



**FY 2024
Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule Final
September 19, 2023**

Mission

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

Overview

As part of the Regional Mass Marketing program element, the Commuter Connections Marketing campaigns will provide frequent promotion of Ridematching services, Guaranteed Ride Home, 'Pool Rewards, CarpoolNow Mobile Application, Flextime Rewards, and incenTrip. In addition, the program promotes the following special events: Bike to Work Day, Car Free Day and the Employer Recognition Awards.

These services and special events promote alternative commute options including ridesharing, teleworking, bicycling, walking, and mass transit. The FY 2024 marketing program will raise awareness of commuting choices available in the Washington, DC metropolitan region through paid and earned media and other marketing and outreach techniques. The program will support Commuter Connections network members in educating area employers and commuters on how to find and use alternatives to driving alone for work trips. Both work and non-work trips apply to use of the incenTrip app and participation in the Car Free Day event.

Marketing Input

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

- [FY 2021 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report](#)
- [FY 2018 – FY 2020 Commuter Connections TDM Analysis Report](#)
- [State of the Commute 2022 Survey Report](#)
- [2022 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Applicant Survey Report for the Washington DC Region](#)
- [2022 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Applicant Survey Report for the Baltimore Region](#)
- [2022 Bike to Work Day Survey Analysis Report](#)

The findings of these reports and surveys help establish the basis for the FY 2024 Marketing Communications Plan. They provide quantitative and qualitative measurement of commute behavior by employees, Commuter Connections program applicants, and event participants

throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan region, and indicate the impact of this behavior on air quality and congestion. Other important inputs include performance data from past campaigns, information gathered through industry reports, surveys, and trends and how they might be applied to the Commuter Connections marketing campaign.

Current Environment

Working five days per week onsite or fully remote are no longer the norm for office workers as hybrid schedules have become a more acceptable business model in the Washington DC market and a compromise to employer/employee dynamic. Hybrid benefits offer flexibility, work-life balance, less stress, and savings in the form of time and money.

Perceptions about where, when, and how work gets done changed dramatically during COVID-19. Early efforts to bring employees back to the office full scale were thwarted by a backlash of employees lobbying for a permanent work from home scenario. Inflexible employers were on the receiving end of a phenomenon known as the Great Resignation, when about 50.5 million people quit their jobs in 2022, besting the prior record set in 2021, according to the federal JOLTS report. Employers adapted by offering hybrid strategies, asking workers to come back into the office at least one day per week.

In August 2023, President Biden aligned with executives from some of the nation's largest private employers in announcing his Cabinet's push to get more federal employees to return to the office in the fall, a measure which has the full support of District of Columbia mayor, Muriel Bowser. In Congress, the issue has been mostly partisan. Biden's announcement served to heighten the divide between key business leaders who largely embrace in-person work, and employees who primarily embrace remote work. To date, unions representing more than 900,000 federal employees are not in favor of the White House's plan for more in-person work.

Hybrid work has become more of a middle ground solution. Surveys show many employees are open to and some even want to go back to the office, at least one or two days a week. More than 60% want to retain their remote flexibility and are likely to search for employment elsewhere if denied. Less than 10% prefer to work on-site while a third prefer fully remote work. Moreover, Gartner research forecasts that generational shifts in the workforce will continue to drive many organizations to adapt their hybrid work policies to meet employee demands for flexibility.

Of employees who have returned to the office a few days a week, most choose to drive alone. With more commuters choosing to drive alone instead of opting to take transit or rideshare, traffic volume is returning. Excluding telework, the 2022 State of the Commute Survey found that commuters drove alone to work about 78% of the time and alternative modes made up the balance. Respondents took transit (train or bus) for 15% of workdays, and vanpooled or carpooled for 3.3% of workdays. During the pandemic, many who worked remotely moved farther from the city's inner core, to where the cost of living is lower. This trend is also having an impact on traffic. The 2022 State of the Commute Survey finds that alternative mode use is

much higher for respondents who live and/or work in the central portion of the region than for those who lived/worked outside the regional core. The survey finds that four in 10 (41%) commuters who live in DC drive alone. This is substantially lower than the 84% drive alone rate for Maryland and the 80% rate for Virginia.

