

Consider Carpooling: Cut Commute, Clog, Cost, and CO2!

by Dixon Adair, 10th grade student

More than a year ago and initially because of my interest in Google Earth, I began mapping out our school community using the AIS directory. I typed in each AIS family address and then put a placemark by the location with the last name of the family on it, creating a customized AIS Google Earth map. It took me more than six months to type in all 700 plus addresses.

I was amazed to see how spread out our school community is. Cumulatively, we are driving incredibly far distances every day and spending a lot of money on gasoline and time in our cars, not to mention creating a lot of greenhouse gases. As I looked closer, however, I saw how many AIS families actually live quite near each other **who probably do not even realize it.** Using the map, I first estimated an average of the collective time, cost and distance that we might save as a school community if 60 percent of us carpooled. The map is a tool that can encourage and help us to carpool: **The map showed the problem, yet also held the solution.**

So, what can we learn by viewing our entire AIS community on a satellite map? For the full story, go to the school website to view all the files in the carpooling project. In the meantime, may I spark your interest by showing a few things I learned? If only 400 of our AIS families carpooled for 160 out of 180 days, we could save this much as a school community each year:

- 1,814,400 miles, enough to go 72.6 times around the equator
- \$243,800
- 47,460 hours or 5.42 years of collective time in the car for parents
- 97,400 gallons of gas
- 1,905,400 pounds of CO₂ going into the air (nearly 1,000 tons of CO₂)

Just think: we could almost double these figures if all of us participated in carpooling!

The great thing about carpooling is that it's not only good for the environment, but it also brings us great benefits, both individually and collectively. It doesn't matter what you think about global warming. There will always be at least one benefit to carpooling that will appeal to you. Now **consider them all:**

- To save cash!
- To reduce the time that each parent spends in the car.
- To reduce significantly the carpool line.
- To reduce overall traffic to and from school.
- To reduce fuel consumption and decrease our dependence on foreign oil.
- To reduce car emissions, which cause global warming and air pollution.

Then the big questions are:

Q1: How in the world do I know who lives near me and whom I could potentially carpool with?

Q2: How would I even go about organizing carpooling with another family?

Q3: Is carpooling even worth the time it takes to organize?

A1: Use the Google Earth carpooling map!

A2: Use the Google Earth carpooling map!

A3: See for yourself....by using the Google Earth carpooling map!

With the satellite map on Google Earth of our entire AIS community, available in a safe download on the AIS website, you can easily figure out who lives near you in our school community by finding your home, which is already marked with a placemark, and then simply looking around to see who is close by!

Once you've found a potential carpooling buddy, it's easy to see how much you can save by carpooling.

- Click on your placemark and then click "From here."
- Now click on your potential carpool family's placemark, and click "To here."
- In the left column are the exact directions from your house to your potential carpool-buddy's house. Check the distance at the bottom of the directions.
- To find out how to get from the carpool buddy's house to school: Click on their house again, and click "From here."
- Click on the school (marked with a red placemark that says AIS) and click "To here."
- Now, look at the left hand column of the screen, and find that exact directions and distances are written for you and can be printed out using the "Printable View" option.

Troubleshooting:

AAQ (Always Asked Question): The directions from my house to the carpooling buddy's house have disappeared in the left panel where it's supposed to show the directions and distances and the purple route line has disappeared on the map too!

Answer: No problem! Google Earth just minimizes the last directions you asked it for when you put in a new set of directions, so you simply have to "de-minimize" them! Just scroll down to the bottom of the new directions Google Earth just gave you (from the carpooling buddy's house to school) and there's a little Google Earth icon/symbol. Now, check the box that "belongs" to it. There's also a plus sign underneath the box you just checked off, so click on it too.

Unexpected Uses to the Rescue

Even if you can't consider carpooling on a regular basis, there will be times when you will need to pick up or drop off classmates of your children for various school activities. The Google Earth AIS map can be a big help at such times: Have you ever found out that you needed to pick up or drop off three other AIS students at school or for a birthday party and didn't know where they lived or what the most efficient route was? Now, you don't have to painfully go through the directory and look for addresses and then go to mapquest to type in each one individually. All you have to do is open the customized AIS map on Google Earth, find the names of the families on the list in the directory, and get easy "From Here"- "To Here" directions.

So, all you have to do is this:

Download Google Earth from earth.google.com

Go to the AIS website and download the AIS Google Earth Carpooling map file

Follow the instructions above

Thank you, and happy carpooling!!!