



Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey

Baltimore Metropolitan Region
Fiscal Year 2014

Draft Report

January 20, 2015

We'll get you home. Guaranteed.

**National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**



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AUTHORS: Douglas Franklin, TDM Marketing Specialist
Nicholas Ramfos, Director, Commuter Connections

AGENCY: The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) was established in 1957 by local jurisdictions to address regional concerns including transportation, growth, housing, environment, public health and safety. The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) became associated with COG in 1966 and serves as the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region. The TPB prepares plans and programs that the federal government must approve in order for federal-aid transportation funds to flow to the Washington region.

Commuter Connections is a regional network of transportation organizations coordinated by the TPB. Established in 1974, Commuter Connections offers free commuter services to help both businesses and their employees find the best available commuting options to improve traffic congestion and improve air quality through lower auto emissions. Primary services of Commuter Connections include ridematching for carpools and vanpools, administration of the Guaranteed Ride Home and 'Pool Rewards rideshare incentive programs, marketing of alternative commute options, and coordination of an employer outreach program including telework.

Funding for the Baltimore GRH program is provided by:

Maryland Department of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation

ABSTRACT: This report presents results of a survey of all Guaranteed Ride Home trip recipients working in the Baltimore Metropolitan region during fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014). The survey was designed to gauge the level of satisfaction of commuters who utilized the GRH service.

The GRH program eliminates a key barrier to using alternative modes; commuter fear of being stranded at the workplace during an unexpected personal or family emergency, or unscheduled overtime.

PUBLICATION: The final report once adopted will be published on the Commuter Connections website at www.commuterconnections.org under the About Us, Publications section.

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Background

Guaranteed Ride Home Program Description

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) through its Commuter Connections program, under the auspices of its funders, has operated the Guaranteed Ride Home program (GRH) in the Baltimore Metropolitan region since October 2011. A “commuter insurance” program, GRH is designed to encourage ridesharing and transit usage by providing a way home for qualifying commuters in the case of an unexpected personal/family emergency, or unscheduled overtime when their normal alternative commute mode is not available. Many area workers who consider switching commute modes from Single Occupancy Vehicles to carpools, vanpools, and transit are concerned about being stranded at work if they unexpectedly have to leave before or after standard work hours. GRH eliminates this concern, and encourages carpooling/vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling and walking to work. Commuters who use these transportation modes twice a week are provided with four free GRH rides home per year. Alternative mode commute practices reduce the number of automobiles on the road and help the region toward air quality goals. The GRH program’s Participation Guidelines and survey samples used during FY 2014 are provided in the Appendix of this report.

Customer Satisfaction Survey and Methodology

The Customer Satisfaction Survey for GRH was conducted as an ongoing study each month throughout the fiscal year. All customers who obtained a free ride home through the program during FY14 were provided the opportunity to participate in the survey. Surveys are administered online on the day following the GRH trip, along with a link to the survey. Customers who have not provided Commuter Connections with an email address, roughly 17%, receive the survey through the U.S. Postal Service. For each ride taken, a postage-paid response card survey along with a cover letter (*see* Appendix) was sent. The letter informed the commuter of the purpose and voluntary nature of the survey. The online survey email contains a similar message. Both the hard copy and online surveys allow respondents to rate the GRH service and provide comments and suggestions. Some respondents voluntarily provide their name, and with their consent, may be featured in news articles and/or the Commuter Connections web site as testimonials. See appendix for samples of the survey response card and online survey used. Note: some respondents did not answer all questions. As a result, response totals to some questions may not be equal to the total number of survey respondents.

Survey Design

The FY 2014 survey consists of five multiple-choice questions, one fill in the blank and an area for comments. Four questions provide insight into customer opinions regarding various operational functions of GRH and ask respondents to rate aspects of the service by selecting one of four responses—“Poor,” “Fair,” “Good,” or “Excellent.” Another multiple choice question asks the reason for the trip, and a fill in the blank question asks respondents to indicate their wait time. The comments area provides an open ended forum to offer specific or general feedback, whether positive or negative.

