



**CAR FREE DAY STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES  
Wednesday March 8, 2017**

**1. Introductions**

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

**2. Meeting Minutes**

The Committee approved the September 8, 2016 meeting notes as written.

**3. Recap of 2016 Event**

A comprehensive event report was distributed which highlighted the various marketing and promotional aspects of the September 22, 2016 event.

A Car Free Day poster was created, printed and delivered to network members, and to employers. The poster was a modification of the 2015 poster, except icons for the various transportation modes were used in place of photos.

The Car Free Day 2016 proclamation signing took place on July 20, 2016 at the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) meeting at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Bridget Newton, Mayor City of Rockville Maryland, and Vice Chairperson of the TPB signed the enlarged proclamation to recognize September 22, 2016 as Car Free Day in the Washington, D.C. region. Some jurisdictions also made Car Free Day proclamations of their own at later dates.

The Car Free Day website contained functionality such as a real-time leaderboard, displaying pledges by travel mode. The website was visited 18,793 times with 14,777 of those visitors being unique. The total number of pages viewed were 39,033, the average number of pages viewed per session were 2.08, and the per session average duration of time spent on the Car Free Day web site was 1 minute and 59 seconds.

An email blast was sent to employers and those who took the Car Free Day pledge over the past three years. Numerous network members also sent e-mail blasts and e-newsletters of their own. Opt-in text messaging was used to encourage those who

participated in previous years, to pledge again this year and share the message with others.

In tandem with COG's Office of Communications, outreach was conducted that included targeted press releases that raised awareness, leveraged SafeTrack surge #9, and focused on the benefits of going car free or car-lite for Car Free Day 2016. Following each press release distribution, the publicity team conducted a series of coordinated media pitches to secure interviews and news stories. These efforts resulted in 40 media placements, including 37 print/online, two radio interviews, and a television interview.

The 2016 marketing campaign raised public awareness of Car Free Day, challenging drivers to leave their cars home for the day, reduce the distance of trips taken, or go car-lite by Ridesharing. The marketing campaign consisted of a web site, radio, text messaging, posters, transit signage, email blasts, digital ads, social media, and earned media. The efforts brought attention to Car Free Day and encouraged the public to take the pledge. The total media budget was \$44,600.

Draft radio scripts were developed and revised, based on Steering Committee feedback. Voiceover talent was selected, and a :30 second commercial was produced. The radio spot aired for several weeks leading up to the event on WIHT (99.5 Top 40) and DC101 (101.1 Alternative Rock). The radio spot messaging was "press play on a new routine and try something different!" Both radio stations provided a combined total of 57 no-charge :30 second promotional spots over the three-week schedule. The stations also provided banner ads on their websites, delivering 290,724 impressions. Hot 99.5 and DC101 station personalities tweeted to promote Car Free Day. In addition, sister iHeart radio station WMZQ provided concert tickets with backstage passes to the WMZQ Fall Fest for the Car Free Day raffle. The station made 208 promotional mentions about the concert ticket giveaway, mentioning Car Free Day as a sponsor.

The campaign included a stepped up paid digital presence which included Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram sponsored ad images. A minimum of 352,900 run-of-site impressions were served on WTOP digital properties, and across all device formats. A social referral takeover on NBC4's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provided an estimated 90,000 impressions.

Bus signage was secured for Car Free Day from several jurisdictions; artwork was created reflecting the poster graphics and then printed, shipped, and installed at the various transit properties. Signage appeared on Montgomery County Ride On and Fairfax Connector (exteriors), Metrobus and Arlington Transit (interiors), and Prince George's (shelters). A complimentary internet banner ad was also created for placement onto the Metro website.

The Capital Area Car Free College Campus Challenge was created as a friendly competition to generate a buzz about Car Free Day on college campuses throughout the region. A promotional tool kit was developed and distributed to 17 colleges and universities through the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. The total number of pledges with .edu email addresses was 952, and first place went to Georgetown University.

Clean Air Partners produced a promotional video to provide a fun visual about the various types of green-minded car free travel. The video was placed on the Car Free Day event web site, under 'How to be Car Free'.

Pokémon Go was used in conjunction with Car Free Day. Leading up to the event, a social media campaign challenged the general public to find Pokémon near Car Free Day sponsor locations. Participating sponsors included Mellow Mushroom of Adams Morgan, and Capital Bikeshare. The whereabouts of the Pokémon were revealed on the Car Free Day and sponsor's social media sites.

Commuter Connections' network members hosted numerous promotions to celebrate Car Free Day. Montgomery County Commuter Services staff greeted travelers with giveaways at the Germantown Transit Center, several Metrorail stations, and Ride On bus stops; Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland was at the North Beach Farmer's Market in Calvert County with giveaways; in Arlington, the Crystal City Business Improvement District provided free coffee, snacks, and giveaways at the Crystal City Water Park; and TransIT Services of Frederick County offered free rides on all Connector and Shuttles buses on Car Free Day.

Donated prizes were offered as incentives to people pledging to go car free or car-lite. Local businesses and organizations that donated goods or services gained exposure, and were associated with a cause that contributed to the betterment of the region's traffic congestion and air quality. Sponsors included KIND Healthy Snacks, Capital Bikeshare, Virginia Railway Express, WMZQ and iHeart radio, Crunch Fitness, SmarTrip (WMATA), Giant Food, The Bike Rack, and Mellow Mushroom of Adams Morgan.

A total of 4,497 people took the pledge to go Car Free or Car-Lite on September 22, 2016. The breakdown by mode is as follows: Team Bike 26%, Team Rail 23%, Team Bus 18%, Team Walk 14%, Team Telework 8%, and Team Pool 8%, no mode selected 3%. Each state generated at least 1,300 pledges and about one third of the total pledges. Total mileage saved on Car Free Day was 93,101 miles. Those identified as the SOV group consisted of 24%, counting for 23,319 of the vehicle miles reduced.

#### **4. Car Free Day 2017 Date/Goal**

This year's Car Free Day will be held on Friday, September 22, 2017, and the goal will remain at 10,000 pledges.

#### **5. Marketing Materials**

After discussion, the Committee agreed to take a new approach to the 2017 Car Free Day creative. For the next meeting, the marketing contractor will develop a variety of options for review and selection.

#### **6. Sponsors**

The Chair asked that Committee members find sponsors to donate in-kind prizes by the next meeting. If possible, it would be ideal to be able to give something to everyone who pledges, i.e. a free lunch coupon, or swag (not T-shirts).

#### **7. Other Business**

Points of discussion from the meeting including the following:

- The permitting process for an open streets event can be long and arduous.
- Use existing bike lanes for an event, to circumvent the need for a permit.
- How can we reach SOV patrons of parking garages and lots?
- WABA is committed to doing some sort of event for Car Free Day.

The next Car Free Day meeting will be held on May 10, 2017 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., in meeting rooms 4 & 5.