



Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey Results for Fiscal Year 2004



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Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments



ABSTRACT

- TITLE:** Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey Results for Fiscal Year 2004
- DATE:** March 15, 2005
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- AGENCY:** The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is the regional planning organization of the Washington area's major local governments and their governing officials. COC works toward solutions to problems in such areas as growth, air and water quality, transportation, and housing, and serves as the regional planning organization for metropolitan Washington.
- Commuter Connections is a regional network of transportation organizations coordinated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Commuter Connections provides commuter assistance for the Washington region and encourages commuters to use carpooling, vanpooling, transit, telecommuting, bicycling and walking. Commuter Connections also helps employers establish commuting benefits and assistance programs, including telework/telecommute programs, for their employees. Funding for Commuter Connections' Guaranteed Ride Home program is provided by the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia's Department of Transportations.
- ABSTRACT:** This report presents the results of a survey of all Guaranteed Ride Home users during fiscal year 2004 (July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004). The survey was designed to obtain the level of satisfaction those commuters who used the GRH service had with various aspects of the GRH service. The Guaranteed Ride Home program is a regional program operated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments on behalf of the transportations departments of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The GRH program was started in 1997 to eliminate one barrier to using alternative modes, commuters' fear of being without transportation in the case that they need to get home unexpectedly.
- PUBLICATION:** This report is published on the Commuter Connections website at www.commuterconnections.org under the Resources, Publications section.

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Background

Guaranteed Ride Home Program Description

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) Commuter Connections program, under the auspices of its funding entities, has operated the Guaranteed Ride Home program (GRH) since January 1997. A "commuter insurance" program, GRH is designed to encourage ridesharing and transit usage by providing a way home for qualifying commuters in the cases of personal emergency or unexpected overtime when their normal alternative commute mode is not available. Many commuters are concerned about being "stranded at work" if they unexpectedly have to leave work before or after their normal time if they carpool, vanpool, or take transit to work. GRH eliminates this concern, and encourages ridesharing, transit use, bicycling and walking to work. Commuters' use of these transportation modes, rather than driving alone, reduces the number of automobiles on the road and helps the region attain its federally mandated air quality goals.

The GRH program's Participation Guidelines are provided in the Appendix of this report, and a full listing of the program's qualifications, limitations on its usage, and a more complete description of the process involved in registering commuters for the program may be obtained online at the Commuter Connections website, <http://www.commuterconnections.org>.

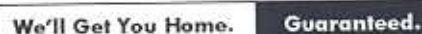
The graphic consists of two dark rectangular boxes with white text. The first box contains the text "We'll Get You Home." and the second box contains the text "Guaranteed."

Figure 1 | Guaranteed Ride Home's promotional slogan

Customer Satisfaction Survey and Report

The customer satisfaction survey for GRH is conducted throughout the year to include all commuters who obtain a free ride home under the program's guidelines. Every commuter who used the program receives a survey response card for each ride received, allowing individual evaluation for each ride taken. The accompanying cover letter (*see* Figure 2) informs commuters of the purpose and voluntary nature of the survey, and the postage-paid, self-mailing response card (*see* Figure 3) allows for quick and easy submission of responses on the part of survey respondents. The same questionnaire has been used every year since the program's inception in 1997, allowing for a direct comparison with all fiscal years. The survey card allows respondents to rate the GRH service and provide comments and suggestions with complete anonymity. However, despite the ability to remain anonymous, some respondents provided their name with their responses. In some instances these respondents have been featured in local and regional newspaper articles on the benefits of GRH. This report provides comparisons to previous fiscal years in addition to in-depth analysis of the current fiscal year's results.



Dear GRH User:

Thank you for using the Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home program. We are surveying all of our customers to determine the level of satisfaction with our Guaranteed Ride Home program. This will help us improve our program and better serve our customers.

Please take a moment and complete the enclosed survey card. After you have completed the survey, just drop the card in the mail, no postage necessary.

Your answers to the survey should reflect **ONLY your JANUARY 2004 GRH trip.**

If you have used the GRH program since January 2004, you will also receive a survey card for that trip. Please return the enclosed survey card within 10 days.

If you would like an update of the 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 your participation.

Happy Commuting!

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS

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THE COMMUTER INFORMATION SOURCE FOR MARYLAND, VIRGINIA AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
www.commuterconnections.org 1-800-745-7433

Figure 2 | Cover letter sent with survey response form to commuters who had used the GRH program within the given month

Survey Design

The survey consists of four multiple-choice questions, each relevant to a specific aspect of GRH, and a section for the respondent to write suggestions. The four questions provide insight into customers' opinions regarding the different operational functions of GRH, and—as will be analyzed later in this report—the section for suggestions is often used to make comments about these functions, as well as, the service in general (*see* Written Responses). The multiple-choice questions ask the respondent to rate the different aspects of the service by circling one of four responses—“Poor,” “Fair,” “Good,” and “Excellent.” Some respondents choose to write in “N/A,” do not circle a rating, or add a qualifier to the response, such as “very,” a plus symbol (+), or a minus symbol (-). Qualifiers were ignored in tabulating the survey results, and responses marked “N/A” were treated as non-responses.