The performance areas of GRH were addressed by four multiple-choice questions pertaining to: reservations staff; transportation service; response time and overall service. “Reservations staff” refers to the operators who answered telephone calls from commuters requesting GRH service, verified the request in accordance with the official GRH participation guidelines, and arranged the ride for the commuter. These contracted staff are employees of Diamond Transportation Services, Inc., which provided such services under an arrangement with COG. “Transportation service” refers to the modes of transportation (e.g. taxi, rental car service) and the affiliated organizations (e.g. xyz cab company, Enterprise Rent-a-car) that provided the trips from the workplace to the final destination. The types of transportation modes used for the GRH trips were selected by Diamond Transportation based on the type and severity of the emergency, distance traveled, and customer preferences.

Fiscal Year 2014 Survey Results Baltimore Region

Response Rates

Number of Surveys Sent and Received

Of the 198 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2014, 160 completed surveys were received, an 81 percent return rate.

Reservation Staff

Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservation staff?

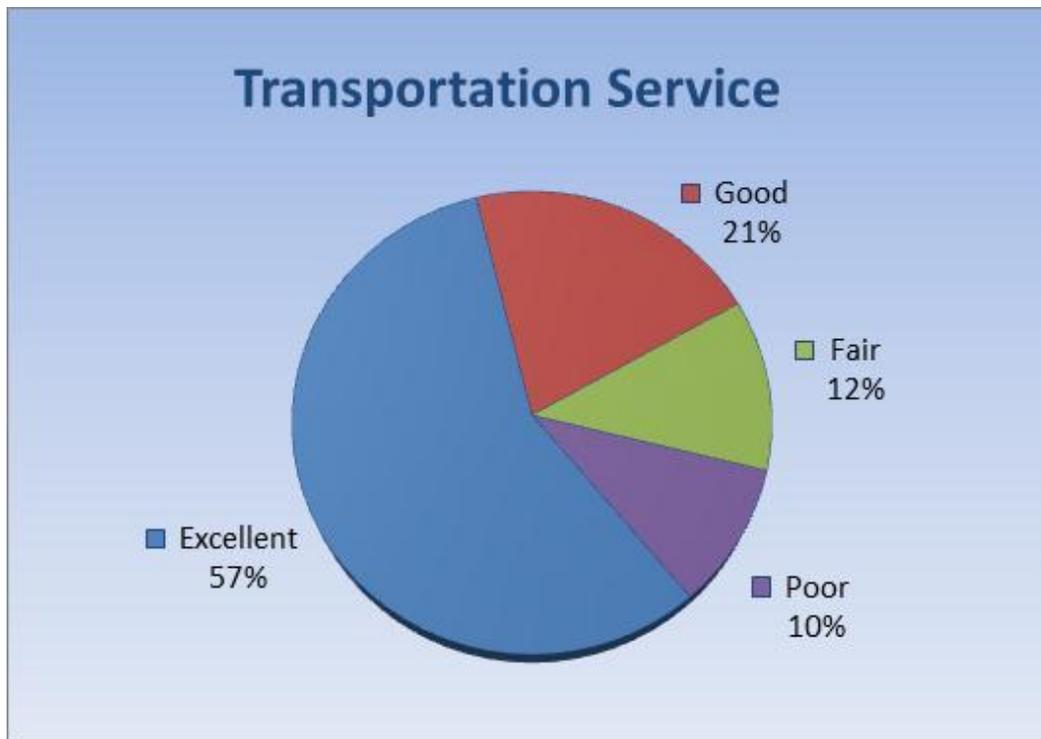


88% rated the trip reservations staff as either excellent or good.

Transportation Service

Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?



78% rated the transportation service as either excellent or good.

Response Time - Rating

Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate our response time?



75% rated the trip reservations staff as either excellent or good.

Response Time – Minutes

Percentages of Responses Received

Approximately how many minutes did you wait until your ride?

Average response wait in FY14 was 17 minutes. The percentage of customers with a wait time of 30 minutes or less was 88%.



