

# Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey

Washington DC Metropolitan Region Fiscal Year 2015

**Draft Report** 

January 19, 2016

We'll get you home. Guaranteed.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments



**DATE:** January 19, 2016

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**AGENCY:** Founded in 1957, The Metropolitan Washington Council of

Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues affecting the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 22 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress. Policies are set through the COG Board of Directors, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, and the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality

Committee.

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, and plays an important role as the regional forum for transportation planning. The TPB prepares plans and programs that the federal government must approve in order for federal-aid transportation funds to flow to the Washington region.

Commuter Connections is a regional network of transportation organizations coordinated by the TPB. Established in 1974, Commuter Connections offers free commuter services to help both businesses and their employees find the best available commuting options to improve traffic congestion through fewer vehicles, and improve air quality through lower auto emissions. Primary services of Commuter Connections include Ridematching for carpools and vanpools, administration of the Guaranteed Ride Home and 'Pool Rewards rideshare incentive programs, marketing of alternative commute options, and coordination of an employer outreach program, including telework.

Funding for Commuter Connections is provided by:

District Department of Transportation Maryland Department of Transportation Virginia Department of Transportation United States Department of Transportation

#### **ABSTRACT:**

This report presents results of a survey of all Guaranteed Ride Home trip recipients working in the Washington Metropolitan region during fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015). The survey was designed to gauge the level of satisfaction of commuters who utilized the GRH service.

The GRH program was started in 1997 to eliminate a key barrier to using alternative modes; commuter fear of being stranded at the workplace due to illness, an unexpected personal or family emergency, or unscheduled overtime.

#### **PUBLICATION:**

The final report once endorsed for release will be published on the Commuter Connections website at <a href="www.commuterconnections.org">www.commuterconnections.org</a>. under the About Us, Publications section.

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#### **Background**

## **Guaranteed Ride Home Program Description**

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) through its Commuter Connections program, under the auspices of its funders, has operated the Guaranteed Ride Home program (GRH) in the Washington DC Metropolitan region 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 case of illness, an unexpected personal/family emergency, or unscheduled overtime when their normal alternative commute mode is not available. Many area workers who consider switching commute modes from Single Occupancy Vehicles to carpools, vanpools, and transit are concerned about being stranded at work if they unexpectedly have to leave before or after standard work hours. GRH eliminates this concern, and encourages carpooling/vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling and walking to work. Commuters who use these transportation modes twice a week are provided with four free GRH rides home per year. Alternative mode commute practices reduce the number of automobiles on the road and help the region toward air quality goals. The GRH program's Participation Guidelines and survey samples used during FY 2015 are provided in the Appendix of this report.

## Customer Satisfaction Survey and Methodology

The Customer Satisfaction Survey for GRH was conducted as an ongoing study each month throughout the fiscal year. All customers who obtained a free ride home through the program during FY15 were provided the opportunity to participate in the survey. Emails with a link to the survey are sent on the day following the GRH trip. A small portion of GRH customers, five percent, have not provided Commuter Connections with an email address, therefore surveys for this group are sent through the U.S. Postal Service.

Both the hard copy and online surveys allow respondents to rate the GRH service and provide comments and suggestions. See appendix for samples of the survey response card and online survey. Note: some respondents did not answer all questions. As a result, response totals to some questions may not be equal to the total number of survey respondents.

#### **Survey Design**

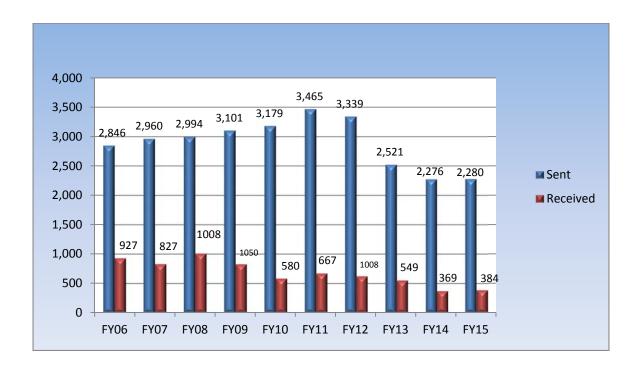
The FY 2015 survey consists of five multiple-choice questions, one fill in the blank and an area for comments. Four questions provide insight into customer opinions regarding various operational functions of GRH and ask respondents to rate aspects of the service by selecting one of four responses—"Poor," "Fair," "Good," or "Excellent." Another multiple choice question asks the reason for the trip, and a fill in the blank question asks respondents to indicate their wait time. The comments area provides an open ended forum to offer specific or general feedback, whether positive or negative.