The operational aspects of GRH addressed by the four multiple-choice questions are: Reservations staff; transportation service; response time and overall service. “Reservations staff” refers to the operators who answer telephone calls from commuters requesting GRH service, verify the request in accordance with the official GRH participation guidelines, and arrange the ride for the commuter. These operators are employees of Diamond Transportation Services, Inc., which provided this service under a contractual arrangement with COG. “Transportation service” refers to the transportation modes (e.g. taxi, rental car, transit, or a combination thereof) and service providers used to provide the commuter with his or her ride home. The transportation services used for the GRH trip are selected by Diamond Transportation and the service providers have contracts with COG for reimbursement of GRH trip expenses.

By asking questions specific to operational functions within GRH, those aspects of the program which need improvement can easily be identified, and since the survey design is consistent to all previous fiscal years, year-to-year performance can also be measured.

Thank you for using our Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH).
We want to know how you feel about our GRH Program.

Please take a moment and complete this card. Your response is greatly appreciated. Mail this card to us or fax it to 202-962-3218

Please circle one response for each question.

<p>How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p> <p>How would you rate the taxi or rental car service? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p> <p>How would you rate our response time? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p> <p>Overall, how would you rate our GRH service? Poor Fair Good Excellent</p>	<p>What suggestions do you have to improve our GRH service?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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1-800-745-RIDE

[Visit our web site at www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org)
Guaranteed Ride Home Program
We'll Get You Home. Guaranteed.

Figure 3 | Sample survey response form

Response Rates

Of 2,916 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2004, 785 were received, making for a 27% response rate.

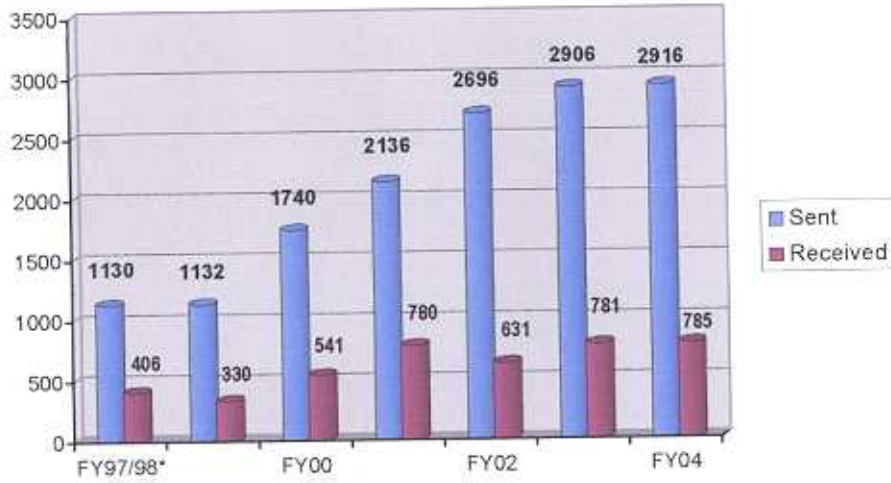


Figure 4 | Surveys sent and received over all fiscal years

Response rates have fluctuated over the years, however in the past two years, the response rate has remained almost the same. This fluctuation can be due to a number of factors, such as, delays between trips taken and surveys sent out. The large drop in the response rate for fiscal year 2002 surveys was due to postal service disruptions from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the closing of the Brentwood Post Office in Washington DC (this is the Post Office COG used for all of its outgoing mail) because of Anthrax contamination.



Figure 5 | Response rates in percentages over all fiscal years.

* The fiscal year begins July 1 of the previous calendar year and ends June 30 of the fiscal year. The GRII program began mid-fiscal year 1997, so the survey data for fiscal years 1997 and 1998 are combined.

Fiscal Year 2004 Survey Results

This section shows the survey results from the fiscal year 2004 GRH users only. Upcoming sections of this report will provide a comparison of results with previous fiscal years (1997 through present). For further clarification of the "Survey Design," please see page three for the rationale behind each question, explanation of some of the terms used, as well as an example of the survey response form that was used to submit the results that follow.

A small number of 785 respondents did not answer all four questions. As a result of this, the sum of the responses to some of the following questions will not equal 785.