40% waited 15 minutes or less.

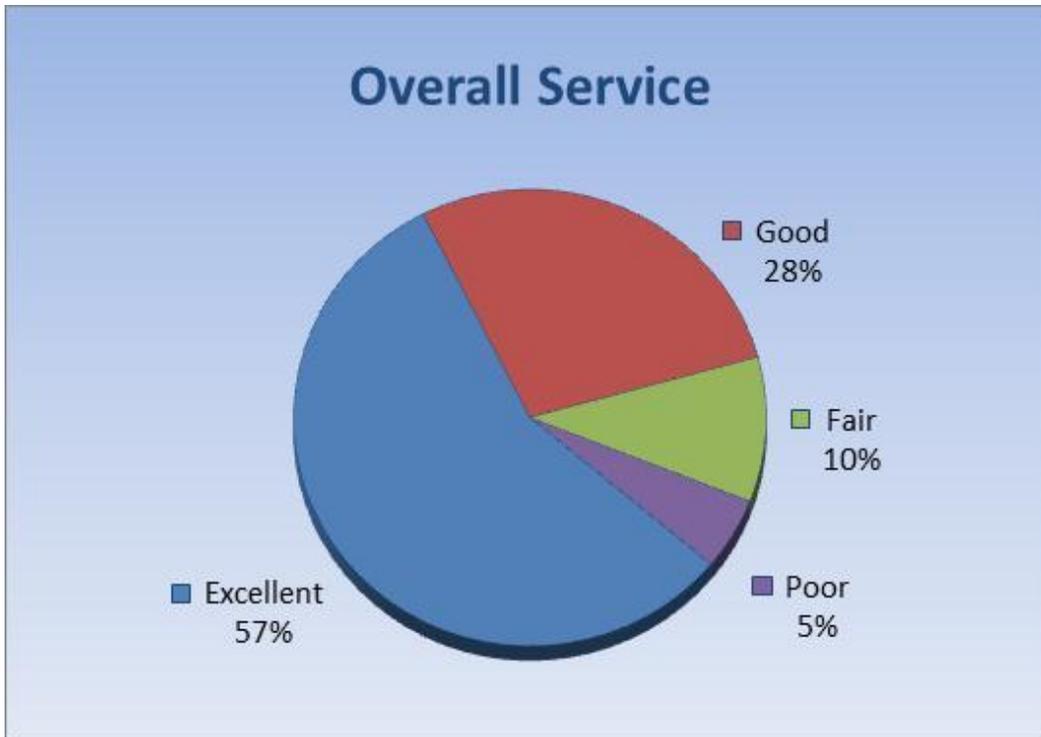
64% waited 30 minutes or less.

Average wait time was 30 minutes.

Overall Service

Percentages of Responses Received

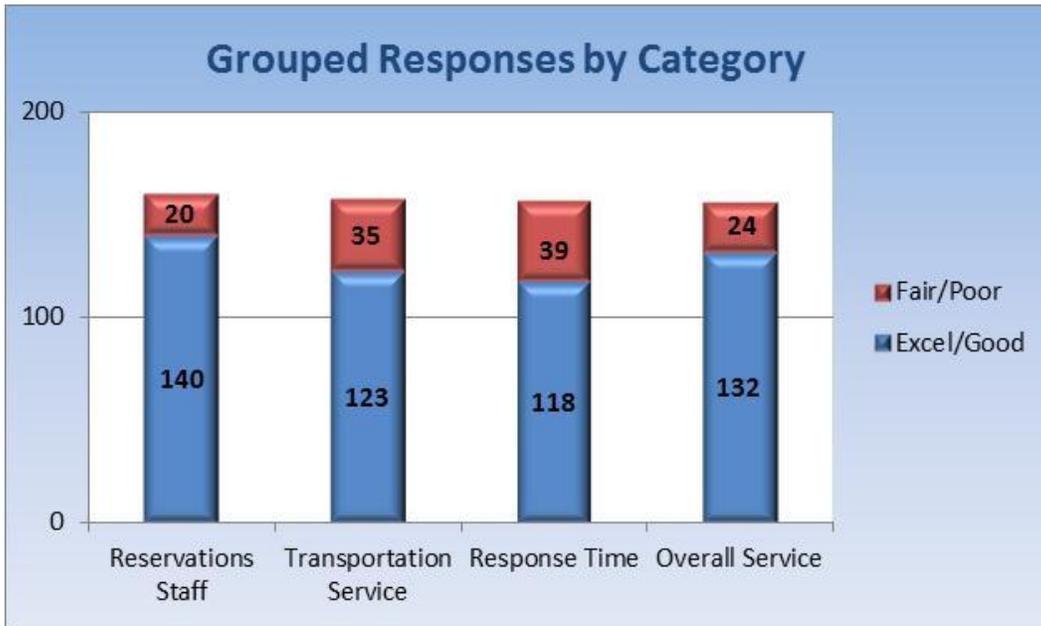
Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?



