

Regional TDM Marketing Group Meeting Notes

Tuesday October 7, 2003

1. Introductions – Sign in sheet

2. Minutes of August 5th Meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

3. Announcement of New Vice Chair

Rhoda Washington was announced as the new vice chair.

4. Change of Chairpersons

Ronald Mitchell was announced as the new chairperson of the Regional TDM Marketing Group. An award was read aloud by Mr. Mitchell on behalf of Charlene Robey's service as chairperson.

5. 2003 TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan

Sheila Lewin presented the group with the final draft of the 2003 TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan (SMP). Notable changes were mentioned such as those to the Regional Activity Centers. Waldorf was removed from the SMP, while the Bailey's Crossroads area was added due to its significant Hispanic population and its proximity to the Columbia Pike corridor and its accessibility to the new Columbia PikeRide Bus Service. Other additions included new research done by Dudnyk, as well as research regarding the Springfield interchange. Another item added to the document included a write up on Car sharing, which was placed into the product section. Ms. Lewin requested that all final edits be provided by the end of the week. The chair raised motion to approve the presented plan contingent on final updates to be made and motion was agreed to.

Rick Rybeck asked if the plan should include efforts of the Fannie Mae foundation stating that Fannie Mae's program encourages people to live closer to transit. Nicholas Ramfos explained that the focus has been with products or services involved in TDM and that Fannie Mae's program although having some relevance was not a truly parallel to TDM. He also explained that these efforts were not involving new households, and there was no data on what was happening to the former residents. The lack of data shows no evidence that the former residents weren't now driving and therefore offsetting the benefits of the people moving in. Mr. Ramfos suggested if research could prove incremental emission reductions, the program could be considered as a viable TDM tool.

6. Regional Mass Marketing TERM

Douglas Franklin discussed the progress of the Mass Marketing TERM. He explained the development of the campaign based on positive feedback from the consumer focus groups and a TPB work session in support of the testimonial theme. He reviewed the online quantitative research that further substantiated the direction of the campaign as well as gathering feedback on taglines for use in the radio spots. “Flexible Solutions for a Better Commute” was deemed the clear choice of the surveyed commuters.

The group listened to five radio commercials produced for the campaign in addition to a Spanish spot airing on Hispanic stations. Mr. Franklin explained that the existing research data as well as new findings helped to shape the foundation of the script writing.

A few of the key attributes from the research including the following:

- Research revealed that the most recurring and compelling emotion associated with commuting is that of “frustration”, and that commuters appear to be in a state of anxiety about their commutes.
- The level of frustration is linked more so with the commute *to work*.
- Most SOV commuters felt they had no choice in the matter and grudgingly accept their commutes as a necessary evil.
- The campaign was developed to strongly identify with commuters who’ve “had enough”.
- It aims at helping commuters understand that alternatives exist and that Commuter Connections can provide assistance toward finding the solution that works best for each individual.
- The inference is made that Commuter Connections is the one-point solution within the region to the frustration of commuting alone by car.
- Consumers acted more favorably to the test spots that provided a variety of alternative transportation options.
- SOV drivers didn’t want to give up the flexibility of driving, and responded well to the mention that alternative transportation can also be flexible as one can still drive their own car to work on the days when they *really* need it.

Each commercial features a formerly frustrated SOV commuter who found Commuter Connections and as a result, has improved the quality of their life. Each spot features one or two modes of alternate commuting but mentions multiple modes.

- *Jan* – Thought about quitting her job to get out of her commute, called Commuter Connections and joined carpool.
- *Bill and Carol* – African American couple who use to drive alone to work, their commutes took away from their family life. Co-worker told Bill about Commuter Connections. Bill now teleworks and takes the train, Carol carpools.
- *Emilo* – Heard about Commuter Connections from employer, receives Metrochek card and now takes the bus.
- *Diane and Jack* – Couple getting married and going over finances. Diane suggested that Jack save money by going on to the Commuter Connections web site to find a cheaper way to work. Now he's in a carpool.
- *Mike* – Went on Commuter Connections web site and obtained information on Telework and shared it with his employer. He takes train when not telecommuting.

Dottie Cousineau asked if the commercials would be rotated in and out, or if they would each air one by one for a certain period of time. Mr. Franklin explained that all commercials would air throughout each flight of the campaign, the fall and spring.

