

Abridgment

Public-Private Partnership in Transportation Demand Management

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Transportation providers have used several strategies to encourage ridesharing. A new approach is described that involves convincing employer chief executive officers to provide employees with rideshare incentives. In Seattle the Commuter Challenge program has asked employers to "Take the Challenge," become Pacesetters, and develop rideshare programs for their employees. In addition, this program has provided a forum in which transportation providers and employers have been able to discuss transportation issues. The program is composed of representatives from transportation providers who work side by side with the Economic Development Council of King County (EDC), which represents over 800 businesses. Since the beginning of the program in 1989, 98 major employers representing over 270,000 employees in the Seattle area have become Pacesetters. Four forums have been held to discuss transportation issues with employers.

The Commuter Challenge program, a public-private cooperative effort, began as a public awareness program driven by the idea that employers can influence their employees' commuting habits by providing incentives to rideshare. Commuter Challenge differed from previous rideshare marketing efforts within the Puget Sound region in that it targeted chief executive officers (CEOs).

The program was developed in 1989 when King County invited other public agencies to launch a commuter campaign. The Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County (EDC), a private, nonprofit organization, agreed to lead the effort because of its commitment to a sound economy and the valuable role a vital transportation system plays in the economy. The EDC, whose membership is composed of both public- and private-sector agencies and businesses, provided a neutral setting in which to join these two groups and focus on transportation problems.

The commuter campaign was based on the knowledge that employers can influence commuter behavior. The campaign developers recognized that the ability of the EDC's president and board of directors to reach decision makers in organizations throughout King County was the key to securing employer commitments to new or enhanced rideshare incentives for employees.

The 1989 campaign's goal was to reduce the number of single-occupant drivers in King County. The campaign objectives were to (a) create public awareness of transportation modes and (b) demonstrate a public-private commitment to relieving traffic congestion. The EDC began with a list of target employers with 50 or more employees who had resisted

efforts by local transportation agencies to have them provide rideshare incentives for their employees.

The EDC gave a breakfast for targeted CEOs to outline the campaign and challenge them to make pledge commitments. Twenty-one employers agreed to provide new or enhanced rideshare incentives and were called Pacesetters. Metro customer service representatives (CSRs) then contacted the pledged employers to develop tailored transportation programs for each.

Employers were asked to appoint an employee transportation coordinator, post and distribute commuting options information, give on-site promotional events, and offer flex-time. Because the first phase of the program had no criteria for qualifying Pacesetters, some employers were accepted into the program on the premise that they would consider these actions.

The results of the 1989 campaign were a measure of its success: 21 employers joined the campaign, pledging new or enhanced rideshare incentives for their collective 200,000 employees. The success paved the way for the program's extension beyond 1989.

CURRENT PROGRAM

The second phase of the Commuter Challenge program began in May 1990 when King County, Metro, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the city of Seattle pledged support to continue the program under the direction of the EDC through June 30, 1992. The program is run by a manager housed at the EDC and on loan from Metro's sales and promotion staff.

A program task force composed of representatives from all the program sponsors adopted the following goals:

- Goal 1—The Pacesetter Program: increase employer commitment to provide employee incentives to reducing single-occupancy commuting.
- Goal 2—The Outreach Program: increase business community awareness of specific, long-term transportation issues by disseminating information and create a mechanism that invites businesses to tell transportation providers about potential transportation solutions.

The program task force, chaired by the EDC president, meets monthly. In addition, the following committees, staffed by program sponsor members, work to accomplish the program goals:

- Recognition Committee: recommends, develops, and implements recognition for Pacesetter activities.
- Evaluation Committee: works to evaluate the effectiveness of the Commuter Challenge program.
- Farsighted Committee: recommends, develops, and implements plans for achieving Goal 2 and the long-term direction of Commuter Challenge.
- Sponsors Committee: chaired by the EDC president, this committee seeks program funding sponsors.

Additional committees and ad hoc groups have been formed to address issues and programs as needed.

PACESETTER PROGRAM

Pacesetters

The primary activity of Commuter Challenge has been to enroll more Pacesetters. Since the beginning of the program's second phase, 77 additional employers have become Pacesetters. As of March 1992 these 98 Pacesetters represented over 270,000 employees in King County.

The incentives for an employer to become a Pacesetter are as follows:

- Pacesetters are profiled as community leaders through public recognition,
- Employees' car expenses and commuting-related stress are reduced,
- Employers are benefited because transportation programs can reduce parking expenses, increase employee morale, improve employee retention, and facilitate extended operating hours and better equipment use, and
- Washington State is helped to meet federal air quality standards and ease traffic congestion.

