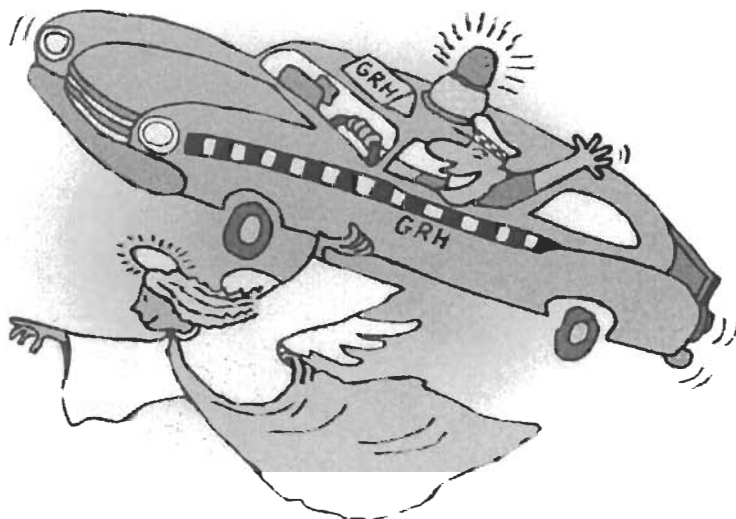




Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey Results Fiscal Year 2003

(With Comparisons to Previous Fiscal Years)

DRAFT



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Table of Contents

Background and Exposition	1
Fiscal Year 2003 Survey Results	5
Comparison to Previous Fiscal Years	14
Summary	19
Appendices	20

Background and Exposition

Guaranteed Ride Home

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) Commuter Connections program, under the auspices of its funding entities, has operated the Guaranteed Ride Home program (GRH) since January 1997. A "commuter insurance" program, GRH is designed to encourage ridesharing and transit usage by providing a way home for qualifying commuters in the cases of personal emergency or unexpected overtime when their normal alternative commute mode is not available (*see* Appendices, p. 20, for GRH Participation Guidelines). Many commuters are concerned about being "stranded at work" if they unexpectedly have to leave work before or after their normal time if they carpool, vanpool, or take transit to work. By providing this incentive, GRH eliminates this concern, and therefore encourages ridesharing, transit use, bicycling and walking to work as an alternative means of transportation. Commuters' use of these transportation modes in place of driving alone serves to reduce the number of cars on the road and help the region attain its federally mandated air quality goals.

A full listing of the program's qualifications, limitations on its usage, and a more complete description of the process involved in registering commuters for the program may be obtained online at the Commuter Connections Web site, <http://www.commuterconnections.org>.



Figure 1 | Guaranteed Ride Home's promotional slogan

Customer Satisfaction Survey and Report

The customer satisfaction survey for GRH is conducted monthly on a year-round basis and encompasses all commuters who obtain a free ride home under the program's guidelines. At the end of each month, every commuter who used the program receives a survey response card for each ride received, allowing individual evaluation for each ride taken. The accompanying cover letter (*see* Figure 2, following page) informs commuters of the purpose and voluntary nature of the survey, and the postage-paid, self-mailing response card allows for quick and easy submission of responses on the part of survey respondents. The same questionnaire has been used every year since the program's inception in 1997, allowing for a direct comparison with all fiscal years.

This report, published annually, takes advantage of the aforementioned consistency of the survey design over all fiscal years to provide comparisons to previous fiscal years in addition to in-depth analysis of the current fiscal year's results. Comparison to previous fiscal years' results can be found on page eight, and an example response card as well as a more-detailed description of the survey design can be found on page three (*see* Figure 3).



June 1, 2003

Dear Commuter:

Thank you for using the Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home program. We are surveying all of our customers to determine the level of satisfaction with our Guaranteed Ride Home program. This will help us to improve our program and to better serve our customers.

Please take a moment and complete the enclosed survey card. After you have completed the survey, just drop the card in the mail, no postage necessary.

Your answers to the survey should reflect ONLY your May 2003 GRH trip. If you have used the GRH program since May 2003, you will also receive a survey card for that trip. Please return the enclosed survey card within 10 days.

If you would like an update of the Guaranteed Ride Home participation guidelines, or if you would like information about other Commuter Connections services, please visit our web site at www.commuterconnections.org, or call us at 1-800-745-RIDE.

Thank you for your participation.

Happy Commuting!

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS

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www.commuterconnections.org



1-800-745-RIDE

Figure 2 | Cover letter sent with survey response forms to commuters who had used the program within the given month

Survey Design

The survey consists of four multiple-choice questions, each relevant to a specific aspect of GRH, and a free response section for suggestions. The four questions provide insight into customers' opinions regarding the different operational functions of GRH, and—as will be analyzed later in this report—the free response section is often used to make miscellaneous comments about these functions as well as the service in general (*see* Free Response, p. 8). The multiple-choice questions ask the respondent to rate the different aspects of the service by circling one of the four possible responses—“Poor,” “Fair,” “Good,” and “Excellent,” but some respondents would write in an “N/A” for “not applicable,” not respond to a question, or add a qualifier to the response such as “very,” a plus symbol (+), or a minus symbol (-). Qualifiers were ignored in tabulating the survey results, and responses marked “N/A” were treated as non-responses.

The operational aspects of GRH addressed by the four multiple-choice questions are reservations staff, transportation service, response time, and overall service. While “Reservations staff” refers to the operators who answer telephone calls from commuters requesting GRH service, verify the request in accordance with the official GRH participation guidelines (*see* p. 20), and arrange the ride for the commuter, “Transportation service” refers to the transportation modes (e.g. taxi, rental car, transit, or a combination thereof) used to provide the commuter with his or her ride home. These operators are employees of Diamond Transportation Services, Inc., an entity under contract with COG to provide this service. The transportation services themselves are selected by Diamond Transportation and have contracts with COG for reimbursement of GRH trip expenses.

By asking questions specific to operational functions within GRH, those aspects of the program which need improvement can easily be identified, and since the survey design is consistent to all previous fiscal years, year-to-year performance can also be measured, reflecting the level of improvement within a specific program category.

**Thank you for using our Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH).
We want to know how you feel about our GRH Program.**

Please take a moment and complete this card. Your response is greatly appreciated. Mail this card to us or fax it to 202-962-3218

Please circle one response for each question.

<p>How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p> <p>How would you rate the taxi or rental car service? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p> <p>How would you rate our response time? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p> <p>Overall, how would you rate our GRH service? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p>	<p>What suggestions do you have to improve our GRH service?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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COMMUTER CONNECTIONS
FOR METRO WASHINGTON AREA

1-800-745-RIDE

Visit our web site at www.commuterconnections.org

Guaranteed Ride Home Program

We'll Get You Home. **Guaranteed.**

Figure 3 | Sample survey response form

Response Rates

Of 2,906 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2003, 781 were received, making for a 26.9% response rate.

