



## FY 2014 Final Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule

**Mission:** Commuter Connections is a regional network providing commute services and information to area residents and employers in the Washington metropolitan region in order to help reduce traffic congestion and emissions caused by single occupant vehicles (SOVs).

As part of the Regional Mass Marketing Transportation Emission Reduction Measure, the Commuter Connections Marketing program will provide frequent promotion of Ridematching services, Guaranteed Ride Home, and 'Pool Rewards; and special events such as Bike to Work Day, Car Free Day, and the Employer Recognition Awards. These various services and special events promote alternative commute options including: ridesharing, teleworking, bicycling, walking, and mass transit. The FY2014 marketing program will raise awareness of commuting choices available in the Washington metropolitan region and support the Commuter Connections network in persuading area workers and the general public to choose, and continue to use, alternatives to driving alone to and from work as well as for other non-work trips.

**Marketing Input:** The background for this marketing brief was derived from the following sources:

- FY 2012 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report
- 2011 Commuter Connections Transportation Emission Reduction (TERM) Analysis Report
- 2010 State of the Commute Survey Report
- 2010 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program Survey Report

Internal reports and surveys are the cornerstone for the FY2014 Marketing Brief. These reports provide quantitative and qualitative measurement of commute behavior by workers throughout the Washington metropolitan region and the impact of this behavior on air quality and congestion.

In addition to comprehensive data provided by internal reports, the marketing team has considered performance data from past campaigns as well as information gathered through industry reports, surveys, and trends, and how it might be applied to the Commuter Connections mass marketing campaign efforts. This information is used to support the development of the media and/or messaging strategies.

Increases in gas prices have had a measured effect on interest in ridesharing. In 2012, the national average started to climb and has recently peaked in FY2013 about 8-cents per gallon higher than a year ago. The economy is still showing sluggish growth and remains a concern for many consumers. The economic benefit of ridesharing is a strong, simple message that resonates with many consumers and commuters and one that will continue to be emphasized.

In addition to gas prices and the economy, other events may impact this year's messaging and strategy. The Virginia MegaProjects has many construction projects underway through the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Within the peak travel period, August through November, Commuter Connections has an opportunity to team up with VDOT to provide commuters with project updates and ride to work alternatives such as Ridesharing and benefits and incentives including Guaranteed Ride Home and 'Pool Rewards.

Carpooling is receiving growing national and regional attention through new social media and mobile apps. The attention that newcomers give to carpooling is positive news for Commuter Connections. It provides an opportunity to address the advantages offered to the region by Commuter Connections for nearly forty years. Commuter Connections has an established, trusted brand across the region and boasts a database of 30,000 commuter accounts. The ridematching service offered by Commuter Connections allows commuters to find and establish carpools to meet their day-to-day commuting needs. The ease of mind and feeling of stability and security provided by establishing a lasting carpool is a message we may explore in this year's campaign. Regional commuters will have access to the ridematching system through a new mobile platform which will be unveiled in FY 2014.

For commuters who rideshare, the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program provides a valuable service guaranteeing a ride home in case of an unexpected personal or family emergency or unscheduled overtime. This year's campaign will look to promote GRH registration within the inner core for those switching to or already using transit, bicycling, and walking to and from work. For commuters in the middle and outer rings, the campaign will focus on coupling GRH registration as a service provided to those who convert from SOV driving to other mobility modes or already using alternative modes such as ridesharing and public transportation. The overall message will remain focused on registering for the program as a safety net for those primarily switching from driving alone to using transportation alternatives to and from work.

In addition to paid and earned media, the regional effort will include Car Free Days and Bike to Work Day events. The mission of these events is to encourage SOV drivers to try alternative transportation modes. The intention is to change behavior so that individuals

will choose to incorporate such modes as part of their regular, or at least occasional, commute or lifestyle patterns.