Question One: Reservation Staff

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

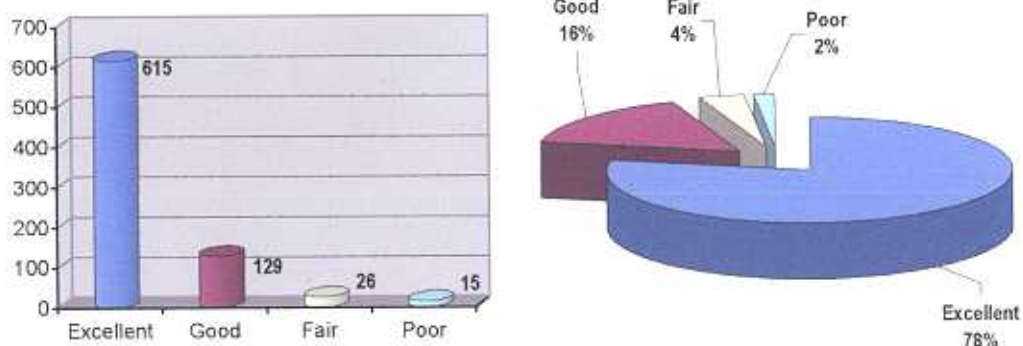


Figure 6 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question One

Question Two: Transportation Service

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

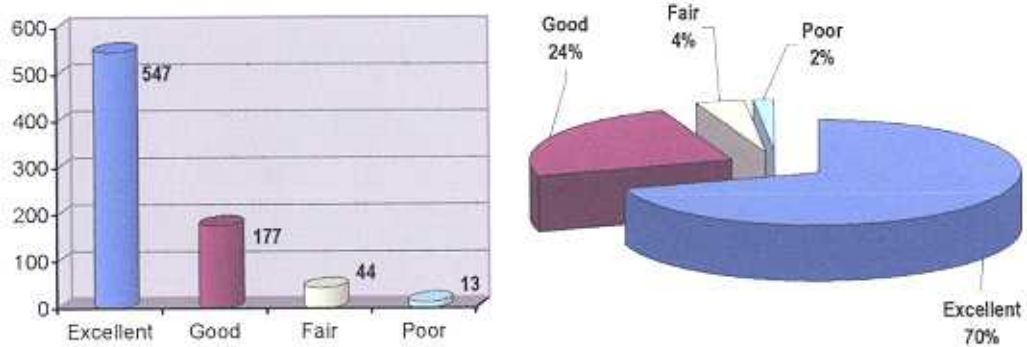


Figure 7 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question Two

Question 3: Response Time

How would you rate our response time?

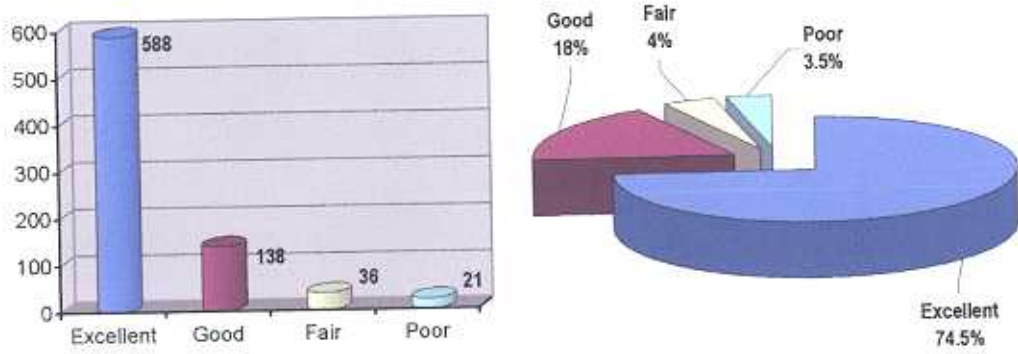


Figure 8 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question Three

Question Four: Overall Service

Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?

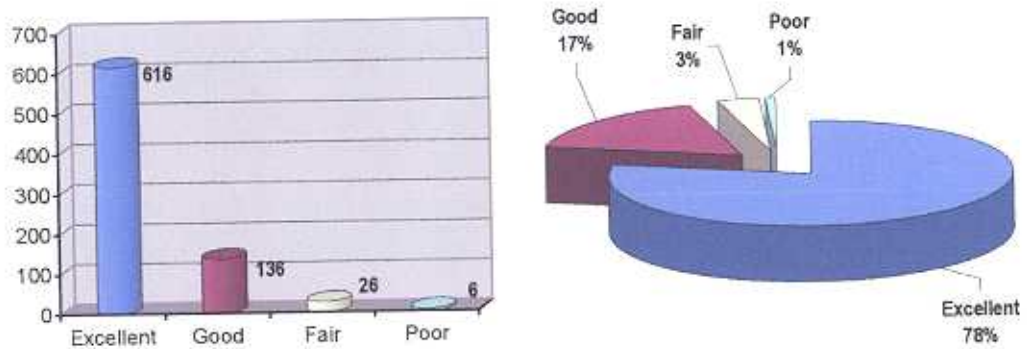
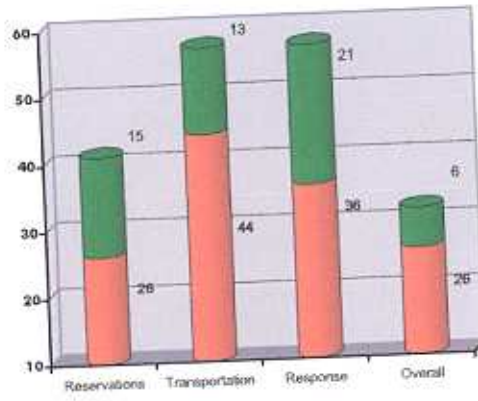
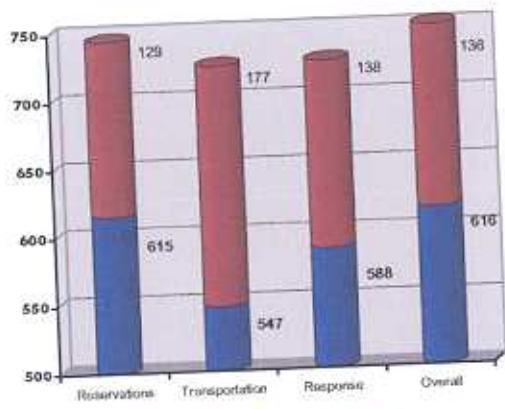


Figure 9 | Numbers and proportions of responses received to possible responses of Question Four

Overall service received the highest percentage of satisfied ratings. “Good” and “Excellent” responses combined for 95% of the ratings.



