

Regional TDM Marketing Group Meeting Notes

Tuesday, August 5, 2003

1. Introductions – Sign in Sheet

2. Introduction of New Intern

Ryan Marshall was introduced as the new Commuter Connections intern for FY04.

3. Minutes of June 3rd Meeting

Chris Arabia, acting as Chair for the meeting asked if anyone had any changes or comments they wished to make to the minutes of the June 3rd meeting. The minutes were approved.

4. Vice Chair Nomination

Douglas Franklin announced that at the next meeting, there would be a switchover of chairs, with the current Vice Chair, Ronald Mitchell of the District Department of Transportation becoming Chair, and Rhoda Washington of Prince George's County Maryland will be the new Vice Chair.

5. Regional Mass Marketing TERM

Dudnyk Advertising representatives provided an update of the regional mass marketing TERM progress which took place since the last meeting held in June and stated that they had completed their contract requirements with Commuter Connections for FY03, and were beginning their new one. Deliverables included a review of existing research, a review of past marketing initiatives, new research on attitudes and behavior, and a proposed integrated marketing plan. They listed key elements of the Mass Marketing Campaign, which would place emphasis on 60-second radio spots airing during morning drive times. This new campaign, which is above and beyond all other Commuter Connections marketing, will promote Commuter Connections as an umbrella brand to provide a one-stop solution to transportation problems within the region.

The research that Dudnyk reviewed revealed that time, cost, and convenience were the major rational concerns, and the agency felt that there was not enough information on the emotional response to commuting behavior; therefore a new qualitative study was conducted with commuters from an attitudinal perspective. Findings cited frustration as the key emotional trigger associated with commuting. They also completed a stakeholder review that included feedback from local jurisdictions, TMA's and transit agencies. Stakeholders expressed the need for a unified and seamless integrated transit system for the region. Employers were also included in the survey and expressed a strong interest and support of telework.

In addition to major broadcast media, the agency also mentioned the importance of direct marketing to target activity centers designated as high SOV areas, as well as marketing to non-English speaking audiences.

The importance of promoting the website was underscored, when it was found that consumers visited the commuterconnections.org site before making a call to the 800 number and often did so in lieu of calling Commuter Connections. The website plays a important role for Commuter Connections as the vast majority of GRH applicants register through this means, as well as a significant level of rideshare applicants.

Dudnyk went on to discuss the six initial concepts offered for possible inclusion in the mass marketing campaign, stating that the goal of the spots were to position Commuter Connections as a solution to frustration.

- **Testimonial:** This was the most straightforward approach, commuters sharing their experiences with other commuters.
- **ECT:** An Emergency Commuter Technician helps commuters with their frustrations. This spot featured more humor, although the humor was still reality based.
- **Change Your Day:** A slice of life comparison style approach, comparing the days of two employees working for the same company, one who found Commuter connections, and one who still drove alone. It depicted a small snippet of their lives, showing the difference. This approach also used humor.
- **Race to Work:** A sports commentator type of commercial, in which two commuters would race each other to work, one using alternative commuting solutions and the other, an SOV driver.
- **Bookends:** This spot would be a straight forward commercial for the first 15 seconds; the middle 30 seconds would be a humorous commercial for some device that would make the commute easier, such as a powerful air horn; it would conclude with a straight forward last 15 seconds.
- **Hey You:** This was the most intrusive commercial, one in which the commercial would tell the listener what to do.

Concepts 1-3 were chosen based on feedback votes by both the Commuter Connections Subcommittee and the Regional TDM Marketing Group. The three concepts were made into :60 second rough-cut sample commercials, using talent available at the recording studio.

