

Valley Metro

2017 Annual Report

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)




COMMUTE·SOLUTIONS



**Valley Metro Commute Solutions is funded by the
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Maricopa
Association of Governments, Maricopa County Air Quality
Department and Valley Metro.**

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SUMMARY

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Valley Metro Commute Solutions provides transportation demand management (TDM) for the Maricopa County region. TDM programs reduce congestion by using existing transportation infrastructure more efficiently through providing drive-alone alternatives. Reducing vehicle miles traveled improves air quality by decreasing vehicular emissions that contribute to air pollution. Valley Metro receives funding from the Arizona Departments of Environmental Quality and Transportation, Maricopa Association of Governments and Maricopa County Air Quality Department to develop, implement and market commute solutions. Valley Metro contributes approximately 1.0 FTE, \$60,000 in vanpool program marketing, and receives approximately \$44,000 from Valley employers each year to support Commute Solutions programs. This annual report describes services provided by Valley Metro during fiscal year 2017 (FY17).

The mission of Valley Metro Commute Solutions is to market alternative transportation modes and schedules. Marketing educates consumers on why they should choose Valley Metro's products or service over others (for example, why commuters should carpool instead of driving alone). Finding the right method and message to educate and influence target markets is critical in effectively shifting commuters from driving alone to using alternative transportation modes and schedules.

TDM activities focus on both improving travel choices and providing incentives to reduce driving alone. TDM also encourages work options that reduce trips, including teleworking and compressed work schedules. Valley Metro Commute Solutions

Valley Metro provides Transportation Demand Management (TDM) for the Maricopa County region with funding from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Maricopa Association of Governments and Maricopa County Air Quality Department, Valley Metro and contributions from Valley employers.

markets the range of alternative transportation modes and schedules including carpool, vanpool, bus, light rail, telework, bicycling, walking and work schedule options. Valley Metro Commute Solutions conducts services that include: assistance to employers in the Maricopa County TRP; a free online trip matching service, **ShareTheRide**; marketing single occupancy vehicle (SOV) alternatives; and operating a regional vanpool program. Funding from the Arizona Department of Transportation for the Be Bright bicycle and pedestrian safety education program expired in mid-FY17 and will not be renewed.

Key characteristics of Commute Solutions and performance results for FY17 are shown in **Table S.1**. Accomplishments of the Valley Metro Commute Solutions program during FY17 and opportunities for FY18 are described below.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Total alternative mode usage including teleworking and compressed schedules stands at 44%, a decrease from 49% in 2016 but similar to the three prior years.

TABLE S.1

Commute Solutions Performance Results, FY17 and Prior Year Comparison

Characteristic	FY16	FY17	Change	
ShareTheRide Active Users	42,926	35,707	-7,219	-16.8%
ShareTheRide New Users	8,540	8,177	-363	-4.3%
ShareTheRide Alternative Mode Calendar Entries	721,914	699,125	-22,789	-3.2%
ShareTheRide Commute Matches	n/a	6,385	n/a	n/a
ShareTheRide Lbs. of Greenhouse Gases Saved	5,181,201	5,290,699	109,498	2.1%
E-newsletters Sent	154	147	-7	-4.5%
E-newsletters Avg. Open Rate	20.1%	18.8%	-1.3%	-6.6%
E-newsletter Avg. Click Thru Rate	2.0%	1.7%	-0.3%	-16.4%
Employer Contacts	11,599	13,921	2,322	20.0%
Employees Reached - Training, Education & Events	11,271	13,102	1,831	16.2%
Persons Reached - Be Bright Training, Education & Events	8,221	7,952	-269	-3.3%
Vanpool Program Active Vans	393	387	-6	-1.5%
Bus and Light Rail Boardings	67,577,919	65,977,305	-1,600,614	-2.4%
Transit Fare Retail Outlets Added	24	23	-1	-4.2%
Drive Alone Miles Saved by ShareTheRide Users	12,036,550	11,820,739	-215,811	-1.8%
Drive Alone Miles Saved by Vanpoolers	50,545,487	57,277,439	6,731,952	13.3%
Notes: FY16 ShareTheRide data incomplete; users seeking matches and total matched not available for Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec and Jan due to system upgrade.				

As a percentage of trips, alternative modes (including teleworking and compressed work schedules) accounted for 30% of residents' trips (down from 35% last year).