To become a Pacesetter, an employer with a rideshare program agrees to improve the program; one without a program pledges to perform at least three of the following actions:

- Provide a minimum \$5.00 rideshare subsidy,
- Appoint an employee transportation coordinator,
- Distribute and post transit information,
- Regularly provide employee newsletter information on commuting options,
- Become a member of a professional rideshare organization,
- Sponsor annual on-site rideshare promotions,
- Develop an alternative work hours policy or participate in the state telecommuting demonstration project,
- Operate a parking management program,
- Guarantee rides home to transit users and carpoolers in the event of unforeseen problems, and
- Allow 15- to 30-min work schedule flexibility for commuters.

The Commuter Challenge program is flexible and encourages employers to create additional, perhaps unique, incentives for their employees.

The primary method for recruiting Pacesetters is to invite

targeted CEOs to hear other employers describe successful employee transportation programs. As a follow-up to each breakfast meeting, the Commuter Challenge manager and a Metro CSR visit each attending employer to discuss development of a transportation program. Four breakfast meetings have been attended by employers from downtown Seattle and outlying suburban areas. On average, each breakfast meeting has attracted 40 persons representing 35 employers. Through March 1992, 60 of these employers or 43 percent of the employers represented at the breakfasts have become Pacesetters. An additional 8 employers, representing 6 percent of the breakfast attendees, are working with Metro CSRs and will eventually become Pacesetters. Some of the Pacesetters and the major rideshare incentives they provide are given in Table 1.

Pacesetter Recognition

Public recognition is important to Pacesetters. Employers like to be recognized in the community and among their peers as contributors to community solutions. Commuter Challenge has developed a comprehensive recognition program. Program activities include the following:

- Metro bus tunnel opening—Pacesetters were recognized for their efforts during this ceremony dedicating Seattle's underground bus tunnel.
- Oil Smart Wednesday—Commuter Challenge participated in this program, which encouraged workers to rideshare for five consecutive Wednesdays. The promotion received widespread local publicity, and Pacesetters were honored for their long-term commitment to employee transportation programs.
- The *All Street Journal*—Commuter Challenge helped produce this comprehensive transportation-alternatives guide for employees, 205,000 copies of which were distributed free within four Puget Sound counties. Pacesetters were highlighted in this book, and some Pacesetter employees were spotlighted to exemplify commuting options.
- Ads in business publications—Commuter Challenge placed ads recognizing employers in business journals, including the regional edition of *Wall Street Journal*, *CEO Magazine*, and *Puget Sound Business Journal*.
- Bimonthly newsletter—The EDC's bimonthly newsletter, *The Catalyst*, reaches over 800 employers in King County. The Commuter Challenge program supplements this newsletter with a two-page insert. Supplement articles address current transportation issues. Each issue highlights new Pacesetters.

Pacesetter Survey

In February 1991 the Evaluation Committee conducted a phone survey. The nonscientific survey targeted managers in the Pacesetter organizations to gather their perspectives of the Commuter Challenge program and to solicit suggestions and perceived problems. At that time there were 42 Pacesetters; 39 participated in the survey. Survey results include the following:

TABLE 1 SELECTED PACESETTER ORGANIZATIONS AND MAJOR TYPES OF RIDESHARE INCENTIVES OFFERED TO THEIR EMPLOYEES

Organization Type and Organization	Distribute Rideshare Information	Employee Rideshare Coordinator	Flex-time Program	Guaranteed Ride Home Program	Parking Management Program	Rideshare Promotion Activities	Transit Subsidy	Vanpool Subsidy
FINANCIAL								
Dean Witter	✓	✓					✓	✓
Security Pacific Bank	×	×					✓	✓
GOVERNMENT								
City of Kirkland	×	×		✓	✓	×	✓	✓
WA State Dept. of Ecology	✓	✓				✓		
HEALTHCARE								
Pacific Medical Center	×	×			✓	✓	×	×
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY								
Attachmate Corporation	✓	✓		×	×	✓	✓	✓
US WEST New Vector	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MANUFACTURING								
Chiyoda International	✓	✓					✓	✓
The Boeing Company	×	×		✓	×	×	✓	✓
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES								
Bogle & Gates	✓	✓		×	×	✓	×	×
Entranco Engineers	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
RETAIL								
Nordstrom	✓	✓				✓		
Trick & Murray	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
UTILITY								
Washington Energy	✓	×		✓	✓	✓		

✓: A rideshare incentive offered to the organization's employees since the organization became a Pacesetter.