The performance areas of GRH were addressed by four multiple-choice questions pertaining to: reservations staff; transportation service; response time and overall service. Reservations staff refers to the operators who answered telephone calls from commuters requesting GRH service, verified the request in accordance with the official GRH participation guidelines, and arranged the ride for the commuter. These contracted staff are employees of Diamond Transportation Services, Inc., which provides such services under arrangement with COG. Transportation service refers to the modes of transportation (e.g. taxi, rental car service) and the affiliated organizations (e.g. xyz cab company, Enterprise Rent-a-car) that provided the trips from the workplace to the final destination. The transportation modes used for the GRH trips are selected by Diamond Transportation based on the type and severity of the emergency, distance traveled, and customer preferences.

## **Response Rates**

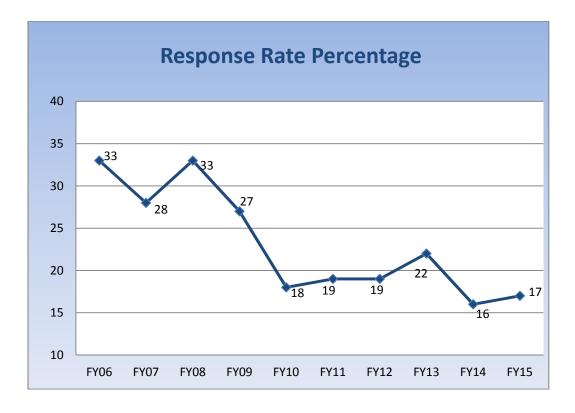
## **Number of Surveys Sent and Received Since Program Inception**

Of the 2,280 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2015, 384 completed surveys were received.



## **Response Rates in Percentages - All Fiscal Years.**

The response rate in FY15 was 17 percent, a one point increase compared to the previous year. The precipitous nine point drop from FY09 to FY10 occurred when the survey changed to an online system. Online surveys are easier to ignore and may be tied up in spam/junk filters. Physical survey cards tend to have more impact. In many households, the volume of emails received have easily surpassed traditional postal delivery mail. Another plausible reason why there are significantly fewer online responses may be due to the fact that many GRH customers realize that online surveys no longer provide anonymity.



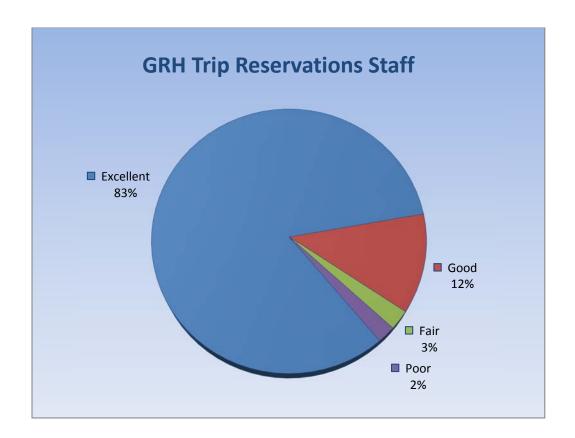
## **Fiscal Year 2015 Survey Results**

This section indicates survey results from the 384 respondents for fiscal year 2015.

