



**Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments**

**FY23 Second Half
Marketing Campaign Summary
First Draft Report**

Regional TDM Marketing Group

March 21, 2023

FY23 Second Half

Marketing Campaign Summary

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Executive Summary

Overview

This document summarizes Commuter Connections' FY23 marketing activity occurring between January and June 2023. Special events planning and promotion during the second half of FY23 include the Spring Umbrella Campaign, Bike to Work Day and the Employer Recognition Awards. Note: a portion of the 'Pool Rewards VDOT I-66 campaign which started in the fall of 2022 extended into a part of January 2023.

Post Pandemic

Now fully entrenched in a post pandemic world, many are still impacted by isolation, social distance, and stress. Depression, anxiety, and the inability to make change have surfaced as issues. Almost six times as many employers report increased mental health issues among employees—burnout being among the most common. ([Forbes](#)) In a recent survey, over half of employees said they were open to leaving their employer for a position elsewhere that included enhanced benefits and more flexibility. American workers are in need of flexibility, balance, connection, and care. ([CDC](#)) Studies show that employees who feel cared for at work are over three times happier.

We have an opening to reposition the time spent on commuting to time invested in self, in social connection, and in things that help individuals change their current state of mind. The commute now offers employers the unique potential to help employees emerge from the mental lockdown that once kept them safe, but now threatens their well-being.

In FY2023, Commuter Connections had qualitative research conducted to garner commuter and employer opinions on commuting and to identify messaging areas that encourage alternative mode use in the post-pandemic landscape. The research indicated a “new normal” for workers in the region, which included a mix of work locations and commute modes. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of workers are teleworking, at least occasionally. The majority (55%) of commuters are drive-alone, and the largest share of commute trips. Feeling comfortable while commuting is just as important to respondents as saving time and money. Avoiding traffic, and having flexibility and reliability are very desirable in a commute. Workers highly value comfort, avoiding stress, and relaxing during commutes. Additionally, there are a group of workers who are concerned with remaining safe from crime and illness on their way to work.

Workers want better commute experiences overall. Lingering COVID pandemic concerns are that public transportation is not sanitary or safe and can be unreliable. Workers who drive alone describe commutes as frustrating, boring, and are worried about other drivers, traffic congestion, gas prices, wasteful, long and/or stressful commutes. Workers who enjoy driving alone say it's safer, private, quiet, and peaceful.

Compared to other alternative commute modes, carpooling is perceived to be better, as workers feel it can be a positive and friendly alternative. However, many are not yet comfortable carpooling with those they don't know and need help finding coworkers to carpool with. Safety concerns still play a significant role as a quarter of workers feel it is important that other carpoolers are vaccinated and/or wearing a mask.

Based on insights from the spring 2022 research, Commuter Connections is continuing to position itself as a comprehensive program with a range of benefits and incentive programs. The messaging ideas that workers say would help encourage alternative modes of travel are as follows: Start with small changes to your commute, once a week or month; commutes that offer relaxation are proven to improve health and quality of life; and sharing your commute is safe and affordable.

GRH & Ridesharing Spring Umbrella Campaign

The spring 2023 campaign is geared to workers returning to the office, even for just a few days a week. The “Together” concept uses a top-down view of a vehicle and quote bubbles to convey the concept of a shared ride. It offers a quick and visual way to convey the many social and financial positives of ridesharing—like having an affordable, reliable way of getting to and from work with a group you know and trust. Commuting is better and happier when we do it together, through trusted channels.

The Guaranteed Ride Home portion of the campaign encourages registrations using a similarly themed message. The FY23 second half media buy is \$324,920.50 for Rideshare and \$325,000 for GRH. The GRH Baltimore media buy is \$24,997.

Bike to Work Day

Commuter Connections concluded its Bike to Work Day 2023 event sponsorship drive at the end of January 2023, securing \$38,550 in cash and \$22,050 in in-kind donations. The media plan budget for the Bike to Work Day marketing campaign is \$65,000.

Employer Recognition Awards

The 2023 Employer Recognition Awards program recognizes employers who initiate outstanding worksite commute benefits and/or telework programs to assist employees. The nomination period concluded at the end of January, the Selection Committee will take place in late March, and winners will be honored in June. The media buy for the Employer Recognition Awards print ad is \$7,500.

Incentive Programs

A portion of the ‘Pool Rewards VDOT I-66 campaign which started in the fall of 2022 extended into a part of January 2023.

Introduction

The following reports were assessed as part of the planning process to help shape creative approaches and media selection during the second half of FY23. These survey reports indicate respondents' attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and patterns about commuting and Commuter Connections programs, services, and events. Many of the surveys also gathered demographic data to help understand age, income, gender, and racial/ethnic backgrounds of the region's citizens and Commuter Connections members.

