There has been an abundance of news coverage regarding Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber, Lyft, Sidecar and many others, who offer ridesourcing services. Lyft markets itself as “your friend with a car”, and rival Uber promotes themselves as “your on-demand private driver.”

These recently emerged companies offer a new twist on the well-established taxicab industry, long embedded into the transportation landscape. In fact, the first taxicab company began in New York City over a century ago.

TNCs not only work similar to taxicab companies, in essence, they work exactly like them; the main distinction is technology. Rides do not start with the hailing of a cab or by speaking over the phone to a dispatcher; rather rides are enabled through smartphones and computers. When a ride is needed, customers use an app or go online to make the arrangement. Shortly thereafter a paid driver pulls up and takes the passenger to their destination. The transaction is paid via credit card stored electronically.

Concerning to Commuter Connections, and other non-profit organizations that promote traditional ridesharing, is the misuse of the term “ridesharing” for companies like Uber. For all intents and purposes, these companies are essentially high-tech taxicab services. It’s less like ridesharing, and more like ridesourcing. The term “ridesharing” has traditionally been associated with informal, not-for-profit carpooling; an unregulated practice. Ridesharing, by definition is an informal arrangement between private citizens to share a ride in a personal vehicle (typically in a recurring fashion for commuting purposes), in order to reduce overall cost and/or time. Commonly, those who rideshare take turns as drivers.

Critics claim that these new Transportation Network Companies gained unfair advantages by disassociating themselves from the taxicab industry in order to avoid insurance and licensing fees required of the regulated cab industry. Taxicab Associations cried foul, asserting that TNCs did not have to play by the same rules and carry the equivalent financial burdens.

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How Ridesourcing Services Fit Into The Transportation Landscape

The playing field is starting to level out in many major cities as government officials have begun to regulate the industry, requiring TNCs to carry insurance etc. Furthermore, although slow to catch on, taxicab companies are starting to develop their own on-demand technologies in order to regain lost market share.

Despite misuse of the term “ridesharing”, commuters aren’t using TNCs to rideshare to work any more than they would use a taxi to do so. These services are used to take shorter, single-trip passenger rides to wherever a person needs to go.

These services aren’t intended to replace your employees’ carpools, vanpools, trains, buses, or bicycles for daily commuting; they can, however, supplement the need for a car when a quick ride is needed and when carsharing is not practical.

To do its part to end controversy swelling around the misuse of the term “ridesharing”, the Associated Press Stylebook, which sets the news industry’s grammar and word use standards, recently sent out an update to reporters. The communication asked the media to end use of ridesharing to describe TNCs; industries which allow users to book and pay for private car service through a mobile app.

If your employees are seeking to establish or join a carpool or vanpool, please encourage them to try Commuter Connections, providing trusted free ridematching since 1974. Visit www.CommuterConnections.org or call 800.745.7433.

BUS ROUTES CHANGED TO SERVE SILVER LINE COMMUTERS

Last December, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors announced that they were making changes to 31 Fairfax Connector bus routes to better serve commuters using the Silver Line, as well as to help connect service between routes and serve new development in the Merrifield and Springfield areas.

Since the launch of Metro’s Silver Line in July 2014, thousands of commuters in Northern Virginia have had to adjust commute times and adapt to new bus routes. The Fairfax Connector changed 28 bus routes, introducing 16 new ones and eliminated five. About 40 percent of the Connector’s service was changed, affecting 9,000 bus riders in an overall positive way.

“Fairfax County overhauled its Connector service last year in anticipation of the Silver Line and in response to the changing needs of our commuters,” Chairman Sharon Bulova said. “Demand for on-time, reliable bus service is rising in Fairfax County. This shift will help meet that demand and we’ll continue to monitor service and reach out to our residents in order to provide them a safe and reliable trip to Metro, work and home.”

The service changes include:

- A new schedule to reduce passenger crowding and add extra time for buses to serve the Springfield Town Center and bus facility, constructed as part of new development at the Dunn Loring-Merrifield Metro station on Routes 401 and 402.
- A new schedule and added weekday trips on service between Fair Oaks and Reston on Route 605.
- A change in the hours of operation of a portion of Route 335 to Fort Belvoir.
- Schedule adjustments to most routes serving the new Silver Line Metro stations.