After playing the three sample commercials, Dudnyk explained the procedure by which they had reviewed the commercials during the focus group sessions. They interviewed 25 commuters, subdividing them into SOV and alternate commute groups. The information they gathered from the research findings was as follows:

- In all spots, consumers identified with the commuters in the commercials.
- They liked the idea that Commuter Connections could be viewed as a solution to commuting problems.
- The humor used in the commercials was appreciated, when it was not being made at the expense of the commuter.
- The use of a list of options was effective, because it allowed commuters to understand many of the options available to them, especially the flexibility of driving alone to work when necessary.
- The Jan (Testimonial) commercial received the highest ratings. Focus group participants enjoyed the positive outcome of the commuter's story and how Commuter Connections assisted with a solution to the previously difficult commuting experience.
- The ECT commercial used a balanced approach, of humor and useful information. However, test groups were not motivated to take any real action by the commercial.
- The Tina (Slice of life) commercial was the most polarizing of the commercials, as to whether they sided with Johnson (stranded commuter) or Tina (promoted).
- The use of traffic sounds caught the ear of the listeners, as they stated that the sounds helped them associate the commercial with their commuting frustration.
- Additionally, it was felt that the commercials should use strong mention of the website, as almost all participants expressed they would be prone to first visit the web site before taking action.

Both the focus group findings and TPB Work Session feedback revealed the "Testimonial" format to be the clear choice. This gave impetus to engage in further research of a quantitative nature, in order to validate the campaign prior to production. The methodology used for this research was an online survey of 300 commuters. Dudnyk stated that the results would be available in the near future.

Participants of the online survey were made up entirely of residents of the Washington metropolitan area and were required to work at least three days per week and commute a distance of ten or more miles to work. Approximately 20% of the survey respondents were made up of alternative mode commuters, and the balance were SOV commuters. Participants clicked on a link to play the radio commercial and were asked a series of questions. Survey respondents were also asked to rate a list of tagline choices.

6. Work Group Nomination TDM Marketing –

The following individuals were nominated and selected to be part of the newly formed TDM Marketing Work Group. This group will review and comment on marketing materials related to Commuter Connections GRH and Telework TERMS. The Work Group consists of:

Dottie Cousineau, Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Gerald Morrison, Virginia Department of Transportation
Muriel Bowser Montgomery County Government
Ronald Mitchell, District of Columbia Department of Transportation

7. 2003 Strategic Marketing Plan (SMP) / Resource Guide Update – Version 7.0

Sheila Lewin of Pathways Communications handed out a draft of the TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan for FY04. She stated the purpose of the plan

is to have a guide summarizing activities, marketing campaigns and budgets of the regional agencies and jurisdictions that will aid in the effective promotion of TDM education, and travel behavior changes for the region's commuters.

Updates, additions and changes to the plan are due back to Commuter Connections by September 12th. The final document will be available at the next Regional TDM Marketing Group meeting in October.

8. Calendar of Events / Other Marketing Information

Buddy Alves from MTA informed the group that MARC will have a PSA spot available for a GRH ad in the MARC Rider Guide brochure, and invited Commuter Connections to contact him to make necessary arrangements for participation. He also spoke about the fall promotions for the MTA and shared several items tying in with the Baltimore Ravens NFL home games. Brochures for light rail and Park & Ride bus service to M&T Bank Stadium and magnets were passed out.

Rick Rybeck stated that although the District Department of Transportation does not have a deep marketing budget, they contribute substantial funds to Commuter Connections to aid in marketing alternative commuting within the region.

Althea Evans from Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission reviewed happenings at PRTC and stated that a major overhaul and re-launch of

their web site was just completed, as well as an announcement of bus routes and schedule changes. Late summer and fall promotions are being designed to drive traffic to the new web site. She also commented on positioning the mass marketing campaign to reach working mothers, and suggested that the campaign include this target.

Dick Siskind from WMATA spoke about the SmarTrip fare Box installation rollout on the Metrobus fleet, which will be fully integrated by 2004. There will a regional customer service center by middle to late next year depending on the success of the software. There will be a bus information program launched in September geared toward demystifying the bus.

Christina Gordon of Arlington Transportation Partners discussed several items in the works, including a bicycle riding promotion with events held in conjunction with Spanish radio stations and WPIT. She also announced that Arlington County has increased their bus fares. In addition, Ms. Gordon pass out recently developed brochures on ATP's services.

“Communities In Motion Day” was brought up and Sheila Lewin from Pathways Communications stated that Commuter Connections had not planned to promote this event and that it has traditionally been up to the local jurisdictions to coordinate any activity within their areas.

***The next meeting of the Regional TDM Marketing Group will be on
Tuesday, October 7, 2003 at 10:00 a.m.***