85% rated the Overall Service as either excellent or good.

Excellent/Good vs. Fair/Poor: All Questions

Number of Responses Based on Combined Satisfaction Levels

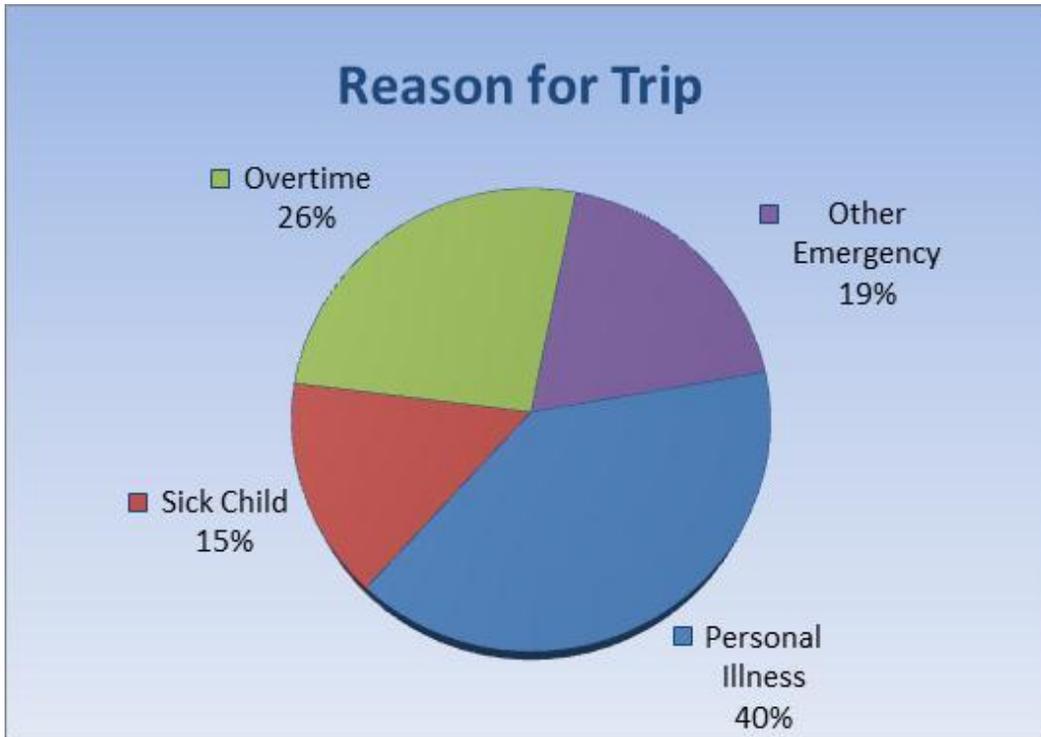


This chart emphasizes the overwhelming favorable ratings (excellent & good) compared to the less favorable ratings (fair & poor). For example, in the first column, 140 respondents gave the Reservations Staff category a favorable rating of either Excellent or Good, noted in the blue area. In contrast, only 20 respondents, shown on top in red, rated the reservations staff with a less favorable “Fair or Poor” response.

