

Money makeover

Going the extra mile

We saved Nick nearly £1,300 a year on transport and dramatically reduced his CO₂ emissions

Rising fuel costs, expensive train fares and the cost of parking mean that most of us spend a lot of cash simply getting from A to B. Nick Johnson lives in Charlbury, Oxfordshire, and drives to work in Warwick every day – a round trip of 2.5 hours. He's concerned about the effect this is having on the environment and his bank balance, so he got in touch with Which? to see whether we could help.

Travelling to work

Nick's fuel costs are about £2,500 a year. His public transport options, though, are minimal. The quickest route to work takes half an hour more than driving, doesn't fit with when he needs to travel, and would cost an extra £1,300 a year.

We think that Nick's best option is to find someone to share his journey and petrol costs – if both own cars they could alternate as drivers. Even though Nick lives in a small village, we found someone travelling a similar route by using a lift-share site (see 'Checklist'). This could halve his petrol costs to £1,250 and will also save 3.2 tonnes of CO₂ emissions – equivalent to running a tumble dryer more than 3,000 times.

A word of caution – lift-share sites don't run safety checks on people. Liftshare.org says: 'If you're concerned, meet someone first, check ID and don't get in a car with someone if you feel uncomfortable.'

Cutting costs even further

Nick could save a penny on every litre of petrol – fuel prices tend to be cheaper where Nick works, so he's better off filling up there. And if Nick switches his car insurance from Norwich Union to Best Buy Budget, he can save £10 a year and the excess is £70 lower (see *Which?*, April 2007, p24).

Nick currently drives to Oxford to go shopping; this costs him about £9.25 a trip, including parking. The train costs £3.30 with a Senior Railcard – in Nick's case, the Senior Railcard is free from his local council – a saving of about £6 a trip. If Nick goes with his wife, they save only £1 a trip but produce about 10kg less CO₂ – comparable to a 100W light bulb left on for almost 475 hours.

Which? says

Nick's savings show that even if your public transport options aren't great, you can still save money on your transport costs and be more environmentally friendly, too.



Thanks to Which?, Nick Johnson cut his transport costs



FUEL FOR THOUGHT

Switching from petrol to diesel can save you money

Nick can make further savings when he next buys a new car. He needs a big vehicle for his family – the diesel Toyota Avensis 2.0 costs £16,245 and is a car that we recommend. Even though it's less powerful than

Nick's current Vauxhall Vectra 2.2, the Avensis has a larger boot, better fuel economy and produces fewer CO₂ emissions. As a result, Nick can save himself a further £425 a year on fuel costs and £90 on road tax.

Checklist

Our top tips to help you save on transport costs

- **Save fuel** Check your tyres every two weeks and before long journeys to ensure they're correctly inflated; if you're going to be stationary for more than three minutes, switch off your engine; clear the clutter out of your boot; a roof rack creates resistance, so remove it if you're not using it. Go to www.dft.gov.uk/ActOnCO2 for more fuel-saving tips.
- **Cheaper fuel** Website www.petrolprices.com sends out a weekly email showing the cheapest fuel near you.
- **Lift-share site** Visit www.liftshare.org for more details about finding a lift-share partner. Also ask colleagues or neighbours whether they'll share.
- **New car** For help with choosing a new car, visit www.which.co.uk/cars where you can find out the fuel efficiency of a wide range of models.
- **Early bird** For cheaper train tickets, try booking nine to 12 weeks in advance.
- **Shanks's pony** If it's a short journey, walk.

Would you like us to find the best way to invest for your child? If so, please get in touch with Dan Moore at helpwanted@which.co.uk