#### **Reservation Staff**

## **Percentage of Responses Received**

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

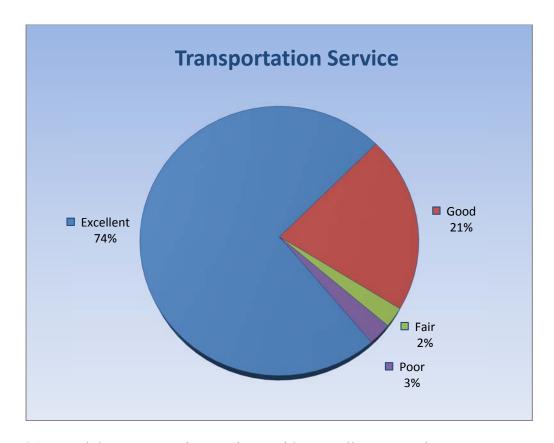


95% rated the trip reservations staff as either excellent or good.

## **Transportation Service**

## **Percentage of Responses Received**

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

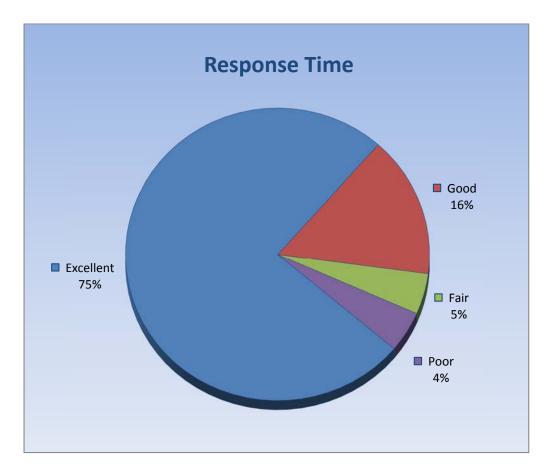


95% rated the transportation service as either excellent or good.

## **Response Time - Rating**

## **Percentage of Responses Received**

How would you rate our response time?

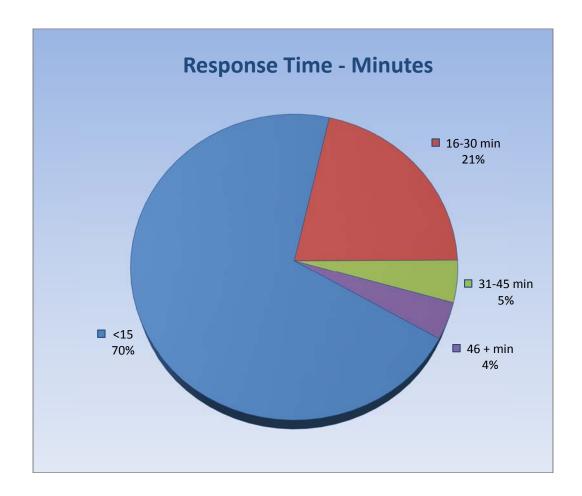


91% rated the response time as either excellent or good.

## **Response Time – Minutes**

## **Percentages of Responses Received**

Approximately how many minutes did you wait until your ride?

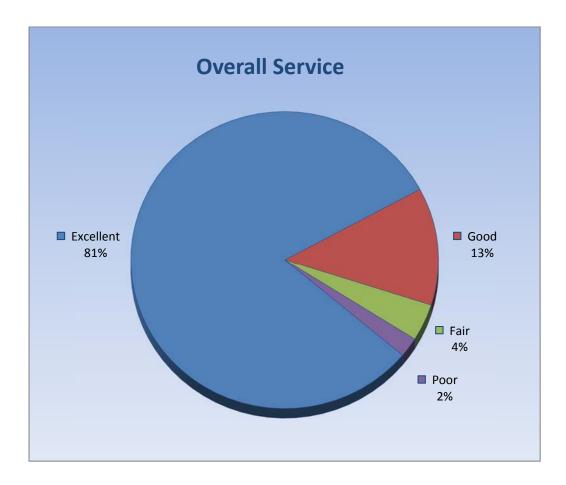


Average response wait in FY15 was 15.5 minutes, an improvement of 1.5 minutes over the previous year. The percentage of customers with a wait time of 30 minutes or less was 91%.