The case for ridesharing is a compelling one and its economic benefit remains a strong, simple message that resonates with commuters. Commuters who changed from driving alone to an alternative mode said they did so for personal benefits. The top three reasons for switching were saving money (11%), ease and convenience (9%) and saving time (6%). Inflation rose at its fastest pace in about 40 years. Prices at the pump continue to be an important issue as the cost to fill up a tank remains influential in commuters' willingness and availability to use alternative modes of transportation. According to AAA, in the Washington, DC metropolitan region, gas prices reached a record all-time high on June 15, 2022, peaking at \$5.06 per gallon (average - regular gas). As of August 14, 2023 the price at the pump stands at \$3.82.

The Commuter Connections 2021 Annual Placement Survey which estimates transportation and air quality impacts using survey data from program registrants indicates that the average one-way commute distance is 39.2 miles and takes 54 minutes by car each way. According to the 2022 State of the Commute Survey, Commuter Connections survey respondents have far longer commutes (time and distance) than the regional one-way average of 16.7 miles and 37 minutes. Understanding this data allows Commuter Connections campaigns to target such individuals. The Placement Survey also noted that respondents who were traveling to a workplace outside their homes drove alone for 43% of their commute trips. They used transit for about one quarter (26%) of weekly trips, vanpooled for 21% of trips, and carpooled for 7%. Respondents made about 4% of weekly commute trips by bicycling or walking.

There are approximately 300 project records in the approved FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the National Capital Region. The construction impacts of these projects and others will make FY24 and years beyond challenging for the region's commuters; even more important is the need to promote TDM options to provide multi-modal solutions for those affected by the construction. The following are some of the big-ticket projects across the region in the TIP:

District of Columbia: South Capitol Street Corridor

Suburban Maryland: Op Lanes Maryland Phase I South, New American Legion Bridge and I-270 to I-370, Op Lanes Maryland Phase North, I-270 from I-370 to I-70, Purple Line

Carpooling continues to receive national and regional attention through social media and mobile apps. Social media and digital presence are important aspects of a campaign that aims to reach a growing demographic. We can continue to increase interaction with the use of hashtags, video, and social media postings geared toward target audiences. Hashtags are used by participants, particularly during special regional events such as Bike to Work Day. Such

postings expand reach to a commuter's own followers, resulting in more people becoming aware of Commuter Connections programs. Millennials, generally regarded as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 27-42 in 2023), make up 22 percent of the population and are causing a decline in car usage and ownership. This newfound interest in shared mobility is positive news for Commuter Connections. Increasing awareness provides an opportunity to address the advantages Commuter Connections has offered to the region for more than 40 years. Commuter Connections has an established, trusted brand across the region and has a database of over 17,000 commuter ridesharing accounts that are verified every year.

The Ridematching service offered by Commuter Connections allows commuters to easily establish carpools. A lasting carpool starts from a trusted source and is reinforced through cost savings and support of backup transportation (Guaranteed Ride Home). These messages will continue to be promoted in this year's regional TDM marketing campaign. Additionally, regional commuters have access to the Ridematching system through a mobile platform. Commuter Connections' real-time Ridematching app, CarpoolNow, gives commuters easy access to finding carpool partners in real time and locating park-and-ride lots. The app increases interest in carpooling by providing a non-commercial way to find a shared ride compared to other Ridematching apps, and drivers receive a \$10 cash payment per trip, up to \$600 per year. We will promote CarpoolNow's ease of use and the driver incentive in this year's Ridematching outreach effort. Flexible vanpooling is also available through the app and allows Vanpool Operators and Coordinators to advertise open seats in their vanpool(s) to the public. Enrolling a van in Flexible Vanpool allows the public to request to join a vanpool in real-time or reserve a seat in advance for a one-time ride. Both the Vanpool Operator and the Vanpool Coordinator must approve the flexible option for vanpools. This will allow the van to display a cost-per-ride to the public. Other information needed for the enrollment process includes origin and destinations, departure and arrival times, days of operation, and vanpool. Marketing campaigns for these programs and offerings are reviewed each fiscal year within the context of the current environment and can be adapted based on external factors; for example, commuter drive-alone pattern changes due to post-pandemic drive-alone conditions, gas prices etc. Marketing efforts are adapted based on such needs and are modified accordingly to help spur adoption (re-adoption) of alternative modes of travel.

