

PCI developed the Solutions System, where leaders convene all sectors to provide solutions to community issues that no sector could achieve on its own. Salt Lake Solutions, which is based on the Solutions System, is a project-based approach to engaging the community in public decision-making.

**Salt Lake Solutions Project:
Utah Clear the Air Challenge**

The Problem



The unique geography in Salt Lake City, Utah, (a large valley surrounded by 10,000+-foot mountains), combined with a great number of vehicles on the roads each day, results in high levels of fine particle emissions and ground level ozone. Car emissions represent about half of the polluting air emissions in the Salt Lake Valley year-round. These emissions create a brown haze during winter inversions and ground level ozone during the summer heat, causing frequent red and yellow alerts days because of poor air quality.

The Process

Three leaders (Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon, and Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr.) convened a Partners Team of 20 organizations that could engage the community in raising awareness of the issue and motivating individual behavior change to help solve the problem. In addition to public partners, non-governmental members represented the business, faith, and education communities, in order to reach into neighborhoods and existing interest groups. The Partners Team identified reducing vehicle emissions as the group’s first focus. The three co-conveners challenged individuals to reduce their driving for a six-week period (June 1-July 10, 2009).

ClearTheAirChallenge.org allowed participants to log in the miles saved and car trips eliminated and provided educational materials to encourage the use of mass transit, carpooling, bicycles, walking, trip chaining and working from home rather than the current trend of overusing vehicles. The project also used social networking mediums (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) to increase participation, and to share strategies and success stories.

Results / Outcomes

Throughout the 2009 Challenge, participants were asked to record each trip eliminated, estimate how many miles were saved, and identify what alternative transportation method(s) were used. Over the six-week period close to 3500 Challenge participants eliminated 110,720 single occupant vehicle trips, saved one million miles and reduced over 1.7 million pounds of polluting air emissions.

The Clear the Air Challenge has acted as a catalyst for continued community action. After the 2009 Challenge, ClearTheAirChallenge.org was used by several large businesses and higher education institutions to keep their internal Drive Less and Drive Smarter. Several Utah mayors declared an idle-reduction awareness week in September, during which idle reduction campaigns took place at local schools. Some of the governmental partners developed a pilot curriculum to introduce elementary school students to various sustainability practices, including Driving Less.



In 2010, Utah Governor Gary Herbert joined Mayor Becker and Mayor Caroon to convene the Challenge a second time.



The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation today announced Salt Lake Solutions' Clear the Air Challenge as a government initiative selected for its Bright Ideas program. Bright Ideas is an initiative that recognizes creative and promising government programs and partnerships. The initiative is offered through the Innovations in Government Program, a program of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School.

During the month-long Clear the Air Challenge, Utah residents came together and eliminated 103,710 single-occupant vehicle trips and averted 1,272,040 miles, resulting in a reduction of 2.1 million pounds of emissions in local air. The 2010 Challenge was coordinated by the Salt Lake Solutions Air Quality Partners Team, a collaboration of more than 20 government, business, community and faith-based organizations.