

LONG-RANGE TDM PLAN-APPENDIX C
RIDEFINDERS PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION



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1.0 PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1.1 Overview of Past Evaluation

Program evaluation is a function that is often short-changed by TDM agencies, due to insufficient funding to conduct the research and data collection required for comprehensive evaluations. RideFinders' efforts to assess the performance of its services and understand customers' needs, however, have been above average relative to many of the Commonwealth's fifteen TDM agencies.

RideFinders tracks monthly participation in several of its services and solicits regular feedback from ride-match and emergency ride home participants through monthly surveys designed to assess the extent to which these services have influenced or assisted participants to start or increase their use of non-SOV modes. RideFinders also has conducted numerous periodic studies of service initiatives, including the:

- 2003 Residents Awareness & Usage Telephone Study
- 2004 Residents Awareness & Usage Telephone Study
- 2005 Bike Challenge Online Study
- 2005 Business Leaders Online Study
- 2005 Residents Awareness & Usage Online Study
- 2008 Placement Study
- 2009 Business Leaders Study
- 2010 Downtown Workforce Study

In most cases, these marketing research studies have explored transportation needs of residents and businesses; assessed the impact of RideFinders' marketing campaigns in building awareness and familiarity of the agency's services; explored how participants use RideFinders' services; measured the level of satisfaction with services; and solicited recommendations for service improvements.

These studies have informed RideFinders' marketing programs and led to service refinements and development of new service offers. The best example of this "*research in action*" comes from the 2005 Residents Study and 2005 Business Leaders Study. Both studies generated unassailable evidence that the direct involvement of businesses in offering transportation-related TDM services in the work setting lifts commuter use of alternatives modes. In fact, the perception of corporate support for ridesharing lifts participation threefold. Armed with this insight, RideFinders designed and launched a comprehensive business outreach TDM campaign the following year.

In addition to funding and directing its own proprietary studies, RideFinders has also participated in other regional and state-wide transportation research-related initiatives including: Greater Richmond Chamber Transportation Study (2007), Greater Richmond Region Affordable Housing Study (2007), Regional Mass Transit Study (2007), and Virginia State of the Commute Survey (2007).

1.2 Current Performance Monitoring

RideFinders currently tracks several performance measures to monitor program delivery and performance. The program is also monitored through DRPT's State of the Commute Study and regional studies conducted by RideFinders. These measures provide RideFinders' staff with a means of monitoring the overall awareness of the Agency, the marketing activities that attract and recruit program participants, and the number of individuals, companies, carpools, and vanpools served.

The output oriented performance measures serve as a starting point for developing additional performance outcome measures - to evaluate the impact of the program and progress towards the aforementioned goals and related objectives. Table 1.1 lists the current output-related performance measures that RideFinders monitors and evaluates to assess the performance of the Agency.

Table 1.1 RideFinders' Performance Measures

Commuter Customers
Total calls
Total Unique Visitors to Web site
Total Database Matching Registrants
Total GRH Registrants
Transit Check Sold
Net Promoter Score™
Employer Customers
Total employer clients
4 Rated employer clients
3 Rated employer clients
2 Rated Employer
1 Rated Employer
Net Promoter Score™
Overall Impact or Outcome
VMT reduced
Air quality impact avoided

Source: RideFinders.

It is envisioned that VMT reduced and air quality impacts avoided will be added to this list in subsequent years.

DRPT requires each TDM agency to report on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis the outputs as identified in Table 1.2 into the Online Grant Application (OLGA) system.

Table 1.2 DRPT OLGA Performance Measures and Reporting Requirements

Number of follow-up contacts attempted	New requests received through commuter store
Number of follow-up contacts completed	New requests received through website
Percentage of customers who changed mode	New requests received through marketing effort
Percentage of customers who used TDM services	New rideshare matches attempted
Percentage of customers who did not use TDM services	New rideshare requestors who received match name
Number of rideshare information requests	New Emergency (Guaranteed) Ride Home registrations
Number of transit information requests	New Emergency (Guaranteed) Ride Home trips
Number of telework information requests	New vanpools formed
Number of biking/walking information requests	New employer contacted through outreach program
Number of Emergency (Guaranteed) Ride Home information requests	Total employers participating at level three
Number of general information requests	Total employers participating at level four
New requests received through events/fairs	Total requests received

1.3 Future Evaluation Criteria

While all of these past research efforts have been tremendously helpful from a programmatic or operational standpoint, more value can be realized if RideFinders' research efforts are viewed and orchestrated as a more formal comprehensive 360° evaluation program.