Reason for Trip

Percentages of Responses Received

What was the reason for your GRH Trip?



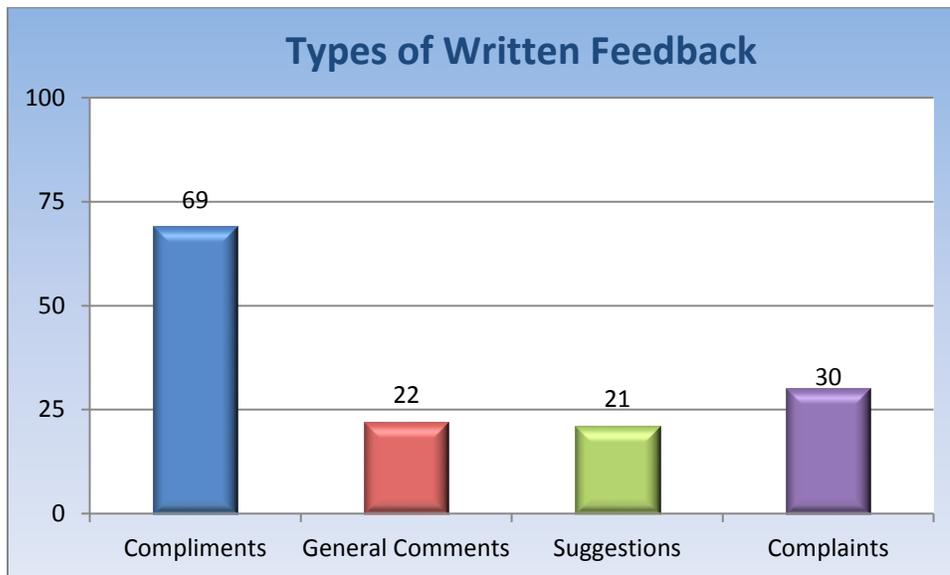
At 40%, Personal Illness was the most common reason given for using GRH.

Written Responses

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, survey respondents were offered the option of providing written comments. All feedback is valuable for assessing customer attitudes regarding specific service areas, and helps to gauge the general pulse of the program. The total number of written responses equaled 118 out of 160 returned surveys, nearly 3/4 (74%) of survey participants.

The open-ended written responses included compliments, suggestions, complaints, and comments. Respondents were allowed to check all that applied, and a significant amount of feedback given fell into more than one type of written response category, hence the below chart adds up to more than 118. A respondent may have given a compliment about a specific aspect of the experience coupled with a complaint about a completely separate aspect. For example, “*The taxi was quick to arrive but the driver was not hospitable*”. This example is both a compliment and complaint.