**Marketing Strategies:** The marketing strategy will focus on achieving the following:

- Emphasize the cost savings benefits of ridesharing through the use of simple, direct messages that sharing a ride saves money.
- Co-branding with VDOT MegaProjects construction projects in online or radio messages.
- Capitalize on the new Commuter Connections ridematching mobile capabilities to position Commuter Connections as the trusted, regional provider of ridematching services for nearly forty years.
- Emphasize the cost-savings benefits of ridesharing
- Draw on the additional savings of 'Pool Rewards as another incentive within Rideshare ads.
- Drive inner core commuters who use public transportation, bicycling, or walking to register for GRH.
- For middle and outer ring commuters, leverage carpooling and vanpooling by positioning GRH as a safety net for ridesharing and public transportation use, available to commuters in case of unscheduled overtime or an unexpected personal or family emergency.
- Increase the number of participants in special events and promotions such as Car Free Days and Bike to Work Day based on set committee goals.
- Promote employer efforts to ease regional commuting issues through earned media placements with the use of human interest stories of commuters using alternative commute modes and/or employers offering commuter benefits that have higher than expected engagement levels.
- Increase reach to younger demographic, Spanish, and African American audiences in radio and print messages.
- Focus more on 'Pool Rewards.
- Explore opportunities to advertise with transit and/or bus wraps.
- Reduce work trips.

Media buying strategies will be selected based on Scarborough Research reports for the specific target audiences for each program and event: Ridesharing, Guaranteed Ride Home, Employer Recognition Awards, Car Free Days, Bike to Work Day, 'Pool Rewards, and any other program or event. These reports identify specific media that are best suited for each target audience. The report information is considered along with the cost of each media option and results from previous Commuter Connections campaigns.

For FY2014, radio is recommended as the anchor medium for the program. Radio has the ability to reach a large portion of the Commuter Connections target markets (90

percent) with significant frequency when commuters are engaged in possibly stressful, frustrating, costly, and time consuming commutes.

Print creative is important to provide visual, repetitive communication and reinforcement of messages delivered through radio spots. FY2014's marketing strategy will include well-placed visuals across the geographical region. Outdoor print such as bus signage and shelters, online animated banner ads, and cable TV will be evaluated as visual elements for the campaign.

Internet advertising is interactive and closer to one-to-one selling than any other form of media. Optimized placement of banner ads on websites targeted to key counties, news, weather, television affiliates, and job sites may be used to reach commuters just a click away from Commuter Connections' online ridematching service or to register for GRH.

Opportunities to involve retailers and local businesses in sponsorship or promotion of Commuter Connections programs such as Ridematching and Car Free Days will be investigated. We would look to identify businesses interested in encouraging people to explore the use of sustainable, healthy transportation and benefiting from the patronage of those commuters. Retailers could provide sponsorship of giveaways or discounts for events such as Car Free Days or could be involved in cross-promotion opportunities as previously done with Flippin' Pizza.

In addition to traditional media, the marketing team will look to further expand the use of social media, mobile devices, smart phones and tablets. Building upon Commuter Connections' existing pages on Facebook (Commuter Connections, Telework, Bike to Work Day, and Car Free Days) and accounts on Twitter (Bike to Work Day and Car Free Days), the marketing team will investigate additional strategies to increase engagement and integrate social media activities with other marketing approaches.

The marketing team will examine opportunities to provide smart phone access to Commuter Connections resources and commute option information and benefits. Quick Response (QR) codes may be used on marketing creative to provide smart phone users with quick and immediate access to Commuter Connections' information and registration or pledge pages.

Existing creative will be used for the fall campaign; results of the complete FY2013 campaign will be studied and best practices will be carried forward for the FY2014 campaign. The creative team will consider the results of the FY2013 campaign along with area transportation trends and additional exploration to help identify the most effective messaging strategies for implementation for spring 2014.

The marketing team will investigate format and layout options for print pieces including the Commuter Connections newsletter, direct mailer, and the Employer Recognition Awards nomination brochure. New formats or layouts may look to one or more of the following objectives: decrease print costs, increase usability and response rates, and provide a fresh, new look.

The Marketing Communications Plan will effectively and efficiently reach its target markets based on a review and analysis of third party media data from Strata, Scarborough, and Arbitron as monitored by a professional media buying firm. Reach and frequency of the target demographic will be calculated using a cost/value proposition for each media option.

