

Traffic Jam

In many countries, almost everyone drives a car. But this means terrible traffic jams and air pollution. Read this story and find out: Why doesn't Singapore have a car problem?

In many big Asian cities, such as Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo, there is a flood of cars, trucks and buses on the streets. This has caused terrible traffic jams that pollute the air.

One large city, Singapore, is an exception. There are no traffic jams. Its air is clean—free from pollution. It only takes fifteen minutes to drive from the city to the airport.

This happy situation is no accident. It is the result of a government program to fight air pollution and traffic jams. The government has simply made it very expensive to own and drive a car in Singapore. The program requires anyone who wants a car to buy a permit.

A 10-year permit to own a car can cost as much as US\$75,000. And when you add sales and import taxes of 195 percent to the cost of buying a car, residents of Singapore might pay over US\$250,000 to get a car and a permit.

In addition to the cost of owning a car, drivers in Singapore must pay to enter downtown on weekdays. And there is a big tax on gasoline.

As nice as this sounds, it might not work in other places. Think about your city. Think about how many people own their own cars and use them for work and pleasure. How would everyone feel if it became too expensive to own and drive cars?

There might be other problems. Would the public transportation system—the buses and trains—be able to handle all of the people who used to drive their own cars? And are the buses and trains convenient for everyone?

Clearly, something must be done to change people's lifestyles in the world's large cities. Pollution from cars and trucks has already caused serious damage to the earth's environment and it will get worse and worse. Perhaps Singapore has the right answer after all.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What do you think about the car problem in large cities?
Check the opinions you agree with.

Other large cities should do what Singapore has done.



What Singapore did is crazy. It's impossible to do in our city.



We should do what Singapore has done, but only gradually, step by step.



We should develop solar or electric cars. Then the problem of pollution will be gone.



I understand the problem, but I just can't live without a car.



Now exchange your ideas with a classmate.

TURN TO PAGE 81 FOR AN INTERACTION TIP.

LOOKING AT THE ISSUE

Work with a partner. Ask your partner these questions:

Can you drive? Do you have a car? Does anybody in your family have a car?
How do you go from your home to these places?

Car Bus Taxi Train Subway Walk Bicycle

school

work

hospital

shopping

movies

station

post office