## **Overall Service**

## **Percentages of Responses Received**

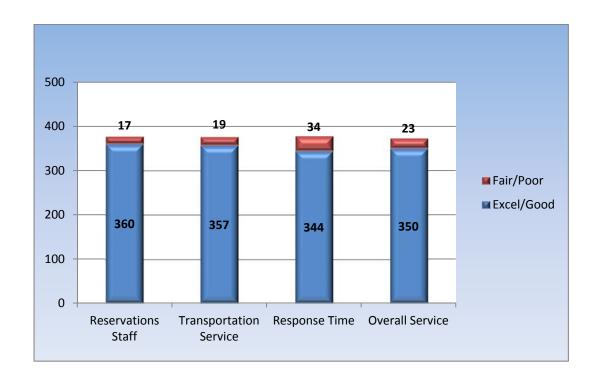
Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?



94% rated the overall service as either excellent or good.

## **Excellent/Good vs. Fair/Poor: All Questions**

#### **Number of Responses Based on Combined Satisfaction Levels**

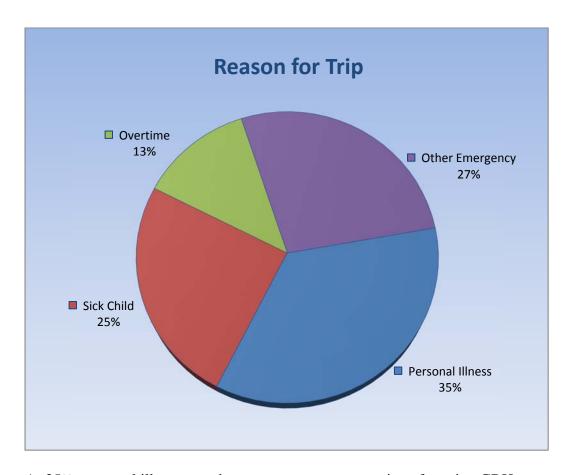


This chart emphasizes the overwhelming favorable ratings (excellent & good) compared to the less favorable ratings (fair & poor). For example, in the first column, 360 respondents gave the Reservations Staff category a favorable rating of either Excellent or Good, noted in the blue area. In contrast, only 17 respondents, shown on top in red, rated the reservations staff with a less favorable "Fair or Poor" response.

## **Reason for Trip**

## **Percentages of Responses Received**

What was the reason for your GRH Trip?



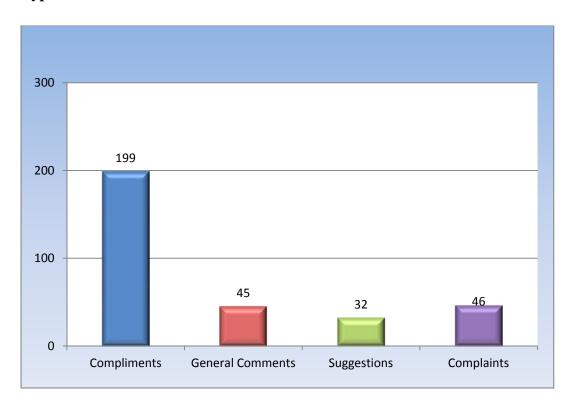
At 35%, personal illness was the most common reason given for using GRH.

#### **Written Responses**

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, survey respondents were offered the option of providing written comments. Feedback is valuable for assessing customer attitudes regarding specific service areas, and helps to gauge the general pulse of the program. The total number of written responses equaled 268 out of 384 returned surveys, more than two-thirds (70%) of survey participants.

The open-ended written responses included compliments, suggestions, complaints, and comments. Respondents were allowed to check all that applied, so a significant amount of feedback fell into more than one type of written response category, hence the below chart adds up to more than 268. A respondent may have given a compliment about a specific aspect of the experience coupled with a complaint about a completely separate aspect. For example, "The taxi was quick to arrive but the driver was not hospitable". This example is both a compliment and complaint.