- 2022 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Applicant Survey Report for the Baltimore Region
- 2022 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Applicant Survey Report for the Washington, DC Region
- 2021 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report
- 2020 Commuter Connections TDM Analysis Report (FY18–FY20)
- 2019 Commuter Connections Bike to Work Survey Analysis Report
- 2019 Commuter Connections State of the Commute Survey Report

The second half of FY23 includes the following activities:

- 'Pool Rewards VDOT I-66 campaign (part of Jan 2023 only)
- Winter/spring employer newsletters
- GRH and Rideshare campaigns
- IncenTrip/Flextime Rewards campaign
- Bike to Work Day campaign
- Employer Recognition Awards campaign

About Commuter Connections

Commuter Connections is a network of transportation organizations coordinated at a regional level through the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Commuter Connections offers free commuter services to workers in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Major services include ridematching for carpools and vanpools, and administration of the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in the Washington, DC and Baltimore regions. Other key elements include TDM evaluation, incentive programs, and special events. Through its Employer Outreach Representatives, Commuter Connections also assists employers with guidance on establishing and enhancing commuter programs, including telework and offering free collateral materials.

Organizations represented in the Commuter Connections Regional TDM Marketing Group include:

- Arlington County Commuter Services
- Bethesda Transportation Solutions
- City of Alexandria GO Alex
- City of Fairfax
- District Department of Transportation
- Dulles Area Transportation Association
- Enterprise Rideshare
- Fairfax Connector
- Fairfax County Commuter Services
- GW Ride Connect
- Loudoun County Commuter Services
- Maryland Department of Transportation
- Maryland State Highway Administration
- Maryland Transit Administration
- Montgomery County Commuter Services
- Montgomery County Ride On
- National Institutes of Health
- North Bethesda Transportation Center
- Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
- OmniRide (PRTC)
- Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation
- Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
- TransIT Services of Frederick County
- Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
- Tysons Partnership Transportation Council
- U.S. General Services Administration
- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Virginia Railway Express
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Brand Character

Commuter Connections delivers a brand promise as the preeminent and trusted regional network of transportation organizations in the Washington, DC region, providing free commuting services and solutions for more than 45 years. Through Commuter Connections' online Ridematching system, commuters are given free direct access to others who are looking to carpool and vanpool, along with access to routes and other alternative mode options such as transit, bicycling, and teleworking. Sharing a ride to work positively affects air quality and mobility for the region.



GRH & Rideshare Spring Campaign

The “Together” concept uses a view from above a vehicle with quote bubbles from the ridesharing passengers. It offers a quick and visual way to convey the many social and financial benefits of ridesharing, such as having an affordable, reliable way of getting to and from work with a group one knows and trusts. Commuting is better and happier when we do it together, through trusted channels.

Costs from the media buy and associated impressions are below:

Ridesharing Budget	Gross Cost	COG Cost	Estimated Impressions
WTOP	\$71,270.00	\$60,579.50	2,016,000
WFED	\$22,500.00	\$19,125.00	132,000
EI Zol	\$29,325.00	\$24,926.30	485,000
WASH	\$18,840.00	\$16,014.00	150,000
WWDC	\$17,640.00	\$14,994.00	175,000
WIHT	\$17,250.00	\$14,662.50	160,000
WAMU	\$6,600.00	\$5,610.00	687,000
Peacock	\$23,530.00	\$20,000.00	40,000
Hulu	\$17,758	\$15,094.00	50,000
WTOP.com	\$10,882.40	\$9,250.00	325,000
Waze		\$1,000	NA
Google Adwords		\$1,000	NA
Washingtonpost.com	\$11,765.00	\$10,000.00	928,000
NBC4.com	\$11,765.00	\$10,000.00	1,000,000
YouTube		\$1,500.00	NA
Instagram		\$1,600.00	NA
Facebook		\$1,600.00	NA
LinkedIn		\$2,231.30	NA
PoPville	\$1,147.00	\$975.00	5,000
Northern VA Magazine	\$2,353.00	\$2,000.00	150,000
Gas Pump Toppers	\$46,441.00	\$39,474.00	190,000
In-Store Ads	\$23,530.00	\$20,000.00	100,000
Digital Truck Ad	\$39,159.00	\$33,285.00	140,000
Totals	\$371,755.40	\$324,920.50	6,733,000

GRH Budget	Gross Cost	COG Cost	Estimated Impressions
WTOP	\$71,675.00	\$60,923.75	2,200,000
WFED	\$21,500.00	\$18,275.00	130,000
El Zol	\$28,500.00	\$24,225.00	485,000
WASH	\$18,930.00	\$16,090.50	160,000
WWDC	\$18,830.00	\$16,005.50	195,000
WIHT	\$19,255.00	\$16,341.25	170,000
WAMU	\$6,700.00	\$5,695.00	687,000
Peacock	\$23,530.00	\$20,000.00	40,000
Hulu	\$17,758	\$15,094.00	50,000
WTOP.com	\$10,882.40	\$9,250.00	325,000
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In-Store Ads	\$23,530.00	\$20,000.00	100,000
Digital Truck Ad	\$39,159.00	\$33,285.00	140,000
Totals	\$376,337.46	\$325,000	6,955,000