Among the most popular personal benefits of ridesharing are saving time and money, which inevitably impact commuters' transportation choices. Commuter demographics are changing as well, shifting from baby boomers to millennials. Today, millennials make up the largest single portion of the U.S. labor force. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, more than one-in-three American labor force participants (35%) are millennials.¹ By 2030, millennials will make up 75 percent of the workforce.² More than half of those studied

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/>

² <https://www.wired.com/insights/2013/08/the-rise-of-the-millennial-workforce/>

between the ages of 22 and 37 by Arity, a Chicago-based transportation company created by Allstate Corporation, believe that a car is not worth the money spent on maintenance, and they would rather be doing something other than driving.³

Societal benefits, like saving energy and reducing pollution and congestion, are among the top motivators for those who use commute alternatives. Many people are increasingly aware of their own impact on the planet and are familiar with ways to positively impact the current environment including the use of alternative transportation. The connection between health and transportation will be considered as part of the campaign message.

For commuters who rideshare, the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program provides a free and reliable ride home in case of an unexpected personal or family emergency, or unscheduled overtime. GRH also covers transit and all alternative modes which helps to prompt commuters to take advantage of using them. This year's campaign will continue to promote the value of GRH registration for those already using or considering transit, bicycling, and walking to and from work.

For commuters in the middle, outer and exurb rings, including the Baltimore Metropolitan region and St. Mary's County, the GRH campaign will focus on positioning the service for those who already use alternative modes, such as ridesharing and public transportation, as well as to help prompt conversion from SOV driving to other alternative modes. The overall message will remain focused on registering for the program and positioning it as a safety net to ease the transition for those switching from driving alone to using commute alternatives to and from work. Messages will also remind consumers to call or visit the Commuter Connections website to re-register annually.

In addition to paid and earned media, the regional effort will include the Car Free Day and Bike to Work Day events. The mission of these events is to encourage SOV drivers to try alternative travel modes on the day of the events. By providing an opportunity to use transportation alternatives through regionally focused events, and by providing a chance at winning raffle prizes; after a positive experience, individuals may choose to incorporate alternatives as part of their regular, or at least occasional, commute or lifestyle.

Incentive programs provide financial incentives to get commuters to try shared modes of travel. Cash incentives are offered to CarpoolNow drivers and 'Pool Rewards participants, while incenTrip users can apply earned points toward cash, EZPass, SmarTrip, gift cards, etc. After commuters get comfortable using a new mode of travel, they are eventually weaned off the incentives.

³ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-young-adults-cars-attitudes-20181106-story.html>

Marketing Strategies

- Emphasize the cost savings of ridesharing by using simple and direct messages.
- Leverage Commuter Connections' mobile Ridematching capabilities to position the brand as the trusted, convenient provider of Ridematching services for 50 years.
- Draw on the additional savings of 'Pool Rewards as an incentive within rideshare ads.
- Drive inner core, Baltimore City commuters who use public transportation, bicycling, or walking to register for GRH.
- For middle, outer, and exurb ring commuters in both the Washington, DC and Baltimore regions, leverage carpooling and vanpooling by positioning GRH as a safety net for ridesharing and public transportation users, available to commuters in case of unscheduled overtime or an unexpected personal or family emergencies.
- Increase the number of participants in the Car Free Day and Bike to Work Day events based on set committee goals.
- Promote employer efforts to ease regional commuting issues through earned media placements and highlight the Employer Recognition Awards. Incorporate human interest stories of commuters using alternative commute modes and/or employers offering commuter benefits that have higher than expected engagement levels.
- Increase the number of commuter downloads and usage of the CarpoolNow mobile application in the Washington, DC region through creative materials in traditional and digital media outlets.
- Leverage umbrella campaign value add to support incenTrip messaging to increase usage.
- Increase commuter participation in the Flextime Rewards program.
- Promote programs to millennials, Spanish-speaking, and African American audiences in radio, digital and print messages as well as commuters in equity emphasis areas.
- Explore opportunities to advertise with transit and/or bus wraps.

