**CAR FREE DAY STEERING COMMITTEE**

**MEETING NOTES**

**March 13, 2019**

1. **Introductions**

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

1. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Committee approved the September 12, 2018 meeting notes as written.

1. **Recap of 2018 Event**

A comprehensive event report was distributed which highlighted the various marketing and promotional aspects of the September 21-22, 2018 Car Free Days event.

The 2018 poster was a revival of a previous year’s theme for Car Free Day and was refreshed with Committee feedback. Messaging encouraged drivers to “Drop it For a Day” and take the free online pledge to use transportation alternatives on September 21 and/or 22. A PDF version of the poster was also made available on the web site for download. A total of 16,500 posters were printed, 5,500 of which were mailed to employers throughout the region, along with a cover letter. In addition, an email blast was sent to 45,000 email addresses comprised of those who took the Car Free Days pledge over the previous three years, Commuter Connections opt-in accounts, Committee Members, employers, and Federal Telework Coordinators.

The Car Free Days 2018 proclamation signing took place on July 18, 2018 at the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) meeting at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. District of Columbia Councilmember and TPB Chairperson Charles Allen declared September 21-22, 2018 as Car Free Days throughout the Washington, DC region. Some jurisdictions also approved local Car Free Days proclamations of their own.

The 2018 marketing campaign raised public awareness of Car Free Days, challenging drivers to “Drop it for a Day” or go car-lite by Ridesharing. Radio comprised of approximately half the media budget and aired on WIAD (94.7 Fresh), WTOP (103.5 WTOP News), and WJFK (103.5 The Fan). Stations were provided with scripts and had their on-air personalities pre-record endorsements, inviting listeners to participate. The radio spot aired for several weeks leading up to the event. Other marketing efforts included text messaging, blogs, posters, bus signage, bus shelters, internet radio,

banner ads on radio station websites, and social media to bring attention to the Car Free Days event and drive the public to the website to take the pledge. The total Car Free Days media budget for the 2018 event was $45,000.

Paid endorsements with popular local bloggers Meg Biram and Courtney Dredden helped reach unique audiences. These influential lifestyle blog writers spread the word about Car Free Days in a grass-roots fashion to generate conversation and awareness of getting around without driving alone by car. Both wrote comprehensive articles from a personal perspective. In the blog they discussed various forms of transportation that readers could use on Car Free Days. Articles contained caveats that provided transparency regarding the sponsored content.

More than a quarter of the media budget was spent on 3,500,000 impressions delivered through Pandora internet radio’s unique geo-targeting and advertisement delivery system. A 30 second radio spot ran concurrently on Pandora along with display advertisements. Unique promotional visuals were posted onto Facebook during the month of September and boosted for a more expansive audience. A different post was placed every few days. Collectively, the posts received 36,356 user engagements.

Bus signage was secured for Car Free Days from several jurisdictions; artwork was created reflecting the poster graphics and then printed, shipped, and installed at the various transit properties. Interior bus cards appeared on Arlington Transit busses and Metrobuses, bus shelters appeared in Prince George’s County, and bus exteriors on Fairfax County Connector and Montgomery County Ride On.

Outreach was conducted that included targeted press releases to raise awareness of the health benefits of going car free and the sponsor supported prize raffle. For the second consecutive year, Commuter Connections partnered with the American Lung Association to support the Car Free Days initiative of improving the region’s air quality and health. The American Lung Association provided a quote for the Car Free Days press release and shared Car Free Days promotional posts and articles on their social media pages.

A new partnership was established with the American Heart Association to amplify the Car Free Day message about health and air quality. In addition to providing a quote for the Car Free Days press release, the American Heart Association distributed the release and information about Car Free Days to its media list and stakeholders; posted a blog post about Car Free Days; and promoted the event and its materials through its social media accounts.

The Capital Area Car Free College Campus Challenge was created as a friendly competition to generate awareness of and participation in Car Free Days on college campuses throughout the region. A promotional kit was distributed to higher learning institutions in partnership with the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Over 250 pledges, nine percent of all Car Free Days pledges were

made through .edu email domains.

Clean Air Partners promoted Car Free Days through an emoji vote on Facebook. Users were asked to react via emoji to the corresponding alternate method of transportation they would use on Car Free Days. The post received 1,441 engagements including 1,270 reactions, 70 comments, and 101 shares.

Commuter Connections’ network members hosted numerous promotions to celebrate Car Free Days. Arlington’s Car Free Day was celebrated on Clarendon Day, an Arlington street festival on Saturday, September 22. The NoMa neighborhood in Washington DC ran a contest to design a curbside parking spot into a space meant for people on PARKing Day September 21; the winner received $500 to make their plans become a temporary reality. The City of Fairfax gave away a CUE Swag Bag, including a $50 SmarTrip card to a resident who took the 2018 Car Free Days pledge.

TransIT Services of Frederick County gave free rides on connectors and shuttles on September 21. The City of Manassas City held an event at a Commuter Lot Farmer’s Market on September 22; bike and walking tours were given. Prizes were offered to residents and OmniRide showcased their I-66 Express Lanes wrapped bus. Montgomery County Commuter Services offered free Ride On ExtRa Bus Service from Shady Grove Metro to Black Hill Regional Park, with stops at Germantown Transit Center and Clarksburg Premium Outlets on September 22. Lastly, the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland was at the North Beach Farmer’s Market on Friday, September 21 with free giveaways.

Donated raffle prizes were offered as incentives to people taking the pledge to go car free or car-lite. 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 mobility and air quality. Sponsors were recognized on the event web site, social media, and a press release. Sponsors included Capital Bikeshare, Cultural Tourism DC, District Taco, East Coast Greenway Alliance, Giant Food, KIND Healthy Snacks, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, VRE, Washington Area Bicyclist Association, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. District Taco provided a promo code to those who took the Car Free Days pledge, good for $3 OFF online orders of $10 or more. The promotion was valid through October 22, 2018 at all DC, Maryland, and Virginia locations.

A total of 2,770 people took the Car Free Day pledge in 2018. Participants were asked to select the mode they used for the greatest distance of travel during Car Free Days. The breakdown by mode was as follows: Bike 27 percent, Rail 26 percent, Bus 21 percent, Walk/Run 10 percent, Pool 8 percent, and Telework 8 percent. The total mileage saved or reduced on Car Free Days was 87,947 miles. Those who self-identified as normally SOV drivers made up 43 percent of the pledges, and 45,734 of the vehicle miles reduced.

The Committee was asked to provide edits to the Car Free Days 2018 draft event report by April 12, 2019.

1. **Car Free Day 2019 Date/Goal**

September 22 falls on a Sunday in 2019, and the Committee agreed to recognize the event to include a weekday and the Saturday prior as well. The Car Free Day event will be recognized as Saturday, September 21 through Monday September 23, 2019, and called Car Free Days. The goal for 2019 remains at 10,000 pledges.

1. **Marketing Materials**

The “Drop it for a Day” theme and graphics used in 2018 will be used again for Car Free Days 2019.

1. **Sponsors**

The Committee is in search of sponsors to donate in-kind prizes for the regional raffle, plus partners to provide in-kind services.

1. **Other Business**

The Next Car Free Day Steering Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 8, 2019 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request, including alternative formats of meeting materials. Visit www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).*