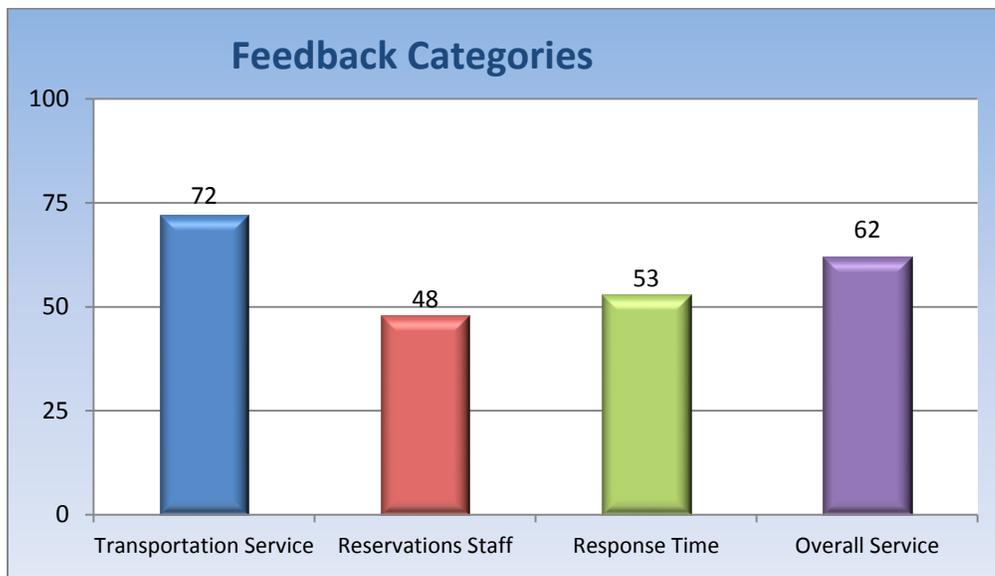
Types of Feedback



Compliments were given by 69 respondents out of 118 written comments, far outpacing the other types at 58 percent. Compliments were as simple as “thank you”, or were lengthy and specific. General Comments were the second most common type of written feedback, followed by Suggestions and Complaints.

Written Feedback Categories

The vast majority of respondent feedback fell into more than one category, as respondents were allowed to check all that apply, hence the below chart adds up to far more than the 118 who provides written feedback. Respondents were prone to comment about multiple aspects of the service provided. For example, *“The reservations staff and taxi driver were kind and helpful, and the driver was already waiting for me outside my office building, it’s a wonderful program!”* This type of written feedback touches on all four areas; reservations staff, transportation service, response time, and overall service.



Most respondents, 72 who provided written feedback did so by mentioning the transportation service. This was reflective of 61% of the 118 written responses. The overall service received the second greatest amount of written feedback at 62 (53%). At 53, response time was mentioned in 45% of written feedback and at 48, reservations staff was mentioned the least (41%).

Compliments

With 69 survey respondents who provided compliments, positive feedback was (58 percent) the most prevalent type out of the total 118 written responses received; this was more than 2 times the rate of complaints. Many were expressions of gratitude for the GRH service. Some commuters explicitly listed GRH as the main reason which allows them to utilize an alternative commute mode. Many of the respondents provided personal stories about how GRH helped them during a crisis situation.

Respondents frequently complimented more than one area of service, therefore the combined response numbers for each area will be more the total number of surveys with compliments. For example a respondent in the same survey may in their written feedback, compliment both the reservations staff and the taxi cab driver, this is counted as one response for each category.

The vast majority compliments were about Overall Service, followed by the Transportation Service. The breakdown of compliments by category are as follows: 54 of 69 compliments were made about the Overall Service, 78 percent; 42 compliments were made about the Transportation Service, 61 percent; 40 were made about the Reservations Staff, 58 percent; and 35 were made about Response Time, 51 percent. It should also be noted that compliments received regarding the Transportation Service almost exclusively pertained to taxi trips, as only a small percentage of the trips used the rental car service.

Samples of actual compliments from FY14:

- The person on the phone was very efficient and friendly, the taxi came within ten minutes and the ride to my car fast and uneventful.
- This service is a lifesaver, it is comforting to know that it is available.
- Excellent. Everyone was helpful, courteous, and professional.
- This program is wonderful for people like me. Thank you so much, I really appreciate the help.
- Excellent service was provided from beginning to end, including a very friendly taxi driver.
- This service was fantastic to utilize! Having this option made things much easier for me, even though I took the commuter bus that day.
- GRH is the absolute best...thumbs up...love this program.
- I loved the experience and am encouraging other commuters to take advantage of it.
- Overall, I am truly grateful for the GRH program. I shared the GRH information with my other 10 van pool riders and they all registered for the program.

Complaints

A total of 30 survey respondents provided complaints about the GRH service; 25% out of the 118 written responses. Respondents who complained may have also provided written feedback of other types. For example of respondents who cited a complaint, 10% also gave a compliment.

Most of the complaints, 20 were about the Transportation Service, 67%; response time had 13 complaints, 43%; reservations staff received 7 complaints, 23%; and complaints about the overall service were made by 5, 17%. Complaints received under the transportation service category almost exclusively pertained to taxi trips, as a small percentage of trips used the rental car service.