In 2017, the carpool frequency among carpoolers remained similar to recent years (3.0 days per week average), while the percentage of those who carpool is 16% overall (down from 2016 but similar to 2013-2015).

Valley Metro had nearly 66 million transit boardings (2.4% decrease from prior year).

The number of active vanpools is 1.5% less than FY16, with 387 vanpools in service as of June 30, 2017.

In FY17, vanpool riders saved nearly 57.3 million miles of travel and 2.2 million gallons of fuel. To frame these environmental savings, 57.3 million miles is the same distance as circumnavigating the earth nearly 2,300 times and 2.2 million gallons of fuel is the yield of more than 120,000 barrels of US-refined crude oil. Driving non-stop at a travel speed of 65 miles per hour, it would take approximately 101 years to drive 57.3 million miles.

Communication effectiveness of Valley Metro Commute Solutions is at 100%.

In FY17, Valley Metro Commute Solutions expended approximately \$198,000 for paid advertising (radio and online) yielding nearly 34 million impressions.

Donated impressions from center train wraps yielded approximately eight million additional impressions.

Attitudes toward advertising that encourages people to use alternative modes of transportation remain stable and positive; three in four residents (75%) viewed this type of advertising as very or somewhat favorable.

Nearly 150 Commute Solutions Update weekly e-newsletters were distributed with an average click-thru rate of 1.7%. In FY17, approximately 508,169 contacts were made through all Commute Solutions e-newsletters, which is 30.8% more than the 388,620 contacts in FY16.

In FY17, Valley Metro Commute Solutions coordinators made nearly 14,000 contacts with Valley employers. Contacts in FY17 were 20% more than FY16, mainly due to an increase in email and mail contacts.

More than 12,800 people were reached through employer trainings and events in FY17, including workshops, webinars and training courses, an increase of 15.6% from the prior year (while FY16 was 96% more than FY15).

With four online training courses available to train TCs on TRP requirements, the number of TCs receiving training continues to increase. In FY17, 324 persons completed training, the highest number since FY07, and an increase of 17.8% from FY16.

The number of active users of [ShareTheRide.com](#) decreased by 16.8% from FY16 due to purging the database of inactive accounts. The year ended with nearly 35,707 active users (slightly more than the 35,276 active users at the end of FY15).

Users of [ShareTheRide.com](#) logged nearly 700,000 alternative mode commutes (3.2% decrease from FY16), shared 11.8 million commute miles (1.8%

decrease from FY16) and saved approximately \$1.4 million in commuting costs. Approximately 2,645 tons of pollution were also saved (2.1% increase from FY16), equivalent to the energy used by 274 homes for an entire year.

From FY16 to FY17, the number of [ShareTheRide](#) custom subsites increased from 400 to 424, an increase of 6.0%. A [ShareTheRide](#) custom subsite allows employers to manage their TRP online, reducing the amount of time and paperwork required to track TRP efforts.

The year ends with approximately 800 retail outlets selling transit passes. Eighty-nine percent of all transit fare media are sold in retail outlets.

October's Rideshare Month resulted in 2,432 new accounts created on [ShareTheRide.com](#) in August, September and October (12% decrease from prior year and 5.6% more than 2014). During the month, 60,065 commutes were logged, saving 217 tons of pollution, equivalent to 42 passenger vehicles driven for one year. A month-long Commuter Challenge included 300 commuters. The commuter pledge resulted in 482 pledges; 30% were new to [ShareTheRide](#). In addition, there were more than 3.6 million impressions and more than 7,600 contest entries for the month.

During Valley Bike Month, there were 1,463 new accounts created on [ShareTheRide.com](#) in March and April. Local artist Scott Biersack designed artwork used for all promotional efforts. Nearly 62,000 alternative mode trips were logged on [ShareTheRide.com](#) resulting in 240 tons of pollution saved, equivalent to 46 passenger vehicles driven for one year. A month-long Team Challenge included 266 commuters logging nearly 7,000 trips and saving more than 38,000 miles. The first-ever Valley Bike Month pledge resulted in 170 pledges; 42.4% were new to [ShareTheRide.com](#). There were 8.1 million impressions, including 12 media stories reaching an

audience of nearly four million. Nearly 14,000 people participated in 28 Valley-wide events.