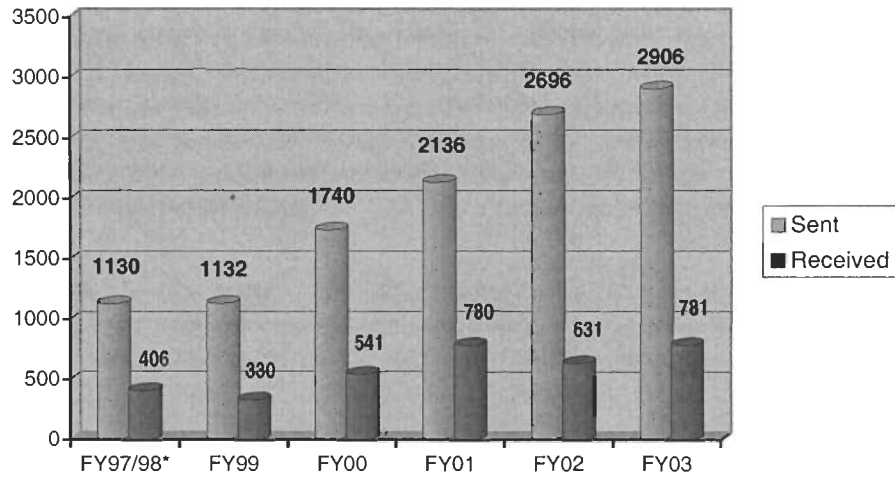


Figure 4 | Surveys sent and received over all fiscal years

Response rates, however, have fluctuated. This can be due to a number of factors, including delays between trips taken and surveys sent out due to staff shortages; as well as incomplete home or mailing address information due to the omission of needed information (e.g. apartment number, PO Box, etc.) on the part of the GRH registrant. The closing of the Brentwood postal facility and increased mail security since the September 11th attacks has also affected reliability in the transit of mail pieces, particularly during fiscal year 2002.

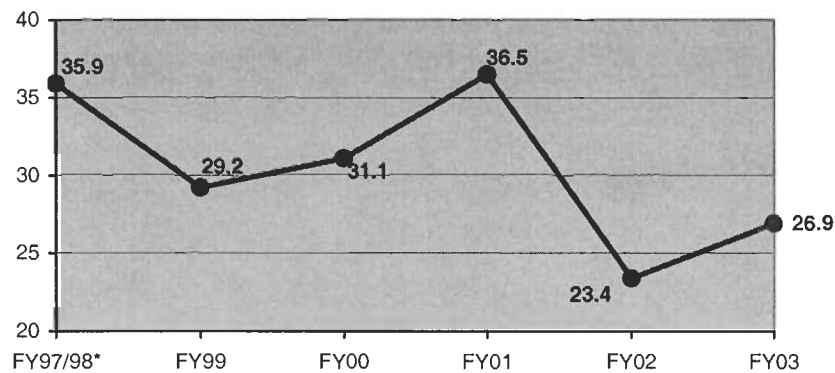


Figure 5 | Response rates in percentages over all fiscal years.

* The fiscal year begins July 1 of the previous calendar year and ends June 30 of the fiscal year. The GRH program began mid-fiscal year 1997, so the survey data for fiscal years 1997 and 1998 are combined.

Fiscal Year 2003 Survey Results

This section shows the survey results for fiscal year 2003 GRH users only. Later sections of this report will compare results from all previous fiscal years (1997 through present). Please see “Survey Design” on page three for the rationale behind each question, clarification of some of the terms used, as well as an example of the survey response form that was used to submit the results that follow.

Although 781 responses were received, a small number of respondents did not answer a question. Because of this, the sum of the responses to some of the following questions will not equal 781.

Question One: Reservations Staff

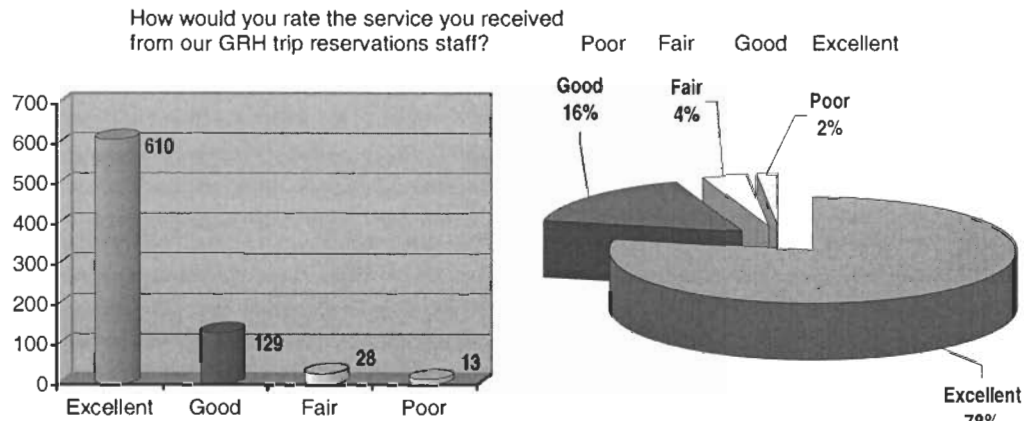


Figure 6 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question One

Question Two: Transportation Service

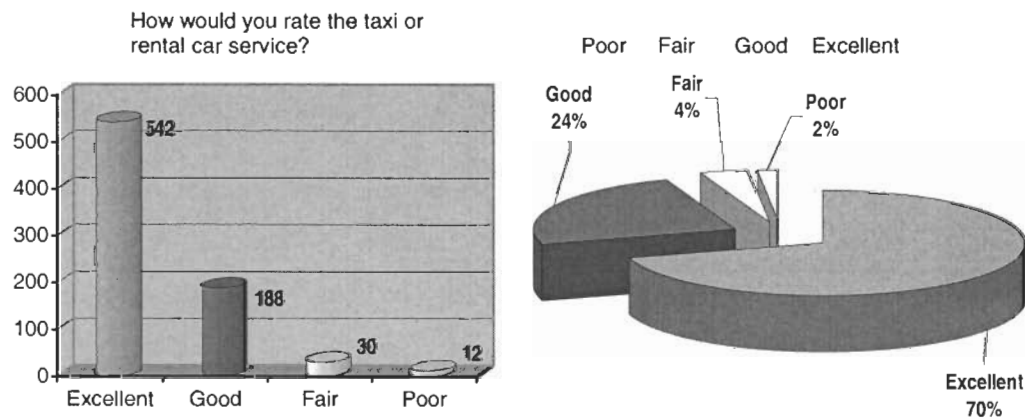


Figure 7 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question Two

For both questions one and two, the combined percentage of “Good” and “Excellent” ratings is 94%; and that of “Fair” and “Poor” 6%. Reservations staff, however, received the second highest percentage of “Excellent” ratings as compared to all questions.