## **Guaranteed Ride Home**

**Objective:** Increase the number of applicants in the GRH database by promoting GRH as a rideshare benefit, eliminating a barrier to using transit, carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling, and walking to work.

**Target market** (from 2010 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program Survey Report):

- 35-64 years old (88%)
- Caucasian (68%) and African-American (20%)
- \$80,000+ annual household income (80%), \$120,000+ annual household income (50%)
- Commute of more than 30 miles / 45 minutes
- Live in Virginia (65%) or Maryland (32%) or District of Columbia (1%), with emphasis on Prince William (17%) and Fairfax Counties (13%); work in D.C (63%), Maryland (11%) and Virginia (26%)

### **Tactics:**

- Focus will be on commuters in the inner core, encouraging them to register for GRH.
- Radio advertising will focus on district radio stations serving the inner core. Radio may also be used to reach the region's Hispanic and African American commuters.
- Evaluate web advertisement (banner ads), geared directly toward generating registrations.
- Evaluate print and/or transit signage to increase awareness.
- Update website images to integrate with the campaign.
- Direct Mail (Allocation equals 5% of Work Program budget)..
- Explore new ideas for Direct Mail pieces.

**GRH Media Allocation:** Approximately 29.9 percent of media budget.

## **Ridematching**

**Objectives:** Maintain and increase awareness of shared ride modes, retain current ridership on these modes; gain new riders; gain new applicants to the regional database.

- **Target market** (from FY 2012 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report):
- 25-64 years old (82%)
- Caucasian (69%) and African-American (17%)
- \$80,000+ annual household income (71%)
- Commute of more than 20 miles/30 minutes
- Live in Virginia (60%) or Maryland (36%); work in D.C. (57%) or Virginia (27%)
- Work for employers with 100+ employees (81%), work for employers with 1000 or more employees (46%)
- Work for federal agencies (67%) and private sector (20%)

### **Tactics:**

- Radio advertising to increase awareness of benefits of ridesharing. Live traffic reads provide an ideal opportunity to make the association between traffic and solution and will be investigated for feasibility.
- A Spanish-speaking radio station may be included to reach out to the region's Hispanic population.
- TV will be considered as an opportunity to visually present the message that's conveyed in radio spots.
- Optimized online banner ads may be used on selective websites to drive users to the Commuter Connections website and/or new mobile ridematching service to register.
- Out-of-home components that make a direct connection between commuting options and saving money will be considered. Media options that reach VDOT MegaProjects commuters will be considered.
- Public relations/media communications to provide testimonials of ridesharing success stories and broaden awareness and registrations.
- Update website images to integrate with the campaign.
- Direct mail (Allocation equals 5% of Work Program budget).
- Explore new ideas for Direct Mail pieces.

**Rideshare Media Allocation:** Approximately 55.5 percent of media budget.

## **'Pool Rewards**

**Objectives:** Recruit and retain commuters in a carpool through monetary incentives.

### **Target Market**

- Rideshare demographics
- Younger demographics

### **Tactics:**

- Media and public outreach will be used to build awareness.
- Messages promoting environmental benefits of ridesharing such as tons of CO<sub>2</sub> reduced gallons of gas saved, miles of alternate commutes logged, and vehicle trips saved, and/or social responsibility including reducing traffic congestion and improving your quality of life with the cash incentive being secondary will be considered.
- To promote awareness, radio and optimized online banner ads may be used.
- 'Pool Rewards eligibility may be tied to Rideshare messages. For example, "...interested in Ridesharing. You may be eligible for 'Pool Rewards..."
- Live radio reads will be investigated to inject additional interest in the program and drive people to the website for more information.
- Value add from the mass marketing campaign may be used to expand the reach of 'Pool Rewards.
- Non-cost avenues such as Craig's List and the Commuter Connections bulletin board will be used.
- Investigate opportunities to expand in Spanish radio.

**'Pool Rewards Media Allocation:** Approximately 3.8 percent of media budget.



## **Special Events**

**Objectives:** Use special events, such as Bike to Work Day, Car Free Days, and the Employer Recognition Awards event to highlight existing programs and encourage other employers and commuters to become involved, increase their ridership or enhance their on-site programs; increase commuter participation in Bike to Work Day and Car Free Days.