GRH Baltimore Budget	Gross Cost	COG Cost	Estimated Impressions
WPOC	\$13,800.00	\$12,730.00	250,000
WBAL	\$13,255.00	\$12,267.00	300,000
Totals	\$27,055.00	\$24,997.00	550,000

Value Add

A total of approximately \$60,145 in value add was negotiated for Ridesharing, \$61,225 for Guaranteed Ride Home, and \$8,250 for Guaranteed Ride Home Baltimore.

Radio (Rideshare)

Radio is serving as the main media component for the Spring Rideshare Campaign and includes 30 second spots and radio reads on popular radio stations in the region.

Rideshare Scripts

:30 Ridesharing - Carpool/Vanpool Radio Script

Life's better when we do things together! Like sharing the ride to work. Even if you're commuting just a few days a week, Commuter Connections can match you with others who live and work near or with you. Plus, you have the added comfort of knowing Guaranteed Ride Home is there for any unexpected emergency, for free! Learn more at Commuter Connections Dot Org or call 1.800.745.RIDE. That's commuterconnections.org. Some restrictions apply.

:10 Ridesharing - Carpool/Vanpool Radio Read

Share the ride to work. Commuter Connections can match you with others who live and work near or with you. Learn more at Commuter Connections Dot Org or call 1.800.745.RIDE.



Waze (Rideshare)

With Waze ending their carpool program, Commuter Connections is leveraging the opportunity to offer free Ridematching services by advertising to its app's users.



Digital Banner Ads (Rideshare)

Banner ads in various sizes are running on WTOP.com, WashingtonPost.com, PoPville.com, WAMU.org, and NorthernVirginiaMag.com.



The Washington Post



NorthernVirginia
MAGAZINE



Streaming & YouTube Video (Rideshare)

A 30-second animated video was created to promote ridesharing and is running as paid advertising on YouTube, Peacock, and Hulu. The video touches on commuting by carpool, bus, and train.



Free Ridesharing Options for those Commuting to the Office - Even Just a Few Days A Week

Gas Pump Toppers (Rideshare)

Gas pump toppers are promoting ridesharing at popular gas stations in the region.



In-Store Ad (Rideshare)

In-store ads are promoting ridesharing at numerous convenience stores in the region.



**RELAX
TOGETHER.**

**WORK'S HARD ENOUGH.
YOUR COMMUTE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE.**

**SO
WHAT'S
UP?**

ZZZZZ



**COMMUTER
CONNECTIONS.** | **A SMARTER
WAY TO WORK**

commuterconnections.org | 800.745.RIDE

**SHARING A RIDE EVEN A
FEW TIMES A WEEK CAN
SAVE MONEY AND
CREATE POSITIVITY.**

Community Flyer (Rideshare)

Several local Starbucks locations and community listservs will showcase a flyer as part of an extra value add promotional effort.



**RELAX
TOGETHER.**

**WANT A BETTER WAY TO GET
TO WORK? TRY CARPOOLING!**

**SO
WHAT'S
UP?**

ZZZZZ



**COMMUTER
CONNECTIONS.** | **A SMARTER
WAY TO WORK**

commuterconnections.org | 800.745.RIDE

**SHARING A RIDE EVEN A
FEW TIMES A WEEK CAN
SAVE MONEY AND
CREATE POSITIVITY.**

Digital Truck Ad (Rideshare)

Digital truck ads are spreading the ridesharing message during peak commuting periods and focusing on the I-95 corridor from Prince William County to DC, The Beltway, I-66 from Gainesville to DC, The Dulles Toll Road (Loudoun County to the Beltway), I-270 from Frederick County to DC, and US 50 in Prince George's County (see map below).



Social Media (Rideshare)

A series of social media posts were created for the spring campaign and are being used for paid ads on various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



APG Media Military Ad (Rideshare)

A Rideshare ad was placed in “At Ease” magazine and in various Military Base Guides throughout the region.

RELAX TOGETHER.

SHARING A RIDE EVEN A FEW TIMES A WEEK CAN SAVE MONEY AND CREATE POSITIVITY.

SO WHAT'S UP?

ZZZZZ

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS. | A SMARTER WAY TO WORK
commuterconnections.org | 800.745.RIDE



Google Search (Rideshare & GRH)

Google search ads, which include multiple keywords, headlines, and descriptions are running throughout the duration of the spring campaign.



