



## FY08 Marketing Communications Brief

**Mission:** Commuter Connections acts as a regional network providing commute services and information to area residents and employers in the Washington metropolitan region in order to reduce traffic congestion and emissions caused by single occupancy vehicles (SOV).

The outreach mission is to create awareness of SOV alternatives and their resulting benefits; to build the Commuter Connections network as an umbrella resource that provides support services to network organizations and individuals who currently drive alone, and to facilitate those who are seeking to change SOV behavior by way of providing assistance about available commute options and alternatives. Activities promoted by the Commuter Connections network include ridesharing, transit, bicycling, walking, teleworking and employer services.

**Stakeholder Interview Findings:** During 2007, a series of interviews were conducted with stakeholders to identify their needs, interests, and ideas to enhance the effectiveness of the Commuter Connections network. Several findings encourage enhancing the synergy of the network members to cooperatively operate campaigns or programs; other findings pointed out the differences in each area and the need to customize messages and materials—but maintain a single, consistent look and theme. Some of the findings include:

- Each network partner serves distinct, manageable-sized geographic area and knows the unique needs, stakeholders, opportunities, and challenges of their territory.
- SmarTrip will create a seamless fare structure—but without the seamless service to complete the promise of a stress-free commute to work, many will likely to continue to drive alone. The Network can help fill the gaps between transit systems and encourage seamless service throughout the region.
- The variety of issues faced by the different agencies calls for customization of messaging strategies that promote viable transportation options from and within that particular area.
- While regional marketing efforts can grow general awareness of options and services, individual efforts by network members can build on these efforts through local marketing and partnerships with organizations that can reach people likely to be receptive to the message

**Marketing Strategies:** Marketing strategies are chosen based on Scarborough Research reports, based on the target markets for each message or event: Ridesharing, Guaranteed Ride Home, Employer Recognition, and Bike to Work Day and other Special Events. These reports identify specific media that are best to use to reach the desired market. The report information is combined with the marketing consultants' experience as well as review of past Commuter Connections campaigns. For FY08, **radio** is again recommended as the anchor medium for the program, with its ability to reach a large portion of our target markets (90 percent) with significant frequency (each individual will be exposed to the radio message 31 times on average).

**Bus Shelters** provide repetitive communication to geographically targeted areas. **Internet advertising** is interactive and closer to one-to-one selling than any other form of media. Websites are targeted to key counties, and include news, weather, television affiliate, and special geo-targeted websites. **Gas pump toppers** are a unique, non-traditional direct-to-consumer

strategy that features full color, weatherproof ads in frames on top of gas pumps. The effectiveness of this type of advertising is evident in the use of it by McDonalds, Discover, Allstate and Toyota. **Coffee cup sleeves** are another direct opportunity to distribute up to 400,000 customized four-color sleeves per month in 145 venues.

Existing creative will be used for the fall campaign; results of the complete 2007 campaign will be studied in December 2007 by the marketing consultant to help identify the most effective messaging strategies for implementation for Spring 2008.

### **Guaranteed Ride Home**

**Objective:** Increase the number of applicants in the GRH database.

**Target market** (from 2007 GRH Survey Report):

- 35-54 years old
- Caucasian (65%) and African-American (21%)
- \$60,000+ annual household income
- Commute of more than 30 miles / 45 minutes
- Live in Virginia (64%) or Maryland (34%), with a special emphasis on Prince William (20%) and Fairfax Counties (18%); Most work in D.C (60%) and Virginia (30%)

**Tactics:**

- Radio advertising to increase GRH awareness, applications and conversions
- Public relations/media communications to provide testimonials of GRH success stories and broaden awareness and registrations for the program
- Web advertisement (banner ads), geared directly toward generating registrations
- Bus shelters
- Coffee cup sleeves
- Web advertising banners placed on radio web sites via earned media opportunities.
- Continuously update website information
- Transit advertising (creative only; space to be provided by operators)
- **Direct Mailer**

**Media Allocation:** Approximately 38 percent of media budget.

### **Rideshare**

**Objectives:** Maintain and increase awareness of shared ride modes, retain current ridership on these modes; gain new riders and telecommuters; gain new applicants to the regional database.

**Target market** (from 2006 Applicant Database/Annual Placement Survey Report):

- 35-54 years old
- Caucasian (65%) and African-American (20%)
- \$60,000+ annual household income
- Commute of more than 20 miles/30 minutes
- Live in Virginia (65%) or Maryland (33%); work in D.C. (49%) or Virginia (34%)
- Work for employers with 250+ employees (68%)
- Work for federal agencies (54%) and private sector (30%)
- Professional (40%), Executive/managerial (19%), and administrative (18%)

**Tactics:**

- Radio advertising to increase services awareness, applications and conversions
- Gas pump toppers
- Public relations/media communications to provide testimonials of ridesharing success stories and broaden awareness and registrations
- Web advertisement (banner ads) for the ridesharing database, geared directly toward generating registrations
- Bus shelters
- Web advertising banners placed on radio web sites via earned media opportunities.
- Continuously update website information
- Consider unique promotion opportunities (e.g. co-promotion with new ABC Carpoolers show).
- **Direct Mailer**

**Media Allocation:** Approximately 57 percent of media budget.

**Employer**

**Objectives:** Add new employer clients; expand participation and offerings in existing employer programs; recognize existing employer programs who have implemented successful programs; increase the number of employers offering the tax free commute benefit; increase use of SmarTrip offered through employer programs;

**Target Market** (from 2006 Applicant Database /Annual Placement Survey Report):

- Employers with 250 or more employees
- Federal agencies
- Private sector employers

**Tactics:**

- Disseminate employer outreach sales kits
- Quarterly employer newsletter
- Quarterly Federal Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) newsletter insert
- Web advertisement (banner ads) and email marketing
- Telework Case Study development
- Coordination with the Telework Exchange, the Virginia Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance, and other pertinent groups to promote the concept of teleworking
- Awards print advertisement highlighting local companies who voluntarily implement innovative commuter and telework programs Sponsor Employer Awards; promote winners
- See Special Events below targeted to employers (Employer Recognition Awards and Live Near Your Work)

**Media Allocation:** Approximately two percent of media budget, for Employer Recognition print ad.

## **Special Events**

**Objectives:** Use special events, such as Bike to Work Day, the Employer Awards, and other events both to highlight existing programs and encourage other employers and commuters to become involved, increase their ridership or enhance their on-site programs; increase commuter participation in Bike to Work Day; increase awareness of the Live Near Your Work program; support network members' special events.

**Target Market** (Bike to Work Day; from WABA member statistics):

- Age 25-49
- Male
- Commute trip up to 30 miles
- \$30,000+ household income

**Tactics:**

- Sponsor Bike to Work Day (May 16, 2008)
- **Develop print marketing materials to promote Bike to Work Day**
- Secure corporate and other sponsorships for Bike to Work Day
- Use radio advertising to increase awareness of Bike to Work Day
- **Press outreach for Bike to Work Day media exposure**
- Sponsor Employer Awards; promote winners **via print ad**
- Provide support to Commuter Connections network members' Live Near Your Work events

**Media Allocation:** Approximately three percent of media budget