×: A rideshare incentive offered to the organization's employees prior to the organization becoming a Pacesetter.

- Many Pacesetters offered more rideshare incentives than they had originally agreed to when they joined the program.

- Over one-third indicated that the main benefit of being a Pacesetter was helping the community.

- About 20 percent of the Pacesetters believed that participation in the program made employees feel better about their workplace. Nearly all of the Pacesetters said that the rideshare incentives provided employees economic benefit and convenience.

- Two-thirds of the Pacesetters indicated that the program had increased their awareness of transportation issues. Eighty percent believed that awareness of transportation issues among other members of the business community had increased.

- Two-thirds of those responding felt their involvement had permitted them to provide input to transit agencies about transportation problems.

- One-third said that both the program and the Pacesetters needed more visibility; eight Pacesetters felt the program should work harder to attract additional Pacesetters.

THE OUTREACH PROGRAM

Commuter Challenge's Farsighted Committee focuses on the program's second goal, the Outreach Program. A survey conducted by the EDC revealed that transportation issues are in the forefront of the business community's concerns; traffic congestion affects personnel mobility and the transport of goods and services (1). Before Commuter Challenge, no mechanism existed to permit ongoing discussion between transportation providers and employers. The EDC's connection to CEOs helped make an environment to fill this need, hence the program's focus in this area.

The Farsighted Committee's objective is to identify existing and new means of facilitating communication between trans-

portation providers and the private sector on regional transportation issues. Initial efforts at achieving this have focused on a Washington State transportation demand management (TDM) law that will take effect in 1992.

Four significant TDM activities have been undertaken to fulfill the committee's goals.

1. EDC quarterly luncheon: At this meeting, Duane Berentson, Washington State Secretary of Transportation, and Dick Watson, Washington State Energy Office Director, spoke to the EDC members and guests on pending TDM legislation.

2. Sponsorship of TDM forum: This breakfast forum for area employers provided up-to-date information on the state's new TDM law. The forum

- Familiarized employers with TDM techniques,
- Informed them of the basics of the law, and
- Explained the process and schedule for determining the details.

3. TDM employer focus groups: In October 1991 Commuter Challenge sponsored two focus groups for area private-sector employers to hear their impressions of upcoming employer TDM requirements. The major concern revealed in these sessions was that employers were not fairly represented in the drafting of the TDM requirements.

4. TDM workshops: As a result of the focus groups, the Commuter Challenge sponsored a workshop to organize employers to effectively participate in the development of the TDM requirements. From this workshop, employers formed three working groups to represent the three elements of the TDM legislation, measurement methods; model ordinance; and parking, model programs, and training. These working groups, aided by technical resource people from the State Energy Office and WSDOT, are providing direct input to the state task force that is developing the law's requirements.

PROGRAM FUTURE

The long-term future of Commuter Challenge depends on continued receipt of operating funds from its sponsors. A long-range plan for the program is now under development. The following will be included in this plan:

- Increase sponsorship—Other suburban communities will be given the opportunity to join the program. Sponsors may also include members of the private sector who would donate funds or services to the program.

- Pacesetter activities—Washington State's new TDM law will make employer rideshare programs a requirement rather than a voluntary commitment. In this new environment, Commuter Challenge is pursuing a work plan to refocus its Pacesetter activities. This new focus will provide recognition of exemplary employer programs and will work toward encouraging smaller, non-TDM effected employers to take the challenge and establish rideshare programs.

- Outreach Program—The primary focus of the program is expansion of the number of transportation issues addressed and development of a more positive public/private environment for discussing these issues.

SUMMARY

The Pacesetter program has raised the region's employers' awareness of congestion problems and has begun to foster a

commitment among them to find and implement solutions. The program task force has attempted to balance the need to keep the Commuter Challenge program visible to the general public with the need to focus most of its efforts on delivering the rideshare message to CEOs.

The Pacesetters survey showed that the program is on track but also needs improvement. 1992 will present an opportunity to focus on improvements and continue this successful example of public and private sector cooperation to address the region's transportation problems.

TDM, as well as other important transportation issues, will require tremendous work and cooperation between the public and private sector. With the guidance and contacts of the EDC and the current multiagency cooperative approach, the Commuter Challenge program is in a unique position to play a major role in joining public agencies and the private sector to address these issues.

REFERENCE

1. 1988 *King County Employer Transportation Survey*. Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County, Seattle. Sept. 19, 1988.

Publication of this paper sponsored by Task Force on Transportation Demand Management.