



Freewheeling

Vanpooling is your trip, your way.



Brought to you by the Washington State Department of Transportation and your local transit agency.

FREEWHEELING

Freewheeling is the first-ever statewide vanpool education campaign sponsored by the Washington State Department of Transportation with support from transit agencies throughout the state. This campaign is designed to create new vanpool ridership and sustain existing ridership by promoting the financial and environmental benefits of vanpooling as well as the concept of vanpooling as a chosen lifestyle. No surprise then, that Washington State leads the nation in the number of vanpools used for commuting. Many public transit agencies, both large and small, around the state include vanpool operations in their mix of services.

BACKGROUND

Although the agencies have always shared information about their programs with other agencies, they have never before cooperated on a statewide effort to promote vanpool services. Each agency has typically decided when and how to promote its own service, even when service areas are shared, such as in the greater Puget Sound. Campaigns often overlapped and even conflicted with each other. Since employers are sometimes served by more than once agency, overlapping campaigns can be problematic and confusing.

In addition, a Vanpool Market Assessment completed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in late 1999 for the Puget Sound Region validated our need and our capacity for significant growth in the vanpool market. Building on the concepts and recommendations included in this report, the agencies, spearheaded by WSDOT, created a Vanpool Education Strategy Committee in early-2004 to examine our individual and collective needs and determine how best to stimulate growth in vanpooling throughout the state.

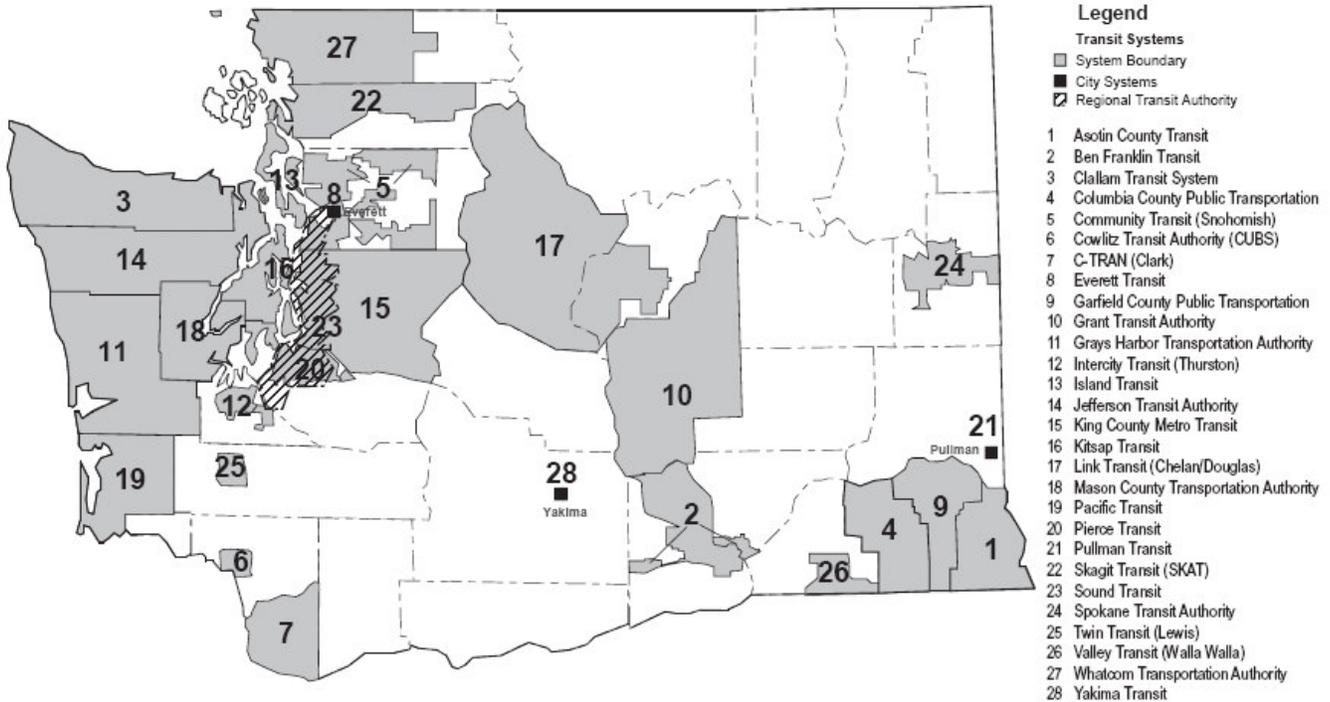
PARTICIPANTS

Each of the agencies listed below participated in the efforts to build and launch this campaign. The statistics provided in the chart represent year-end 2004. The bus fleet numbers show the relative size of the transit agency. The numbers in the first column correspond to the appropriate service area on the map shown below.