For FY 2024, radio and digital media will likely be leveraged as the anchor mediums for the program to effectively reach most of the Commuter Connections target markets. However, additional marketing mediums will be explored as well, to determine effectiveness.

Digital Media

Digital media, such as Google, YouTube, Twitter(X), Instagram, LinkedIn and other social media, will complement the overall campaign. Online advertising with visuals and video (where applicable) will aim to drive target audiences searching for commuter options, such as carpool/vanpool, etc., to the Commuter Connections website. Recently, the use of social media influencers to reach new prospects provides an opportunity to promote Commuter Connections in new and interesting ways. Utilizing such tactics at key decision-making moments will increase the reach to the target audiences and increase the likelihood of click-throughs and ultimately a request for Ridematching, GRH, or other programs and services offered. Facebook continues to be the most popular social network and Twitter(X) is an ideal platform for real-time marketing and responses within minutes of an event.

Internet advertising is also visual and closer to one-to-one selling than any other form of media. Optimized placement of banner ads on websites and mobile apps targeted to jurisdiction, news, weather, television affiliates, and job sites may be used to reach commuters who are just a click away from Commuter Connections' online Ridematching service or GRH registration and re-registration.

The marketing team will continue to expand the use of social media, and mobile apps and devices. Building upon Commuter Connections' existing pages on Facebook and Instagram (Commuter Connections, Telework) and accounts on Twitter(X) (Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day), which have received increasing attention over the last few years, the marketing team will investigate additional strategies to increase engagement and integrate social media activities through other marketing approaches. The team will continue to improve mobile access to Commuter Connections resources and commute option information and benefits and explore possibilities to better reach new audiences.

Traditional Media

The marketing effort 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. Media buying strategies will be selected based on Scarborough Research reports for specific target audiences for Ridesharing, Guaranteed Ride Home, GRH Baltimore, Employer Recognition Awards, Car Free Day, Bike to Work Day, 'Pool Rewards, CarpoolNow, Flextime Rewards, and incenTrip. 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.

Visual creative is important to provide reinforcement of messages delivered through radio spots, as well as brand awareness. FY 2024's marketing strategy will include well-placed visuals across the geographical region. Outdoor print such as bus signage and shelters will be evaluated as potential visual elements for the campaign.

Sponsorships

Opportunities to involve retailers and local businesses in sponsorship or promotion of Commuter Connections programs such as GRH Rewards, Bike to Work Day, and Car Free Day will be considered. We aim to identify businesses interested in both encouraging people to explore the use of more sustainable, healthy transportation and benefiting from the patronage of those commuters. Retailers could provide sponsorship through giveaways or discounts for Car Free Day or could be involved in co-promotional opportunities such as GRH Rewards.

Creative

Results from prior year campaigns will be studied and best practices will be carried forward to new campaigns. New creative will be developed for the Rideshare and GRH spring FY24 campaigns and as needed for other FY 2024 campaigns.

Guaranteed Ride Home Washington, DC Region

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

Target market (indicated from 2022 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Applicant Survey Report for the Washington, DC Region):

- Ages 25-34 (4%), 35-44 (19%), 45-54 (31%), 55-64 (39%)
- Non-Hispanic White (62%), Non-Hispanic Black (20%), Asian (9%), Hispanic (6%)
- Male (54%) and Female (46%)
- Annual Household Income \$60,000+ (96%), \$100,000+ (80%), \$120,000+ (66%), \$160,000+ (42%)
- One-way commute more than 30 miles (63%)/more than 45 minutes (72%)
- Lives in Virginia (57%) or Maryland (38%) or DC (2%), another state (3%) with emphasis on Prince William (15%) and Fairfax counties (11%)
- Works in DC (59%), Virginia (22%) and Maryland (19%).