### **Target Market**

- Car Free Days 2013: SOV drivers
- Bike to Work Day 2014 (from WABA member statistics):
  - Age 25-49
  - Male
  - Commute trip up to 30 miles
  - \$30,000+ household income
- Employer Recognition Awards 2014: Level 3 & 4 Employers in Commuter Connections Network area

### **Tactics:**

- Car Free Days (CFD)
  - Sponsor CFD, September 20-23, 2013
  - Secure corporate, retailers, and other sponsorships for CFD.
  - Focus on teleworking and vanpool in addition to family-friendly messaging throughout the weekend September 20-23, 2013.
  - Use radio advertising to increase awareness of CFD and drive listeners to [carfreemetrodc.org](http://carfreemetrodc.org).
  - Provide marketing collateral such as posters.
  - Transit /outdoor signage (bus exterior and bus shelter ads).
  - Text messaging.
  - Email blasts and mailings to employers and past participants.
  - Engage Transportation Planning Board members through Proclamation and encourage jurisdictional partners to do the same.
  - Use social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Bike to Work Day (BTWD)
  - Sponsor BTWD, Friday, May 16, 2014.
  - Secure corporate and other sponsorships for BTWD.
  - Use radio advertising to boost registration of BTWD.
  - Provide additional marketing collateral and advertising including t-shirts, posters, and rack cards.
  - Should additional sponsor dollars become available, provide additional marketing such as pit stop banners, print ads, and various signage.
  - Email blasts and mailings to employers and past participants.

- Earned Media.
- Engage Transportation Planning Board members through Proclamation and encourage jurisdictional partners to do the same.
- Use social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Employer Recognition Awards
  - Coordinate the Employer Recognition Awards ceremony, June 2014.
  - Provide brochure/nomination form in support of the nomination process; online application and email blast to potential nominees.
  - Marketing collateral for the event including invitations, program brochure, podium sign, and promotional giveaways.
  - Print advertisement in major business publication highlighting winning employers.

**Special Events Media Allocation:** Approximately 3.3 percent of media budget for BTWD, Approximately 3.8 percent of media budget for CFD, and less than 1 percent of media budget for Employer Recognition Awards event.

## **Employer Outreach**

**Objectives:** Add new employer clients; expand participation and offerings in existing employer programs; recognize existing employer programs who have implemented successful employee commute benefit programs; increase the number of employers offering the tax free commute benefit; increase use of SmarTrip offered through employer programs as well as other TDM strategies such as telework, flextime, and ridematching.

**Target Market** (from FY 2012 Commuter Connections Applicant Database Annual Placement Survey Report):

- Employers with more than 250 employees (69%)
- Private sector employers (20%)

### **Tactics:**

- Update web content as required and other social media applications for Telework such as Facebook
- Quarterly employer newsletter
- Quarterly Federal Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) newsletter insert
- Email marketing and mailings
- Continuously update Federal ETC website information
- Employer Case Studies.

**Employer Outreach Media Allocation:** 0 percent of media budget.

## **FY 2014 Schedules**

### **Creative Development Schedule**

Review research and results from recent campaigns	June 2013
Develop Marketing Communications Plan	July 2013
Feedback on Plan from Regional TDM Marketing Group(SharePoint)	Aug 2013
Present conceptual approaches to Regional TDM Marketing Grp	Sept 2013
Refine and develop approach based on Workgroup feedback	Oct 2013
Finalize creative	Nov 2013
Produce creative	Dec 2013
Distribute creative to media vendors	Jan 2014
Campaign launch	Feb 2014

### **Marketing Campaign Schedule**

Car Free Days	Aug – Sept 2013
Fall Campaign (repeat FY13 creative)	Oct – Dec 2013
Spring Campaign (new FY14 creative)	Feb – June 2014
Bike to Work Day	Apr – May 2014
'Pool Rewards	Jan - June 2014
Employer Recognition Awards	June 2014