



FY06 Marketing Communications Brief

The overall objective of Commuter Connections is to reduce traffic congestion and its resulting vehicle emissions, by changing the behavior of single occupancy drivers into alternative forms of commuting. In FY06 the overall marketing program will not be divided into separate budgets and the program will support Ridesharing, Guaranteed Ride Home, Telework, Transit and the role of the employer in encouraging and supporting change in commuting behavior.

The audience most likely to change their driving habits continues to be male and female SOV drivers who commute to work daily into the Metropolitan Washington area between the ages of 25 to 54. With survey data, direct mail test response information, and area-wide reports, it is evident that our target audience is computer savvy, fairly to well educated and commutes up to 40 miles into DC. Over 39% of the 6,700 respondents reported their annual household income is \$100,000 or greater.

Three important findings that surfaced from the 2004 State of the Commute data that will impact the NDW Communications/COG strategy are:

1. About one-third of likely alternative commuting prospects live near an HOV lane (and the audience in the outlying areas are more responsive to communications for alternative commuting)
2. The greatest reason cited for using alternative modes of transportation is to save time and/or money (32%)
3. The second most common reason cited (25%) for using alternative modes of transportation were related to making a move; either to a new home or new job.

The Commuter Connections program has clearly gained name recognition and awareness among a significant number of area commuters since its 1996 inception. Data indicates that commuters are likely to increase their use of alternative modes when they are participants in the GRH program. Key performance indicators i.e., enrollment into Guaranteed Ride Home, requests for rideshare applications, calls and web site visits seeking information or enrollment validate that there has been continually increasing participation in the programs.

In order to focus Commuter Connections resources, key strategies that will guide the FY06 program will include promotional efforts specifically geared to matching the audience profile of top Activity Centers and a focus on getting employers to offer benefits that will change employee commuting behavior.

EMPLOYER COMMUNICATIONS

Qualitative research. Use the Employer Satisfaction study as a base for conducting one-on-one interviews with employers to gain more in-depth understanding of issues and needs in order to most effectively prioritize and provide the content and support employers need.

Direct mail/E-mail communications. Use direct mail and/or e-mail direct messages to maintain on-going communications with employers to support representatives efforts.

Literature. Update Commuter Connections literature including a general services brochure, ridesharing brochure and GRH brochure.

Newsletter. The six-page newsletter, *Commuter Connections* distributed to employers, will continue to be created and mailed on a quarterly basis but will contain a new sleeker look and feel.

Employer Awards Program. Continue this program to recognize the effective achievements of employers in the region.

Bike to Work Day - The event will be held third Friday of May and supported by radio, sponsorships and giveaways.

MEDIA COMMUNICATION

General Commuter Connections communications need to continue to maintain name and brand awareness, especially to new residents of the Washington metropolitan area. Key message points need to focus on the time savings related to HOV usage and specific transit options, as well as addressing commuters' frustration and Commuter Connections' ability to provide stress relief. Presented in a clear, and straightforward manner communications will include the various services provided and note that the services are free and provided as a public service.

A radio media campaign will spotlight specific messages that will provide individual focus on ridesharing, GRH, Telework and transit. In addition a general "catch-all" alternative mode services message will also be developed. Furthermore, where appropriate, the mention of gas prices will be a recurring theme.

These radio spots will be coordinated and developed simultaneously with the others to insure consistency in the message. Metropolitan Washington radio will continue to be used but outlying area radio will also be used to focus messages into targeted activity centers. Web advertising banners will be placed on radio web sites via value added opportunities. Radio advertising messages will be unified with a Commuter Connections audio signature.

Other media that can be focused with specific activity centers may include outdoor and print such as the *New Homes Guide* in the second half of FY06

TELEWORK

Employers are still a primary source of conveying information to commuters on the benefits of teleworking, ridesharing, and Guaranteed Ride Home. Commuter Connections efforts have helped to establish Telework as an accepted commuting alternative which has been widely adopted. Telework will be supported via collateral, employer support and radio in FY06. No workshops will be held in FY06.

INTEGRATED RIDESHARING

Pathways Strategic Communications will be working with several of the kiosk host sites this year to schedule on-site promotions with the Ambassadors, providing giveaways and requesting donations that will be used for an annual raffle drawing among the participants who filled out a quality control survey regarding the kiosks. The promotions will be scheduled for November and December 2005, February, March, April and May 2006. The Ambassadors will survey kiosk users on their opinion of the information found on the kiosks and encourage them to use the kiosks to get alternative commuting information.