Tactics:

- Target commuters in the Washington, DC metropolitan statistical area and its exurbs, encouraging them to register.
- Incorporate new and existing digital media – Google, Facebook, social media, streaming TV, influencers, and YouTube pre-roll–into the media mix, both paid media and value add.
- Use district radio stations serving the inner core. A tag will be added to the radio ad reminding people to call or visit the website to re-register annually. Radio may also be used to reach the region’s Hispanic and African American commuters.
- Use TV to visually present the message that’s conveyed in radio spots.
- Evaluate digital banner ads and interactive ads geared directly toward generating registrations.
- Incorporate web with print media through interactive media to increase web traffic and reach a younger demographic.
- Evaluate print and/or transit signage to increase awareness of the GRH program.
- Leverage human interest stories on social media, e.g., a brief video to be used on the Commuter Connections website.
- Update website images to integrate with the campaign.
- Use direct mail (allocation equals 5% of Work Program budget); explore new ideas for direct mail pieces.

GRH Washington, DC Region Media Allocation: Approximately 32% of media budget.

Guaranteed Ride Home Baltimore Region

Target market for Baltimore Metropolitan region (from 2022 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Applicant Survey Report for the Baltimore Region):

- Ages 25-34 (9%), 35-44 (20%), 45-54 (25%), 55-64 (39%)
- Non-Hispanic White (52%), Non-Hispanic Black (38%), Asian (6%) and Hispanic (4%).
- Female (62%), Male (38%)
- Annual household income \$80,000+ (73%), \$120,000+ (48%), \$160,000+ (22%)
- One-way commute 30+ miles (58%)/more than 45 minutes (52%)
- Lives in Maryland (87%), Virginia (6%), or Pennsylvania (1%), New Jersey (0%), DC (1%), Delaware (2%)
- Top home jurisdictions are Harford (21%), Baltimore City (19%), Baltimore County (18%)
- Works in Maryland (91%), DC (8%), Virginia (1%)

Tactics:

- Target commuters in the Baltimore metropolitan statistical area and St. Mary's County in Southern Maryland and exurbs, encouraging them to register for GRH.
- Use new and existing digital media – Google, social media, YouTube pre-roll –as part of the media mix and as value add.
- Focus radio advertising on stations serving the Baltimore market. A tag will be added to the radio ad reminding people to call or visit the website to re-register annually. Radio may also be used to reach the region's Hispanic and African American commuters.
- Evaluate digital banner ads and interactive ads geared directly towards generating registrations.
- Incorporate web with print media through interactive media to increase web traffic and reach a younger demographic.
- Evaluate print and/ or transit signage to increase awareness of the GRH program.
- Leverage human interest stories on social media, e.g., short video shown on website.
- Update website images to integrate with campaign.

GRH Baltimore Media Allocation: Approximately 3% of media budget.

Ridematching

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

Target market (from FY2021 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report):

- 35-64 years old (80%): <35 (12%), 35-44 (26%), 45-54 (25%), 55-64 (29%),
- Female (49%) and Male (51%)
- Non-Hispanic White (67%), Non-Hispanic Black (19%), Asian/Pacific Islander (9%), Hispanic (4%)
- \$100,000+ annual household income (79%)
- One-way commute of more than 30+ miles (67%)/more than 45 minutes (55%)
- Lives in Virginia (62%) or Maryland (29%); work in DC (47%), Virginia (25%), Maryland (18%)
- Works for employers with more than 100 employees (86%), works for employers with 1,000 or more employees (61%)
- Works for federal agencies (69%), private sector (20%)

Tactics:

- Increase awareness of benefits and ease of ridesharing through radio advertising.
- Consider using a Spanish-speaking radio station to reach out to the region's Hispanic population.
- Consider TV as an opportunity to visually present the message that's conveyed in radio spots.
- Use social media and influencers for real-time engagement with commuters.
- Use optimized digital banner ads on select websites to drive users to the Commuter Connections website and/or mobile Ridematching service for registration.
- Consider out-of-home components that make a direct connection between commuting options and saving money.
- Provide testimonials of ridesharing success stories and broaden awareness and registrations through public relations/media communications.
- Update website images to integrate with the campaign.
- Use direct mail (allocation equals 5% of Work Program budget); explore new ideas for direct mail pieces.