Question Three: Response Time

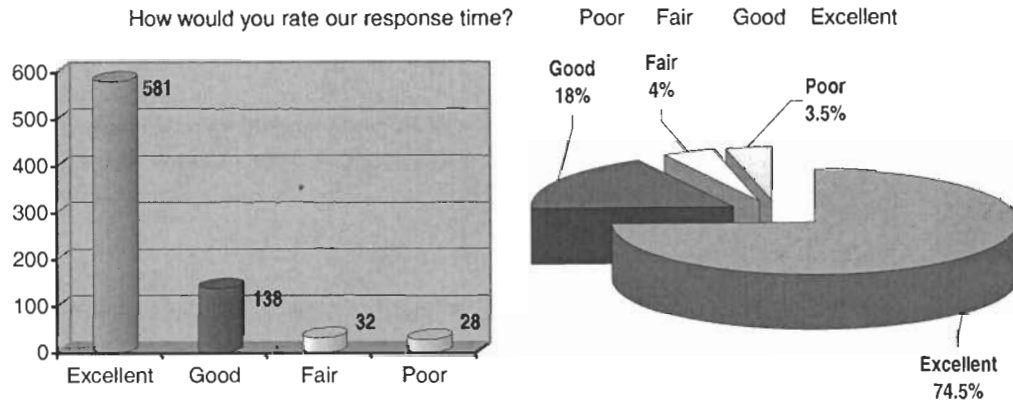


Figure 8 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question Three

Response time received the largest proportion of unsatisfied ratings, a combined 8% of “Fair” and “Poor” responses.

Question Four: Overall Service

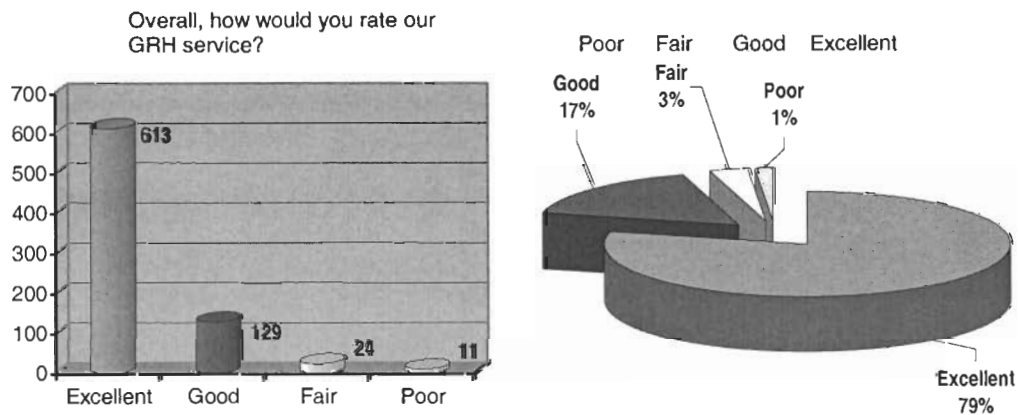
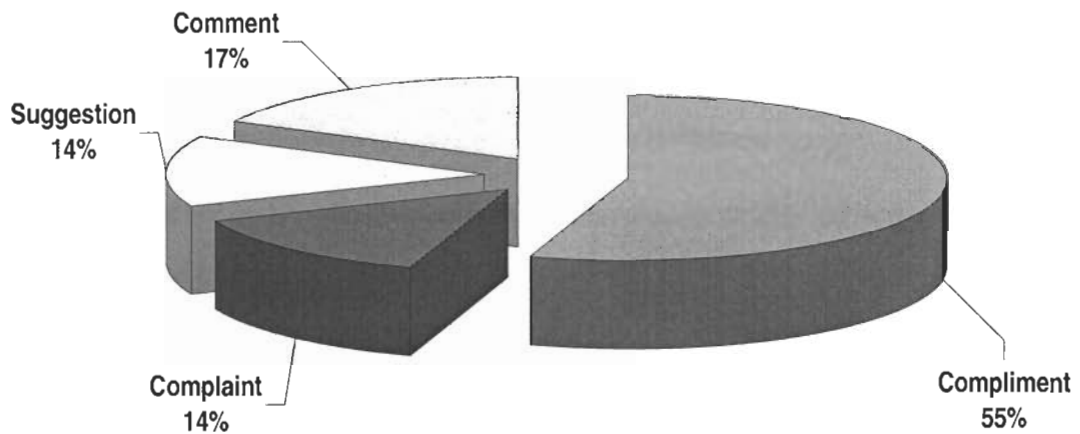


Figure 9 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question Four

Overall Service received the highest percentage of satisfied ratings, a combined 96% of “Excellent” and “Good” ratings. It also received the highest percentage of “Excellent” ratings overall.

Free Response

In addition to four multiple-choice questions, survey respondents were asked to provide suggestions for the improvement of the GRH service. The phrasing of the question does seem to bias responses toward suggestions and away from other comments, but the question provides a prompt to which the respondent can easily and naturally respond. Instead of a neutral “Other Comments” section or only providing blank lines, the question engages the respondent, and ultimately 50% of respondents, 391 out of 781, provided not only suggestions but their compliments, comments, and complaints (*see* Figure 10, below). These 50% do not include comments like “None” or “N/A”—like multiple-choice questions marked as such (*see* Survey Design, p. 3), these comments were not factored in this analysis. The request for suggestions was intended to obtain ideas that could be considered to improve the GRH service. However, as shown in this report, compliments and complaints are just as valuable for analyzing service areas that could be improved and those areas that do not need adjusting.



What suggestions do you have to improve our GRH service?

Figure 10 | Proportions of comments by type received in response to free response portion of survey

Compliments

By far the most common type of free response (55% of all respondents who completed the suggestions section) were positive remarks or expressions of gratitude for the GRH service, while some commuters explicitly listed GRH as the sole reason they were able to choose an alternative commute mode. The most common compliments were along the lines of “great service” or “keep up the good work,” while a few offered short stories of how GRH had helped them through a crisis. Sometimes a respondent that provided especially positive feedback included their contact information written in blank space on the card, a good source for positive media coverage of the GRH program.

Of the 215 compliments received, only twenty-three pertained to one specific aspect of the service. These were first response time (9), followed by transportation service (7) and reservations staff (7). A possible explanation for this is that when the program functions smoothly, no particular aspect seems to stick out.

Complaints

The smallest number of respondents, Fifty-three (14% of all free responses) complained about five principal subjects: the attitude and/or rudeness of reservations staff, the length of time put on hold by reservations staff, failure of cab to arrive at the appointed time or place, behavior and/or attitude of the cab driver and the normal enforcement of GRH program guidelines. Some extremely displeased individuals even provided contact information, which indicates they may also have suggestions.