Ad · commuterconnections.org

Free Ride Home - Emergency Free Ride - Guaranteed Free Ride

Need A Ride Home From The Office? Get A Free One Guaranteed. Find Out How! Get Home From Work Worry-Free With A Guaranteed Ride. Learn More Now!

The screenshot shows the Commuter Connections website with a dark blue header. The header contains the logo and tagline 'COMMUTER CONNECTIONS. A SMARTER WAY TO WORK' on the left, and a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT US, COMMUTERS, EMPLOYERS, NEWS & EVENTS, QUICK LINKS, and RESOURCES on the right. The main content area features a large green banner for 'Guaranteed Ride Home'. The banner includes the text 'FREE RIDE GUARANTEED!' in large green letters, a call to action 'SIGN UP TODAY FOR FREE!' in a grey speech bubble, and a list of benefits: 'UNEXPECTED EMERGENCIES' and 'UNSCHEDULED OVERTIME'. There is also an image of a white car and a green speech bubble with a yellow smiley face. Below the banner, there is a paragraph explaining the service: 'Guaranteed Ride Home (otherwise known as GRH) provides commuters who regularly (twice a week) carpool, vanpool, bike, walk or take transit to work with a FREE and reliable ride home when one of life's unexpected emergencies arise. Commuters may take advantage of GRH up to six times per year to get home for unexpected emergencies such as a personal illness or a sick child. GRH can also be used for unscheduled overtime when your employer mandates that you must stay late.' A small note at the bottom right of the banner says 'Some restrictions apply.'

Radio (GRH)

Radio is serving as the main media component for the spring GRH campaign on several different radio stations in the region.

Scripts

:30 Guaranteed Ride Home Radio Script

[Loud exhale] Ahhhhh! That's the sound of knowing you've got a free ride home guaranteed! If you like carpooling or vanpooling but worry about getting stuck at the office - relax! With Commuter Connections, you can get a free ride home for unexpected emergencies or unscheduled overtime - even if you're commuting just a few times a week. All FREE! Register or renew today for free at Commuter Connections Dot Org or call 800.745.RIDE. That's Commuter Connections Dot Org. Some restrictions apply.

:10 Guaranteed Ride Home Radio Read

Get a free ride home for unexpected emergencies or unscheduled overtime when you share the ride to work. Get started at Commuter Connections Dot org or call 800.745.RIDE.



Digital Banner Ads (GRH)

Banner ads in various sizes are running on WTOP.com, WashingtonPost.com, PoPville.com, WAMU.org, and NorthernVirginiaMag.com.



The Washington Post



NorthernVirginia
MAGAZINE

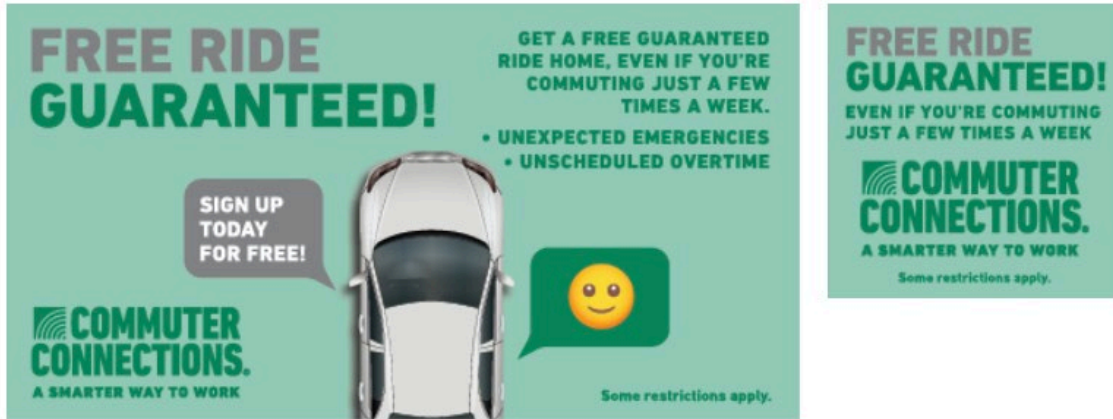


WAMU 88.5
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY RADIO



Waze (GRH)

With Waze ending their carpool program, Commuter Connections is leveraging the opportunity to highlight the Guaranteed Ride Home benefits by advertising to its app's users.



Streaming & YouTube Video (GRH)

A 30-second animated video was created to promote ridesharing and is running as paid advertising on YouTube, Peacock, and Hulu. The video touches on the benefits of the Guaranteed Ride Home program.