Rideshare Media Allocation: Approximately 48% of media budget.

CarpoolNow Mobile App

Objectives: Increase knowledge and activity of app use, in turn easing consumer access to ridesharing.

Target Market

- Rideshare demographics.
- Target audience will skew slightly younger than our transit average as younger individuals use mobile apps to a greater extent.

Tactics:

- Use media and public outreach to build awareness of mobile app.
- Reach commuters at carpool pick-up points with public outreach at park-and-rides.
- Focus messaging on promoting driving and the driver incentive.
- Leverage Commuter Connections brand equity in the Washington, DC Region.
- Promote awareness with influencers and a heavy digital presence to reach potential commuters.
- Evaluate radio for use as a secondary media.
- Tie CarpoolNow App to Rideshare messages to Car Free Day. For example, “...interested in Ridesharing? Check out the CarpoolNow App...”
- Investigate TV and live radio reads to generate additional interest in the program and drive people to the website for more information.
- Explore a video tutorial and optimize the features of the app such as the driver’s incentive. Value add from the mass marketing campaign may be used to expand the reach of the CarpoolNow Mobile App.
- Promote free passenger trips.

CarpoolNow Mobile App Media Allocation: Approximately 1% of media budget.

'Pool Rewards

Objectives: Recruit and retain commuters in carpools and vanpools through monetary incentives.

Target Market

- Rideshare demographics.
- Target audience will skew slightly younger than our transit average as younger individuals use mobile apps to a greater extent.

Tactics:

- Use media and public outreach to build awareness of the program and incentives.
- Use the cash incentive as the primary message. Additional messaging will promote environmental/health benefits of ridesharing, such as tons of CO₂ emissions reduced, gallons of gas saved, miles of commutes logged, vehicle trips saved, social responsibility of reducing traffic congestion, and improving quality of life through better health.
- Focus on Facebook and Instagram ads that promote awareness. Optimized digital banner ads may also be used.
- Evaluate radio as a secondary media.
- Tie 'Pool Rewards eligibility to Rideshare messages. For example, "...interested in Ridesharing? You may be eligible for 'Pool Rewards..."
- Investigate TV and live radio reads to generate additional interest in the program and drive people to the website for more information.
- Use value add from the mass marketing campaign to expand the reach of 'Pool Rewards.
- Consider opportunities to expand into Spanish radio.
- Promote the 'Pool Rewards program during the I-495 Northern Extension (495 NEXT) project for new Express Lanes which are under construction and will open in 2026. The 'Pool Rewards program will allow for \$100 in 'Pool Rewards incentives above the standard \$130 for each carpool participant, for a total of \$230.

'Pool Rewards Media Allocation: Approximately 1.5% of media budget.

Flextime Rewards

Objectives: Increase knowledge and participation in the program; help reduce peak traffic congestion by alerting commuters of flextime options.

Target Market

- Workers with Flextime and Telework availability.
- Younger demographics, 35 years old and younger.

Tactics:

- Use media and public outreach to build awareness of the program.
- Promote awareness by leveraging social media.
- Evaluate radio for use as a secondary media with a focus on radio talent to help personalize the promotions.
- Include Flextime Rewards messaging in existing campaigns with a call to action to download and participate in Flextime Rewards.
- Produce a YouTube tutorial exploring the benefits of the program as well as a tutorial of the program.
- Create a sell sheet to give to employers and hand out at events.
- Integrate Flextime marketing into the Commuter Connections website.
- Promote Flextime Rewards as part of incenTrip.

Flextime Rewards Media Allocation: Approximately 1% of media budget.

incentTrip Mobile App – Commuter Connections Program

Objectives: incentTrip will address congestion, reduce energy use, and reduce emissions while improving multimodal transportation system performance along congested corridors. A key benefit of incentTrip is the development of personalized and dynamic incentives that vary based on individual preferences and real-time traffic conditions, which significantly improve the cost-effectiveness of traveler incentives.

