

Hub workers: These routes are made for walking

By Katy Jordan | Sunday, November 30, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **Local Coverage**

Bostonians apparently weary of suffering the Job-like plagues of toll hikes, gas price fluctuations and potholes have embraced a novel form of commuting: walking.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Boston has ambled to the top of the list of large cities where residents walk to their jobs.

Thirteen percent of Bostonians walk to work, far ahead of the national average of 2.5 percent.

Among them is the state's transportation czar.

"It's a nice way to relax and it's healthy," said Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation Bernard Cohen. "Sometimes I see things I wouldn't have seen in the city where I live."

Cohen, who oversees the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Registry of Motor Vehicles, always walks home to the South End from his government office at Park Plaza, and usually walks to work - except when he takes the No. 43 bus.

"I think Boston is a great walking city," said Cohen, who credits his fellow perambulating citizens with urging the state to build more walking and bike paths.

Massachusetts spent \$2.7 million for such projects in 2007 and \$5.6 million in 2008.

According to Wendy Landman, executive director of WalkBoston, a nonprofit that encourages city-dwellers to walk, the city's archaic, cow-path layout contributes to the walkable environment.

"We're an older city," she said. "People live near where they work."

Landman touts the civic and business benefits of strolling.

"It's great for local businesses and building a sense of community. Walking creates livable, vibrant communities. The more you see people walking, the more you want to walk, and feel safe doing it."

Margaux Bettencourt couldn't agree more. Aggravated by her daily commute, which ranged from 55 minutes to two hours depending on traffic, the ex-Norfolk resident decided to go pedestrian.

"I'm never late anymore," said Bettencourt, who now lives about 100 yards from the South Boston Shag salon she manages. "My stress level is down and my life is 100 times better."

For commuters overall, however, walking still limps behind driving and using public transportation, according to the Census Bureau.

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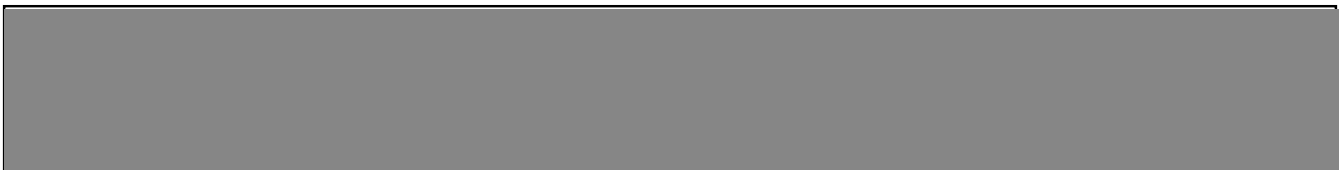
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