This year saw the end of the Be Bright bicycle and pedestrian safety program in December 2016. In its' eighth and final year, Valley Metro's Be Bright program staff hosted 21 events, reaching nearly 8,000 persons and fitting more than 600 helmets in the first six months of FY17.

AWARDS

This year, two Valley Metro Commute Solutions campaigns won awards: the Clean Air Campaign and the Change Your Game Plan campaign.

The creative for the 2016 Clean Air Campaign created by Moses, Valley Metro's marketing subcontractor, won two American Advertising Federation Awards, also known as ADDY Awards, from the PHX American Advertising Federation Club (ADClub): gold for Elements of Advertising and bronze for Collateral Materials for a Special Event. The gold winner continued to the regional level of competition, and in early June the creative received a silver ADDY at the national competition.

The *Change Your Game Plan* campaign won the first place Spotlight award at the South West Transit Association's Transit (SWTA) Marketing Workshop held in July 2017. According to SWTA, "the SPOTLIGHT Award is the oldest transit marketing and advertising award given in the United States and is awarded for excellence in a total transit marketing campaign with a "biggest-bang-for-the-buck" emphasis."

OPPORTUNITIES

The mission of Valley Metro Commute Solutions is to market alternative transportation modes and schedules to employers, students and the general public. The opportunities presented below have been informed by an analysis of FY17 results, customer surveys, market research, market trends and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis conducted in December 2015.

Integrated, Coordinated, Comprehensive Marketing

Creating a comprehensive, year-round paid media campaign that integrates clean air and alternative mode messages to leverage limited funding for marketing alternative transportation modes and schedules remains a key opportunity. Multiple air quality/transportation marketing campaigns dilutes effectiveness and creates commuter confusion with different calls to action. All Commute Solutions marketing was reduced starting in FY09 with a 40% budget reduction, especially paid advertising, public relations, community involvement and customer support. Recent market research shows that attitudes toward advertising that encourages people to use alternative modes of transportation remain stable and positive; three in four residents (75%) viewed this type of advertising as very or somewhat favorable.

Balance Support to TCs with Employees/Commuter Marketing

Another important opportunity to increasing alternative mode use is to balance support to TRP employer representatives with robust marketing to individual employees/consumers. According to recent market research, two-thirds (67%) of employed residents surveyed indicate their company does not have a transportation coordinator. Four in 10 (40%) of employed residents surveyed indicated their company offers resources that provide information about ways to commute to work other than driving alone. When asked about the types of information they would want at their worksite, employees most frequently request carpool related information (14%). However, most indicate a lack of interest – by either stating “nothing/not interested” (41%) or simply saying “don’t know” (22%).

Valley Metro’s strong support system for TCs at large companies needs to be coupled with robust marketing (i.e. market research, paid advertising, public relations, community involvement, customer support, product pricing and distribution, and sales strategy) outside the workplace to reach those who work for smaller companies and those who are not interested in hearing information at the workplace. Successful marketing builds awareness and creates a favorable impression of alternative modes; these are critical precursors to behavior change.

Increase ShareTheRide Awareness

The number of active users of ShareTheRide.com did not increase this year, while the number custom subsites increased (increase of 6.0% from FY16 to FY17). The number of new users added this year is 4.3% less than FY16 and 5.7% more than FY15.

The lag in growth as measured by active users is likely a reflection of appropriately purging the database of inactive users. Similar to the prior two years, approximately one in four (27%) employees were aware Valley Metro offers an online matching system (remaining significantly higher than 20% in 2014). Of those who said “yes”, none were able to correctly identify the name of the service (this was also the case in 2014 through 2016).

When asked how they would find partners for carpooling and vanpooling, employees most often indicated that they would contact friends/coworkers/word-of-mouth to find carpool partners (35%, similar to 38% last year). After declining for five years, the proportion of employed residents who said they would seek a carpool partner through their place of employment increased significantly this year to 18% (up significantly from 11% last year). Furthermore, when asked whether they would be likely to consider using Valley Metro’s online carpool and vanpool matching system if looking for a carpooling/vanpooling partner, two thirds of employed residents indicated “yes,” they would consider using Valley Metro’s online matching system. Just over one-half (53%) of employed residents who are not currently carpooling/vanpooling indicated they would be somewhat or very likely to consider a customized matching system. This is up slightly compared to recent years and significantly higher than in 2013.