Target Market

- Commuters working in the Washington, DC metropolitan region, including those from the Richmond region who commute one-way an average of 17.1 miles and an average of 43 minutes.
- General public, employers, and media.

Tactics:

- Implement a marketing initiative for the launch that will ask commuters to download and use the incentTrip app.
- The marketing initiative will include, but not be limited to radio, internet, newspaper, educational video, SEO blog posts, venue, mobile, social media and text ads.
- Update the website and social media pages to feature promotional activities and point-based incentive. Use media placements, including value-added placements, to reach the target markets.
- Design and coordinate the marketing effort with the input of COG/TPB staff, and the Commuter Connections Subcommittee.
- Promote earning points for cash, gift cards, Nift, SmartBenefits, and E-ZPass incentives to travelers who use incentTrip.
- Promote incentTrip for Employers that allows an employer to set up a companywide employee challenge through a customized dashboard.

incentTrip (Commuter Connections) Media Allocation: Approximately 3% of media budget.

incentTrip Mobile App – MDOT Program

Objectives: incentTrip will address congestion, reduce energy use, and reduce emissions while improving multimodal transportation system performance along congested corridors. A key benefit of incentTrip is the development of personalized and dynamic incentives that vary based on individual preferences and real-time traffic conditions, which significantly improve the cost-effectiveness of traveler incentives.

Target Market

- Commuters working in Maryland outside of the Washington, DC metropolitan region (i.e., all counties/cities in Maryland except for Prince George’s, Montgomery, Charles, and Calvert counties).
- Smaller-urban areas throughout the state such as Cumberland, Hagerstown, Salisbury, and the outskirts of Wilmington.
- General public, employers, and media.

Tactics:

- Implement a marketing initiative for the launch that will ask commuters to download and use the incentTrip app.
- The marketing initiative will include, but not be limited to, radio, internet, newsprint, educational video, SEO blog posts, mobile, social media, and text ads.
- Update the website and social media pages to feature promotional activities and point-based incentives. Use media placements, including value-added placements, to reach the target markets.
- Design and coordinate the marketing effort with the input of COG/TPB staff and MDOT staff.
- Promote earning points for cash, gift cards, Nift, SmartBenefits, and E-ZPass incentives to travelers who use incentTrip.

incentTrip (MDOT) Media Allocation: Approximately 3% of media budget.

Special Events

Objectives: Use Bike to Work Day, Car Free Day, and the Employer Recognition Awards events to highlight existing programs and encourage other employers and commuters to become involved, increase their ridership, or enhance their on-site programs. Increase participation in Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day, and also in employer nominations for the awards program.

Target Markets:

- Car Free Day 2023:
 - SOV drivers; car-heavy families and individuals; students
 - Ages 16-65
 - Lives/works in the Washington, DC metropolitan area
- Bike to Work Day 2024 (from 2022 Bike To Work Survey Analysis Report): Ages 25-55 (61%), 25-34 (14%), 35-44 (25%), 45-54 (22%), 55-64 (26%)
 - Male 65% and Female 35%.
 - Caucasian 82%, Hispanic (6%), Asian (5%), African American (4%)
 - Annual household income \$80,000+ (86%), \$100,000+ (79%), \$120,000+ (69%), \$160,000+ (51%)
 - Works for federal agency (36%), private sector (35%), nonprofit (18%)
 - Lives in VA (45%), DC (27%), and MD (28%)
 - Lives in Montgomery (20%), Fairfax (18%), Arlington (13%)
 - Works in DC (48%), VA (32%), and MD (20%)
 - Works for employer size of more than 100 employees (62%), 1,000+ (31%)
- Employer Recognition Awards 2023:
 - Level 3 & 4 employers in Commuter Connections Network area.