This perspective, however, requires two considerations. First and foremost, research must be programmed and conducted in a consistent manner. Second, research must be viewed as an investment and funded at the required level. A general rule of thumb that corporate marketing programs follow is to allocate 5% to 10% of total resources to fund research evaluation and development initiatives.

While there are many advantages of an ongoing comprehensive 360° evaluation research program, the most important one is the ability to evaluate systematically agency services from an impact or outcomes perspective and to document the transportation and environmental impacts of an agency's services. The need to calculate impacts or desired outcomes will continue to become more and more important as governmental spending comes under more and more scrutiny.

A similar 360° evaluation research program was recently put in place for Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS), one of RideFinders' sister TDM agencies. One of the net take-aways from ACCS' work is that it can now claim that in FY 2008, Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS):

- Eliminated a specific number of daily vehicle trips in the County by helping people shift from driving alone to transit, carpooling, vanpooling, walking, bicycling, or teleworking;
- Eliminated a specific number of daily VMT;
- Reduced Arlington County's carbon footprint by specific number of tons of NO_x, a specific number of tons of VOC, and specific number of tons of CO₂.

RideFinders, in conjunction with GRTC, has recently embarked on a similar multi-year, multifaceted comprehensive 360° evaluation program. The Southeastern Institute of Research (SIR) and LDA Consulting have begun work on this multi-year effort. Table 1.3 outlines specific future evaluation criteria that have been determined by RideFinders.

Table 1.3 Future Evaluation Criteria

Awareness and attitudes
Awareness of options
Awareness of GRTC/RideFinders and its services
Ratings of transportation options and GRTC/RideFinders services on specific attributes
Factors influencing mode choice
Consideration of alternative modes
Participation/use of services
Sources of information
Inquiries
Contact with RideFinders
Usage of specific services
Frequency of use
Length of time using
Barriers to trial
Consideration of future use
Current services
New programs
Satisfaction
Overall satisfaction ratings for transportation system and support
Overall satisfaction ratings for GRTC/RideFinders
Reasons behind ratings
Areas for improvement
Unmet needs
Overall impact
Mode split
Shifts to non SOV modes motivated by use of services – trail and continued
Perceived benefits of mode change – personal, business, societal
SOV trips eliminated – cars taken off road
VMT reduction
Environmental consequences

Source: RideFinders.

1.4 Process for Monitoring and Evaluation

The process for monitoring and evaluating RideFinders is detailed in a comprehensive long-range working document entitled *GRTC-RideFinders' Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program - June 2, 2008* by LDA Consulting and SIR. Highlights from this plan follow.

Overall Plan Objectives

- Assess performance of all programs/services.
- Provide input for GRTC-RideFinders' overall services and program development and ongoing refinement. To do this, identify optimal prospects for individual programs/services, identify areas for improvement and finally, identify any unmet needs and program/service development opportunities.
- Document impacts - outcomes - of GRTC/RideFinders programs and services.

Target Audiences

- General public/residents
- Employers
- Current transit customers both fixed route riders - "Choice" riders, transit dependent riders and express service riders - "Choice" riders
- Commuter RideFinders' program participants - ridematching, vanpool and ERH (Emergency Ride Home)
- RideFinders' Employer Program participants
- RideFinders'/GRTC Web site visitors
- Commuter store visitors
- Individuals requesting information/assistance

Implementation Approach

Table 1.4 presents the specific components of *GRTC-RideFinders' Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program*. Studies are slated for GRTC-RideFinders' individual programs/services. All of this work will profile existing users and identify optimal prospects for individual programs/services, identify any unmet needs and program/service development opportunities; create in-depth user/target profiles (demographical and psycho-graphical), identify barriers and benefits; and measure performance.

Collected data will be used to calculate program impacts by specific GRTC-RideFinders' program/service and overall agency. Ultimately, the *Performance Evaluation Program* will build and support an online "Dashboard" reporting system for internal and public review of GRTC-RideFinders' ongoing performance and demonstrated impacts. The last step will involve the construction of an online *Strategy & Performance Evaluation* research database for *GRTC-RideFinders* - an easy venue to share research reports and program rationale with the general public, constituents, clients, and advocacy groups.