Excellent and Good
Poor and Fair
 Figure 10 | Number of satisfied and unsatisfied responses received for each question, respectively

Written Responses

In addition to four multiple-choice questions, survey respondents were asked “What suggestions do you have to improve our GRH service?” The request for suggestions is intended to obtain ideas that could be considered to improve the GRH service. However, in addition to suggestions, comments, compliments, and complaints were also provided and are just as valuable for analyzing service areas that could be improved. The question engages the respondent, and ultimately 41% of respondents provided their comments, suggestions, compliments or complaints with the GRH service.

For this report, written responses were categorized. A few respondents wrote information that was categorized into two categories. For example, a respondent wrote that “My cab did not show up as expected, but the GRH staff was friendly and helpful.” This response included both a complaint and compliment and was recorded in both categories. Therefore, the number of responses attributed in each category will add up to more than the total number of surveys that had a written response. Comments like “None” or “N/A” were not incorporated into the analysis.

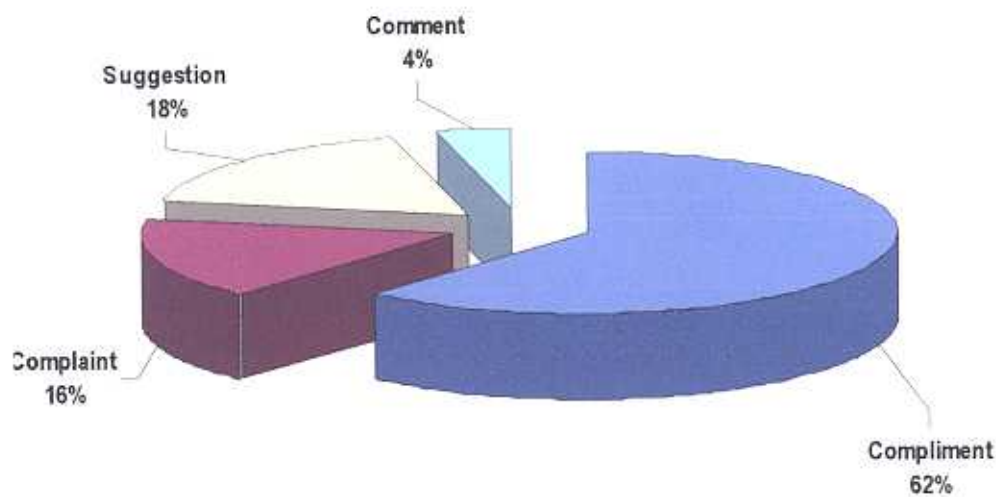


Figure 11 | Proportions of comments by type received in response to written response portion of survey

Suggestions

Fifty-eight suggestions were received (18% of all written responses) and covered a variety of topics, especially increasing the number of trips available, improving the cab company/drivers knowledge of the GRH program, extending the hours of operations, working on proper customer service etiquette for the reservations staff, and improving the quality of cabs and drivers for the program.

With improving the cab company/driver knowledge of the program, came the suggestion of creating a pamphlet that the drivers would have in their cabs at all times to educate themselves and the GRH users on the program and what it entails.

Other suggestions included sending reminders when the time comes for re-registration, establishing agreement with DC to ensure a response time of fifteen minutes or better, and ensuring that the cab driver understands exactly where the GRH customer is going to be picked up.

Compliments

By far the most common type of written response was positive remarks or expressions of gratitude for the GRH service. Some commuters explicitly listed GRH as the only reason for them utilizing an alternative commute mode. The most common compliments were along the lines of "Keep up the great work" or "Don't change a thing," while a few of the respondents provided personal stories of a time when GRH helped them during a crisis situation. Sometimes a respondent that provided especially positive feedback included their name and telephone number.

Of the 202 compliments received, only 31 pertained to one specific aspect of the service. These were response time (15 responses), reservations staff (6 responses), and transportation service (10 responses).

Complaints

The smallest number of respondents, 52 (16% of all written responses) complained about five principal subjects: the attitude and/or rudeness of the reservations staff, the failure of the cab to arrive at the predetermined location, the waiting period for the cab to arrive, and the lack of knowledge the cab drivers had of the GRH program.