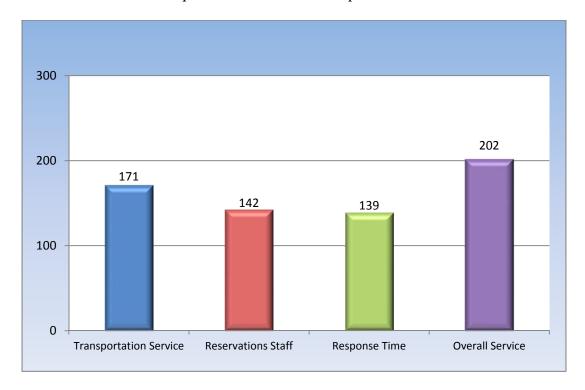
## **Types of Feedback**



The vast majority of feedback given were compliments.

## **Written Feedback Categories**

Most respondents, 202 who provided written feedback did so by mentioning the service in an overall manner. This was reflective of 75% of the 268 written responses. The transportation service category received the second greatest amount of written feedback at 171 (64%). The reservations staff and response time received about an equal number of written responses.



The Overall Service category received the most comments, followed by Transportation Service. Reservations Staff and Response Time received about the same amount of comments.

## **Compliments**

With 199 survey respondents who provided compliments, positive feedback was overwhelmingly (74 percent) the most prevalent type out of the total 268 written responses received; this measured more than 4 times the rate of complaints. Many were expressions of gratitude for the GRH service. Some commuters explicitly listed GRH as the main reason which allows them to utilize an alternative commute mode. Many of the respondents provided personal stories about how GRH helped them during a crisis situation.

The vast majority compliments were about Overall Service, followed by the Transportation Service. The breakdown of compliments by category are as follows: 156 of 199 compliments were made about the Overall Service, 78 percent; 113 compliments were made about the Transportation Service, 57 percent; 106 were made about the Reservations Staff, 53 percent; and 97 were made about Response Time, 49 percent.

#### Samples of actual compliments from FY15:

- 1st time using it, I didn't think it was going to be use easy and faster. I'm so thankful for the service
- As usual, it was a very pleasant experience -- from the phone call to the drop off at my commuter lot. Two thumbs up!:)
- Driver was very friendly, and arrived very timely. Outstanding service to promote folks to commute. Staff helped me complete my registration over the phone to enable me to use the GRH immediately.
- Fantastic texting feature telling me how long until the taxi would arrive, the number of the cab, and that it was actually pulling up. When I was feeling ill, this really put my mind at ease. Thank you for a superior system. PS, my driver was wonderful, too, with a very positive spirit.
- Father-in-law collapsed, and eventually died. Had to run to hospital. This service was critical to being there to support my wife and family during this tragedy. Thank you!
- Helpful and friendly GRH staff who took call, almost immediate confirmation call from taxi co., and nice taxi waiting for me immediately. Excellent service overall!
- I am incredibly grateful to the GRH program for allowing me the hasslefree opportunity to get home to care for a sick child. The ride home was the calm in the midst of a chaotic situation, and I can't thank you enough.
- I am very appreciative of this service. The phone call came to alert me my mom needed to go to the emergency room and the next bus was not leaving for another 2 hours. This ride to my car when I needed it, made a great deal of difference to me as well as my family. Thank you!

- I arrived at work feeling great and within 2 hours, I was feeling miserable. A taxi arrived shortly after calling for GRH. The poor driver had to pull over a few times as I was sick. I was so dizzy that he helped me out of the car and walked me to the front door. I so much appreciated the GRH and the driver's patience and understanding.
- Great experience and wonderful program especially when you have to work late unexpectedly or have another emergency. Everyone is very professional and courteous. I really appreciate the excellent service.

#### **Complaints**

A total of 46 survey respondents provided complaints about the GRH service; 17% out of the 268 written responses. Respondents who complained may have also provided written feedback of other types. For example of respondents who cited a complaint, six also gave a compliment.

The breakdown of complaints by category are as follows: 27 out of 46 complaints were about the Transportation Service, 59 percent; 23 were about the Response Time, 50 percent; 21 were about the Overall Service, 46 percent; and 18 were about the Reservations Staff, 39 percent.