Tactics:

Car Free Day (CFD) September 22, 2023:

- Secure corporate, retailers, and other sponsorships for CFD, with a focus on consumer retailers.
- Tie-in the incenTrip mobile app and promote the bonus points that can be realized if using the app to go car free or car-lite on CFD.
- Promote CarpoolNow mobile app
- Focus on teleworking and vanpool in addition to family-friendly messaging.
- Explore teaming with media channels to promote and cover local events.
- Expand digital and social media, explore video ads, digital radio, digital video and YouTube as primary media.
- Evaluate using radio personalities and key influencers through on-air and online/social media communications to increase awareness of CFD and drive listeners to carfreemetrodc.org to take the free pledge.
- Provide marketing collateral such as flyers.
- Use transit/outdoor signage (bus exterior and bus shelter ads).
- Use text messaging to opt-in participants.

- Send mailing to employers.
- Send email blasts to past participants, opt-in customer database, employers and Committee Members.
- Engage Transportation Planning Board members through regional Proclamation and encourage jurisdictional partners to do the same.
- Increase University Challenge participation through campus commuter programs, green groups, clubs, media, and RA Directors. Create challenges between universities and workplaces for most pledges.
- Compliment paid digital and social media with a strong earned media plan as well as outreach to employers, schools, and key influencers like bloggers and podcasters.
- Send an email after the event to all of those who took the pledge, offering congratulations, appreciation, and a list of the benefits of going Car Free or Car Lite, along with a link to the Commuter Connections website for more information on programs to sustain a car free lifestyle.
- Produce newsletter articles.
- Reach 5,000 pledges.
- Include a daily pledge leaderboard by mode on the website.

Bike to Work Day (BTWD) May 2024:

- Secure corporate and other sponsorships.
- Use an integrated mix of radio, social media, and display ad advertising to boost registration.
- Provide additional marketing collateral and advertising including t-shirts, flyers, posters, and rack cards.
- Should additional sponsor dollars become available, provide additional marketing such as pit stop banners.
- Send mailing to employers.
- Send email blasts to past participants, opt-in customer database, employers and Committee Members.
- Use earned media to reach minorities and women.
- Engage Transportation Planning Board members through regional Proclamation and encourage jurisdictional partners to do the same.
- Meet goal set by Committee (approximately 5% above previous year's number).

Employer Recognition Awards

- Coordinate the Employer Recognition Awards ceremony, June 2024.
- Provide brochure/online nomination form in support of the nomination process
- Send email blast to potential nominees.
- Include marketing collateral for the event such as invitations, program brochure, podium sign, and promotional giveaways.
- Place a print advertisement in a major business publication(s) highlighting winning employers.

- Secure earned media for the event and winners.

Special Events Media Allocation: Approximately 7.5% of media budget: 4% for BTWD, 3% for CFD, and .5% for the Employer Recognition Awards event.

Employer Outreach

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

Target Market (from FY 2021 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report):

- Employers with more than 250 employees (75%).
- Private sector employers (20%).

Tactics:

- Update web content as required.
- Update social media applications (e.g., Facebook) for telework.
- Produce quarterly employer newsletter.
- Produce a quarterly Federal Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) newsletter insert.
- Provide images and logos to support Commuter Connections programs for use in Network Member newsletters and correspondence.
- Send email marketing and mailings.
- Continuously update Federal ETC website information.
- Develop Employer Case Studies.

Employer Outreach Media Allocation: 0% of media budget.

FY 2024 Creative Development Schedule

Develop Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule	Aug 2023
Review research and results from previous campaigns	Aug 2023
Feedback on Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule	Aug 2023
Present creative approach at the Regional TDM Marketing Group meeting	Sept 2023
Present visual creative concepts to Regional TDM Marketing Workgroup & State TDM Workgroup	Oct 2023
Refine and develop creative based on all feedback; finalize creative	Nov 2023
Produce creative	Dec 2023
Distribute creative to media vendors	Jan 2024
Campaign launch	Feb 2024

FY 2024 Marketing Campaign Schedule

Car Free Day	Sept 2023
'Pool Rewards	Oct 2023 – Jan 2024
CarpoolNow Mobile Application	Nov 2023 - Jan 2024
Fall Campaign (GRH & Rideshare)	Oct – Dec 2023
Spring Campaign (GRH & Rideshare)	Feb – June 2024
incenTrip/Flextime Rewards	Feb – May 2024
Bike to Work Day	Apr – May 2024
Employer Recognition Awards	June 2024