

Regional TDM Marketing Group

August 2, 2005 Meeting

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
10:00 a.m. – Training Center

1. Introductions

2. Minutes of June 7th Meeting

The minutes were approved as written

3. Montgomery County RideOn

Beverly LeMasters of Montgomery County discussed general background on Ride On as well as recent happenings, including the 2005 Free Wheeling promotions and the Germantown service changes.

Ride On has over 80 routes and provides 82,000 trips per weekday. The fleet includes 260 large buses and 100 small buses and is operated by a contractor. Total trips taken in FY05 reached a record 25.1 million, 8.3% increase in ridership from 2004. Over the last ten years Ride On has seen a 43 % increase in ridership and attributes this boosts to County population growth, a strong economy as well as new services introduced.

Ms. LeMasters shared data from the December 2004 onboard customer survey which netted an impressive 2,134 completed surveys.

Ethnicity - Self Identification

- African-American (40%)
- Hispanic (24%)
- White (19%)
- Asian 7%
- More than one category (5%)

Other Demographics and Information

- Riders tend to be younger than 35
- 43% of current riders have used Ride On for only two years or less
- 44% use Ride On six or seven days per week
- 61% of riders reported they have at least one vehicle available in their households

A new U-Pass Program for Montgomery College students was rolled out in August. To allow students to board for free, fees are transferred to Ride On by the College. To subsidize the cost, all students are assessed a \$20 fee per semester.

The Free Wheeling program was reintroduced in the summer of 2005. This program offers free rides on Ride On buses 16 bus routes along I-270, U.S. 29 and Cross-county routes connecting the two branches of the Metrorail Red Line. The program was modeled after the Free Wheeling promotion which occurred from fall 2001 to spring 2003. To maintain continuity, the previous logo was carried forward.

Marketing tactics used to promote the Free Wheeling program included direct mail, door hangers, phone outreach, notice on buses, Take-One cards*, Web page updates, press release, County cable shows, dioramas on Metro platforms, radio advertising*, cable weather crawl, and local and regional newspapers*.

** Both English and Spanish*

During the week of June 13, an onboard survey of 1,700 respondents was conducted to help determine the success of the Free Wheeling promotion. The survey indicated a gain of approximately 900 weekday trips of which Ride On expects to retain half to a third. The program ends on August 6, 2005 and the total lost revenue amounted to \$400,000.

Ride On expanded service in Germantown in May of 2005 to accommodate the growing needs of the area, by providing better transit access among its residential, retail, and commercial areas. The changes affected 14 routes including the elimination of six routes and the addition of four routes. Service benefits are better circulation within Germantown; new service to developing areas; more frequent service and more transit options; more midday, evening and weekend service; more connections to other transit options, including Metrorail and MARC trains. Other benefits include timed transfers at the Germantown Transit Center during off-peak hours; more service to encourage greater use of the Park and Ride facility at the Germantown Transit Center; greater route efficiency by increasing the number of riders per trip; and less duplication of routes.

Notification to existing riders of the sweeping changes within Germantown came through schedule change fold out brochures, Ride On staff communicating within the field, presentations to various groups, web site updates, print ads, and bus ads on six buses. Germantown service changes exceeded expectations in attracting new riders as ridership increased by 15 percent during the first month of service.

Other major Ride On programs occurring in the fall include a brochure for the Olney area, the bus shelter improvement program, conversion to SmarTrip, and the Burtonsville Park and Ride lot construction with better access from the Route

29 North. In September, additional low floor buses will be added and the entire fleet will be totally accessible through either a ramp or lift.

4. Commuter Connections FY05 Update

Douglas Franklin of COG provided a summary of the 2005 Commuter Connections Employer Recognition Awards program. The awards recap included photos from the ceremony and a screening of the video which profiled the five winning programs. Copies of the awards program booklet were also given out.

Winners were as follows:

American University – Incentives
Chevy Chase Bank – Marketing
National Wildlife Federation – Telework
District Department of Transportation - Employer Sales Team
Arlington County – Employer Services

The final FY05 2nd Half Commuter Connections Marketing Campaign Summary report was distributed to the group. This report highlights marketing and advertising which occurred between January – June 2005 for Guaranteed Ride Home, Mass Marketing, Integrated Rideshare, Telework and Operations Center programs. It encompasses radio, direct mail and internet advertising campaigns, as well as promotional and public relations activities conducted by Commuter Connections within the Washington metropolitan area.

Mr. Franklin also reminded the group to submit updates for the TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan (SMP) report. A draft of the SMP will be issued at the next marketing meeting on October 4 and the final report will be issued at the December 2006 meeting.

5. Wilson Bridge Marketing

Michelle Holland from Strat@comm, the firm responsible for managing public relations for the Wilson Bridge project discussed the recent outreach campaign in support of the heavy construction taking place during the summer of 2005. The bridge is in its fifth year of construction, and includes four major interchanges, in both Virginia and Maryland. In total, the project corridor spans 7.5-miles. The Wilson Bridge project is in the process of undergoing the most severe traffic related construction of the \$2.43 billion, eleven year effort.

