



## FY 2013 Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule

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

As part of the Regional Mass Marketing Transportation Emission Reduction Measure, the Commuter Connections Marketing program will provide frequent promotion of alternative commute options including: ridesharing, teleworking, bicycling, walking, and mass transit; support programs such as Guaranteed Ride Home, the Commuter Connections network ridematching services; and special events such as Bike to Work Day, Car Free Day, and the Employer Recognition Awards. The FY2013 marketing program will raise awareness of commuting choices available in the Washington metropolitan region and support the Commuter Connections network in persuading area workers and the general public to choose, and continue to use, alternatives to driving alone to and from work as well as for other non-work trips.

**Marketing Input:** The background for this marketing brief was derived from the following sources:

- [FY 2012 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report](#)
- [2011 Commuter Connections Transportation Emission Reduction \(TERM\) Analysis Report](#)
- [2010 State of the Commute Survey Report](#)
- [2010 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home \(GRH\) program Survey Report](#)
- [2010 Bike To Work Survey TERM Analysis Report](#)

Internal reports and surveys are the cornerstone for the FY2013 Marketing Brief. These reports provide quantitative and qualitative measurement of commute behavior by workers throughout the Washington metropolitan region and the impacts of this behavior on air quality and congestion.

In addition to comprehensive data provided by internal reports, the marketing team has considered performance data from past campaigns as well as information gathered through industry reports, surveys, and trends, and how it might be applied to the

Commuter Connections mass marketing campaign efforts. This information is used to support the development of the media and/or messaging strategies.

Increases in gas prices have had a measured effect on interest in ridesharing. After a precipitous rise in the spring of 2012, gas prices dropped and a leveling was experienced at the start of FY2013. Although there is no indication that gas prices will see an increase in FY2013, the market is volatile and may be impacted by any number of external factors. In addition, the economy is still showing sluggish growth and remains a concern for many consumers. The economic benefit of ridesharing is a strong, simple message that resonates with many consumers and commuters and one that will continue to be emphasized.

In addition to gas prices and the economy, other events may impact this year's messaging and strategy. The 495 Express Lanes on the Virginia side of the Capital Beltway are planned to open at the end of 2012. The 495 Express Lanes is a high occupancy toll (HOT) road where carpools with three or more passengers ride free. The opening of the 495 Express Lanes provides another opportunity to promote ridesharing with its additional time saving and economic benefits.

Carpooling is receiving growing national and regional attention through the launch of new social media and mobile apps. The attention that newcomers draw to carpooling is positive news for Commuter Connections and provides an opportunity to address the advantages offered to the region by Commuter Connections for nearly forty years. Unlike some of the newcomers to the market, Commuter Connections has an established, trusted brand across the region and boasts a database of 30,000 commuter accounts. The primary ridematching service offered by Commuter Connections allows commuters to find and establish carpools to meet their day-to-day commuting needs. The ease of mind and feeling of stability and security provided by establishing a lasting carpool is a message we may explore in this year's campaign.

For commuters who rideshare, the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program provides a valuable service guaranteeing a ride home in case of an unexpected personal or family emergency or unscheduled overtime. This year's campaign will look to promote GRH registration within the inner core; for transit users, bicyclists and walkers. For commuters in the middle and outer rings, the campaign will focus on coupling GRH registration as a service provided to those who convert from SOV driving to other mobility modes such as ridesharing and public transportation. The overall message will remain focused on registering for the program as a safety net for those using transportation alternatives.

Finally, the presidential election takes place in November, and with Virginia acting as a battle ground state, ads from special interest groups and candidates are expected to

flood the media market. The fall media buys for the umbrella campaign, and to a lesser extent Car Free Day, will take the volatility and demand for media into consideration when negotiating buys in order to secure the best opportunities for Commuter Connections.

In addition to paid and earned media, the regional effort will include special events including Car Free Day and Bike to Work Day. The mission of these events is to encourage SOV drivers to try alternative transportation modes with the intention of changing behavior so individuals will choose to incorporate such modes as part of their regular or at least occasional, commute or lifestyle patterns.

**Marketing Strategies:** The marketing strategy will be looking to achieve the following:

- Emphasize the cost savings benefits of ridesharing through the use of simple, direct messages that money can be saved by sharing a ride.
- Appeal to 495 Express Lane commuters to rideshare thus saving time and money.
- Capitalize on the growing interest in ridesharing mobile and social apps to position Commuter Connections as the trusted, regional provider of ridematching services for nearly forty years.
- Emphasize the cost-savings benefits of ridesharing
- Draw on the additional savings of 'Pool Rewards as another incentive within paid and value-add Rideshare ads.
- Drive inner core commuters who use public transportation, bicycling, or walking to register for GRH.
- For middle and outer ring commuters, leverage carpooling and vanpooling by positioning GRH as a safety net for ridesharing and public transportation use, available to commuters in case of unscheduled overtime or unexpected personal or family emergency.
- Increase the number of participants in special events and promotions such as Car Free Day and Bike to Work Day based on set committee goals.
- Promote employer efforts to ease regional commuting issues through earned media placements with the use of human interest stories of commuters using alternative commute modes and/or employers offering commuter benefits that have higher than expected engagement levels.