For more information visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector.
Each year registration for Bike to Work Day has surpassed the previous one. Over the last decade the event has grown dramatically by expanding from 4,800 bicyclists to 16,800, a jump of 250 percent. Commuter Connections and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association are anticipating another stellar year in 2015.

The nationwide event got its start locally in the Metropolitan Washington region in 2001 and since has enjoyed tremendous popularity. Each year thousands of bicyclists take to the streets in an effort to participate in a healthy and affordable alternative to driving alone to work by car.

The benefits of employee bicycling to your work location are many. Studies have shown that active transportation such as bicycling can lower health care costs, decrease employee absenteeism, increase employee productivity, and reduce parking and maintenance costs. Plus, it’s fun!

The 15th annual Bike to Work Day event will occur on Friday, May 15th. If your worksite is not near one of the over 75 Bike to Work Day “pit stops” found at www.biketoworkmetrodc.org, here are tips on how you can organize an unofficial Bike to Work Day event at your location this May.

1. Get Management Buy-in
   • Excitement and encouragement about bicycling can be more effective when it comes from the top down.
   • Appoint a Bike to Work Day coordinator.

2. Promote Bike to Work Day at your company.
   • Publicize your Bike to Work Day event through your company meetings, newsletter, intranet, payroll inserts, emails, memos etc.
   • Issue a press release about your company’s participation.
   • Emphasize the environmental, health and cost savings benefits of bicycling to work.
   • For longer distance commuters, encourage the tandem use of bicycles and transit. All Metrobuses and most area bus systems are equipped with bicycle racks. Metrorail and commuter trains permit folding bicycles at all times.

3. Make participation in Bike to Work Day easy.
   • Offer a flex-time schedule on Bike to Work Day to make it possible for bicycle commuters to avoid peak rush-hour commuting. Standard bicycles are permitted on Metrorail during off-peak hours.
   • Allow for a more relaxed dress code on Bike to Work Day.
   • Make information available about bicycle parking at your facility.
   • If you don’t have changing and shower facilities, consider making arrangements with a nearby health club for the day.
   • Distribute copies of Commuter Connections’ Bike to Work guide and Guaranteed Ride Home brochure.

4. Have fun!
   • Have a simple breakfast or lunch available for employees who participate in Bike to Work Day.
   • Provide prizes, special recognition or a day off for the longest distance traveled, oldest/most interesting bicycle etc.
   • Bike to Work Day can be a fun and exciting time in your company and can be great for morale.
   • Issue a friendly Bike to Work Day challenge to a neighboring employer or among departments.

For more information on Bike to Work Day, and for employee registration (beginning in March), visit www.biketoworkmetrodc.org or call 800 745-7433. See you on May 15th!
With the opening of the new 95 Express Lanes last December, carpools of three or more can travel toll free with an E-ZPass Flex and earn extra cash through the Commuter Connections ‘Pool Rewards program.

To earn cash, Commuter Connections is offering an extra incentive for those commuters who start or join a new carpool or vanpool through ‘Pool Rewards, and use an E-ZPass Flex on the new 95 Express Lanes. Qualified commuters are eligible to receive $230 over a 90-day period—that’s a bonus of $100 above the current program incentive. Carpools must include at least three occupants and follow ‘Pool Rewards guidelines.

“‘Pool Rewards and the 95 Express Lanes offer incentives that encourage trusted ridesharing and will greatly improve mobility in the region,” said Nicholas Ramfos, Commuter Connections Director. “We hope that commuters will register to take advantage of these new, unprecedented incentives to share a ride to work and benefit from the reduced commuting cost and time.”

‘Pool Rewards, an incentive program available through the Commuter Connections program, encourages commuters to rideshare in the region by offering each carpool member up to $130 in cash, for carpooling to work over a consecutive 90-day period. ‘Pool Rewards participants using an E-ZPass Flex on the 95 Express Lanes get an extra $100 bonus.