The complaints seemed more focused on the transportation end. The reservation staff received a majority of the complaints; most of which made reference to the lack of respect the reservation staff had for the GRH users. Complaints suggested that the reservation staff were rude or had some kind of attitude with the GRH users. Response time had a high number of complaints with 15, and the transportation service had a high number of complaints with 10. Transportation service complaints involved failure of the taxi company to call the commuter for pickup, cleanliness/comfort of transportation service vehicles, and finally the friendliness, driving characteristics, English proficiency, and the directional knowledge of the drivers. There were also some issues encountered with the driver's familiarity with the GRH program, where the driver would expect a voucher as a method of payment. Ultimately, the transportation service is responsible for the training of taxi drivers, and while valid issues are discussed with

the transportation service provider, COG has very little direct control over these aspects of the service.

Comments

The smallest category of written responses, 13 (4%) were general comments. "Comments" for the purpose of this survey were defined as responses relatively benign in nature- they did not identify any positive aspect of the service as would a compliment, nor did they necessarily express unhappiness with the GRH service as would a complaint, and neither did they suggest any new aspect of the GRH service or pose their comments in the form of a suggestion.

Most of the comments conveyed the message to "keep offering the service." A couple of respondents mentioned that the service was good, but commented on how the driver took longer routes than necessary. Overall, the comments were positive.

Comparison to Previous Fiscal Years

Question One: Reservations Staff

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

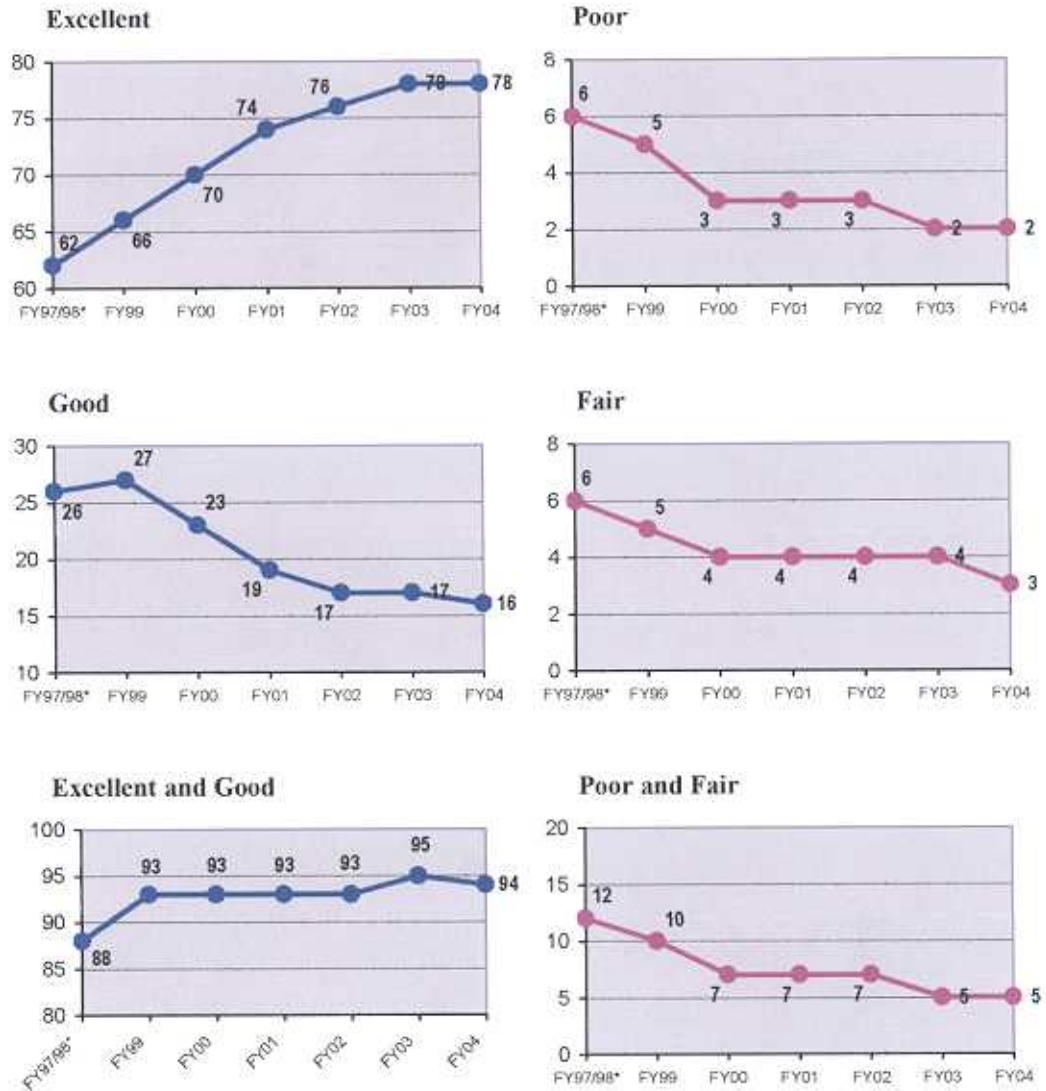


Figure 12 | Percentages of responses received for Question One over all fiscal years