Media buying strategies will be selected based on Scarborough Research reports for the specific target audiences for each program and event: Ridesharing, Guaranteed Ride Home, Employer Recognition Awards, Car Free Day, Bike to Work Day, 'Pool Rewards, and any other program or event. These reports identify specific media that are best suited for each target audience. The report information is considered along with the cost of each media option and results from previous Commuter Connections campaigns.

For FY2013, radio is 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 when they are engaged in their possibly stressful, frustrating, costly, and time consuming commutes.

Print creative is important to provide visual, repetitive communication and reinforcement of messages delivered through radio spots. FY2013's marketing strategy will include well-placed visuals across the geographical region. Outdoor print such as bus signage and shelters, online animated banner ads, and cable TV will be evaluated as visual elements for the campaign.

Internet advertising is interactive and closer to one-to-one selling than any other form of media. Placement of banner ads on websites targeted to key counties, news, weather, television affiliates, and job sites may be used to reach commuters just a click away from Commuter Connections' online ridematching service or to register for GRH.

Opportunities to involve retailers and local businesses in sponsorship or promotion of Commuter Connections programs such as Ridematching and Car Free Day will be investigated. We would look to identify businesses interested in encouraging people to explore the use of sustainable, healthy transportation and benefiting from the patronage of those commuters. Retailers could provide sponsorship of giveaways or discounts for events such as Car Free Day or could be involved in cross-promotion opportunities as previously done with Flippin' Pizza.

In addition to traditional media, the marketing team will look to further expand the use of social media. Building upon Commuter Connections' existing pages on Facebook (Commuter Connections, Telework, Bike to Work Day, and Car Free Day) and accounts on Twitter (Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day), the marketing team will investigate additional strategies to increase engagement and integrate social media activities with other marketing approaches.

The marketing team will examine opportunities to provide smart phone access to Commuter Connections resources and commute option information and benefits. Quick Response (QR) codes may be used on marketing creative to provide smart phone users with quick and immediate access to Commuter Connections' information and registration or pledge pages.

Existing creative will be used for the fall campaign; results of the complete FY2012 campaign will be studied and best practices will be carried forward for the FY2013 campaign. The creative team will consider the results of the FY2012 campaign along

with area transportation trends and additional exploration to help identify the most effective messaging strategies for implementation for spring 2013.

The marketing team will investigate format and layout options for print pieces including the Commuter Connections newsletter, direct mailer, and the Employer Recognition Awards nomination brochure. New formats or layouts may look to one or more of the following objectives: decrease print costs, increase usability and response rates, and provide a fresh, new look.

The Marketing Communications Plan will effectively and efficiently reach its target markets based on a review and analysis of third party media data from Strata, Scarborough, and Arbitron as monitored by a professional media buying firm. Reach and frequency of the target demographic will be calculated using a cost/value proposition for each media option.

## **Guaranteed Ride Home**

**Objective:** Increase the number of applicants in the GRH database by promoting GRH as a rideshare benefit, eliminating a barrier to using transit, carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling, and walking to work.

**Target market** (from 2010 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program Survey Report):

- 35-54 years old (63%)
- Caucasian (68%) and African-American (20%)
- \$80,000+ annual household income (80%), \$120,000+ annual household income (50%)
- Commute of more than 30 miles / 45 minutes
- Live in Virginia (65%) or Maryland (32%), with emphasis on Prince William (17%) and Fairfax Counties (13%); work in D.C (63%) and Virginia (26%)

### **Tactics:**

- Focus will be on commuters in the inner core, encouraging them to register for GRH.
- Radio advertising will focus on district radio stations serving the inner core. Radio may also be used to reach the region's Hispanic commuters.
- Evaluate web advertisement (banner ads), geared directly toward generating registrations.
- Evaluate print and/or transit signage to increase awareness.
- Update website images to integrate with the campaign.
- Direct Mail (Allocation equals 5% of Work Program budget) with distribution targeted to inner core residents.

**GRH Media Allocation:** Approximately 31 percent of media budget.

## **Ridematching**

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

- **Target market** (from FY 2012 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report):
- 35-64 years old (82%)
- Caucasian (69%) and African-American (17%)
- \$80,000+ annual household income (71%) Commute of more than 20 miles/30 minutes
- Live in Virginia (60%) or Maryland (36%); work in D.C. (57%) or Virginia (27%)
- Work for employers with 100+ employees (81%), work for employers with 1000 or more employees (46%)
- Work for federal agencies (67%) and private sector (20%)

### **Tactics:**

- Radio advertising to increase awareness of benefits of ridesharing. Live traffic reads provide an ideal opportunity to make the association between traffic and solution and will be investigated for feasibility.
- A Spanish-speaking radio station may be included to reach out to the region's Hispanic population.
- TV will be considered as an opportunity to visually present the message that's conveyed in radio spots.
- Online banner ads may be used on selective websites to drive users to the Commuter Connections website to register.
- Out-of-home components that make a direct connection between commuting options and saving money will be considered. Media options that reach 495 Express Lane commuters will be considered.
- Public relations/media communications to provide testimonials of ridesharing success stories and broaden awareness and registrations.
- Update website images to integrate with the campaign.
- Direct mail (Allocation equals 5% of Work Program budget) with distribution targeted to middle and outer ring residents.