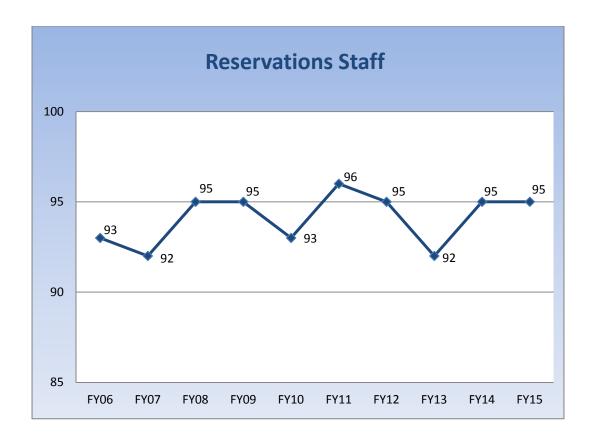
Sample of actual complaints from FY15:

- Driver wasn't clear on whether or not you covered his tolls, so I paid for the tolls. Not complaining about it, just suggesting the drivers be more educated on all of the rules/conditions of service. I appreciate the service!
- Taxi didn't know how to get to my building despite it being a large building that says Dept of Labor. Then he asked me how to get to 95 South. I wasn't too happy with him but I do love and am grateful for the program.
- Having to travel from NIH to Shady Grove to meet the taxi seems unnecessary.
- I had to walk from the Navy Yard to the Metro, then take the Metro all the way to Franconia-Springfield to catch the cab. Not certain if this is standard practice, but that would be my only complaint.
- I think the delay in the taxi's arrival was too long and not as promised. otherwise, the GRH was good experience
- I was very displeased with the taxi response time. However, very pleased with how GRH respond to the situation.

## **Comparison to Previous Fiscal Years**

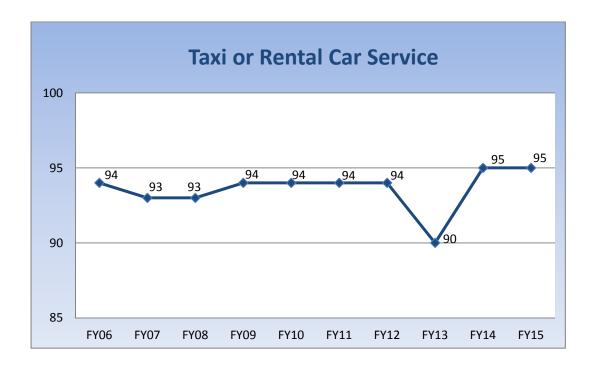
#### **Reservations Staff**

Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good) How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff?



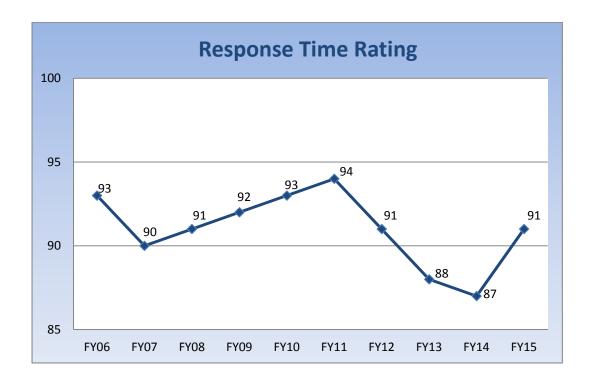
## **Transportation Service**

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

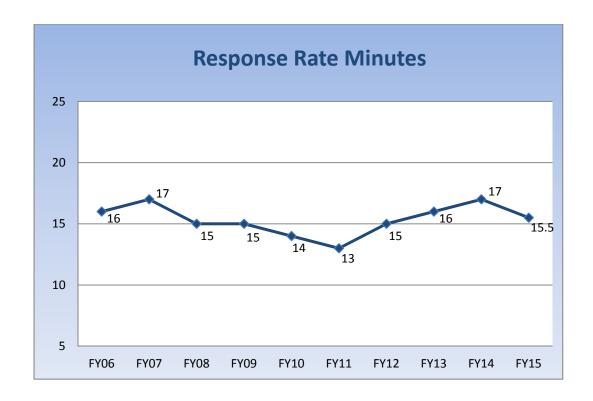


## **Response Time**

Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good) How would you rate our response time?

