



**CAR FREE DAY STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES  
Wednesday March 14, 2018**

**1. Introductions**

Committee members, guests and other attendees introduced themselves by name and affiliation.

**2. Meeting Minutes**

The Committee approved the September 13, 2017 meeting notes as written.

**3. Recap of 2017 Event**

A comprehensive event report was distributed which highlighted the various marketing and promotional aspects of the September 22, 2017 event.

Car Free Day posters were developed and presented to the Steering Committee for feedback. After refinement, the posters were distributed electronically and in hard copy. A total of 18,000 were printed, 7,000 of which were mailed to employers throughout the region. The poster visual was of a hand dropping car keys, accompanied by the headline "Drop it for a Day".

The Car Free Day 2017 [Proclamation](#) signing took place on July 19, 2017 at the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) meeting at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The TPB Chairperson/City of Rockville Mayor, Bridget Newton declared September 22, 2017 as Car Free Day throughout the Washington, DC region. Some jurisdictions also made local Car Free Day proclamations of their own.

A daily leaderboard was displayed on the Car Free Day web site's home page. The chart showed each mode and indicated the percentage of pledges. Between July 1, 2017 and September 22, 2017, the Car Free Day website was visited 27,213 times by 27,168 unique users. The total number of pages viewed were 74,240; the average number of pages viewed per session were 2.22; and the per session average duration of time spent on the Car Free Day web site was 2 minutes and 10 seconds.

An email blast was sent to employers, and those who took the Car Free Day pledge over the past several years. A spike of more than 2,300 web visits occurred within 24

hours following the email blast. Numerous network members also sent e-mail blasts and e-newsletters of their own. Opt-in text messaging was used to encourage those who participated in previous years, to pledge again this year and share the text message with others.

Working with COG's Office of Communications, Car Free Day outreach included targeted press releases to raise awareness and focus on the benefits of going car free or car-lite on September 22, 2017. Press releases and calendar listings were developed, distributed, and pitched to print, broadcast, and social media. Commuter Connections collaborated with the American Lung Association to amplify the air quality component of Car Free Day. In addition to providing a quote for the first Car Free Day press release of 2017, the American Lung Association distributed the release and information to its media list and stakeholders.

The 2017 marketing campaign raised public awareness of Car Free Day, challenging drivers to leave "Drop it for a Day", or go car-lite by Ridesharing. Paid media consisted of traditional radio, internet radio, text messaging, key influencer blog, online banner ads, and social media. The efforts brought attention to Car Free Day and encouraged the public to take the pledge. The total media budget was \$45,541.

Draft radio scripts were developed and revised, based on Steering Committee feedback. Voiceover talent was selected, and a :30 second commercial was produced. The radio spot aired for several weeks leading up to the event on WTOP, WITH, and WWDC. WTOP also provided a value-added :30 second endorsement spot by popular longtime traffic reporter, Bob Marbourg.

A paid endorsement with influential lifestyle blog writer Meg Biram was used to spread the word about Car Free Day. Her blog with over 50,000 followers in the DC region, was a way to generate conversation and awareness of getting around without driving alone by car. The article was also shared on her social media accounts, and in her weekly newsletter.

Bus signage was secured for Car Free Day from several jurisdictions; artwork was created reflecting the poster graphics and then printed, shipped, and installed at the various transit properties. Signage appeared on Montgomery County Ride On (exteriors), Metrobus, and Arlington Transit (interiors), and Prince George's (shelters).

The Capital Area Car Free College Campus Challenge was created as a friendly competition to generate a buzz about Car Free Day on college campuses throughout the region. A promotional tool kit was developed and distributed to colleges and universities through the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. The total number of pledges with .edu email addresses was 2,072, and first place went to Georgetown University.

Clean Air Partners produced a promotional video to provide a fun visual about the various types of green-minded car free travel. The video was placed on the Car Free Day event web site, under 'How to be Car Free'. Clean Air Partners also engaged in a paid and organic social media campaign for Car Free Day, which ran from September 11 – September 22, and reached thousands of residents across the region. The campaign was both geographic and interest-targeted.

Commuter Connections' network members hosted numerous promotions to celebrate Car Free Day. Montgomery County Commuter Services staff greeted travelers with giveaways at the Germantown Transit Center, several Metrorail stations, and Ride On bus stops; Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland was at the North Beach Farmer's Market in Calvert County with giveaways; TransIT Services of Frederick County offered free rides on all Connector and Shuttles buses on Car Free Day; The City of Alexandria's GoAlex team celebrated Car Free Day in front of City Hall, greeting commuters with free giveaways and information; The City of Manassas was at the Community Conversations 'pop-up' park on Car Free Day to discuss travel alternatives and provide walking and biking tours; and The City of Falls Church raffled off \$25 SmarTrip Cards, and 30-Day Capital Bikeshare memberships to those who took the Car Free Day pledge.

Donated prizes were offered as incentives to people taking the pledge to go car free or car-lite. Local businesses and organizations that donated goods or services gained exposure, and were associated with a cause that contributed to the betterment of the region's traffic congestion and air quality. Sponsors included Crunch Fitness, Giant Food Stores, goDCgo, KIND Healthy Snacks, Mellow Mushroom Adams Morgan, Men's Wearhouse, Pinstripes N. Bethesda location, Sweetgreen, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, Virginian Railway Express, and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. Chipotle Mexican Grill provided a Buy-One-Get-One offer valid on September 22, 2018 at DC, Maryland and Virginia locations, to anyone who showed their Car Free Day email confirmation at time of purchase. Email blasts were sent out to promote the one-day only special offer.

A total of 11,205 people took the Car Free Day pledge in 2017. The breakdown by mode was as follows: Bike 29 percent, Rail 22 percent, Bus 17 percent, Walk 16 percent, Telework 8 percent, and Pool 8 percent. Each state generated at least 3,200 pledges and close to one-third of the total pledges. Total mileage saved on Car Free Day was 191,428 miles. Those identified as the SOV group made up 36 percent of the pledges, and 76,959 of the vehicle miles reduced.

Personalized follow up emails were sent after the event to thank participants for taking the Car Free Day pledge. Separate letters were sent to those who indicated that they

were normally SOV travelers, versus those who typically travel using alternative methods.

The committee was asked to provide edits to the Car Free Day 2017 event recap by April 14, 2018.

**4. Car Free Day 2018 Date/Goal**

This year September 22, 2018 falls on a Saturday. The committee agreed to celebrate Car Free Day on Friday September 21, and Saturday September 22, and call it Car Free Days. The goal for 2018 was set at 10,000 pledges.

**5. Marketing Materials**

After discussion, the committee agreed to review new creative ideas for 2018, and to also maintain the possibility of reusing the “Drop it for a Day” creative from Car Free Day 2018. For the July meeting, the marketing contractor will develop a variety of options for review and selection.

**6. Sponsors/Partners**

The committee is in search of sponsors to donate in-kind prizes for the regional raffle, plus partners to provide in-kind services. Kendall Tiffany of Frederick TransIT Services can provide complementary transit advertising space. Mackenzie Jarvis, Fairfax County Department of Transportation suggested Rails to Trails, and East Coast Greenway Alliance and possible partners to help promote Car Free Day. Chipotle will be contacted again for another possible special offer.

**7. Other Business**

The next Car Free Day meeting will be held on May 9, 2018 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., meeting rooms 4 & 5.