Table 1.4 Program Components

Study Name	Description	Approach	Timing
<u>Market-wide Studies</u>			
Resident	Assess awareness, usage and attitudes region wide, includes measurement of RideFinders' efforts reducing SOV trips	Telephone survey n = 300 to 500	Every 2 years
Employer	Assess region wide awareness, usage and attitudes, incidence and types of commute services at worksites, includes measurement of RideFinders' impact reducing SOV trips through employer assistance	Internet/Paper survey n = 200 Partner with Chamber and/or other business group(s). Could include RideFinders' 30 business clients	Every 2 years
<u>Corridor Opportunity Study</u>			
Residents	Usage, motivators, barriers to use, and intent to use in opportunity corridors for Choice Riders (Example: Parham lot to downtown)	Telephone survey or mail	One time for plan development
<u>Customer Feedback</u>			
Bus riders	Separate studies for fixed route services and individual express bus services; include measurement of Go-Cards	"Seat drop" – written survey distributed on buses 43 routes – 25 completes per route – 1075 total	Every 2.3 years
Employer Program	Usage, satisfaction, impact on number and type of commute services offered by employer	Phone survey to database of current participants 100 participants 50% participation	Every 2-3 years

Study Name	Description	Approach	Timing
Smaller GRTC Programs	Example: CARE, CARE Tickets, C-Van	Examine these programs as needed where budget and time allow	TBD
Ridematching Services	Will include both carpool and vanpool program, use, satisfaction, impact on mode choice	Phone/internet survey to database of current participants	Every 2-3 years
Emergency Ride Home	Use, satisfaction, impact on mode choice	Mail/internet survey to database of current participants	Every 2-3 years
Website	Use, satisfaction, impact on mode choice	Pop-up online survey of site visitors	Every 2-3 years
Commuter Store	Use, satisfaction, impact on mode choice	Customer intercepts or comment cards	Every 2-3 years
Assistance / Information Requests	Use, satisfaction, impact on mode choice	Mail/internet survey to database of current participants	Every 2-3 years
<u>Maintenance</u>			
Research Database	Database of all research pertaining to GRTC. Includes Knowledge Papers to tie the research together.		Ongoing
Making an Impact Presentation Deck	PowerPoint presentation for RideFinders Team to share Evaluation Plan and related research insights with key stakeholders.		Ongoing
Impact Analysis	Use research and other data to determine ultimate impact and report annually.		Annually
Marketing Dashboard	Create systematic reporting system.		Ongoing
Miscellaneous	Depending on the scope of the Strategy and Performance Evaluation Program, there may be the need to create a budget line item for miscellaneous meetings, account maintenance, and travel.		Ongoing

Source: GRTC-RideFinders Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program.

Program Priorities

The *GRTC-RideFinders' Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program* is a four-year program that was designed in 2008 and launched in 2009. Due to limited budget resources, initial prioritization of evaluation performance measurement was made based on the need to obtain program strategy input – to drive program development and refinement.

Based on this criterion, the first two research studies – *Employer Study* and *Corridor Study*, were launched in 2009. The *Employer Study – 2009 Business Leader Study* – was recently completed. Findings have been included in this document. The corridor study transitioned to

the 2010 *Downtown Workforce Study* and was completed in early 2010. The findings generated by these two studies evince that there is significant opportunity in the Richmond Region to increase the use of alternatives to SOV commuting, as well as offering expanded and new commuter express bus services along key corridors in the downtown area. Proposed implementation schedule for the entire *GRTC-RideFinders' Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program* is presented in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 RideFinders' Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program Implementation Schedule

	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Resident Study</i>				
<i>Employer study</i>				
<i>Corridor Study</i>				
<i>Bus riders</i>				
<i>Ridematch feedback</i>				
<i>Employer feedback</i>				
<i>Emergency Ride Home</i>				
<i>Web site</i>				
<i>Commuter store</i>				
<i>Assistance/ Info requests</i>				

Source: GRTC-RideFinders' Strategy & Performance Evaluation Program.