Commuters Sign Up for the Free Guaranteed Ride Home Program

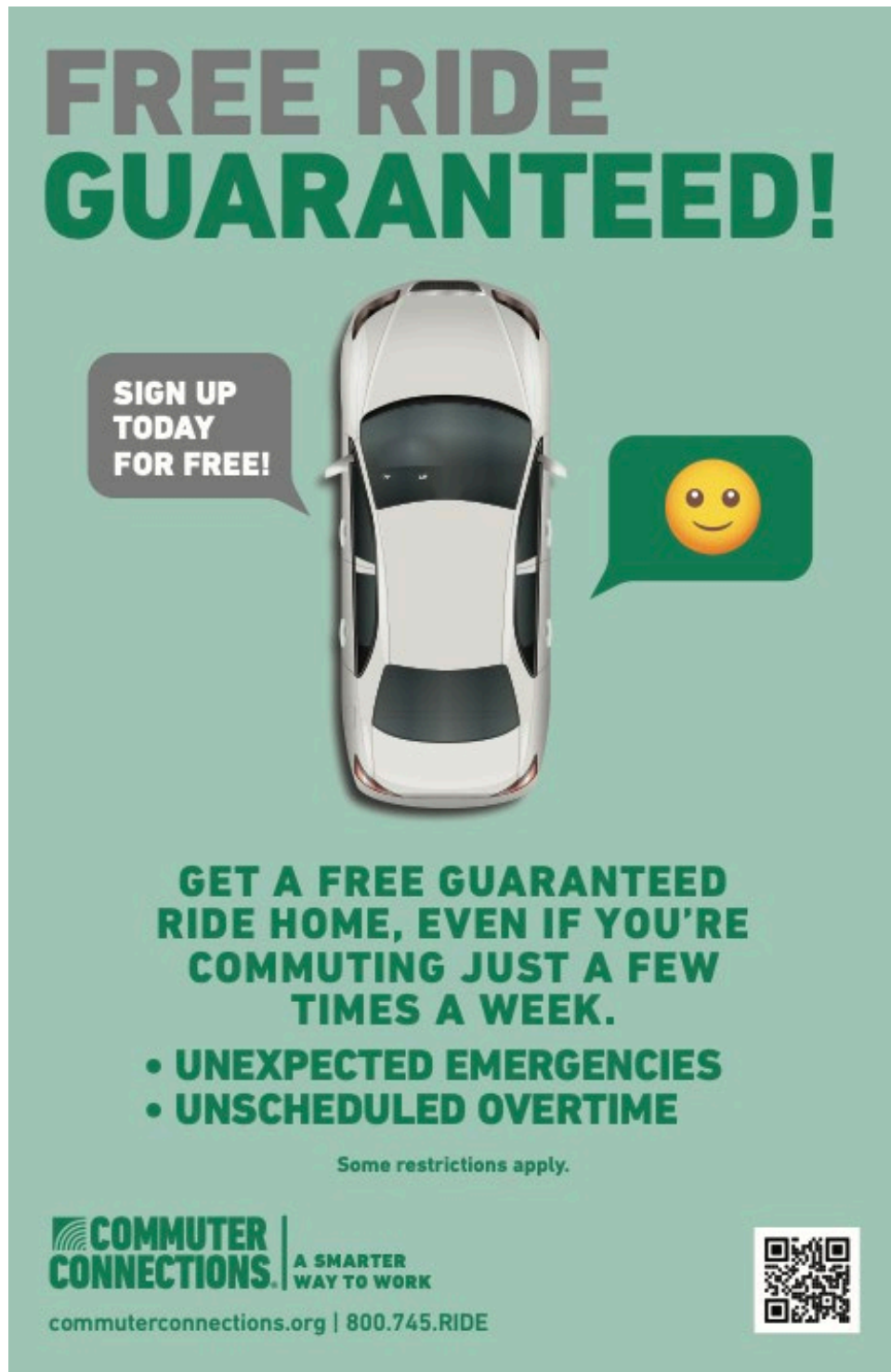
Gas Pump Toppers (GRH)

Gas pump toppers are promoting ridesharing at popular gas stations in the region.



In-Store Ad (GRH)

In-store ads are promoting Guaranteed Ride Home at numerous convenience stores in the region.



**FREE RIDE
GUARANTEED!**

**SIGN UP
TODAY
FOR FREE!**


**GET A FREE GUARANTEED
RIDE HOME, EVEN IF YOU'RE
COMMUTING JUST A FEW
TIMES A WEEK.**

- **UNEXPECTED EMERGENCIES**
- **UNSCHEDULED OVERTIME**

Some restrictions apply.

**COMMUTER
CONNECTIONS** | A SMARTER
WAY TO WORK

commuterconnections.org | 800.745.RIDE



Digital Truck Ad (GRH)

Digital truck ads spread the GRH message during peak commuting periods and are focusing on the I-95 corridor from Prince William County to DC, the Capital Beltway, I-66 from Gainesville to DC, Dulles Toll Road (Loudoun County to the Beltway), I-270 from Frederick County to DC, and US 50 in Prince George's County.