The complaints seemed more focused on the transportation end. The reservations staff received only eleven complaints and only three complaints related to the overall service. Response time had the second most with fourteen, and the most—twenty-one in all—related to the transportation service. Transportation service complaints involved failure of the taxi company to call the commuter for pickup, cleanliness/comfort of transportation service vehicles, and finally the friendliness, driving characteristics, ethnic heritage, English proficiency, and directional knowledge of taxi drivers. There were also some issues encountered with driver familiarity with the program, where the driver would expect a voucher as a method of payment (some commuters complained that they had to end up paying for their ride to satisfy the driver's doubts). Ultimately, the transportation service is responsible for the training of taxi drivers, and while valid issues are discussed with the transportation service provider, COG has very little direct control over these aspects of the service.

Suggestions

Fifty-Five suggestions were received (14% of all free responses) and covered a variety of topics, especially increasing the number of trips available, improving communication of pick up locations, and improving the registration and re-registration process (*see* “Themes of Free Response,” following page).

Other suggestions included letting commuters make their own transportation arrangements, increasing the GRH marketing effort, extending the hours of operations, the distribution of an updated quarterly newsletter via e-mail, maintaining contracts with more than one cab company per jurisdiction, and the inclusion of the unavailability of one's primary commute mode (e.g. transit cancellations and delays) as a valid reason for a GRH trip.

Comments

The second largest category of free responses, sixty-eight (17%) were general comments. “Comments” for the purposes of this survey were defined as responses relatively benign in nature—they did not identify any positive aspect of the service as would a compliment, nor did they necessarily express unhappiness with the GRH service as would a complaint,

and neither did they suggest any new aspect of the GRH service or pose their comments in the form of a suggestion.

A good number of comments conveyed the message just to “keep on offering the service.” A couple of respondents noted their own mistakes in figuring out where to be picked up, others discussed specifics of their trips; and a few had mixed feelings, such as the taxi was in disrepair, but the driver was nice.

Themes of Free Responses

In all the free responses, a few themes were consistent among several different responses that ranged from suggestions to comments to complaints. While no single issue stood in stark contrast to the others in terms of how many like-minded responses were received, some may deserve more attention than others:

- **Increasing the number of trips available**

While one respondent suggested paying a small fee for more yearly trips, another possible solution could be partial reimbursement for trips taken over the yearly limit. One commuter even suggested allowing GRH users to rollover unused trips.

Less than one percent of GRH registrants use all four rides in one year. At this time, there will not be any changes to the number of trips available because it has not been proven that providing one or two extra trips a year will significantly reduce the number of single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips to work, and budgetary constraints make increasing the number of GRH trips unfeasible at this time. The partial reimbursement or payment of a fee for additional trips would require additional accounting procedures, as well as changes in the GRH software system that tracks and records GRH usage. Both would increase the cost to operate the GRH program and cannot be implemented at this time. The issue of raising the number of GRH trips has been reviewed by the GRH Ad-Hoc Group in the past and could be reviewed again in future meetings.

- **Finding the right taxicab in the right place**

This problem was especially encountered in locations with multiple taxicabs or multiple pickup points, such as Metro stations and the Pentagon. Respondents suggested providing the name of the cab company and the number of the cab assigned to the commuter while coordinating more-detailed pickup instructions between the commuter and transportation service. Still others would have liked to take a taxi of the same company that was already waiting where they were. A final suggestion was using some kind of signage to distinguish GRH cabs from other cabs.

GRH reservations staff is instructed to get detailed pick-up location information from the commuter; this information is then passed along to the taxi dispatcher who informs the taxi driver. GRH reservations staff provides the name of the taxi company and, if available, the number of the taxi that will provide the GRH trip. However, in many cases, the taxi company dispatcher cannot provide the latter at the time of the trip reservation. Also, there is one dispatching service that coordinates taxi service for several taxi companies in Prince George's County who often cannot provide even the name of the taxi company at the time of reservation. The number of commuters and taxicabs at Metro stations make it difficult for commuter and taxicab driver to find each other, and office buildings with multiple entrances pose another challenge to have the commuter and driver meet at the correct entrance.

- **Improving the registration and re-registration process**

Suggestions included eliminating the necessity of re-registration (i.e. making registration permanent), sending reminders, allowing commuters to keep the same registration number from year to year, as well as simplifying and/or automating the registration and re-registration process.

Contacting commuters for re-registration is a challenge. The GRH reservations staff calls commuters whose GRH registration is about to expire, but many times a voice mail message is left

on the commuter's answering machine or the commuter cannot be reached at all. The registration and re-registration process has been automated to a degree. The newly added registration feature on the website allows for commuters to fill out a form to register for the first time, and in the future will allow them to re-register and update information. Also, recent improvements to the registration program will allow for quicker response time to registration issues. Finally, with the recently begun practice of collecting e-mail addresses for GRH users, an e-mail reminder system is in the works that will send e-mail reminders to re-register for the GRH program.

Taxi Cab Issues

The major issue in most of the free response complaints and comments had to do with the quality of the taxis and attitudes of the taxi drivers. While this is not a matter the COG can directly influence, it does seem to be of major concern to many GRH participants. Therefore, identifying the problem, and notifying the participating cab companies of these problems may be a step in the right direction.

One theme that came up was making sure drivers of cabs understand how GRH works. In some instances, the cab drivers did not know that they would be receiving payment via voucher as opposed to directly from the commuter. This led to delays as drivers had to radio in to receive information as to how the system worked. Also, it needs to be understood that tip is not covered under GRH, and any tip given will be straight out of the rider's pocket. Some cab drivers seem to believe that tips are mandatory when using our service. A recommendation for handling this issue is to create a pamphlet for taxi cab drivers of participating cab companies, which explains to them how the GRH system works.

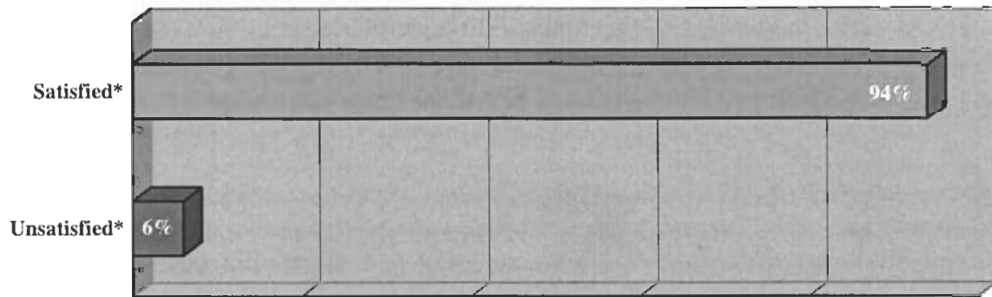
While not a major problem, the issue of driver attitude and knowledge was of concern to some GRH commuters. One related a story of a taxi driver who stopped to fill up the gas tank and left the engine running. Others related stories of having to give directions to cab drivers, or drivers simply not knowing where a destination was. While the former can't really be corrected, the latter does need to be dealt with. Drivers not knowing the locations of specific hospitals and schools (two major reasons for using GRH) can create a discomfort in using the system and discourage repeated use. Again, using a pamphlet here might be useful, outlining emergency locations in a given region for a cab company.