Completion of the southern or outer loop six-lane bridge is scheduled for mid-2006. Once open, the new southern span will carry traffic in both directions while demolition of the old bridge begins. Completion of the northern or inner loop

span of the bridge will occur two years later in 2008, along with three of four interchanges. The Telegraph Road interchange construction will occur during the final stage of the project, to be completed in 2011. The current four-lane Wilson Bridge was designed to carry 75,000 vehicles a day. Today it carries nearly three times its originally intended traffic volume, causing seven hours of congestion daily. Projections indicate that volume will reach 295,000 in 2020. Expanding the bridge to double its current number of lanes and improving surrounding interchanges will alleviate congestion and provide for better traffic flow, reduce accidents and remove one of the worst bottlenecks in the country.

The Woodrow Wilson Bridge project managers are warning travelers about the potential for dismal traffic jams. Severe delays are anticipated as a portion of the Beltway will be shifted to a new alignment, resulting in unprecedented lane and ramp closures. A major \$360K public outreach and communications effort consisting of press announcement and paid radio time is being devoted to minimizing impacts on motorists and keeping traffic moving safely and smoothly. Other efforts include a DVD showing lane shifts through animation and emails to truckers along the I-95 corridor. The message is simple – “stay away at all costs during the two major weekend beltway shifts or face unprecedented delays and miles of backups.”

To help alleviate and manage ongoing traffic congestion throughout the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project corridor, and to encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation, a subsidy program called Bridge Bucks is being offered to commuters. The initiative offers commuters \$50 per month of fare media toward rail, bus, or vanpool costs. Bridge Bucks are available on a first-come, first-served basis for the first 500 commuters in Maryland and the first 500 in Virginia who qualify. DC residents may also apply. To date, over 700 commuters have taken advantage of this great offer.

6. Clean Air Partners

Jen Desimone from COG’s Environmental Programs Department briefed the group on promotional efforts for the 2005 Air Quality Action Days season. This included radio schedules for both Washington and Baltimore markets during June and July on seven radio stations. The schedule summary encompassed both paid and negotiated Public Service Announcements as well as online links and information on radio station web sites, such as code notification listings and “Top 10 things to do on Code Red Days”. Between the two markets over 1,000 spots, PSA’s or mentions were made in relation to Air Quality Action Days. Total media cost for the outreach campaign was \$85,323, 30% less than what was available in the previous season.

Special remote promotions with radio stations were held where Air Quality Action Days brochures were distributed. Promotional announcements were made

by the stations to inform and encourage listeners to participate. Some of the events included:

- Promotions at local gas stations to encourage listeners to fill up their gas tanks after dark. Listeners received free gas or gas at a reduced price.
- Lawn mower promotion at Lowe's - listeners were encouraged to come out and get a new electric lawn mower at 10% off the purchase price.
- Have fun indoors at Chuck E Cheese was promoted as a way for kids to enjoy the summer without exposure to harmful Ozone pollutants.

Chris Arabia from VDRPT pointed out that many jurisdictions still refer to the program on their web sites using the outdated name of "Ozone Action Days" and encouraged members to update this to reflect "Air Quality Action Days."

7. Calendar of Events / Marketing Round Table

This is an opportunity to go around the room and have meeting participants share recent advertising, marketing collateral and information, and to discuss news or upcoming events happening within their organizations.

Victor Egu from Prince George's County reviewed rideshare activities conducted during the last quarter.

- June – A print ad for RideSmart ran in the Gazette Newspaper's annual Community Guide.
- July – 6,000 newsletters were mailed to targeted residents in areas where improvements were made to facilities designed to accommodate commuting needs (Langley Park transit improvements). Also included in the newsletter was a call to employers to invite the County's rideshare team in for a free commuter survey and service analysis.
- RideSmart ads began appearing in local theaters throughout the County and will run through the week following the Thanksgiving holiday.

Rich Solli from MTA provided updates to rail and bus service in the Baltimore area:

- As part of the Greater Baltimore Bus Initiative, 40-45% of routes will change to provide better service and that some will be eliminated.

- North end Light Rail double track work will be 98% complete by January.
- 750 buses will have new fare boxes accepting the Maryland Transit Pass by spring 2006.
- New MTA brochures were passed out to the group including, MARC Riders Guide, MTA Visitors Ride Guide, Ravens Football Transit Service, and Paratransit Mobility.

Vanessa Vega noted that the City of Alexandria is undergoing a study to determine the most cost effective ways to market transit ridership within the city. An agreement has been made with FlexCar to provide the carsharing service on the West end of the city. More areas will be reviewed for possible expansion based on residents needs.

Linda Provost of Montgomery County announced an ice cream social for transit customers who fill out a survey. Also, lobby displays have been set up in commercial lobbies for a few weeks at a time to promote Montgomery County transit services.

8. Other Business / Set Agenda for next meeting

Marketing Group members were asked to provide any suggestions for topics at the next Regional TDM Marketing meeting to be held on Tuesday October 4, 2005 meeting. No suggestions were offered at this time.