

Final Report

Contract Number: MS12087

Project Title: Rideshare Thursday Incentives Program

Contractor Organization: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
(Metro)

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This final report is prepared for the Mobile Source Air Pollution Review Committee (MSRC) under the AB 2766 Discretionary Fund Work Program.

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Project Description and Work Performed

Since 1997, Metro has offered rideshare incentives to increase and sustain ridesharing, thereby reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality and quality of life in the greater Los Angeles area. This rideshare incentives grant has allowed Metro to update the Metro Rewards program and offer the new incentives over a two-year period. In addition to Metro program administration, the production of program brochures, and database management, Metro's match for this project consisted of significant Metro staff marketing outreach.

The new Metro Rewards Program began in November 2013 and offered Entertainment Books worth over \$1,000 in immediate savings from participating merchants, both national and local. The program also included online SaversGuide with significant discounts to eligible participants; SaversGuide discounts were offered on dining, movies, shopping, attractions, services, and travel. A portion of the discounts were premium discounts such as 50% off coupons or 2-for-1 discounts. Mobile applications were available via download at the website.

The participating commuter's employer must be enrolled in the program. Eligible commuters are those adults who don't drive to work alone and who rideshare a minimum of eight workdays a month, for three consecutive months or longer. Participants were tracked by their chosen alternative transportation mode to driving alone: bicycle, carpool, commuter rail (Metrolink), telecommute, transit (bus and Metro Rail), vanpool or walk modes.

Since the new Metro Rewards program inception, 20,142 Entertainment books were distributed to program participants working in Los Angeles County. 8,460 of these coupon books were new to Metro Rewards, and 11,682 were for renewing members. Of the members renewing, at least 28% were participants in the old Metro Rewards program. The first eight months of the new Metro Rewards program had a 230% greater participation rate compared to the last eight months of the old Metro Rewards incentives (which was an online restaurant coupon incentive).

Metro selected a vendor with extensive experience providing Entertainment books to commuters in other Southern California counties. By requiring that the businesses participating in the Metro Rewards coupon book make their coupon the best available coupon offer, the vendor ensured a high level of satisfaction of program participants.

Implementation of Marketing Strategies

The incentives have been promoted in articles published in the regional OntheGo ETC newsletter. The Metro Rewards incentives were also marketed to both ETCs and employees directly on both the metro.net website and the go511.com website. Metro staff also encouraged ETCs to post program information on their websites as well as links to the Metro website pages promoting the program. Metro Rewards is marketed on all RideGuides produced by Metro, and Metro staff marketed the incentives during Rideshare Week and Bike Week LA events.

For the past two years, the Metro Rewards incentives have been promoted at all monthly Metro ETC briefings. Metro Staff has also discussed the incentives at the SCAQMD ETC trainings and has sent each ETC participant a Metro Rewards brochure. The incentives were also promoted by Metro staff at large ETC workshops including the Los Angeles County ETC workshop. Metro staff attended several rideshare fairs each month. These events at large Los Angeles county worksites gave Metro staff the opportunity to speak directly with employees and to show them a sample coupon book. Moreover, each of the ETCs whose worksites did not meet their AVR target was contacted, and they were encouraged to market the Metro Rewards program at their worksite.

In addition to the direct marketing efforts of Metro Rewards staff and ETCs, Metro Rewards staff provided marketing materials and briefed Metro marketing staff promoting other programs at Metro (such as the Vanpool program, Guaranteed Ride Home Program, and TAP Program). Metro Rideshare staff also helped promote the program when assisting the public. Metro Rewards marketing materials were also given to Metro's Community Relations staff and Metro volunteers attending community events, so they could offer the incentives to the community at various community events.