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

## **'Pool Rewards**

**Objectives:** Recruit and retain commuters in a carpool through cash or other incentives.

### **Target Market**

- Rideshare demographics

### **Tactics:**

- Media and public outreach will be used to build awareness.
- Messages promoting environmental benefits of ridesharing such as tons of CO<sub>2</sub> reduced gallons of gas saved, miles of alternate commutes logged, and vehicle trips saved, and/or social responsibility including reducing traffic congestion and improving your quality of life with the cash incentive being secondary will be considered.
- To promote awareness, radio and online banner ads may be used.
- 'Pool Rewards eligibility may be tied to Rideshare messages. For example, "...interested in Ridesharing. You may be eligible for 'Pool Rewards..."
- Live radio reads will be investigated to inject additional interest in the program and drive people to the website for more information.
- Value add from the mass marketing campaign may be used to expand the reach of 'Pool Rewards.
- Non-cost avenues such as Craig's List and the Commuter Connections bulletin board will be used.

**'Pool Rewards Media Allocation:** Approximately 3.5 percent of media budget.



## **Special Events**

**Objectives:** Use special events, such as Bike to Work Day, Car Free Day, and the Employer Recognition Awards event 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 and Car Free Day.

### **Target Market**

- Bike to Work Day (from WABA member statistics): Age 25-49, Male, Commute trip up to 30 miles, \$30,000+ household income.
- Car Free Day: SOV drivers.
- Employer Recognition Awards: Level 3 & 4 Employers in Commuter Connections Network area.

### **Tactics:**

- Bike to Work Day (BTWD)
  - Sponsor BTWD, May 17, 2013.
  - Secure corporate and other sponsorships for BTWD.
  - Use radio advertising to boost registration of BTWD.
  - Provide additional marketing collateral and advertising including t-shirts, posters, and rack cards.
  - Should additional sponsor dollars become available, provide additional marketing such as pit stop banners, print ads and various signage.
  - Email blasts and mailings to employers and past participants.
  - Earned Media.
  - Engage Transportation Planning Board through Proclamation and encourage jurisdictional partners to do the same.
  - Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Car Free Day (CFD)
  - Sponsor CFD, September 22, 2012
  - Secure corporate, retailers, and other sponsorships for CFD.
  - Include a family-friendly focus as September 22, 2012 is on the weekend.
  - Use radio advertising to increase awareness of CFD and drive listeners to [carfreemetrodc.org](http://carfreemetrodc.org).
  - Provide marketing collateral such as posters.
  - Transit /outdoor signage (bus exterior and bus shelter ads).
  - Text messaging.
  - Email blasts and mailings to employers and past participants.
  - Engage Transportation Planning Board through Proclamation and encourage jurisdictional partners to do the same.
  - Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

- Employer Recognition Awards
  - Coordinate the Employer Recognition Awards ceremony, June 2013.
  - Provide marketing collateral in support of the application process; online application and email blast to potential nominees.
  - Marketing collateral for the event including invitations, program brochure, podium sign, and promotional giveaways.
  - Print advertisement in major publication highlighting winning employers.

**Special Events Media Allocation:** Approximately 3 percent of media budget for BTWD, 4.5 percent of media budget for CFD, and less than 1 percent of media budget for Employer Recognition Awards event.

## **Employer Outreach**

**Objectives:** Add new employer clients; expand participation and offerings in existing employer programs; recognize existing employer programs who have implemented successful employee commute benefit programs; increase the number of employers offering the tax free commute benefit; increase use of SmarTrip offered through employer programs as well as other TDM strategies such as telework, flextime, and ridematching..

**Target Market** (from FY 2012 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report):

- Employers with more than 250 employees (69%)
- Federal agencies (67%)
- Private sector employers (20%)

### **Tactics:**

- Update web content as required and other social media applications for Telework such as Facebook
- Quarterly employer newsletter
- Quarterly Federal Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) newsletter insert
- Email marketing and mailings
- Continuously update Federal ETC website information

**Employer Outreach Media Allocation:** 0 percent of media budget.

## FY 2013 Schedules

### **Creative Development Schedule**

Review research and results from recent campaigns	June 2012
Develop Marketing Communications Plan	July 2012
Feedback on Plan from Regional TDM Marketing Group ( <i>Extranet</i> )	Aug 2012
Present conceptual approaches to Regional TDM Marketing Grp	Sept 2012
Refine and develop approach based on Workgroup feedback	Oct 2012
Finalize creative	Nov 2012
Produce creative	Dec 2012
Distribute creative to media vendors	Jan 2013
Campaign launch	Feb 2013

### **Marketing Campaign Schedule**

Car Free Day	Aug – Sept 2012
Fall Campaign (repeat FY12 creative)	Oct – Dec 2012
Spring Campaign (new FY13 creative)	Feb – June 2013
Bike to Work Day	Apr – May 2013
Employer Recognition Awards	June 2013