Map #	Agency	Bus Fleet	Vanpools In Svc 12/2004	VP Trips	VP Miles	Avg VP RTM*
	WSDOT	n/a	Provides short-term lease vans	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	Ben Franklin Transit	64	180	657,870	2,498,645	67.8
3	Clallam Transit	30	15	60,110	305,315	75.8
5	Community Transit	275	230	828,115	3,062,825	58.2
12	Intercity Transit	45	90	299,995	1,446,400	73.0
13	Island Transit	13	47	140,380	825,520	81.7
15	King County Metro	1,324	662	2,569,235	8,681,205	56.7
16	Kitsap Transit	94	95	232,220	1,085,405	51.3
18	Mason Transit	15	10	20,340	91,435	52.6
20	Pierce Transit	168	245	692,495	3,782,125	65.1
22	Skagit Transit	20	7	21,120	188,195	103.1
24	Spokane Transit Authority	127	40	110,600	400,380	45.9
27	Whatcom Transit Authority	36	11	55,375	208,365	80.8
28	Yakima Transit	21	12	46,065	277,890	129.0
	TOTALS	2,232	1,644	5,733,920	22,853,705	72.4

*RTM = Average Vanpool Roundtrip Mileage

Washington State Public Transportation Transit Authorities



CONTACTS

Overall campaign, messaging, and funding

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SITUATION

- More vans are on the road, carrying fewer riders.
- 7-8 average riders per van, down from 10 average riders per van in 1999.
- Many riders don't care that there is capacity to carry more people because their costs are subsidized.
- A few agencies had lots of vans that were not in service.
- Peak Vanpool seasons – Spring (Apr-Jun) and Fall (Sep-Nov).
- General public is not aware that vanpool is a viable option.

BUDGET

- Up to \$2,000,000 State funds for expansion vanpool capital purchases.
- \$369,000+ incentive regional grant.
- \$170,000 from WSDOT for campaign expenses.
- Additional funds from transit agencies.

GOALS

- Raise awareness of vanpool as a viable commute option.
- Increase vanpool ridership throughout the state.

OBJECTIVES

- Expand vanpool service in various communities.
- Retain vanpool groups and current participants in current programs.
- Improve vanpool customer services.
- Expand RideshareOnline.com statewide.
- Complement other statewide commute campaigns, such as the Washington State Ridesharing Organization (WSRO) sponsored "Wheel Options."

OUTCOMES

- Reduce traffic congestion.
- Increase operational efficiency.
- Increase the number of public vanpools on the road.
- Increase total statewide vanpool ridership.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Primary: general public, "mass" awareness, to motivate new recruits.

- Secondary: current vanpool customers at various tiers of involvement (employers/sites, individual participants) at both CTR and non-affected sites.

DECISIONS

The participants met regularly during the latter part of 2004 to create a campaign that met the goals and objectives established for the project, that provided excellent opportunities for ridership growth, and that each agency could stand behind and use. Buy-in of the total program and the overall concept was essential to the project's success.

After many discussions, the campaign elements were determined and approved by all.

- The campaign slogan: "Freewheeling. Vanpooling is your trip, your way."
- The campaign look: Images that are easily identifiable as Washington State landscapes and that represent a variety of regions served by the participating transit agencies.
- The campaign timeline: Kickoff the campaign in early 2005 and run a second wave in Fall 2005 if funding is available.

LAUNCH & OPERATION

- The Freewheeling campaign was launched on February 1, 2005.
- The first wave of the campaign ended on July 31, 2005.
- The incentives part of the campaign was extended through October 31, 2005.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The cover of this paper uses several of the images created for this campaign. Participants wanted clean, professional quality images that would withstand the test of time. They "borrowed" the common theme currently being used by many car manufacturers – that of driving in a comfortable car, leaving your troubles behind you. Pierce Transit assumed the lead for creative, and with the support of many of the partners, developed images that reflected the landscape of the various regions around the state and met the objectives of the campaign.

MEDIA - RADIO

Radio messages, specific to the media markets, were created and approved. Each market received several messages for its use. All messages were similar with slight tweaks dependent on the specific market. A series of three 15-second spots were interspersed in traffic and weather reporting. A sampling of those messages is provided below.

Introduction

All sponsorships will begin with: "This traffic report/message is brought to you by Washington State DOT," followed by the report/message, then the copy (:10 or :15 depending on station).