Lessons Learned

Periodic monitoring of the Online SaversGuide website activity showed that many of the Metro Rewards participants who received Entertainment Books were not registering online to get the additional SaversGuide savings. The online registration is an added step for program participants and requires promotion after initial program registration is complete. The SaversGuide is an excellent value, offering even more discounts than the Entertainment Book, so Metro staff put extra staff time into helping improve the online registration. Metro staff began contacting all ETCs by phone when the coupon books were mailed and reminded them to encourage the Metro Rewards participants to complete the online registration so they could become eligible for the SaversGuide online savings.

Another issue encountered was an overestimation of coupon books required per calendar year. Even an increase in 230% program participation compared to the old incentives (an online restaurant coupon offer) was not enough participation to distribute all of the books before they were near expiration and no longer of any value. Inclusive of this reprint, all 20,142 books available for this project were distributed to qualified program participants during the 22 month project implementation period. In future, Metro staff recommends negotiating with the vendor so that more books will be printed according to demand for a calendar year, with the printing of additional books postponed as needed to the next calendar year.

Finally, Metro used an incentives database modeled on Metro's previous incentives programs. For the future, Metro will be developing an incentives module for the Regional Rideshare Database managed by Metro. The advantage to having one database for both incentives and regional ridematching activities is being able to more easily target prospective employers who need to improve their AVR and could therefore benefit from the Metro Rewards incentives.

Emissions Benefits

The implementation plan included the distribution of 20,142 Entertainment books which were mailed to participants after their registration in the program was complete. The maximum emissions benefits were achieved, since Metro met its goal of distributing all the books according to the 22 month contract schedule.

Since the new Metro Rewards program inception in November 2013, the entire stock of 20,142 Entertainment books was distributed to employees working in Los Angeles County. The total number of books distributed to members through September 30, 2015 includes 142 books provided free to Metro from the vendor. The number of vehicles reduced from this program is 16,723 and at least 80,466 vehicle trips were reduced for the entire 22 months of the program. This amounts to 160,932 one-way vehicle trips or 3,739,639 miles saved—a total emissions reduction of 12,913 pounds (or 6.5 tons) of pollutants from mobile sources.

Because at least 28% of those participants who renewed their Metro Rewards membership in 2014 were members of the previous Metro Rewards program, it is likely that the investment in this new Metro Rewards program will be a catalyst in future Metro Rewards renewals and thus future emissions reductions. Moreover, Metro's marketing efforts for Metro Rewards have made ETCs aware of the full spectrum of emissions-reducing rideshare and transit programs at Metro, and the exposure to Metro's offerings should have a positive future impact on emissions reductions.

Metro Rewards Participation by Mode Split

Please see the participation by mode split in the table below. From Nov. 2013 – Sep. 2015, the three most common modes have been carpool (34%), transit (37%) and vanpool (19%).

Mode	Mode Split Nov. 2013 through Sept. 2015 (since program inception):	
	#Payments/Mode	Mode Split %
Bicycle	555	2.76%
Carpool	6,859	34.05%
Metrolink	925	4.59%
Telecommute	161	0.80%
Transit (bus and Metro Rail)	7,437	36.92%
Vanpool	3,858	19.15%
Walk	347	1.72%
Total:	20,142	100%

Acknowledgement

The success of the new Metro Rewards program implemented over the last two years is due to the generous \$125,000 MSRC grant funding the incentives. Metro Project Manager Paula Carvajal developed the Metro Rewards Marketing Plan and ensured the smooth implementation of the plan and program. Metro Consultant staff Mary Ann Garcia of Inland Transportation Services (ITS) managed daily activities of the Rewards program, including the database administration and was an important contact for ETCs participating in the program. Her promotion of the program at ETC training workshops, via eblasts to ETCs, and employer rideshare fairs gave ETCs and employees the information they needed to make this program successful. In addition, Karen Wenzel, consultant, managed the quarterly reports and ensured that all requirements were met for the final report.

This report was submitted in fulfillment of MS12087 and Metro Rideshare Incentives in Conjunction with MSRC Rideshare Thursday under the partial sponsorship of the Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC). Work was completed as of September 30, 2015.