Question Two: Transportation Service

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

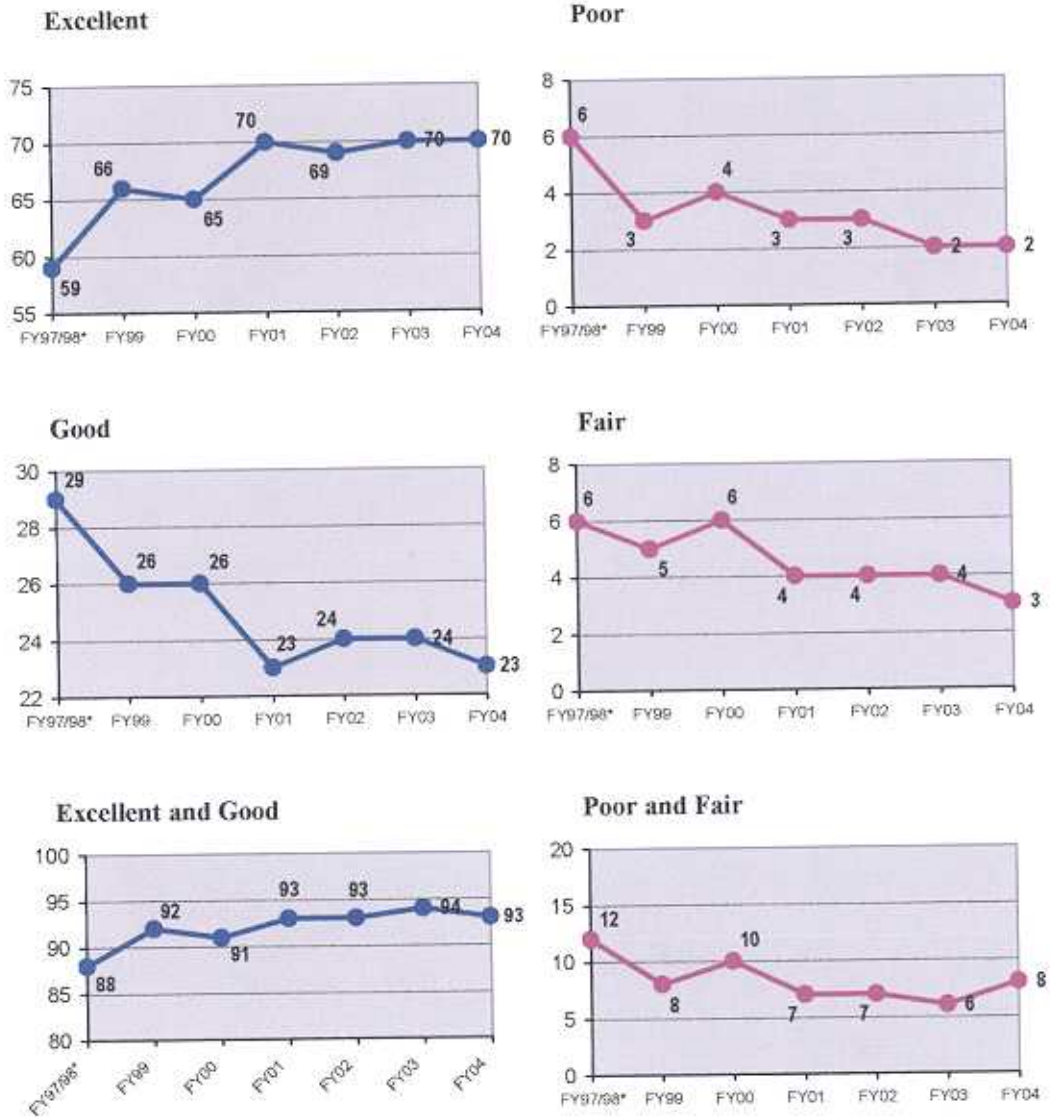


Figure 13 | Percentages of responses received for Question Two over all fiscal years

Question Three: Response Time

How would you rate our response time?

