the election, your voice, opinions and questions can be heard and reported on in the local media.

Resources

The book "How to Run for Local Office: a complete guide for winning a local election":
www.winelect.com

Engage your community & local government

(continued)

Reclaim Public Space

Work with other members of your community to revitalize an existing public space or to create a new site for neighborhood interaction. Each community will have a different vision of how to develop such a project and how the finished product will look, function and be managed. Project ideas could include reclaiming an underused parking lot as a venue for outdoor markets, converting an roadway into car-free public space, or revitalizing an existing park and setting up a community garden plot.

Resources

The City Repair Project: www.cityrepair.org

Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org

Barn Raising Project

Traditionally, Barn Raising projects were exacty that: members of the community gathering together to collectively build up a barn. Today the idea of a Barn Raising can be taken as a means of coming together and contributing time and energy to a community project. Members of a community actively decide to come to the same place at the same time to achieve a specific goal. The activity can be something that benefits a small group within the community, such as installing a solar water heater for a neighbor, or it can be a larger goal of the entire community, such as creating a new community garden. The key features of Barn Raising event are doing work and finding time to socialize and have fun!

Resources

Definition and history: [www.usemod.com/cgi-bin/mb.pl?](http://www.usemod.com/cgi-bin/mb.pl?BarnRaising)

BarnRaising: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barn_raising

Permablitz: www.permablitz.net



Get involved in meetings and media

Hold a Film Screening or Film Festival

Film screenings and film festivals are a valuable tool to raise awareness about the energy and ecological predicaments of our society's dependence on fossil fuels. Film screening and festivals are especially effective if participants are given the opportunity to discuss the film after the showing. These types of events are a great opportunity to increase community knowledge and advocacy, to raise funds for sponsoring groups. (See www.transitionus.org for a How To guide on organizing a film screening and suggestions for films to screen)

Coordinate Letters to the Editor

The letters to the editor section of your local paper represents is a valuable forum for getting raising awareness and and getting the word out about Transition projects. The editorial section is one of the most read sections of any newspaper. Letters to the editor help editors decide which topics to cover in future news stories and editorials. Additionally, elected officials often carefully monitor this section and the editorial page to gauge local opinion.

Coordinate your efforts: gather together several local organizations and plan to write editorials to the same newspaper within the same week. The more letters an editor gets, the more weight your letter will have.

Raise Awareness with Press Releases

Writing press releases can be an effective means of sharing your message with your community. Focus your story on specific issues, perhaps something that is happening in your community, and outline the positive actions that your group is taking to deal with these challenges. Press releases can inspire people to action and will give your group and its activities legitimacy.

Resources

Press Release Newswire: www.prweb.com

Press Release Free: www.prfree.com





For a more in-depth look at these project ideas, please visit the resource section on www.transitionus.org.

If you have ideas or resources to share for future updates to this Action Handbook, contact us!

TRANSITION UNITED STATES
www.transitionus.org

Tackling Climate Change and Peak Oil. Bringing the Head, Heart and Hands of Communities together to make the transition to life beyond oil.

Transition United States is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to catalyze, inspire, encourage, network, support and train communities throughout the U.S. as they consider, adopt, adapt and implement Transition Initiatives.

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Acknowledgements

Content for this How To guide provided by Post Carbon Institute (www.postcarbon.org).