Puget Sound Version - (:10 only, no transit system mentions)

:10 Copy - Shouldn't you be freewheeling? Vanpools carry more people to work in Washington than anywhere else in the country—and seats are available in your area. Vanpooling is your trip, your way. Visit RideshareOnline.com

Spokane Version - (:10 and :15, mention transit systems, don't mention faster commute)

:10 Copy - Imagine freewheeling through traffic while you listen to a book on tape, catch up on e-mail, or take a nap. Join a Spokane Transit Vanpool—Visit RideshareOnline.com to find out how and win great prizes.

:15 Copy - Win great prizes with the new, statewide promotion “Freewheeling: Vanpooling is your trip, your way.” Riding in a vanpool can be cheaper and more relaxing than driving alone. And it's easy. Spokane Transit will provide you with the wheels and help get you going. Visit RideshareOnline.com to find out more.

Yakima Version - (:15 only, mention transit systems)

:15 Copy - Have you considered freewheeling? Vanpooling is your trip, your way. Riding in a vanpool can reduce stress and save you money while saving space on our roads. Join any Yakima Transit vanpool by July 31st and you'll be eligible for a \$75 MasterCard gift card. Visit RideshareOnline.com for more.

Benton County Version - (:15 only, mention transit systems, mention carpools equally)

:15 Copy - Do you dread your morning commute? Try sharing a ride—it's easy. Carpooling is an easy way to reduce stress and save you money while saving space on Benton County's roads. To help get you moving, just visit RideshareOnline.org to find out everything you need to know to get your carpool up and running.

MEDIA - BILLBOARDS

Billboards were designed to utilize the Freewheeling images, with selections matching the region where the billboards would be posted. Pierce Transit produced final, vendor-ready art and worked with the vendor for postings. Billboards were posted in Snohomish County, Kitsap County, King County, Pierce County, Whatcom County and the City of Yakima.

MEDIA - TRANSIT

Ben Franklin, Community Transit, Kitsap Transit, King County Metro, Pierce Transit, Spokane Transit, Whatcom Transit and Yakima Transit agreed to participate with transit advertising and posted kings, queens or tails during the media blitz.

MEDIA - PRINT

Pierce Transit created and received approval for an intensive employer marketing kit. This kit was designed to provide employers with information about the Freewheeling campaign and how to combine it with the employers' own efforts or other promotional campaigns. The kit also contained easy-to-use email messages and promotional fliers.

INCENTIVES

What's a good campaign without incentives? In this case, we offered excellent incentives to reward participants who joined – and stayed with – a vanpool as well as rewarding those participants who would assume the responsibility of driving or becoming a bookkeeper. We also included incentives for recruiters. The incentives were provided in the form of MasterCard gift cards, good anywhere MasterCard is accepted. The incentives included:

- \$75 to each new vanpool rider
- \$75 to each new vanpool bookkeeper
- \$100 to each new vanpool driver
- \$50 to each recruiter (maximum of 10 recruits per person)

The rules for earning the incentives were easy.

- New vanpool riders may not have participated in any public vanpool in the six months prior to joining the vanpool.

- To be eligible as a new rider, participant must join a public vanpool in Washington State between February 1 and July 31, 2005 and vanpool at least 10 days per month for two months.
- To be eligible as a new driver or bookkeeper, participant must attend his/her respective transit agency's orientation class between February 1 and July 31, 2005.
- To be eligible for a recruiter reward, the new participant must join a public vanpool between February 1 and July 31, 2005 and meet the above requirements. (Maximum of 10 recruits per person).
- To be eligible for incentives, all new riders, drivers, bookkeepers and recruiters must register at RideshareOnline.com or by submitting the Freewheeling Incentives Referral Form.

And, yes, participants could earn more than one incentive. An individual could earn as much as \$750 by joining a vanpool as a new rider (\$75), becoming a driver (\$100) and bookkeeper (\$75), and recruiting ten individuals (\$500) for his/her vanpool. Employee transportation coordinators at employment sites were eligible for and were encouraged to earn the recruiter incentives, helping the agencies form new vanpools and increase ridership on current vanpools.

THE GREAT, THE NOT-SO-GOOD AND THE UGLY

As with any project, rarely does everything come together exactly as planned, meeting all objectives on time. This project had the additional complications of being statewide, representing vanpool programs from very small (7 vanpools) to very large (over 600 vanpools), and having several facets to it. The project included messaging, imagery, outdoor media, radio media, print media, incentives, many staff representatives, and vendors. During the same time period that Freewheeling launched, we also launched RideshareOnline.com statewide.

The Great

Amazingly, the staff representatives on this project discussed, argued, cajoled, and reached agreement on nearly every piece of the project in record time. The images are first class and have been well received by the agencies, the public, and our respective customers. The project team members expect to use the images and messages throughout 2005 and possibly even 2006. The products were made available via a "Library" site so agencies can efficiently produce their own materials and provide local marketing.