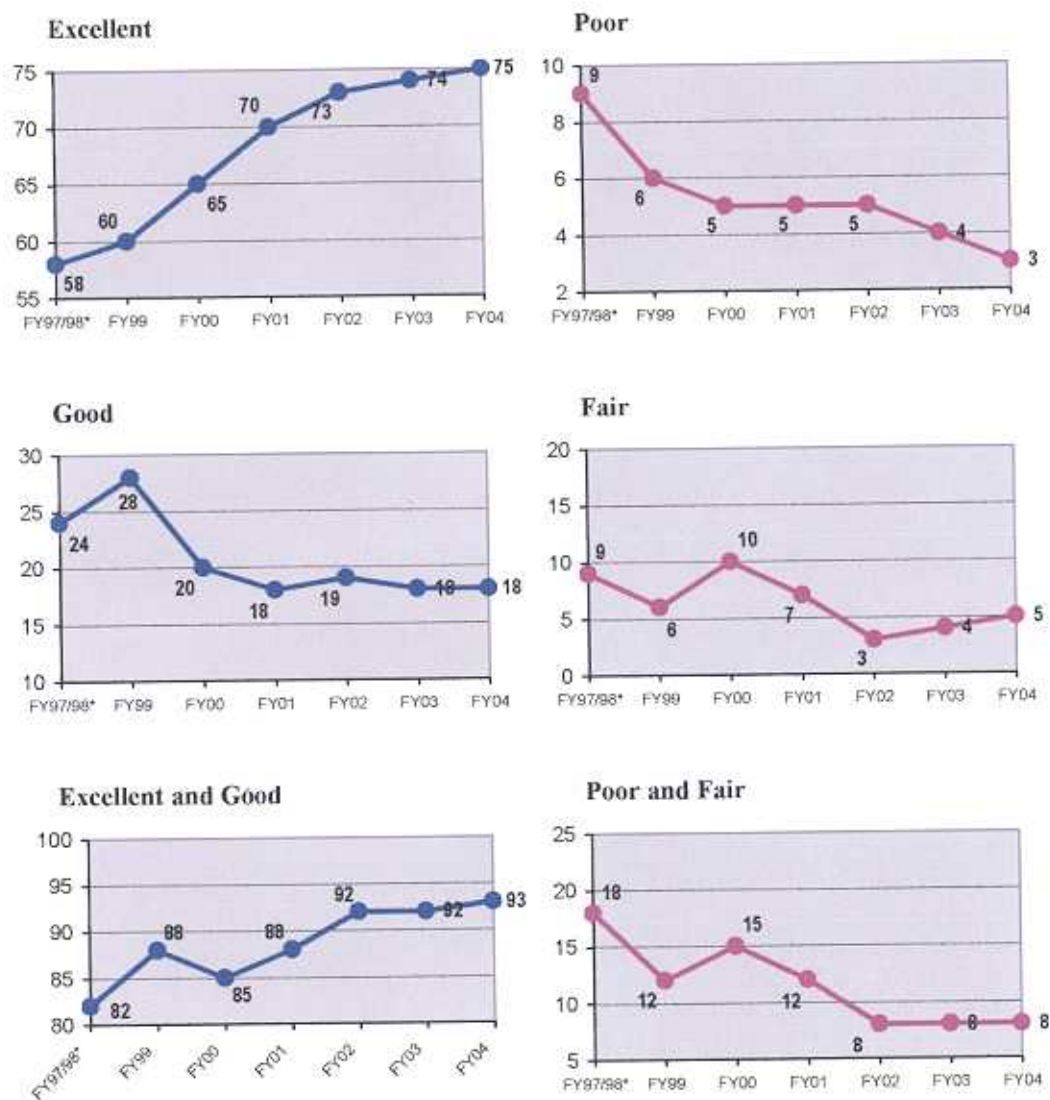


Figure 14 | Percentages of responses received for Question Three over all fiscal years

Question Four: Overall Service

Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?