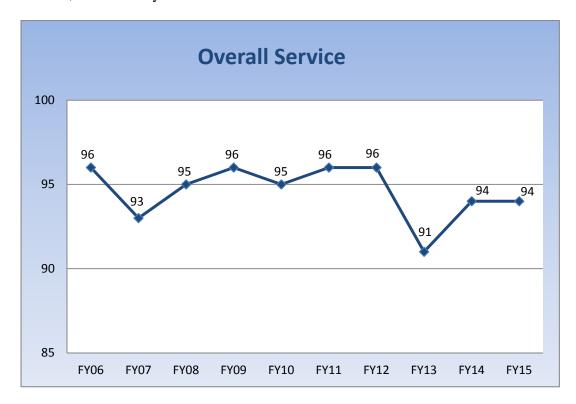


## **Average Response Time – Minutes**



#### **Overall Service**

Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good) Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?



The theory behind the drop of five percentage points in the overall satisfaction rating from FY12 to FY13 is attributed to a strict short-term enforcement of a long standing GRH program policy. Due to budgetary reasons at the time, GRH customers were required to augment their trips by using Metrorail for the first leg of their journey. This time inconvenience was felt as a significant downgrade and had a negative effect on customer satisfaction.

Although some customers in FY15 were asked to use transit in tandem with a taxi, it was not enforced to the extent that it was previously. Relaxing this requirement had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

#### **Recap Summary**

Of the 2,280 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2015, 384 or 17 percent of surveys were completed. The vast majority, 94% of the survey respondents were pleased with the overall GRH service. Written responses were entered on more than two-thirds (70%) of the returned surveys, the overwhelming majority of which (74%) contained compliments. Compliments outweighed criticism more than 4 to 1. For every category, good or above ratings were given by 91% or more of the respondents. The greatest improvement area in FY15 was that of response time rating, from 87 to 91 percent. Average response wait was 15.5 minutes and 91% waited 30 minutes or less.

# **Appendix**

## Sample Cover Letter Sent with Survey Card



#### Dear Commuter:

Thank you for using the Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in September. As a standard practice, we send out survey cards to all of our customers, in order to determine their level of satisfaction with this free service. Your feedback will help us gauge the program's continued value and also help improve and better serve commuters in the Washington metropolitan area.

Please take just a moment to complete the enclosed survey card and simply drop it in the mail within 10 days, no postage necessary!

Please note, your answers to the survey should only reflect your <u>September 2008</u> GRH trip. If you have again used the GRH service after September 30, 2008, you will receive a separate survey card for that trip.

For the latest 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 using an alternative method of transportation to get to work and for supporting the Guaranteed Ride Home program. Your efforts help to reduce traffic congestion and improve the air we breathe.

Please be sure to tell your co-workers and neighbors to sign up for the free Guaranteed Ride Home program at <a href="https://www.commuterconnections.org">www.commuterconnections.org</a>.

Happy Commuting!

#### COMMUTER CONNECTIONS



MERCHONIAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 272 NORTH CAPTOLISTRETINE SIGE 900 WASHINGTON D.C. 20002-2239

THE COMMUTER INFORMATION SOURCE FOR MARYLAND, VIRGINIA AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA





1800 223 803

#### Sample Survey Response Card





## **Sample Online Survey**

	onnections GRH Satisfaction Survey w you feel about our program. Please take a moment to complete this survey. Your ppreciated.
How would you ra GRH trip reserva	ate the service you received from our tion staff?
O Poor	
O Fair	
O Good	
O Excellent	
How would you ra	ate the taxi or rental car service?
O Poor	
O Fair	
O Good	
O Excellent	
How would you r	rate our response time?
O Poor	
O Fair	
O Good	
O Excellent	
Overall how wou	ld you rate our GRH service?
O Poor	
O Fair	
O Good	
O Excellent	

