

Commuter Connections FY09 Car Free Day Marketing Communications Brief

Mission: Commuter Connections is a regional network of transportation organizations providing commute services and information to area residents and employers in the Washington metropolitan region in order to reduce traffic congestion and emissions caused by single occupancy vehicles (SOV).

The outreach mission for Car Free Day is to encourage people to try alternative methods of transportation and as a result, to consider changing SOV behaviors and adopt a car-free or car-lite lifestyle, and; to build upon the Commuter Connections network as an umbrella resource that provides a regional awareness and focus for Car Free Day.

Demographics: The target audience for this campaign is the car-driving population of metropolitan Washington DC. It includes anyone that uses a SOV on a full-time, part-time, or occasional basis and may include commuters, soccer Moms, students, and tourists. This population transcends any definition by age, race, occupation, or income and is just limited by the geographical reach of the Commuter Connections network.

Stakeholders: The stakeholders for this campaign are the members of the Car Free Day Steering Committee. This committee is comprised of representatives of local jurisdictions, advocacy groups, transit agencies, departments of transportation, elected officials, business improvement districts as well as COG/TPB staff.

Marketing Strategy: The centerpiece of communication efforts for Car Free Day will be a comprehensive website, *carfreemetrodc.com*, dedicated to the event. The website is to be funded and developed by the District Department of Transportation. It will inform visitors to the website of various ways they can live car-free or car-lite; contain a list of all Car Free Day related events occurring throughout the region; and allow visitors to “pledge” to go car free on September 22, 2008. The development and focus of this website is outside the scope of this marketing brief. However the resultant website will be referenced by all components of this marketing strategy.

The marketing strategy will build upon the recognition of Commuter Connections brand as an umbrella resource to drive a regional identity for Car Free Day events and activities of local jurisdictions. The name selected for this event is “CarFree Day Metro DC” and reflects the region-wide support of Car Free Day. A logo incorporating this name will be developed and can be used across jurisdictional marketing activities.

The strategy of the Commuter Connections marketing campaign for Car Free Day is the following:

- Build on the existing Commuter Connections umbrella reach and recognition to incorporate local jurisdictional Car Free Day activities into a recognizable region-wide Car Free Day.
- The website, *carfreemetrodc.com*, being developed by the District Department of Transportation, will be used as a repository of information for alternative modes of transport, local Car Free Day events, and a database of people who pledge to go car free on September 22.
- Engagement of the media is critical to the adoption and success of Car Free Day.
- Radio will be the anchor medium for the campaign with its ability to reach a large portion of the target market with significant frequency.

- Content-based, geo-targeted Internet text ads will re-direct people to *carfreemetrodc.com* for more information and to make a pledge.
- Print advertising will enforce the messages visually with high impact, cost effective creative. Side of bus advertising will allow repetitive communication in heavily traveled areas.

Tactics: This is the inaugural campaign for Commuter Connections Car Free Day. As such, the goal of this campaign is to provide a solid foundation for larger and more successful future campaigns.

The tactics to be undertaken for the launch of the regional Car Free Day activity will include:

- A press release will be written and a press event organized to engage the media. A tie in with the new ridematch software launch may be used to leverage the event. Follow-ups are planned with key media contacts.
- The development of a logo incorporating the name “CarFree Day Metro DC” and establishing a look and style to be used in other creative.
- The logo will be made available to Car Free Day Steering Committee members and may be incorporated in externally developed creative and websites.
- A creative concept will be developed that will incorporate the logo and will refer to *carfreemetrodc.com* for further information. The creative concept will be the basis for posters and bus queens.
- A radio ad will be developed to inform listeners of Car Free Day and encourage them to visit *carfreemetrodc.com* to make a pledge. The radio ad will serve to inform as well as excite and raise curiosity and will drive listeners to the website. As the anchor of this campaign, the spot will be professionally produced.
- Internet advertising will consist of text based ads placed with search engines. These ads will be content-based and geo-targeted to the metropolitan DC area. In addition, the campaign will make use of any web pages or links provided by radio stations as part of value add promotions.
- Media dollars will be focused on radio ad placement with a smaller portion of the media budget being used for Internet text ads.
- The Car Free Day campaign will go live mid-August and run until mid-September. Due to varying production and distribution times for the specified media, it may be necessary to roll-out the campaign over 1-2 weeks as opposed to a single go-live date.

The COG budget for this Car Free Day promotion budget includes:

\$70,000 for radio and Internet text advertising.

\$22,000 for printing of posters and bus queens (vinyl).

\$25,000 for development of 1 radio ad, internet text ad, poster, bus queens and earned media.