Another issue that we may wish to look into is somehow rewarding courteous drivers. Many compliments contained notes that drivers were very courteous or pleasant company for the ride home. While the mechanics of this would be hard to work out, one possible method would be providing an area for providing information on the cab driver, and contacting the driver's employer to let him know that the driver was doing a good job. This system could also be used to inform cab companies of problematic drivers.

An interesting suggestion made by one commuter was to allow commuters to contact GRH staff from the Metro station to arrange a cab. This suggestion seems to imply a lack of understanding on the part of some commuters about the necessity of organizing the trip ahead of time for re-imbusement purposes. It needs to be better understood that GRH trips must be arranged before the fact, not after the fact, and that commuters should not take steps to get home until they clear it with the reservations staff. One commuter also complained that the nearest Metro station to their work was five miles away, which seems unlikely. It might be a good idea to provide explicit directions to the metro stations in the future, to avoid this type of confusion.

Another interesting suggestion is a recommendation to allow the scheduling of a GRH online. While having an entirely online process is not feasible, due to a need for feedback, a modified form of this suggestion could be used to deal with the time spent on hold for some customers scheduling GRH rides. An online queue system, one where a rider could provide contact information, as well as information on the need for the ride and the destination, might help streamline the process somewhat. This would allow commuters to continue with their work while waiting for a return call to confirm the details of the trip.

Conclusions



* ("Satisfied" = Good and Excellent, "Unsatisfied" = Fair and Poor)

Figure 11 | Percentages of total responses received for all multiple-choice questions in fiscal year 2003

As the chart above illustrates, the vast majority of people are satisfied with the service GRH provides. The total percentage of multiple-choice responses from all categories is the lowest it's ever been in the case of unsatisfied ("Fair" and "Poor") responses, and the highest in the case of satisfied ones. Seventy-five percent of responses received for all multiple-choice questions were "Excellent," a record high for all previous fiscal years (see Figure 18, p. 17), and the majority of free responses were compliments for the second year in a row.

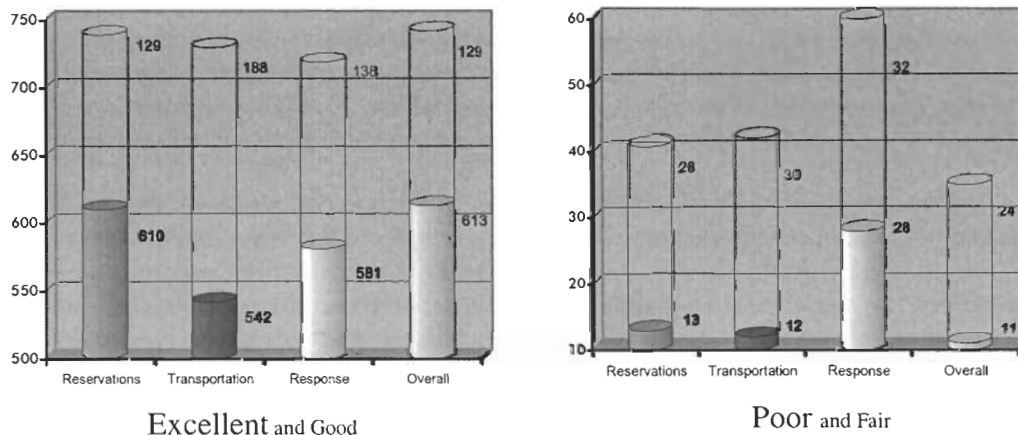


Figure 12 | Number of satisfied and unsatisfied responses received for each question, respectively

Having received the highest number of "Poor" ratings (28 of the 781 responses), Response Time may deserve a closer look as to what could be done to improve it. Many service factors can play into Response Time, a relatively subjective concept. Possible explanations for the slightly higher number of combined "Poor" and "Fair" ratings than in response to other questions include delays due to problems encountered with the

transportation service, the time required to reach the intended destination and the amount of time reservations staff may have put the customer on hold.

Possible areas of exploration for rectifying the significantly higher number of “Poor” ratings than in response to other questions include interfacing with reservations staff to reduce hold and trip reservation times, finding ways to reduce the time required to reach the intended destination, and working with the various transportation services involved in the program to reduce delays. However, the availability and response time of taxi service is beyond COG’s control.

Transportation service, having received the lowest number of “Excellent” ratings (542 of 781 responses), maybe linked to the number of “Poor” ratings on response time, which received the second lowest number of “Excellent” ratings. Simply put, people associate the time they have to wait with the service. However, matters involving the transportation service are most often variables over which GRH staff have little, if any, direct control. The same problems (see “Themes of Free Responses,” p. 9) would be encountered by use of the transportation service in a situation other than one authorized GRH, and are mainly concerns of the transportation providers themselves. Overall service received the highest number of “Excellent” ratings, followed by Reservations Staff.

Comparison to Previous Fiscal Years

Question One: Reservations Staff

How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff? Poor Fair Good Excellent