Rhoda Washington asked if each commercial would be played on each station. Doug stated that several commercials would be aired on each individual station based on synergies between the stations listenership and characters portrayed in the commercials. Ms. Cousineau said that it was a good idea to involve the TPB work sessions in the process, because it allowed for outside opinions, and gave the campaign more credibility. Mr. Franklin agreed with this point, and noted that two spots had been changed based on TPB feedback, and that they had been instrumental in suggesting a search for a new tagline.

Mr. Franklin played the new 30-second TV spot. This spot complements the radio as it follows the testimonial theme. The commercial will air on major networks as well as cable outlets. Mr. Mitchell asked how long this commercial would run; Mr. Franklin responded that it would run until the end of the fiscal year, following the same pattern as the radio spots. He also elaborated that the design of the media schedule was to allow for ongoing presence of Commuter Connections. During down weeks of the Mass Marketing spots, GRH spots would be running.

Mr. Franklin discussed how the focus groups had pointed out the importance of the web site. Almost unanimously, participants stated they would visit the website first before calling. As part of the overall integrated communications plan of the mass marketing campaign, Commuter Connections incorporated a one-month internet advertising test. Banner ads appeared on web sites frequented by SOV drivers, including sites such as WashingtonPost.com. Web advertising appeared on the traffic pages of such sites. Commuter Connections was also placing keyword sponsorships on major search engines such as Google

and Yahoo to guarantee top three positioning or a side bar link. These keyword searches are paid for on a cost per call basis, so Commuter Connections would only have to pay for actual click-thru's. He also noted another benefit of advertising over the internet is that it's very trackable. These steps had already increased traffic on the Commuter Connections Website by 200%.

7. Arlington County TDM Developer Outreach

Catherine Sihler will present information on this topic at the December meeting.

8. WMATA Metrobus Ridership

Jane Taylor from WMATA discussed their efforts to boost Metrobus Ridership.

FY2004 Financial Goals

- Bus Ridership Target: 149,637,775 – *Change from FY03: 1.2%*
- Bus Revenue Target: \$81,450,459
- Non-Passenger Revenue Target: \$35,837,200

Ms. Taylor explained that bus ridership continues to grow year over year, yet ridership and revenue under-performed to the FY03 budget. An analysis of customer research and ridership trends identified key opportunities, which serve as the basis for the marketing strategy formulation.

The opportunities include:

- Driving a stronger understanding of the Metrobus Customer throughout the organization
- De-mystifying Metrobus
- Focusing on the 32 lines that drive over 50% of ridership
- Modeling Arlington County's efforts with strong outreach, transit programs and service
- Communicating that Metrobus goes more places than just downtown
- Execute an integrated marketing campaign to further promote "Information Anytime", breaking down the mystery of how to ride Metrobus and demonstrating its service relevance to the target audience
- Qualifying, penetrating and maximizing ridership from targeted market segments with limited access to a car through outreach. Saturate the following Segments: Universities (Q2), Hospitals (Q3-4), Military Facilities (Q3), Senior Independent Living Facilities (Q3-4)
- Targeting the top 10 feeder routes to Metrorail Station
- Develop Regional SmarTrip Expansion Marketing Plan
- Develop and Execute Two Partnership Campaigns per Quarter, targeting organization such as the Sierra Club, Fannie Mae, Commuter Connections, EPA, APTA, American Express, Board of Trade, Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities, DC Living, City Style

Ms. Lewin asked how the fare increase had affected ridership. Ms. Taylor replied that the rail riders had absorbed it. She also noted that the ridership in June and July had been incredible.

Terrie O'Steen brought up the fact that for them it wasn't the fare increase but the types of passes that were available that was the issue. She was wondering how would SmarTrip affect commuter trains. Rich Solli replied that it was yet to be determined, and getting it going would be difficult, since it would require handheld devices for employees on trains.

Ms. Taylor also noted that they now have a single brochure that features both English and Spanish. Rick Rybeck agreed that demystifying the busses was a good idea, and suggested posting more detailed bus route info at bus stops. He also commented on confusion regarding the naming of the bus routes.

Ms. Cousineau noted that the map showed a great deal of connectivity, and that keeping one map showing the whole system would be a good idea. WMATA noted that they are working on layering the map online, and that there were 65,000 downloads of the map from their site.

Non-rider WMATA revenue was discussed, and is considered to be anything other than revenue from riding busses or trains. Primarily it is from advertising, but some of it comes from parking revenue, and from fiber-optic cable companies running cables through tunnels.

