

**CAR FREE DAY
2020 EVENT STEERING COMMITTEE**

**MEETING NOTES
March 11, 2020**

1. Introductions

Committee members, guests and other attendees introduced themselves by name and affiliation.

2. Meeting Minutes

The notes from the September 11, 2019 meeting were approved as written.

3. Car Free Day 2019 Event Report

A comprehensive draft report was distributed which highlighted the various marketing and promotional aspects of the 2019 Car Free Days event. The 2019 poster was a revival of a previous year's theme for Car Free Day and was refreshed with Committee feedback. Messaging encouraged drivers to "Drop it For a Day" and take the free online pledge to use transportation alternatives during Car Free Days. A PDF version of the poster was also made available on the web site for download. A total of 16,500 posters were printed, 6,100 of which were mailed to employers throughout the region, along with a cover letter. In addition, an email blast was sent to nearly 77,000 email addresses comprised of those who participated within the last three years in either the Car Free Day or Bike to Work Day events, opt-in members of Commuter Connections ridematching system, Steering Committee members, and employers.

The Car Free Day 2019 proclamation signing took place at the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) meeting at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments on July 24, 2019. Kelly Russell, City of Frederick President Pro Tem Board of Aldermen, and TPB Vice Chairman signed the proclamation to recognize September 21-23, 2019 as Car Free Days in the Washington, DC region. Some jurisdictions also approved local Car Free Day proclamations of their own.

The 2019 marketing campaign raised public awareness of Car Free Days, challenging drivers to "Drop it for a Day" or go car-lite by Ridesharing. Radio comprised of nearly two-thirds of the

media budget on five iHeart stations. Stations were provided with scripts and on-air personalities pre-recorded endorsements and invited listeners to take the pledge. The radio spot aired for several weeks leading up to the event. Other marketing efforts included internet radio, social media, online native articles, and text messaging. The total Car Free Days media budget for the 2019 event was \$45,000. Complimentary ad space was donated by transit partners throughout the region. Signage included Arlington Interior Bus Cards; Prince George's County Bus Shelters and Benches; Fairfax County Connector Bus Tails; Metrobus Interior Bus Cards; and Montgomery County Bus Exteriors.

Partnership was continued with the local chapters of the American Heart Association and American Lung Association to amplify the Car Free Day message about health and air quality. All who took the Car Free Day pledge were incentivized to use the incenTrip app to plan and track trips during Car Free Days, in exchange for earning 200 rewards points.

The Capital Area Car Free College Campus Challenge was created as a friendly competition to generate awareness of and participation in Car Free Day on college campuses throughout the region. A promotional kit was distributed to schools within the region, in partnership with the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Almost 300 pledges (6% of all Car Free Day pledges) were made through .edu email domains. The top three institutions in order were Georgetown University, American University, and the University of Maryland. The Capital Area Car Free College Campus Challenge winner in 2019 was Georgetown University. Those who used a @georgetown.edu domain to take the Car Free Day pledge were invited to attend a luncheon event at Georgetown University on January 10, 2020. The complimentary lunch was made available by iHeart Radio, and Ledo Pizza. iHeart station WASH-FM provided the soundtrack for the festivities, along with prize giveaways. A plaque was presented to Georgetown University's Director of Transportation Management and Shuttle System. Georgetown had 109 students, employees, or alumni who took the Car Free Day pledge and did so using a @georgetown.edu domain.

Commuter Connections' network members hosted numerous promotions to celebrate Car Free Days. City of Fairfax CUE buses offered free rides from September 16-23, 2019 for Try Transit Week and Car Free Days. CUE also awarded a City Swag Bag including a \$50 SmarTrip card to a randomly selected local winner who took the Car Free Day pledge. Frederick County TransIT Services provided free rides on TransIT Connectors and Shuttles on Monday, September 23, 2019 for Car Free Days. Historic Manassas and OmniRide staff were at the local Farmer's Market on Saturday, September 21, 2019 and provided a Community Bike Ride and Walking Tour. An OmniRide bus was on hand and those who took the Car Free Day pledge got a chance at winning great prizes. Montgomery County Commuter Services staff were at ten transit locations around the county on Friday, September 20, 2019 to promote Car Free Days, with giveaway items. Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland was at the Waldorf Farmer's

Market in Charles County during Car Free Days on Saturday, September 21, 2019 and provided giveaways. Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Administration expanded its full-size options for bicycle riding customers on all three MARC Commuter Rail lines for Car Free Days on Monday, September 23, 2019.

Each event participant who pledged to go car free or car-lite were entered in a raffle for a chance to win sponsor donated prizes, tickets to events, annual memberships, gift cards, and transit fare. iHeart radio offered several Brilliant Bicycles to be raffled. An online Nift Gift (neighborhood gift) promo code of \$30 was emailed to all who took the Car Free Day pledge. With Nift, Car Free Day participants were provided with a credit to discover local businesses in neighborhoods where they live or work.