Social Media (GRH)

A series of social media posts were created for the spring campaign and are being used for paid ads on various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



Community Flyer (GRH)

Several local Starbucks locations and community listservs will showcase a flyer as part of an extra value add promotional effort.

**FREE RIDE
GUARANTEED!**

GET A FREE GUARANTEED RIDE HOME, EVEN IF
YOU'RE COMMUTING JUST A FEW TIMES A WEEK.

- UNEXPECTED EMERGENCIES
- UNSCHEDULED OVERTIME

SIGN UP
TODAY
FOR FREE!

**COMMUTER
CONNECTIONS.** | A SMARTER
WAY TO WORK

commuterconnections.org | 800.745.RIDE

Some restrictions apply.

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH Baltimore)

GRH radio spots are airing on the following two Baltimore stations. Both stations are also supporting the campaign with social media posts.



Bike to Work Day

In January, Commuter Connections concluded its annual sponsorship drive for the 2023 Bike to Work Day event. A total of \$38,550 in cash and \$22,050 in-kind was raised, representing both new and returning sponsors. Sponsor dollars are being allocated toward the cost of procuring the event T-shirts.



Flyer and Poster

Marketing materials were designed to help promote the May 2023 Bike to Work Day event. Materials are being distributed to each of the 108 local pit stops. A mailing was sent to employers containing the flyer and a cover letter. The English and Spanish flyers are available at www.biketoworkmetrodc.org.

FREE EVENT
BIKE TO WORK DAY
FRIDAY
MAY 19, 2023

Pre-Register by May 12 for FREE T-SHIRT* & BIKE RAFFLE
REGISTER TODAY AT
BikeToWorkMetroDC.org
Free refreshments & giveaways at participating locations, while supplies last.

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS.
A SMARTER WAY TO WORK

WABA
WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

GO Alex

PEDEGO
ELECTRIC BIKES
ALEXANDRIA & BETHESDA

ICF

ALL ABOUT BURGER

Bike Arlington

VERRA
Standards for a Sustainable Future

BICYCLE SPACE

City Dental DC
serving over 20 years

AASHIO
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF BICYCLE HIGHWAY AND TRAIL ENTHUSIASTS

FAIR LAKES

goDCgo
powered by d.

VDOT

MDOT
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Giant

VISIONZERO
SAFER BIKES, SAFER PEOPLE

Seen & Alert Safe

BIKES@VIENNA

Register for free at BIKETOWORKMETRODC.ORG
800.745.7433

Visit biketoworkmetrodc.org for pit stop locations and times.
*T-Shirts available at pit stops to first 15,000 registrants.
Pit stops in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia!

Bike to Work Day is funded by DDOT, MDOT, VDOT, and USDOT.

bike to work day
2023

EVENTO GRATUITO

DÍA DE LA BICICLETA PARA IR AL TRABAJO

VIERNES 19 DE MAYO DE 2023

Regístrese previamente antes del 12 de mayo para una CAMISETA GRATIS & SORTEO DE UNA BICICLETA

REGÍSTRATE HOY EN
BikeToWorkMetroDC.org

Bebidas gratis y obsequios en los lugares participantes, hasta agotar existencias.







Regístrese gratis en
BIKETOWORKMETRODC.ORG
 800,745,7433

#BTWD2023

Visita biketoworkmetrodc.org para más información acerca de los puntos de parada y los horarios. *Camisetas disponibles en los puntos de parada a los primeros 15.000 participantes que se registren. Puntos de parada en D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

El Día de la Bicicleta para Ir al Trabajo está financiado por DDOT, MDT, VDOT y USDOT



Pit Stop Vinyl Banners

bike to work day
2023

Register at
BIKETOWORKMETRODC.ORG
or call 800.745.7433

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS.
A SMARTER WAY TO WORK

WABA
WASHINGTON AREA
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

GO Alex

PEDEGO
ELECTRIC BIKES
ALEXANDRIA & BETHESDA

ICF

ALL ABOUT
TRAVEL

Bike Arlington

VERRA
Standards for a
Sustainable Future

BICYCLE SPACE

City Dental DC
SERVING SINCE 20 YEARS

FREE EVENT
BIKE TO WORK DAY
FRIDAY
MAY 19, 2023

ANACOSTIA
ACROSS FROM ARTS CENTER
13th Street & Good Hope Road SE
7:00 am to 9:00 am

Rack Cards

Pre-Register by May 12 for
FREE T-SHIRT* & BIKE RAFFLE
REGISTER TODAY AT
BikeToWorkMetroDC.org

FREE EVENT
BIKE
TO WORK DAY
FRIDAY
MAY 19, 2023

Free refreshments & giveaways at participating locations, while supplies last.