What was the reason for your GRH trip?	
O Sick Child	
O Personal Illness	
O Unscheduled Overtime	
Other Emergency	
Please Provide us with any comments about experience.	t your GRH
	~

Do you consider your comments to be a: (check all that apply)
Compliment
Suggestion
Complaint
General Comment
Do your comments refer to: (check all that apply)
☐ Taxi or Rental Car Service
Overall Service
Reservation Staff
Response Time
Submit

# **Survey Response Table**

Survey Questions	Responses	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15
GRH Trip Reservations Staff	Excellent	78%	80%	81%	84%	80%	71%	76%	83%
	Good	17%	15%	12%	12%	15%	20%	19%	12%
	Fair	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	6%	3%	3%
	Poor	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Taxi or Rental Car Service	Excellent	71%	74%	72%	75%	71%	70%	74%	74%
	Good	22%	20%	21%	20%	23%	20%	21%	21%
	Fair	5%	3%	4%	3%	4%	7%	2%	2%
	Poor	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Response Time	Excellent	74%	78%	76%	82%	77%	70%	73%	75%
	Good	17%	14%	16%	12%	14%	18%	14%	16%
	Fair	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	7%	7%	5%
	Poor	5%	4%	4%	2%	4%	5%	6%	4%
Overall GRH Service	Excellent	77%	79%	81%	84%	80%	73%	73%	81%
	Good	18%	17%	14%	12%	16%	18%	20%	13%
	Fair	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%	5%	4%	4%
	Poor	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%	2%

# 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 be officially registered with Commuter Connections before using the Guaranteed Ride Home service. Commuters must provide the supervisor name and phone number and at least two (2) phone numbers (home/cell and work) in order to register for 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 officially register *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 <u>and</u> on the day they use the GRH service. GRH is only available to people commuting to and from work.
- 2. Commuters must call Commuter Connections and receive authorization from Commuter Connections prior to using the GRH service. Commuter Connections will issue an authorization number(s) to the commuter to approve a GRH trip. Commuters will not be reimbursed for trips not authorized by Commuter Connections. After approval, Commuter Connections will make the GRH trip arrangements for the commuter and, if necessary, provide instructions on how and where the GRH transportation provider will pick up the commuter. Commuter Connections is equipped to provide wheelchair accessible transportation as part of the GRH service as needed.
- 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. The GRH trip credits are non-transferable.
- 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 <u>unexpected</u> personal or family emergency, <u>unexpected</u> illness, or <u>unscheduled</u> overtime. Cases in which the GRH program <u>cannot</u> 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 disasters.

- 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 designated program holidays and any planned and/or unplanned Federal Government office closings. *GRH TRIPS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE 10:00 P.M* to ensure that the commuter has received their ride. Designated program Holidays include: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., 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. To be eligible, a commuter must be physically working in the following areas in Washington, D.C. or Baltimore, MD. The area includes the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's; the City of Baltimore, and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William; and the City of Alexandria as well as all cities within the aforementioned counties.
- 9. Eligible commuters can live anywhere inside **the areas listed in Guideline #8** or in any of the following areas: Allegany, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot or Washington counties in Maryland; and Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Madison, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Warren, or Westmoreland counties, the City of Fredericksburg, or the City of Winchester in Virginia; and Berkeley, Hampshire, or Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Adams, Franklin, or York counties in Pennsylvania. Any residence 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 <u>work location</u>. 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. Commuter Connections 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 uses a taxi, Commuter Connections 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 part of the GRH trip, the commuter will be mailed a transit reimbursement voucher. The transit reimbursement voucher must be submitted back to Commuter Connections within thirty days of transit use in order for payment to be made. Please allow 45 days for reimbursement. A commuter's supervisor must sign the transit

voucher for any trip granted because of unscheduled overtime in order for the reimbursement to be issued.

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), and 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 Commuter Connections at 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.

07/16/10