Due to budgetary reasons, some commuters are asked to augment their GRH trip by using transit if available. For example, they may have been asked to take Metrorail to the end of the line and get a taxi from that point. This reduced the distance of the taxi ride and consequently, the cost of the taxi service. Of those who lodged a complaint, this topic was widely unpopular and resulted in having a negative impact on customer satisfaction. This is evident based on the multitude of comments received on the subject.

Sample of actual complaints from FY14:

- The cab was smelly that is my only complaint.
- The cab that picked me up was small for my size and height. The GRH receptionist should ask the patron for their size and height to ensure a cab is sent to accommodate their size.
- They should to get there faster for people who are feeling sick.
- The process could be improved by not having to wash the car before I took it from Enterprise. That was the majority of the wait time.
- The wait time was terrible, the cab was dirty, raggedy and smelly. the taxi contract service is horrible.
- Taxi driver needed directions to my building which held up his arrival time. Should have GPS or other source.
- The taxi smelled very strongly of smoke it was a very unpleasant ride. Next time I will request a non-smoking taxi.
- The cab driver was talking on the phone while driving and in his native language very loud in which I didn't know if he was talking about me. I feel he violated Maryland Law.

Recap Summary

Of the 198 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2014, 160 an astonishing 81 percent of surveys were completed. The vast majority, 85% of the survey respondents were pleased with the overall GRH service. Written responses were entered on nearly 3/4 of the returned surveys, the majority of which (58%) contained compliments. Compliments outweighed criticism more than 2 to 1. For every category, good or above ratings were given by 75% or more of the respondents. Average response wait was 30 minutes and 34% waited 30 minutes or less.

Appendix

Sample Cover Letter Sent with Survey Card



Dear Commuter:

Thank you for using the Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in September. As a standard practice, we send out survey cards to all of our customers, in order to determine their level of satisfaction with this free service. Your feedback will help us gauge the program's continued value and also help improve and better serve commuters in the Washington metropolitan area.

Please take just a moment to complete the enclosed survey card and simply drop it in the mail within 10 days, no postage necessary!

Please note, your answers to the survey should only reflect your September 2008 GRH trip. If you have again used the GRH service after September 30, 2008, you will receive a separate survey card for that trip.

For the latest 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 1-800-745-7433.

Thank you for using an alternative method of transportation to get to work and for supporting the Guaranteed Ride Home program. Your efforts help to reduce traffic congestion and improve the air we breathe.

Please be sure to tell your co-workers and neighbors to sign up for the free Guaranteed Ride Home program at www.commuterconnections.org.

Happy Commuting!

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS

We'll get you home. Guaranteed.

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, N.E. SUITE 900 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002-4239

THE COMMUTER INFORMATION SOURCE FOR MARYLAND, VIRGINIA AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

www.commuterconnections.org



1-800-745-7433

Sample Survey Response Card



Thank you for using Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH).
We'd like to know how you feel about our program.

Please take a moment to complete this card and drop it in the mail. Your response is greatly appreciated.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
1. How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. What was the reason for your GRH trip? <input type="checkbox"/> Sick Child <input type="checkbox"/> Overtime <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Illness <input type="checkbox"/> Other Emergency
2. How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Your name: (optional)
3. How would you rate our response time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Comments: _____
4. Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5. Approximately how many minutes did you wait until receiving your ride?	_____ minutes				_____

1-800-745-RIDE • www.commuterconnections.org **COMMUTER CONNECTIONS** A SMARTER WAY TO WORK **We'll get you home. Guaranteed.**

Sample Online Survey

Commuter Connections GRH Satisfaction Survey

We'd like to know how you feel about our program. Please take a moment to complete this survey. Your response is greatly appreciated.

How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservation staff?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

How would you rate our response time?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Overall how would you rate our GRH service?