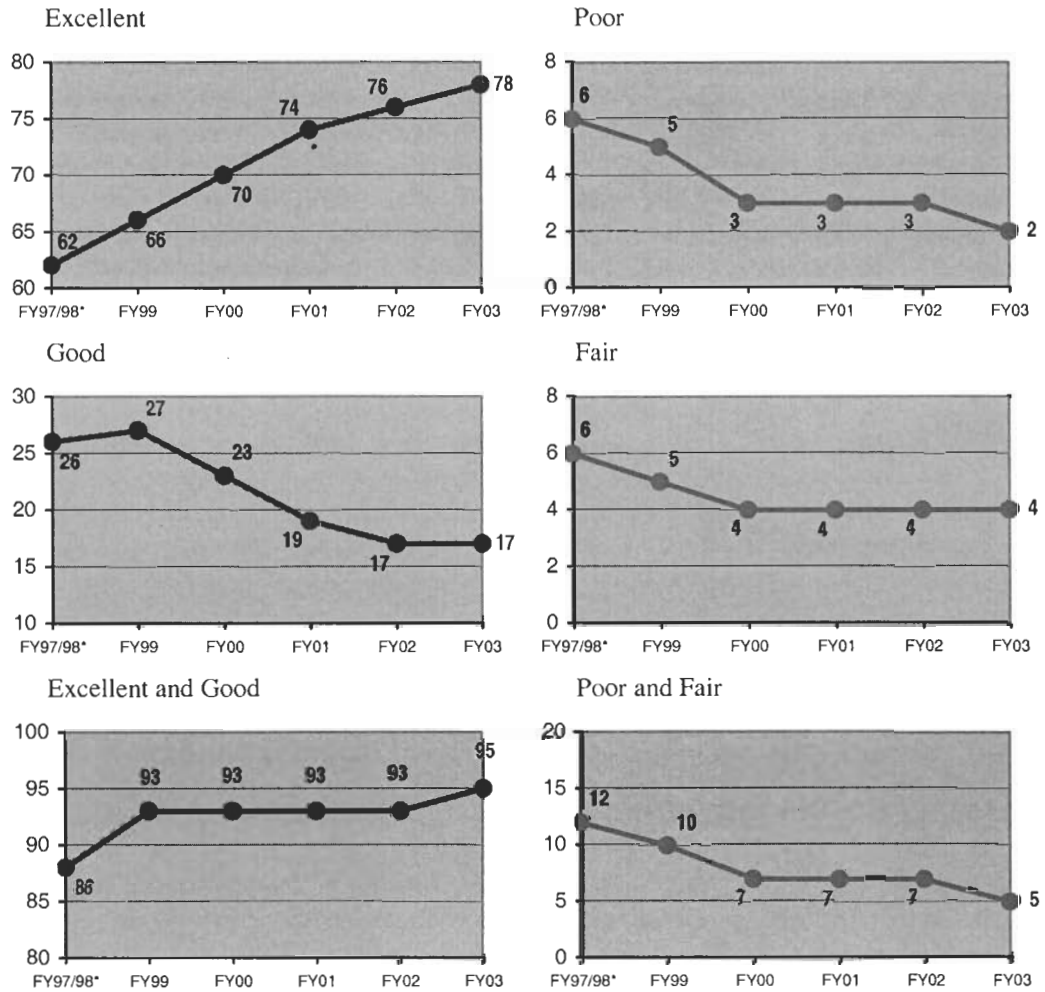


Figure 13 | Percentages of responses received for Question One over all fiscal years

As it has done every year since the survey began, the number of “Excellent” ratings climbed. Additionally, the number of good surveys held this year, with the increase coming out of the poor category, which shows that problems with this aspect of the service are being dealt with.

Among those who are dissatisfied (those who gave “Fair” or “Poor” ratings), dissatisfaction has dropped, as the percentage of poor ratings dropped this year.

Question Two: Transportation Service

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

Poor Fair Good Excellent

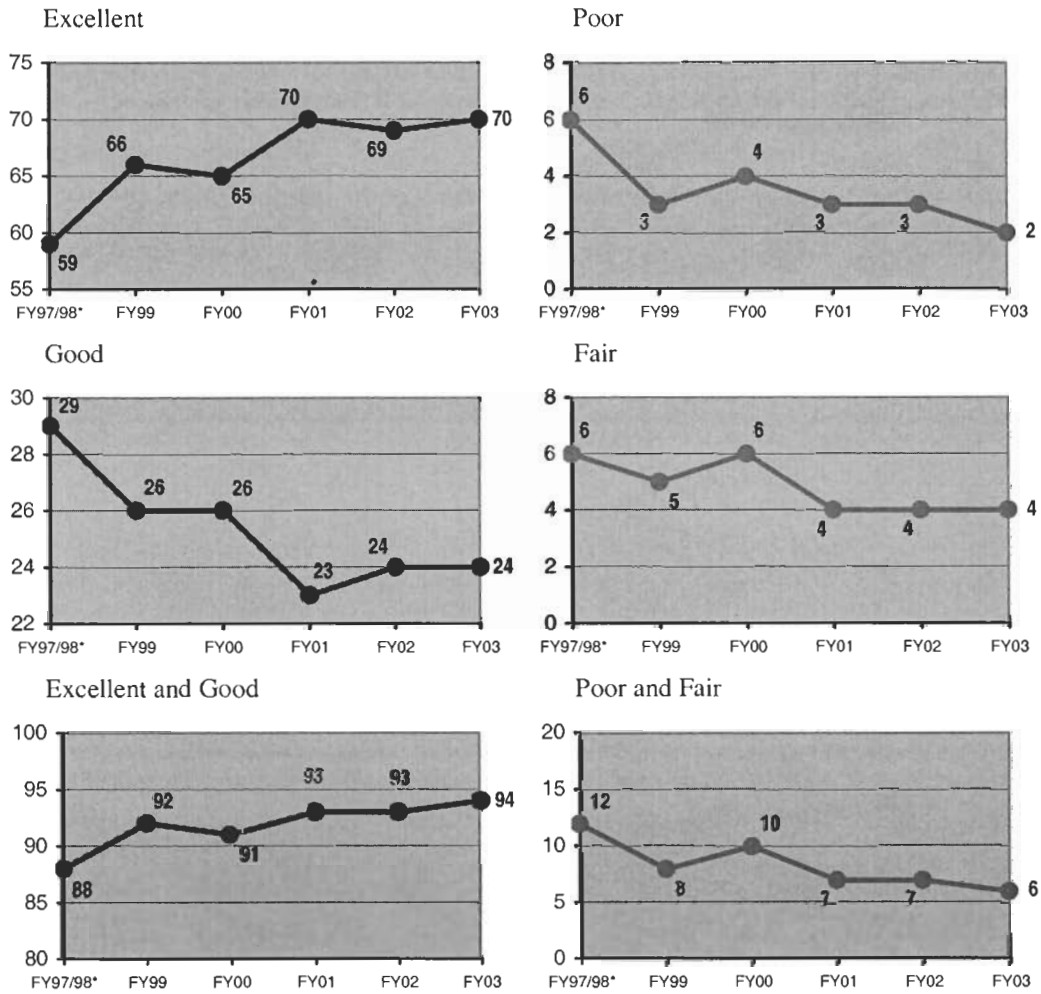


Figure 14 | Percentages of responses received for Question Two over all fiscal years

The most noticeable change in statistics for this question this year was a drop in the number of “Poor” responses. However, inspection of the data reveals that these were replaced by blank answers. Also, the free responses on most of these cards indicated a dissatisfaction with the transportation service, so this is not a sign of improvement.