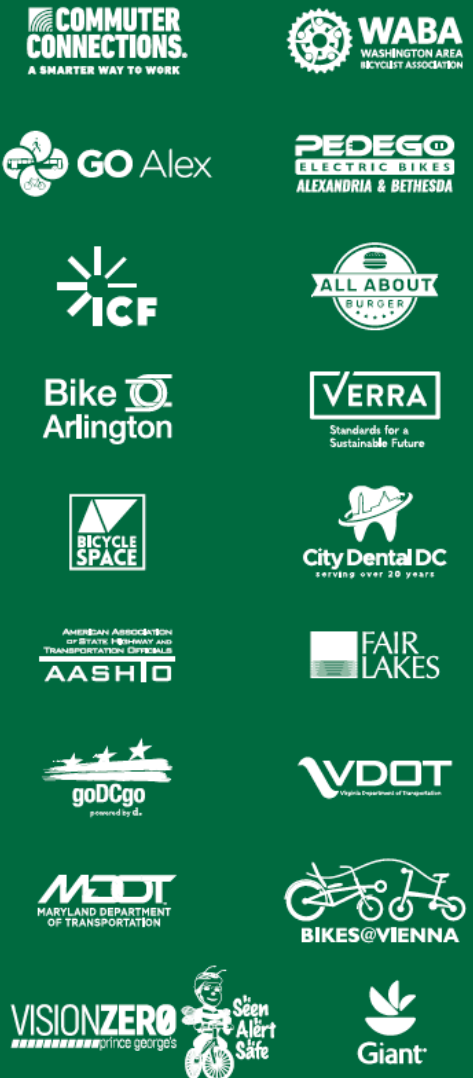



Visit biketoworkmetrodc.org for pit stop locations and times.
 *T-Shirts available at pit stops to first 15,000 registrants.
 Pit stops in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia!

BIKETOWORKMETRODC.ORG
 800.745.7433

#BTWD2023

bike to work day
 2023



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS
 A SMARTER WAY TO WORK

WABA
 WASHINGTON AREA
 BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

GO Alex

PEDEGO
 ELECTRIC BIKES
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ICF

ALL ABOUT BURGER

Bike Arlington

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 Standards for a Sustainable Future

BICYCLE SPACE

City Dental DC
 serving over 20 years

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS
 AASHIO

FAIR LAKES

goDCgo
 powered by d.

VDOT
 Virginia Department of Transportation

MDT
 MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BIKES@VIENNA

VISIONZERO
 prince georges

Seen Alert Safe

Giant

Bike to Work Day is funded by DDOT, MDT, VDOT, and USDOT.

Printed on recycled paper

T-Shirt



Employer Recognition Awards

The Employer Recognition Awards program will recognize employers who initiated outstanding worksite commute benefits and/or telework programs to assist their employees. The 2023 awards nomination period concluded at the end of January 2023, the Selection Committee will meet at the end of March 2023 and the winners will be honored at the end of June 2023 at the 26th Commuter Connections annual awards ceremony.



Newsletter


The winter 2023 edition of the Commuter Connections newsletter was issued during the first half of FY23. The six page, 4-color newsletters was produced and distributed to employers and stakeholders. The newsletter is also available in PDF format on the Commuter Connections website.

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS. | A SMARTER WAY TO WORK

Issue 1, Volume 27 WINTER 2023 **WHAT'S INSIDE**

- 1-2 2023 Transportation Fringe Benefit Raised to \$300
- 2 Flex Time Rewards Program Rolled into Incentrip
- 3 Ride Metro to Dulles
- 4 Bike to Work Day 2023 Registration Opens Soon
- 5 Carpools with 3+ Ride Free on I-46 Express Lanes

The Commuter Information Source for Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia

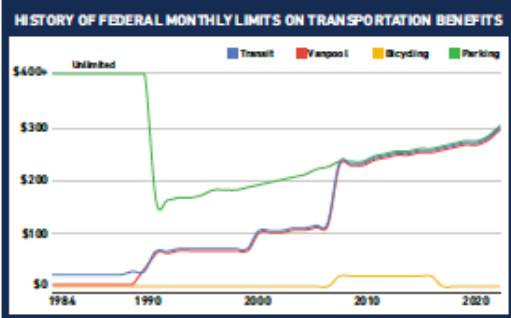


2023 TRANSPORTATION FRINGE BENEFIT RAISED TO \$300

The Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit started in 1984 with a tax-free limit of \$15. Nearly 40 years later, the **2023 monthly limit for transit passes and vanpooling expenses is \$300.**


The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) estimates that, thanks to the fringe benefit, hundreds of thousands of commuters are enjoying a tax-free commute at public, private, and nonprofit employers. In the Washington, DC region, the use of SmarTrip® cards greatly simplifies administration of the benefit for employees who use transit.