To generate excitement, Commuter Connections, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the 95 Express Lanes held a contest for carpoolers who obtained an E-ZPass Flex in advance of the opening of the 95 Express Lanes. Three-person carpools that posted a photo of their carpool members with an E-ZPass Flex onto the Commuter Connections Facebook page (www.facebook.com/commuterconnections) were placed into a raffle to win a $500 gas card for each member of the carpool, courtesy of Transurban.

Drivers using the recently opened 95 Express Lanes can use a faster, more predictable way to get to work, or wherever they are going along the 29 miles of high occupancy toll lanes spanning from Garrisonville Road in Stafford County to the Edsall Road area on I-395. Carpools with three or more can travel toll-free on the Express Lanes with an E-ZPass Flex set to HOV mode. Vehicles traveling on the 95 Express Lanes with one or two occupants need a standard E-ZPass®, and will be required to pay the toll.

Officials see the new Express Lanes as a major opportunity to increase ridesharing in the region. “The 95 Express Lanes will dramatically improve commutes for carpools of three or more; all they need is an E-ZPass Flex” said Nicholas Ramfos, Director of Commuter Connections.

E-ZPass Flex is a windshield transponder made especially for carpoolers. E-ZPass Flex works like a standard E-ZPass but allows carpoolers to switch between HOV and toll-paying modes. The switchable E-ZPass Flex lets the Express Lanes operator know which vehicles are HOV-3+ so that they aren’t charged a toll.

E-ZPass Flex works like a standard E-ZPass on all other Virginia toll roads and wherever E-ZPass is accepted.
The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) announced the launch of the Chinatown Multimodal Value Pricing Pilot to test state-of-the-art strategies to make it easier to find parking spaces.

The pilot, encompassing all 1,300 metered on-street parking spaces bounded by H Street, NW; E Street, NW; 12 Street, NW, and 3rd Street, NW, will use the Chinatown/Penn Quarter area to test strategies to provide real-time parking-availability information. The goal is to have customers spend less time searching for parking spaces, to develop changing parking pricing so more spaces are available, and to make parking signage more easily understood.

A DDOT spokesperson stated that “DDOT is committed to keeping its promise to residents by delivering innovative projects and technology that will help shape the future of transportation in the District.” Outlined in the moveDC plan, DDOT’s multimodal long-range transportation plan is expected to create a city that’s more livable, sustainable, prosperous and attractive.

Parking can be a challenge for employers and employees. The Commuter Connections 2013 State of the Commute survey found that 65% of employers in the region provide “free parking” at the worksite, 23% pay for all employee parking, and 14% provide parking discounts to carpoolers and vanpoolers.

Beginning in early 2015, new parking meters will be installed to transition from the multi-space, pay-and-display format to a new pay-by-space format. All single-space meters will be upgraded to accept credit cards.

Additionally, DDOT will be testing various parking-space occupancy detection technologies to provide real-time occupancy information that will be used to make price adjustments based on demand, as well as, provide parking space availability information to customers.

Based on typical usage levels, meter prices will be adjusted quarterly to encourage shorter stays on high-demand blocks and incentivize use of lower-demand blocks. In addition, through an app and a website, customers will be able to see where parking is available downtown, and how much it will cost. Together, demand-based pricing and real-time parking occupancy information will make it easier to find spaces, reduce time circling, and help travelers choose the best mode to get downtown.

The pilot will be completed at the end of 2016 with a full evaluation of the project’s impact. Lessons learned from the pilot will help outline eventual deployment throughout the District.

For more information, visit www.DDOT.dc.gov/page/parking-services.
HOV INFLUENCE ON COMMUTE MODE & TIME SAVED BY HOV LANE USE

* 2013 Commuter Connections State of the Commute Survey

inner core = Washington, D.C.
  Arlington County
  City of Alexandria

middle ring = Fairfax County
  Montgomery County
  Prince George's County

outer ring = Calvert County
  Charles County
  Frederick County
  Loudoun County
  Prince William County

average one-way time saving

24 min 13 min 21 min 29 min

51% 33% 48% 59%

For subscription information or to change your mailing address, contact Commuter Connections at 800.745.RIDE

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For information or to change your mailing address, contact Commuter Connections at 800.745.RIDE, or 202.962.3213 (TDD). We invite your comments and suggestions. Please send to:

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