Question Three: Response Time

How would you rate our response time? Poor Fair Good Excellent

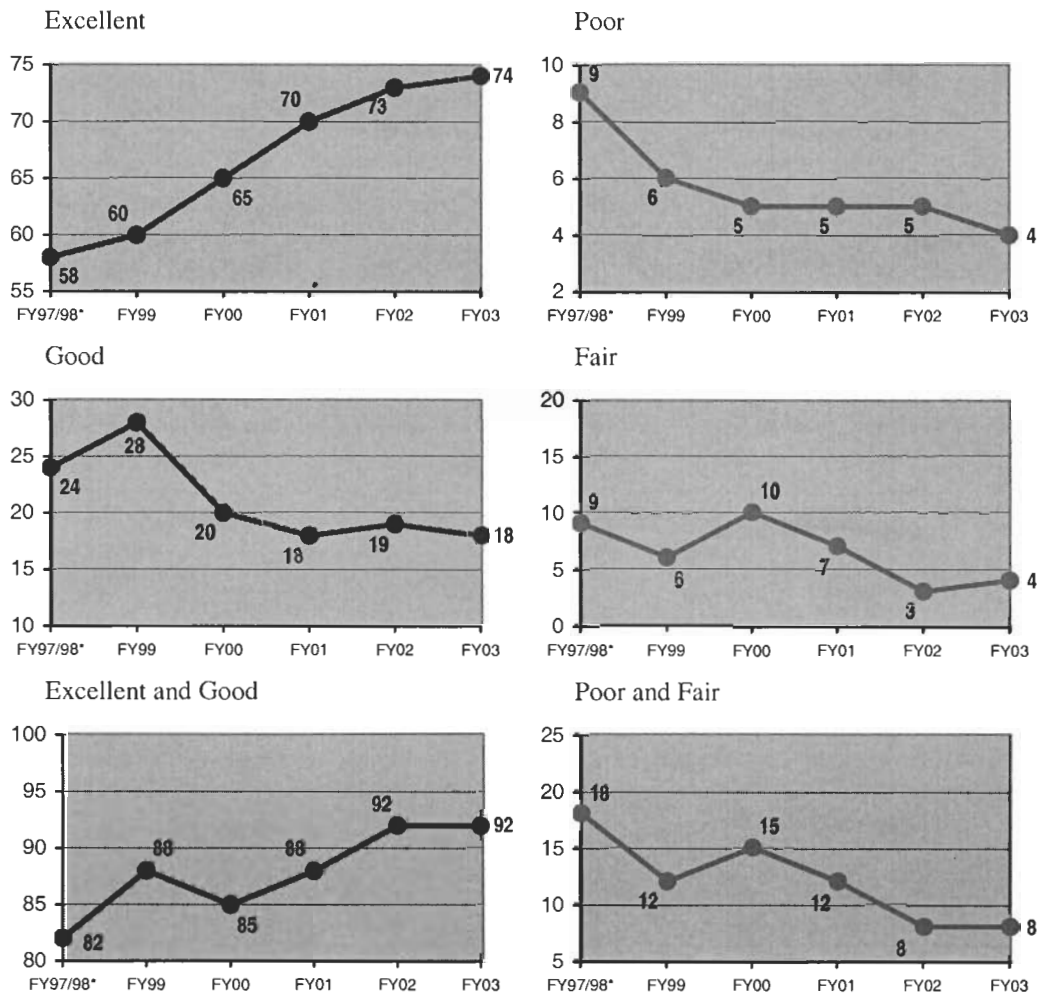


Figure 15 | Percentages of responses received for Question Three over all fiscal years

Though this question continues to receive the highest number of “Fair” and “Poor” ratings, a comparison to previous fiscal years reveals that satisfaction with the response time is much improved. The number of combined “Excellent” and “Good” ratings is stable for the second year, as is the number of dissatisfied responses. Additionally, the number of “Excellent” ratings has increased steadily over all fiscal years.

The percentages of “Good” and “Poor” both fell, while the percentages of “Excellent” and “Fair” both rose. This indicates that the quality of the response time is rising, overall, and can be seen as a positive trend.

Question Four: Overall Service

Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?

Poor Fair Good Excellent

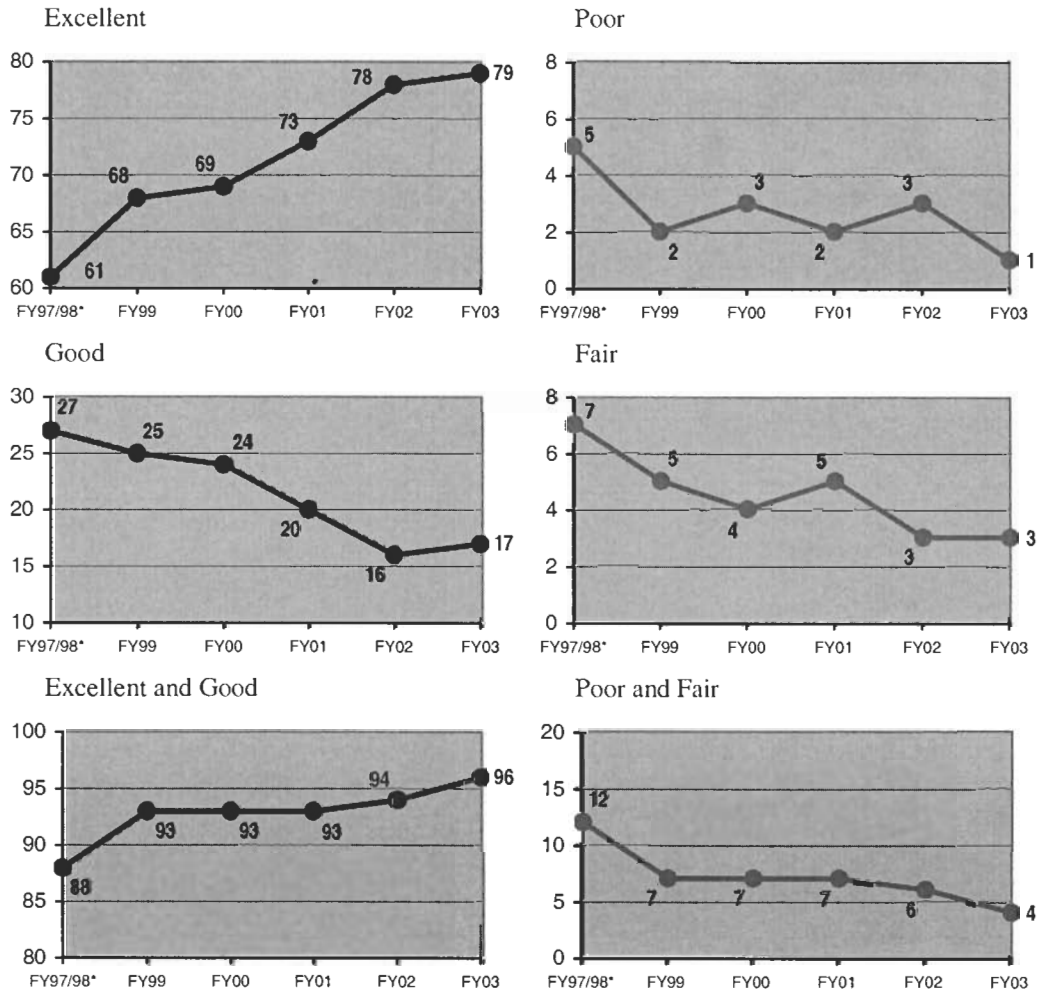


Figure 16 | Percentages of responses received for Question Four over all fiscal years

The most noticeable change is the decrease in the number of “Poor” responses to this question and increase in “Good” responses. This is an excellent indicator that the program in an overall sense, has improved many of the little things that were problems in previous years. While there is still room for improvement, these statistics clearly show the program is on the right track.