Many companies in the region offer SmarTrip cards to their employees who use transit or vanpools. Research has shown that providing commuters with both "free" parking and subsidized transit results in no change in behavior compared with offering neither benefit. But combined with the ability to take the value of the parking space in cash, the program can have a significant impact on how employees get to work.



Year	Unlimited	Transit	Vanpool	Bicycling	Parking
1984	\$400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1990	\$150	\$15	\$15	\$0	\$0
2000	\$200	\$100	\$100	\$0	\$0
2010	\$250	\$200	\$200	\$0	\$0
2020	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$0	\$0

METRO LOSING MILLIONS IN UNPAID FARES



Metro is beefing up its fare evasion enforcement to help bridge a looming budget gap of \$185 million. The transit system said fare evasion results in tens of millions of dollars in unpaid fares. Metro counts on that revenue to keep vital transportation services running.

Metro conservatively estimates more than \$40 million in lost revenue in 2022 due to fare evasion on Metrorail and Metrobus, or about 22 percent of the projected deficit for 2023.

The number of fare evasion tickets plummeted beginning in 2018 when the District decriminalized fare evasion. Maryland and Virginia have kept fare evasion a criminal offense but the number of tickets have declined in recent years. Fare evaders face a \$50 civil fine in DC. The fine is \$100 in Maryland and Virginia.

Signs in stations warn customers that fare evaders will be caught and fined. Metro has programs that may help riders who cannot afford the fare. For information about fare programs, call 202-637-7000.

Continued on page 2


Federal ETC Updates Newsletter

The winter 2023 edition of the Commuter Connections Federal ETC Updates newsletter was produced during the second half of FY23. The two-page black & white newsletter was distributed to Federal Employee Transportation Coordinators via GSA. It was also made available in PDF format at www.federaletc.org.

WINTER 2023

FEDERAL ETC UPDATES

TRANSIT BENEFIT RAISED FOR 2023



The IRS has set the tax-free 2023 commuter benefit monthly tax-free limit at \$300.

A few points to remember:

- Employees may only use the transit benefit subsidy when commuting from home to work and work to home.
- Agencies may elect to reimburse employees for their qualified parking expenses at or near transit stations, park-and-ride lots, or vanpool staging areas using employee pre-tax salary funds, up to the same maximum. Parking costs are treated separately from transit costs, even if they are incurred in conjunction with an employee's use of public transit or vanpools.
- Appropriated funds may not be used for these purposes unless exceptional circumstances exist.
- Agencies that make cash reimbursements for parking must establish a bona fide reimbursement arrangement to establish that their employees have, in fact, incurred such expenses.
- For employees in a telework status, use of transit benefit credit cards is prohibited and could result in disciplinary action.

The start of a new year is a great time to review commuter benefit procedures at the agency. A Government Accountability Office audit found that some federal employees used the program fraudulently, inflating monthly commuting costs, using the benefit for family members, and even selling fare media on eBay (distribution of the transit benefit via SmarTrip® cards has helped curb this practice).

Office of Management and Budget guidance (M-07-15) requires minimum controls that agencies must have over their programs such as:

- Certifying that employees are eligible for the subsidy.
- Warning employees against making false statements in benefit applications.
- Having the approving official verify that the employee's costs are calculated correctly.
- Checking applicants' names against those of employees who receive benefits to park at their place of work.
- Adjusting benefits according to travel, leave, or change of address.
- Making sure that the benefits end when the employee leaves the agency.

All employees who receive the commuter benefit are eligible to receive six free rides home over 12 months in the event of an unexpected emergency or unscheduled overtime. Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) is a free service from Commuter Connections enjoyed by federal employees who take transit and rideshare to work. Unexpected emergencies also include personal illness or a sick child. GRH can be used for unscheduled overtime as well, when a supervisor requires an employee to stay late. Knowing there's a free guaranteed ride available gives commuters who rideshare or take transit peace of mind. Registration is easy at commuterconnections.org.

More News



**2023 Transportation Fringe Benefit
Raised to \$300**

The Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit started in 1984 with a tax-free limit of just \$15. Nearly 40 years later, the 2023 monthly limit for transit passes and vanpooling expenses is \$300.



Bike to Work Day 2023 Registration

APPENDIX A
Performance Measures

Web Visits

Month	FY 2022 Web Visits	FY 2023 Web Visits	+/-	+/- %
January	5,621	6,632	1,011	18.0%
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
	5,621	6,632	1,011	18.0%

Phone Calls

Month	FY 2022 Phone Calls	FY 2023 Phone Calls	+/-	+/- %
January	146	333	187	128.1%
February	188	402	214	113.8%
March				
April				
May				
June				
	334	735	401	120.1%