The Not-So-Good

As might be expected, there were some delays when coordinating all the pieces to the project. The primary designer for the print materials was not brought into the project at the very beginning and, as a result, did not buy into the total concept. As a result, his initial designs were not what the team expected and needed to be reworked. Copywriting suffered from the same issues and was finally assumed by WSDOT.

RideshareOnline.com went statewide at the same time that Freewheeling was launched. Although the team expected the statewide launch of RideshareOnline.com to complement the Freewheeling campaign, it ended up competing – staff representative time was split and was devoted to the campaign that the representative decided he/she wanted to use at launch.

The competing campaigns created some confusion with customers. Eleventh hour decisions were, of course, necessary and it became increasingly difficult to get commitment from all team members.

The Ugly

Noah was instructed to bring “only two” of each species to his ark, and fortunately, the Freewheeling Campaign project team also had “only two” ugly animals for its launch. The first incident occurred over the employer kit. The team members did not adequately describe what they needed for an employer kit and that lack of description was complicated by the primary designer being responsible for the printed materials for both the Freewheeling campaign and the RideshareOnline.com campaign. In hindsight, these two projects should have had separate designers, and in the end they did. The employer kit design was assumed by Pierce Transit a couple of weeks before launch, was completed on time, and was distributed to all agencies for their use.

The second incident occurred at the very last minute and could not be corrected before campaign launch. In coordinating the two campaigns, Freewheeling and RideshareOnline.com, it was decided that the RideshareOnline.com website would be used to promote Freewheeling and for participants to register for incentives. Pierce Transit created the Freewheeling website look, King County Metro worked with its technology team to add Freewheeling to the site, and WSDOT worked with the incentives vendor to handle the registration and issuance of incentive MasterCard gift cards. Unfortunately, with some changes occurring at WSDOT, the vendor contract did not get signed at the time of launch. In fact, the contract did not get executed until May and the website registration was not operating until June, a 5-month delay.

THE RESULTS

Results show that in just 5 short months, every agency has realized vanpool growth. Total statewide vanpools in service increased 3.6%, from 1,644 to 1,704. Total statewide estimated annual vanpool trips increases 7.7%, from 5,733,920 to 6,176,778. (This clearly shows that we will surpass the projected goal of 10% increase in operating vans over the biennium, and, more importantly that ridership gains show an increase in efficiency.)

The results in the chart below are for end of June 2005.

Map #	Agency	Bus Fleet	Vanpools In Svc 6/2005	Est Annual VP Trips	Est Annual VP Miles	Avg VP RTM*
	WSDOT	n/a	Provides short-term lease vans	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	Ben Franklin Transit	64	185	746,360	2,723,832	64.5
3	Clallam Transit	30	15	62,316	345,390	80.0
5	Community Transit	275	243	906,734	3,306,356	57.6
12	Intercity Transit	45	98	364,320	1,688,116	73.0
13	Island Transit	13	50	155,184	934,792	62.8
15	King County Metro	1,324	667	2,617,886	8,655,098	55.3
16	Kitsap Transit	94	104	288,300	1,186,760	47.4
18	Mason Transit	15	11	31,740	157,698	59.7
20	Pierce Transit	168	254	747,048	3,961,944	63.6
22	Skagit Transit	20	9	28,610	190,860	94.8

24	Spokane Transit Authority	127	43	122,002	490,296	46.8
27	Whatcom Transit Authority	36	14	51,436	268,150	89.2
28	Yakima Transit	21	11	54,842	285,464	107.3
	TOTALS	2,232	1,704	6,176,778	24,194,756	69.4

Although it's difficult to state that the growth in vanpool ridership during the last five months is strictly due to the Freewheeling campaign, anecdotal information shows that many of the agencies were unable to meet their demand for new vanpools primarily due to the success of this campaign. The statistics do show that some of the unmet demand for new vanpools was met by convincing new riders to join current vanpools instead of forming new ones.

The incentives earned and paid to date include:

- \$53,700 for 716 new vanpool riders
- \$15,000 for 200 new vanpool bookkeepers
- \$73,200 for 733 new vanpool drivers
- \$35,250 for 470 new riders recruited
- \$177,150 total incentives paid

IN CONCLUSION

The Freewheeling Campaign was a huge success, not only depicted by the increase in vanpools and ridership, but also observed by the goodwill gained from the general public, the employers, and our vanpool participants. Despite a few glitches and a couple of "uglies," this campaign came together, building on each agency's strengths and needs, to deliver a first-class promotion.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY,

Daphne Tackett, Kathy Johnston and Dawn Kirsch