Survey Questions	Responses	FY97/98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03
1. How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff?	Excellent	62%	66%	70%	74%	76%	78%
	Good	26%	27%	23%	19%	17%	17%
	Fair	6%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%
	Poor	6%	5%	3%	3%	3%	2%
2. How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?	Excellent	59%	66%	65%	70%	69%	70%
	Good	29%	26%	26%	23%	24%	24%
	Fair	6%	5%	6%	4%	4%	4%
	Poor	6%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%
3. How would you rate our response time?	Excellent	58%	60%	65%	70%	73%	74%
	Good	24%	28%	20%	18%	19%	18%
	Fair	9%	6%	10%	7%	3%	4%
	Poor	9%	6%	5%	5%	5%	4%
4. Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?	Excellent	61%	68%	69%	73%	78%	78%
	Good	27%	25%	24%	20%	16%	17%
	Fair	7%	5%	4%	5%	3%	3%
	Poor	5%	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%
Responses as a Percentage of Total Responses	Excellent	60%	65%	67%	72%	73%	75%
	Good	26%	27%	23%	20%	19%	19%
	Fair	7%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%
	Poor	7%	4%	4%	3%	4%	2%

Figure 17 | Proportions of responses and sum of responses received for each multiple-choice question

Free Response

Free responses from this fiscal year are the first to have been categorized into compliments, comments, suggestions and complaints. Responses from future surveys will be categorized in this manner for future comparison.

Survey Question	Response?	FY97/98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	
What suggestions do you have to improve our GRH service?	No	48%	51%	55%	51%	56%	50%	
	Yes	52%	49%	45%	49%	44%*	50%*	
						Compliment	53%	55%
						Complaint	19%	14%
						Suggestion	18%	14%
						Comment	10%	17%

* Breakdown available for fiscal year 2002 and 2003 only.

Figure 18 | Proportions of types of free responses received over all fiscal years

Summary

The vast majority (95%) of the fiscal year 2003 survey respondents are satisfied with the overall service GRH provides. Although the level of satisfaction similar to that of fiscal year 2002, the percentage of “Poor” ratings for the questions dropped overall from 2002, indicating progress has been made to shore up the last of the flaws that could hurt the usage of the GRH program.

More than half (55%) of the written comments were compliments. Nevertheless, a small number of respondents (6%) were not satisfied with certain aspects of the GRH service they received. The majority of the complaints received concern aspects of the taxi service that are beyond COG’s control, such as, the taxi wasn’t clean, the driver drove too fast or slow, the commuter did not like the taxi driver, the taxi’s air conditioner was not on, the commuter thought they had to wait too long, etc. Although these matters are beyond COG’s control, COG addresses such issues with the president of a taxi company when a series of complaints about that company are received. Progress has been made in the area of taxi cabs since the last survey, but there is obviously still more to be done. Although there were only a few complaints about the reservation staff, regular customer service training is recommended to maintain a high level of service.

Appendices

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA GUARANTEED RIDE HOME PROGRAM PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Guidelines are subject to change without notice. Call 1-800-745-7433 or visit www.commuterconnections.org for current Participation Guidelines.

1. **Commuters must call Commuter Connections and receive authorization from Commuter Connections prior to using the GRH service.** The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Commuter Connections staff will issue authorization number(s) to participating commuters and/or company Employee Transportation Coordinator's (ETC's) to certify a GRH trip. **Commuters will not be reimbursed for trips not authorized by Commuter Connections.** Depending on the commuter's employment site, an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) may have to be contacted first in order to make the appropriate arrangements for this service. Please check with your personnel department as to whether or not your site has a designated ETC.
2. Commuters must be officially registered with Commuter Connections before using the GRH service. Registered commuters are those who have received an official registration letter and GRH ID card from Commuter Connections. Commuters who have not been officially registered may use the GRH service one time, providing they meet all other eligibility criteria. This is referred to as a "one-time exception." Any commuter granted a one-time exception must be officially registered *before* additional GRH trips are granted. Additionally, registered and one-time exception commuters must be carpooling, vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling, or walking to their site of employment at least two (2) days per week and on the day they use the GRH service.
3. Registered commuters may use the GRH program up to four (4) times annually from their official registration date. Commuters who received a one-time exception, then officially register with Commuter Connections may use the GRH service three (3) more times from the date of their one-time exception GRH trip.
4. Commuters must re-register annually to maintain their GRH registration. Commuters must contact Commuter Connections to re-register and update their registration information.
5. The GRH program may only be used in cases of unexpected personal or family emergency, unexpected illness, or unscheduled overtime. **Cases in which the GRH program cannot be used include, but are not limited to the following: previously scheduled medical appointments, trips to the hospital or emergency room for a commuter that needs medical attention, personal errands, transit service disruptions and/or delays, business related travel,**

working late without a supervisor's request, weather emergencies, any type of building closings or evacuations, and natural acts of God.

6. Requests to use the GRH program because of unscheduled overtime must be made *before* the commuter's registered work end time, *and* a supervisor's verification will be required at the time of the request.
7. GRH service is available between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays and unplanned Federal Government office closings. **GRH TRIPS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE 10:00 P.M. Holidays include: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.**
8. In order to be eligible for use of the regional GRH program, the participating commuter must be physically working in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget. The MSA includes the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery and Prince George's, the City of Alexandria and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and Stafford, and all cities within the aforementioned counties.
9. Commuters can live anywhere inside the MSA or in any of the following areas: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Harford, Howard, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, or Washington counties, the City of Baltimore, and any point along the Upper Eastern Shore in Maryland; and Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Warren, or Westmoreland counties, the City of Fredericksburg, or the City of Winchester in Virginia; and Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Adams, or York counties in Pennsylvania. Any other destination points outside of the above-mentioned areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
10. Depending on the nature of the emergency, and home and work locations, a commuter using the GRH service may be required to use a taxi, car rental, transit, or any combination of these services to reach their destination point. All GRH trips must originate from the commuter's work location. **COG's Commuter Connections staff and/or their designees will determine the type of service used and will issue a valid GRH authorization number at that time.** Cancellation on the part of the commuter of a GRH trip may count as one of the four annual trips.

Commuter Connections will pay for one vendor service **and/or** one transit service per request. If the GRH trip is made by a taxi, COG's Commuter Connections

program will pay for all charges, excluding gratuity, to the destination. **The commuter is responsible only for tipping the taxi driver.**

If a transit option is used for the GRH, the participant will be mailed a transit reimbursement voucher. The transit reimbursement voucher must be submitted back to COG within thirty days of transit use in order for payment to be made. Please allow 45 days for reimbursement.

11. If the GRH trip is made by rental car, the commuter is responsible for signing a standard rental agreement, showing a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, providing a credit card number for collateral, returning the rental car within a 24-hour period, and the following charges: gasoline refueling charges, taxes, purchase of insurance (if necessary), additional rental charges if auto is not returned within a 24-hour period (unless Commuter Connections has given prior approval for additional rental time). The commuter will be responsible for any loss or damage to the rental car.
12. GRH is a free service provided by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). COG will use its best efforts to provide the Guaranteed Ride Home in accordance with the guidelines shown above. By requesting assistance from the Guaranteed Ride Home program, the participant in the program explicitly acknowledges that COG assumes no liability for the timeliness of the GRH participating vendor(s) or any accidents that may occur on the conveyance.

11/18/2003