With continued interest in a commute matching system, an effort to build awareness could result in increased use of [ShareTheRide](http://ShareTheRide.com) and a resulting increase in alternative mode use. Awareness is a critical driver to changes in attitudes and behaviors; market research continues to show that people are willing to use [ShareTheRide](http://ShareTheRide.com), but are unaware of its existence.

More Staff Needed to Support ShareTheRide Growth

As **ShareTheRide** grows in popularity and use, there is a need for additional TC training of the site, including how to use the site to better manage TRP efforts and market alternative modes. There is also a need to meet basic customer service of **ShareTheRide** users and assist with day-to-day operation of the service. This trend has been noted for the past four years. Multiple requests for additional staff to support **ShareTheRide** growth have not been approved by Commute Solutions funding partners.

Prior to the 40% funding reduction experienced by Commute Solutions in FY10, there was a full-time position dedicated to **ShareTheRide** training and growth. Between FY10 and FY17, the number of active users of **ShareTheRide** increased by 29,972 users, an increase of 522.6%. In FY10, there were less than 145 **ShareTheRide** custom subsites and there were 424 custom subsites at the end of FY17, an increase of 192.4%.

To accommodate growth in **ShareTheRide**, Commute Solutions is reducing other types of employer-related outreach and marketing initiatives, is exploring ways to integrate technology tools and automate communication efforts with TCs, and moving more training and outreach to online and electronic methods. These efforts have simultaneously increased efficiency and effectiveness. Without staff resources to support customer service and training on **ShareTheRide**, the quality of customer service will deteriorate which will curb growth as users become frustrated with a poor user experience.

In addition, effective May 2017, Valley Metro Commute Solutions is no longer accepting applications for additional **ShareTheRide** custom

subsites. Administrative accounts are still being added to existing sites, and customer support for existing subsites is being provided. The TDM Manager is evaluating whether this is part of a permanent or temporary solution to curb **ShareTheRide** growth to levels sustained by current and projected resources, and a decision is expected in early FY18.

Also, SchoolPool is a common element of TDM programs nationally. Five to 25% of peak period traffic due to parents taking kids to school, depending on the data source. Benefits include increased student safety, ability for parents to use alternative transportation modes because they no longer need their car for their child's commuting needs, reduced congestion in school zones and reduced emissions of pollutants.

Resources to Support Marketing Initiatives to Reflect Changing Conditions

Consider how the commuting market has changed over the past decade:

- From FY10 to FY16, employees affected by TRP grew by 5.1% and students affected by TRP grew by 82.4%; however, contacts with employers have not kept pace with TRP participant growth.
- Of companies with more than five employees, 95% of employers have less than 100 employees accounting for approximately 54% of jobs. Approximately 66% of employers are small businesses employing between five and 19 employees, however, this accounts for only 18% of jobs within the county. Organizations with less than

50 employees at a single site are not required to comply with the Maricopa County trip reduction ordinance.

- Product distribution and sales strategy is not considered strategically and Valley Metro relies heavily on existing distribution channels rather than creating new ones. There is a need for more market research, with attention to different tactics customized for different audiences, such as students.
- Due to the economic downturn and changing communication preferences, many TCs are no longer distributing current marketing materials to employees at TRP companies. Attention is needed to enhance web-based resources and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blogging.
- Building awareness of regional air quality issues will become more important to ensure compliance as the region addresses changing federal air quality standards. According to the 2017 TDM Survey, nearly three in ten (29%) residents surveyed mentioned an air quality/transportation-related issue as being one of the most important issues facing the Valley, representing a significant increase over the 21% measured last year and surpasses the 27% recorded in 2014. Furthermore, as more high pollution advisories are called and communication methods are unchanged, the marketplace is experiencing fatigue as more unsubscribe to emails and ignore messages encouraging behavior change.
- More consumers and businesses are relying on mobile devices to research and purchase products

Marketing initiatives to address these market conditions possible with more resources include:

- develop promotional materials and resources to address 82% increase in students who must comply with TRP
- purchase, sort and maintain direct mail lists to encourage voluntary participation in TRP
- create additional training courses for TCs, such as how to market TRP, how to gain management support for alternative work options, and how to better engage employees in company TRP efforts, etc.
- attend additional on-site presentations and events to build awareness of programs. Awareness is a critical precursor of behavior change.
- work with property managers of employment parks and business rental properties to reach smaller employers who co-locate in clusters with other small employers to create employment concentrations sufficient to support vanpools and carpools.
- create and send targeted emails and follow-up emails sent to TRP Annual Survey respondents (employees, rather than employer representatives) who express interest in using alternative transportation modes and schedules
- a marketing strategy for geo-targeted programmatic advertising that includes demographic filters, across multiple user platforms including mobile, can help reach larger audiences with travel reduction messages
- creating a mobile-based marketing strategy, increasingly important as more consumers and

business professionals use mobile devices to research and purchase products

- enhance the focus on email marketing, the preferred method of communication with TCs according to five-plus years of TC annual survey results
- create and send additional follow-up emails and calls to participants in promotional efforts, including **ShareTheRide** commuter contests and challenges
- integrate social media with **ShareTheRide.com**, including Facebook and blog content. Note that a **ShareTheRide** Facebook page was initiated in January 2017.
- promote **ShareTheRide** contests to bloggers, television and print outlets
- invite TRP employers to participate in news coverage to gain positive publicity for the TRP program and local businesses supportive of TRP efforts
- conduct outreach to city chambers of commerce and organizations to acquire speaking engagements and partnerships
- build relationships between Valley Metro and community stakeholders to increase support of regional air quality and congestion reduction initiatives

Effective Messages

Employees and students who use alternative modes of transportation most often cite convenience (30%) as the primary motivation for using those modes of transportation (down from 43% last year). In 2017, only 8% of alternative mode users cited saving gas/

saving money as their main reason which is significantly lower than 2016 and 2014 and represents a ten-year low.

When asked how they would go about finding partners for carpooling/vanpooling, employees most often indicated that they would contact friends/coworkers/word-of-mouth to find carpool partners (35%, similar to 38% last year). After declining for five years, the proportion of employed residents who said they would seek a carpool partner through their place of employment increased significantly this year to 18% (up significantly from 11% last year). Those generically mentioning the Internet dropped significantly to 10% this year. Employees ages 35 or younger are more likely than those over age 35 to indicate they would rely on their personal network of friends, coworkers, or other word-of-mouth references (51% vs. 34% of those 36-55 and 21% of those 56+). Those employed by larger companies (50+ employees) were significantly more likely than those working for smaller organizations to report turning to their work place to find partners (24% vs. 9%).

Residents were asked which types of information would be most likely to encourage them to consider alternative modes of transportation (multiple responses allowed). Although all messages received significantly lower scores in 2016, they all rebounded in 2017 and all but one surpassed 2015 scores. In 2017, residents were significantly more likely than last year to select each of the statements as encouraging (up 7 to 29 percentage points), with the greatest gain being for the least selected statement “reduce your carbon footprint” (52% up from 23%). The most compelling messages were saving money (64%), improving the environment (62%) and improving the community (62%). Saving money was significantly more appealing to younger adults (89% vs. 63% over 35) and those with incomes of less than \$40K (79% vs. 61% earning \$80K or more annually).

Saving time resonated with adults 45 and younger (71% vs. 52% age 56+). Improving the environment was more likely to encourage women (68% vs. 56% of men) and those less than \$80K (71% vs. 55% earning more).

Compared to recent years, the top steps residents are willing to take to improve air quality or reduce traffic congestion remains similar, with occasionally work from home seeing the highest proportion of “9” to “10 – very willing” ratings (50%), followed by work a compressed work week (42%). After dipping to 17% last year, the percentage of residents willing to bike on short trips or errands increased significantly back to a level consistent with 2015 and 2013 – this figure has fluctuated from year to year as has walking for short trips.

Suggestions for how employers could encourage alternative mode transportation most commonly center on incentives or rewards (25%), but a full 39% indicated there was nothing their employer could do to motivate them to commute to work by a means other than driving alone. When asked about the types of information they would want at their worksite, employees most frequently request carpool related information (14%). However, most indicate a lack of interest – by either stating “nothing/not interested” (41%) or simply saying “don’t know” (22%). The proportion who answered they were not interested in this information significantly decreased this year after a significant upswing last year. It appears that this shift may be related to the “don’t know” response which is higher this year than last, but similar to 2015.

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ShareTheRide.com

CARPOOL | VANPOOL | BUS | LIGHT RAIL | TELEWORK | BIKE | WALK