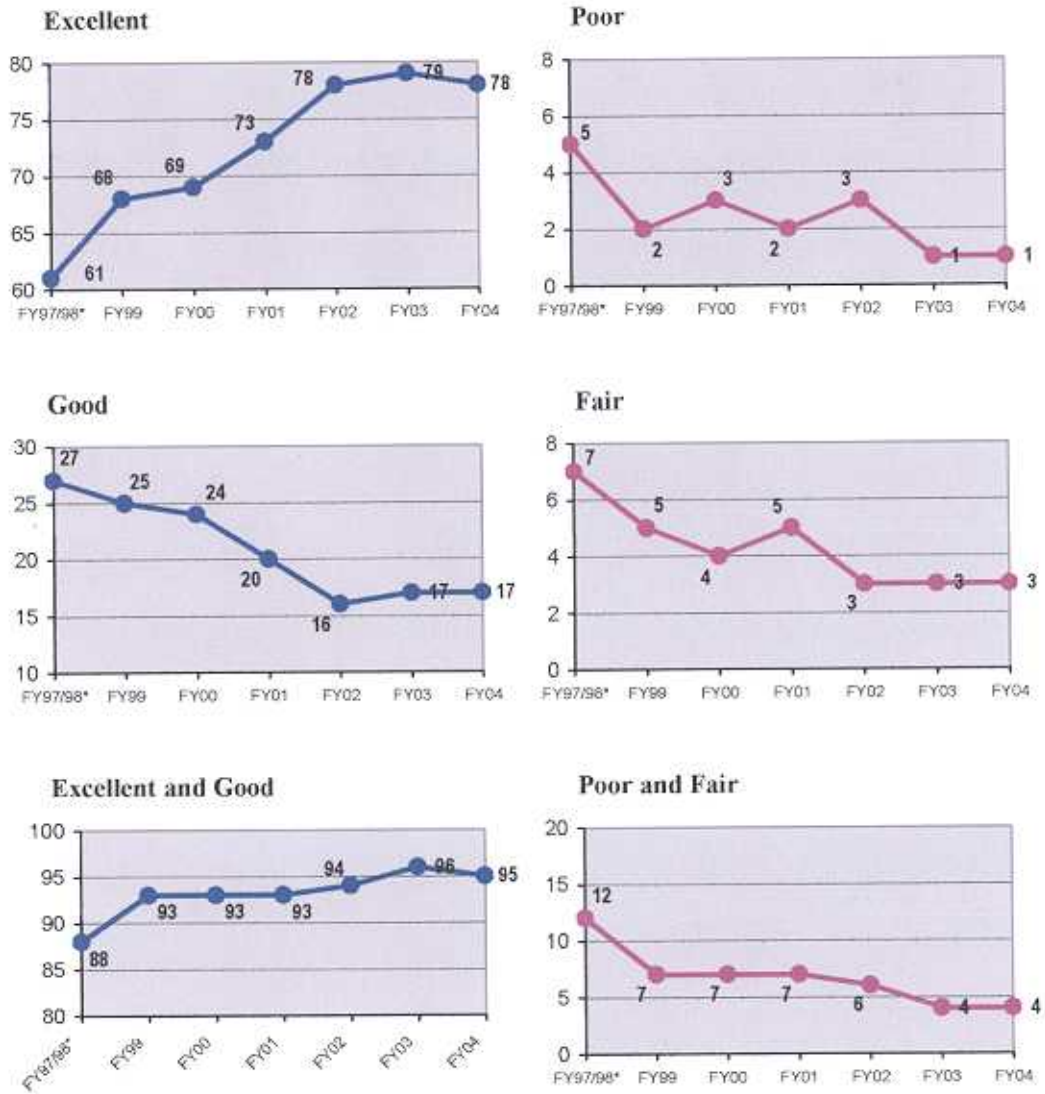


Figure 15 | Percentages of responses received for Question Four over all fiscal years (Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.)

Survey Questions	Responses	FY97/98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04
1. How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff?	Excellent	62%	66%	70%	74%	76%	78%	78%
	Good	26%	27%	23%	19%	17%	17%	16%
	Fair	6%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
	Poor	6%	5%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
2. How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?	Excellent	59%	66%	65%	70%	69%	70%	70%
	Good	29%	26%	26%	23%	24%	24%	23%
	Fair	6%	5%	6%	4%	4%	4%	6%
	Poor	6%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%
3. How would you rate our response time?	Excellent	58%	60%	65%	70%	73%	74%	75%
	Good	24%	28%	20%	18%	19%	18%	18%
	Fair	9%	6%	10%	7%	3%	4%	5%
	Poor	9%	6%	5%	5%	5%	4%	3%
4. Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?	Excellent	61%	68%	69%	73%	78%	79%	78%
	Good	27%	25%	24%	20%	16%	17%	17%
	Fair	7%	5%	4%	5%	3%	3%	3%
	Poor	5%	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Responses as a Percentage of Total Responses	Excellent	60%	65%	67%	72%	73%	75%	75%
	Good	26%	27%	23%	20%	19%	19%	19%
	Fair	7%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%	4%
	Poor	7%	4%	4%	3%	4%	2%	2%

Figure 16 | Proportions of responses and sum of responses received for each multiple-choice question (Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.)

Conclusions

The vast majority (95%) of the fiscal year 2004 survey respondents were satisfied with the overall service GRH provides. The satisfaction level for fiscal year 2004 is virtually unchanged from fiscal year 2003.

More than half (62%) of the written comments were compliments. Nevertheless, a small number of the total number of respondents (16%) was not satisfied with certain aspects of the GRH service they received. The majority of complaints received concern aspects of the taxi service that are beyond COG's control. One of the main complaints had to do with the driver's lack of understanding of the GRH program. Commuter Connections continuously provides customer training and information to the reservations staff and other employees at Diamond Cab Company, as well as further training sessions when needed. Although these matters are out of COG's control, COG addresses related issues with the president of the taxi company when a series of complaints about that company are received. Progress has been made in the area of cab driver's understanding of the GRH program, but there is obviously more to be done. As far as other complaints, COG strives towards progression with all aspects of the GRH program and will continue to do so in the future.

Appendix

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA 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 call Commuter Connections and receive authorization from Commuter Connections prior to using the GRH service.** The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Commuter Connections staff will issue authorization number(s) to participating commuters and/or company Employee Transportation Coordinator's (ETC's) to certify a GRH trip. **Commuters will not be reimbursed for trips not authorized by Commuter Connections.** Depending on the commuter's employment site, an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) may have to be contacted first in order to make the appropriate arrangements for this service. Please check with your personnel department as to whether or not your site has a designated ETC.
2. Commuters must be officially registered with Commuter Connections before using the 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 be officially registered *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.
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.
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 acts of God.

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 holidays and unplanned Federal Government office closings. **GRH TRIPS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE 10:00 P.M. Holidays include: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King's Birthday, 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. In order to be eligible, a commuter must be physically working in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget. The MSA includes the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery and Prince George's, the City of Alexandria and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and Stafford, and all cities within the aforementioned counties.
9. Eligible commuters can live anywhere inside the MSA or in any of the following areas: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Harford, Howard, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, or Washington counties, the City of Baltimore, and any point along the Upper Eastern Shore in Maryland; and Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Warren, or Westmoreland counties, the City of Fredericksburg, or the City of Winchester in Virginia; and Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Adams, or York counties in Pennsylvania. Any other destination points 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. **COG's Commuter Connections staff and/or their designees 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 is made by a taxi, COG's Commuter Connections program 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 the GRH, the participant will be mailed a transit reimbursement voucher. The transit reimbursement voucher must be submitted back to COG within thirty days of transit use in order for payment to be made. Please allow 45 days for reimbursement.

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), 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 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.