2009 Business Leader Survey Key Findings

- Three quarters of business leaders in the Richmond area (76%) are not satisfied with the region's transportation system.
- Business leaders believe the quality of the region's current transportation system affects their employees.
- Many business leaders are already involved supporting the region's transportation system by offering employer-based transportation programs such as flextime, telework programs, ridematching support, etc.
- Business leaders see the bottom line benefits of employer-based transportation programs.
- Yet, business leaders see these programs as a way to help their employees.
- Many of the business leaders who do not currently offer employer-based transportation programs and services are now interested in doing so.
- Business leaders support a greater level of community investment towards a more balanced transportation system.

2010 Downtown Workforce Study Key Findings

- Today, three in ten (28%) say that their commute is congested.
- Most of downtown Richmond's workforce commutes to work as single occupant vehicle (SOV) commuters.
- Availability of transportation if one has to work late or leave unexpectedly (77% say this is very important) and flexibility (68% say this is very important) drive commute mode choice.
- Access to parking has a big impact on downtown workers commute mode choice. When parking is available, employees are more likely to choose to drive alone.
- Six in seven downtown employees (85%) say their employers are already involved in their employees' commute.
- There is room to increase the use of commuter support services provided by employers to their downtown workforce.
- Telework is the most popular alternative to SOV commuting.
- There is great interest among downtown employees in using the kinds of rideshare support services that Rf already offers. People just aren't aware of these free options.
- Employer assistance "lifts" employer goodwill. Three in four (73%) would view their employer more positively if their employer did something to help or offered information that made their commute cheaper, shorter, or easier.
- Interest in expanded or new commuter bus service is substantial, and there is a potential market for new or expanded services.

1.5 FY11-12 Market Research

For FY11 -FY12 RideFinders is moving forward with the next phase of its research model as indicated in the Information Attachment approved at the March 14, 2011 GRTC/RideFinders Board Meeting.

**INFORMATION ATTACHMENT
RIDEFINDERS PERFORMANCE & IMPACT PROGRAM STUDY**

Background

RideFinders is Central Virginia's lead agency for advancing transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to support the region's transportation and air quality objectives which include improving regional mobility, enhancing access, reducing traffic congestion and air pollution, and supporting economic stability. While RideFinders advances numerous programs to support these objectives, it has done so without adequate financial resources to assess and report the agency's true impact - specific reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), reduction in air pollution inputs, and energy saved.

Arriving at these outcomes measures requires a significant investment in comprehensive research program - a program that measures the impact of every TDM program touch-point (Commuter Store, Website, Telework!VA, Guaranteed Ride Home, NuRide, etc.). To date, Department of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT) has only helped one other Virginia TDM agency, Arlington County Commuter Services, fund this kind of sophisticated reporting program.

Today, the need to measure and report program performance and quantifiable results for every TDM agency, regardless of size, has never been more pressing. Rising stakeholders' expectations, the call for all organizations to do more with less, and the challenging budgetary times are all conspiring to make "impact reporting and return on investment" calculations a necessary and important part of doing business for any TDM agency.

In February 2010, the GRTC/RideFinders Board of Directors approved RideFinders' request to apply for a research grant from DRPT to fund RideFinders' Performance and Impact Program. RideFinders was successful in securing a \$140,000 grant for this project-- 80% will be funded with State Aid with a 20% Federal Match.

Highlights:

- RideFinders' Performance and Impact Program funded by this grant is part of an overall 4 Phase project scope awarded to Southeastern Institute of Research and LDA Consulting. The performance and impact assessment research is the third phase of a systematic research program design. It follows the Business Leaders Study and Corridor Studies conducted in FY09 and FY10, respectively.
- This third phase, modeled off of a very successful impact assessment program for Arlington County's TDM agency, will assess the performance and related impact that each of RideFinders' major touchpoints have on RideFinders' prospects and customers in terms of converting them from SOV to ridesharing modes, reduction in VMTs, reduction in air pollution inputs, etc.
- The expiration date of this grant is June 30, 2012. RideFinders' consultant team will deliver the final "Making An Impact" Report by December 31, 2011.
- The "Making An Impact Report" will be produced by RideFinders as an annual report-like publication that makes the strongest case possible for RideFinders' stakeholders to support continued funding in a competitive environment for CMAQ funds.

- DRPT plans to use the methodologies developed as part of this grant as the template for other TDM agencies across Virginia to conduct similar studies.

Recommendation:

That the Board of Directors approve RideFinders to commence work on the Performance & Evaluation Program research project as approved and funded by the research grant.

Figure 1.2 Illustrates the scope of the Performance and Impact Project.