The total number of pledges for Car Free Day 2019 reached 4,756, a 71.7 percent increase above the previous year's event. With 29.5 percent of the total pledges, the District of Columbia was the number one jurisdiction, followed by Montgomery County at 18.1 percent, and a two-way tie for third with Fairfax and Arlington Counties at 9.8 percent. Participants were asked to select the mode(s) they used for travel during Car Free Days. The breakdown by mode was as follows: rail 21.7 percent, walk 21.2 percent, bike 20.5 percent, bus 20 percent, pool 9 percent, and telework 7.6 percent. A total of 2,603 (54.7%) participants selected more than one travel mode, while 2,153 (45.3%), selected one mode exclusively. Total mileage saved or reduced on Car Free Days was 190,863. There was about an even split of participants who self-identified as those who typically drive alone, 49.6 percent, vs. those who were normally car-free, 50.4 percent.

The event took place over a three-day period, and the majority (49%) who participated did so on all three days. Another 32 percent only participated on Monday, the only weekday; while 19 percent participated on two of the days. Bike and walk travel data by state was skewed toward DC, while bus and rail were approximately distributed evenly across all states as a percentage of mode share. Carpool/vanpool and telework were both skewed toward Maryland and Virginia. The Committee was asked to provide edits to the Car Free Days 2019 draft event report by April 8, 2020.

4. 2019 Car Free Day Survey Highlights

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, presented results from the 2019 Car Free Day Event Survey, the first of its kind for the event. Car Free Day spanned from September 21-23, 2019 (Saturday through Monday), and for 36 percent of respondents was their first Car Free Day event. The online survey of 4,700 participants representing those who took the Car Free Day pledge in 2019 was conducted in November 2019. More than 1,000 completed the survey, a 21.6% response rate. Nearly all respondents (97%) were employed, and 72 percent were Caucasian; starkly different than the 43% regional average of white commuters as measured by the Commuter Connections 2019 State of the Commute Survey. Gender saw a similar female/male split as compared to the regional average, and participants were slightly older and had a slightly lower household income than the regional average. Most participants heard

about CFD through digital sources, i.e. internet, email, and social media. Almost all respondents (98%) used alternative methods of transportation during Car Free Days, and

most used the same travel mode as previously designated when taking the online pledge. Transit however had more of statistical disparity as its 56 percent usage was significantly less than the 62 percent who pledged to use it. About 8.5 out of 10 respondents (86%) used a travel alternative for a work trip. About nine in ten (91%) respondents participated in the event on Monday, while about half did so during the weekend; Saturday (53%) and Sunday (51%). Nearly half (47%) of respondents walked for a trip during Car Free Days, but only 15 percent walked for a work-related trip. Other than walking, respondents made work and non-work trips using other travel modes at about a similar ratio.

More than 8 in 10 (84%) used an alternative travel mode to get to work, while only 16 percent drove alone. Transit was the most frequently used travel method (47%) for a work trip, followed by bike/scooter (19%). Respondents traveled an average of 14.9 miles to work, slightly less than the regional commute distance average of 17.1 miles. Of respondents who changed their commute mode for a work trip during Car Free Days, 71 percent would otherwise be likely to have driven alone. The average frequency of work-related alternative mode use rose slightly from before Car Free Days to after; 3.8 days/week to 3.9 days/week. Lastly, exactly a third of respondents increased use of alternative travel modes for non-work-related trips since participating in Car Free Days.

Results from the 2019 Car Free Day survey will be used in the analysis of the Commuter Connections Marketing TDM measure in the Regional TDM Analysis report which will be prepared later this fiscal year.

5. Car Free Day 2020 Date/Goal

Car Free Day is traditionally held on September 22nd. In 2019, the date fell on a Sunday, and in order to accommodate commuters, a weekday was included as well, thus the event was referred to as Car Free Days. Due to leap year, Car Free Day will be observed in the Washington metropolitan region on Tuesday, September 22, 2020. The goal for the Car Free Day 2020 event was set at 11,000 pledges.

6. Marketing Materials

The “Drop it for a Day” theme which has been used for several consecutive years will be replaced with a new campaign developed for Car Free Day 2020. The marketing contractor will develop a variety of options for review and selection by the Committee at its July 2020 meeting.

7. Sponsors

The Committee is in search of sponsors to donate prizes or in-kind services for the regional raffle. George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, will donate a tablet for the Car

Free Day 2020 raffle. Lines of communication have remained open with Nift to offer a similar promotion as last year.

8. Other Business

The next Car Free Day Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.