Ron Mitchell then asked about the way WMATA was emphasizing 32 of 170 routes, and if they were going to cut routes. WMATA said that those decisions come through their boards. Ms. Cousineau asked if they were planning to expand Metrobus shelter advertising to areas other than DC. Ms. Taylor said that the DC government owns that ad space. Ms. Cousineau noted that Fairfax County got permission to allow ads in VDOT stations.

9. Fall 2003 TDM Marketing Campaign

Mr. Franklin explained that Commuter Connections produced 3 new 60-second spots for the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program. Since the majority of GRH request are for emergency situations, two of the three spots address this aspect.

- *Emergency*
 - Announcer asks a stressed out mom about her commute, and if she ever thought about carpooling and using GRH to be available for her sick daughter when school calls.
 - Takes place in office parking lot as commuter is running late for work, the announcer suggests vanpooling and GRH to allow commuter to get home to his sick mother.

- *Working Late*
 - Stuck in traffic, announcer suggests taking the bus - as it fly's down the HOV lane. Commuter said he use to take the bus, but when he worked late his wife-would have to pack up the kids to pick him up.

Ms. Cousineau questioned the “Some restrictions apply” at the end of each commercial, since it seemed to detract from the emphasis of the commercial. Chris Arabia explained that this disclaimer helped to reduce incoming calls by people not qualifying for a GRH as well potential liability issues. Terrie O’Steen suggested that maybe saying “For emergency purposes only” would be an alternative. Mr. Ramfos explained that emergencies are subjective in that some people consider business meetings to be emergency situations. Terrie then asked if there was a restriction based on where you lived. Mr. Arabia stated that the rule was as long as you *worked* in the greater DC area. Ms. Cousineau asked if Baltimore has the GRH program, to which Buddy Alves said no.

Mr. Franklin stated that there would be a direct mail campaign for GRH in the fall, where a postcard mailer would be sent out to residential addresses within key activity centers and high SOV zip codes within the region. He also thanked MTA for providing Commuter Connections with advertising space in its MARC rider guide.

Michael Jones asked exactly when the GRH registration expires, to which Chris Arabia responded that it lasts for a period of one year, and that you must re-register. Mr. Arabia explained that entries expiring are purged on a monthly basis. Mr. Jones then asked about what happens in situations where the “GRH cab” is late, and the person calls another cab on their own. He asked if commuters were reimbursed in these situations. Mr. Arabia explained that as a general rule, it is not done under normal circumstances, but there were exceptions in certain situations. For example, if it were getting really late and there was a significant delay with the cab arranged by Commuter Connections and the person had to be home by a certain time, the GRH service would give permission for the person to get any cab and would later reimburse them.

Mr. Franklin also noted that a telework advertising strategy would be determined in November. Ms. Cousineau asked if Commuter Connections published information on the number of gratis spots it received. Mr. Ramfos said that there would a campaign summary made available at the next meeting, which would outline both the media schedule and the value-added PSA opportunities negotiated for the campaign.

10. Other Marketing Information

Ms. O’Steen discussed the recent commuter survey that Montgomery County Commuter Services had conducted. The number of companies that responded to the survey totaled 867, and collectively represented 6,700 employees. The reward

for completing the survey was a Giant gift card; this was done to encourage returns. She also discussed the mitigation plans and transit subsidies for her region. She noted that Montgomery redesigned their transit maps, and sent a mail-out of their new brochure. They also have a new park and ride guide and new employer guide for ride matching. Business outreach in the area included the Wheaton small business seminars, and that Thursday and Friday would be the Maryland Hispanic Business Conference.

Mr. Solli discussed the money they had spent on brochures, and that MTA had decided to go with cheaper brochures to save money. He also discussed the quick guide to transit services that MTA provides.

Ms. Sihler discussed the recent launch of Pike Ride. She commented that there had been increased ridership, good media presence, and that they had received positive feedback on the program. Ms. Sihler noted they had doubled service on a particularly popular route. She also discussed high Spanish population along the pike, and that they had Spanish packets for this reason.

Mr. Jones discussed the WABA ETC training for bike to work day, which is designed to promote workers of federal agencies to bike to work. Ms. Cousineau talked about travel training with senior centers, and efforts to help register seniors for discounts with Metro. Mr. Jones noted that metro had discontinued the bonus program when it had raised fares, and WMATA noted it had been well publicized and that the \$100 transit benefit for federal employees was still in effect.