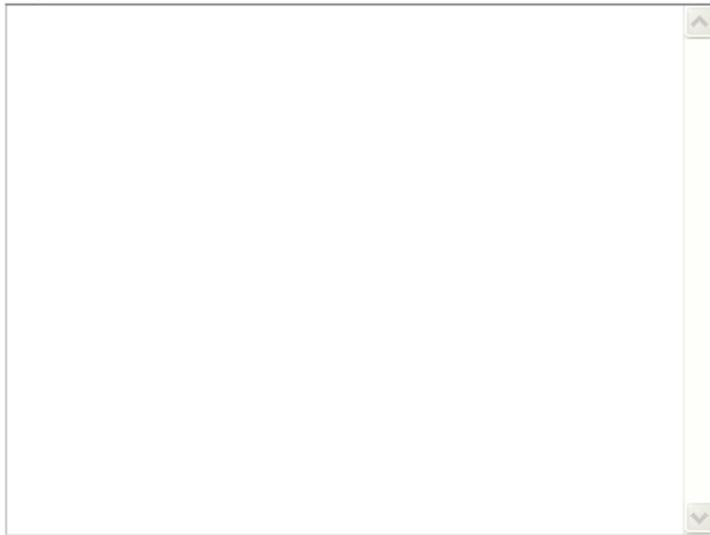
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Approximately how many minutes did you wait until receiving your ride?

What was the reason for your GRH trip?

- Sick Child
- Personal Illness
- Unscheduled Overtime
- Other Emergency

Please Provide us with any comments about your GRH experience.



Do you consider your comments to be a: (check all that apply)

Compliment



Suggestion



Complaint



General Comment



Do your comments refer to: (check all that apply)

Taxi or Rental Car Service

Overall Service

Reservation Staff

Response Time

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 be officially registered with Commuter Connections before using the Guaranteed Ride Home service. Commuters must provide the supervisor name and phone number and at least two (2) phone numbers (home/cell and work) in order to register for 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 officially register *before* additional GRH trips are granted. 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. GRH is only available to people commuting to and from work.
2. **Commuters must call Commuter Connections and receive authorization from Commuter Connections prior to using the GRH service.** Commuter Connections will issue an authorization number(s) to the commuter to approve a GRH trip. **Commuters will not be reimbursed for trips not authorized by Commuter Connections.** After approval, Commuter Connections will make the GRH trip arrangements for the commuter and, if necessary, provide instructions on how and where the GRH transportation provider will pick up the commuter. Commuter Connections is equipped to provide wheelchair accessible transportation as part of the GRH service as needed.
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 within 12 months from the date of their one-time exception GRH trip. The GRH trip credits are non-transferable.
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 disasters.**

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 designated program holidays and any planned and/or unplanned Federal Government office closings. **GRH TRIPS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE 10:00 P.M to ensure that the commuter has received their ride. Designated program Holidays include: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., 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. To be eligible, a commuter must be physically working in the following areas in Washington, D.C. or Baltimore, MD. The area includes the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's; the City of Baltimore, and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William; and the City of Alexandria as well as all cities within the aforementioned counties.
9. Eligible commuters can live anywhere inside **the areas listed in Guideline #8** or in any of the following areas: Allegany, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot or Washington counties in Maryland; and Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Madison, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Warren, or Westmoreland counties, the City of Fredericksburg, or the City of Winchester in Virginia; and Berkeley, Hampshire, or Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Adams, Franklin, or York counties in Pennsylvania. Any residence outside of the above-mentioned areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
10. All GRH trips must originate from the commuter's work location. 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. **Commuter Connections will determine the type of service used and will issue a valid GRH authorization number at that time.**
11. Commuter Connections will pay for one vendor service and/or one transit service per request. If the GRH trip uses a taxi, Commuter Connections will pay for all charges, excluding gratuity, to the destination. **The commuter is responsible only for tipping the taxi driver.** Cancellation on the part of the commuter of a GRH trip may count as one of the four annual trips.

If a transit option is used for part of the GRH trip, the commuter will be mailed a transit reimbursement voucher. The transit reimbursement voucher must be submitted back to Commuter Connections within thirty days of transit use in order for payment to be made. Please allow 45 days for reimbursement. A commuter's supervisor must sign the transit voucher for any trip granted because of unscheduled overtime in order for the reimbursement to be issued.

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), and 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 Commuter Connections at 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.

07/16/10