



Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey

Baltimore Metropolitan Region
Fiscal Year 2014

Final Report

March 17, 2015

We'll get you home. Guaranteed.

**National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**



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AGENCY: The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) was established in 1957 by local jurisdictions to address regional concerns including transportation, growth, housing, environment, public health and safety. The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) became associated with COG in 1966 and serves as the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region. The TPB prepares plans and programs that the federal government must approve in order for federal-aid transportation funds to flow to the Washington region.

Commuter Connections is a regional network of transportation organizations coordinated by the TPB. Established in 1974, Commuter Connections offers free commuter services to help both businesses and their employees find the best available commuting options to improve traffic congestion and improve air quality through lower auto emissions. Primary services of Commuter Connections include ridematching for carpools and vanpools, administration of the Guaranteed Ride Home and 'Pool Rewards rideshare incentive programs, marketing of alternative commute options, and coordination of an employer outreach program including telework.

Funding for the Baltimore GRH program is provided by:

Maryland Transit Administration
Maryland Department of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation

ABSTRACT:

This report presents results of a survey of all Guaranteed Ride Home trip recipients working in the Baltimore Metropolitan region during fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014). The survey was designed to gauge the level of satisfaction of commuters who utilized the GRH service.

The GRH program eliminates a key barrier to using alternative modes; commuter fear of being stranded at the workplace during an unexpected personal or family emergency, or unscheduled overtime.

PUBLICATION:

The final report once adopted will be published on the Commuter Connections website at www.commuterconnections.org under the About Us, Publications section.

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Background

Guaranteed Ride Home Program Description

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) through its Commuter Connections program, under the auspices of its funders, has operated the Guaranteed Ride Home program (GRH) in the Baltimore Metropolitan region since October 2011. A “commuter insurance” program, GRH is designed to encourage ridesharing and transit usage by providing a way home for qualifying commuters in the case of an unexpected personal/family emergency, or unscheduled overtime when their normal alternative commute mode is not available. Many area workers who consider switching commute modes from Single Occupancy Vehicles to carpools, vanpools, and transit are concerned about being stranded at work if they unexpectedly have to leave before or after standard work hours. GRH eliminates this concern, and encourages carpooling and vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling and walking to work. Commuters who use these transportation modes twice a week are provided with four free GRH rides home per year. Alternative mode commute practices reduce the number of automobiles on the road and help the region toward air quality goals. The GRH program’s Participation Guidelines and survey samples used during FY 2014 are provided in the Appendix of this report.

Customer Satisfaction Survey and Methodology

The Customer Satisfaction Survey for GRH was conducted as an ongoing study each month throughout the fiscal year. All customers who obtained a free ride home through the program during FY14 were provided the opportunity to participate in the survey. Surveys are administered online on the day following the GRH trip, via email with a link to the survey. Customers who have not provided Commuter Connections with an email address, 5%, receive the survey through the U.S. Postal Service. For each ride taken, a postage-paid response card survey along with a cover letter (*see Appendix*) was sent. The letter informed the commuter of the purpose and voluntary nature of the survey. The online survey email contains a similar message. Both the hard copy and online surveys allow respondents to rate the GRH service and provide comments and suggestions. Some respondents voluntarily provide their name, and with their consent, may be featured in news articles and/or the Commuter Connections web site as testimonials. See appendix for samples of the survey response card and online survey used. Note: some respondents did not answer all questions. As a result, response totals to some questions may not be equal to the total number of survey respondents.

Survey Design

The FY 2014 survey consists of five multiple-choice questions, one fill in the blank and an area for comments. Four questions provide insight into customer opinions regarding various operational functions of GRH and ask respondents to rate aspects of the service by selecting one of four responses—“Poor,” “Fair,” “Good,” or “Excellent.” Another multiple choice question asks the reason for the trip, and a fill in the blank question asks respondents to indicate their wait time. The comments area provides an open ended forum to offer specific or general feedback, whether positive or negative.

The performance areas of GRH were addressed by four multiple-choice questions pertaining to: reservations staff; transportation service; response time and overall service. “Reservations staff” refers to the operators who answered telephone calls from commuters requesting GRH service, verified the request in accordance with the official GRH participation guidelines, and arranged the ride for the commuter. These contracted staff are employees of Diamond Transportation Services, Inc., which provided such services under an arrangement with COG. “Transportation service” refers to the modes of transportation (e.g. taxi, rental car service) and the affiliated organizations (e.g. xyz cab company, Enterprise Rent-a-car) that provided the trips from the workplace to the final destination. The types of transportation modes used for GRH trips were selected by Diamond Transportation based on the type and severity of the emergency, distance traveled, and customer preference.

Fiscal Year 2014 Survey Results Baltimore Region

Response Rates

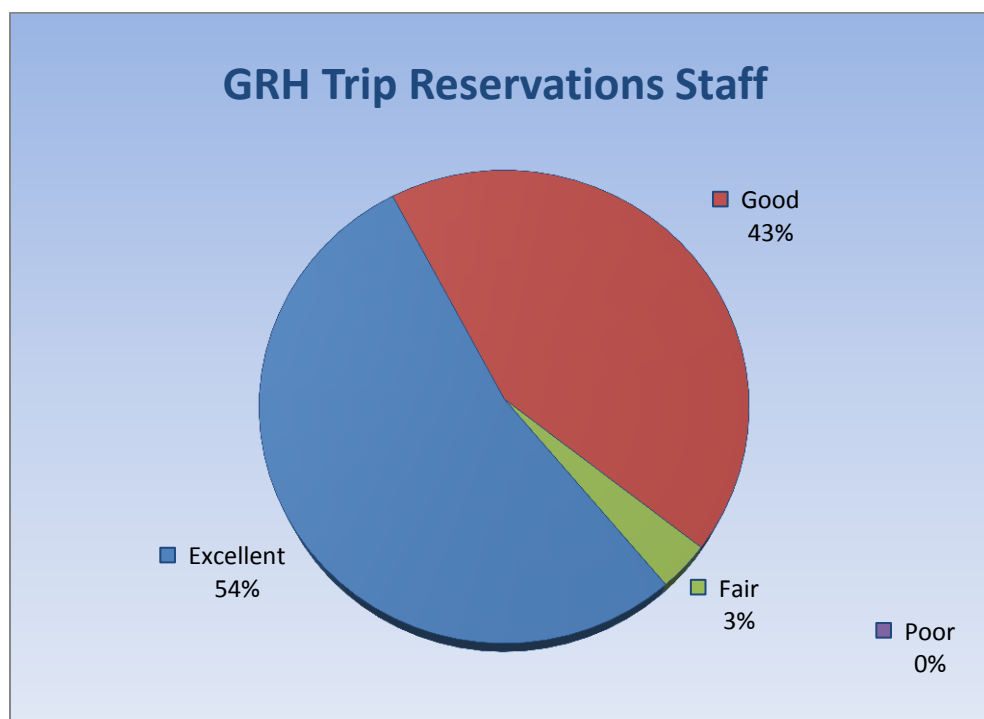
Number of Surveys Sent and Received

Of the 198 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2014, 30 completed surveys were received, a 15 percent return rate.

Reservation Staff

Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservation staff?

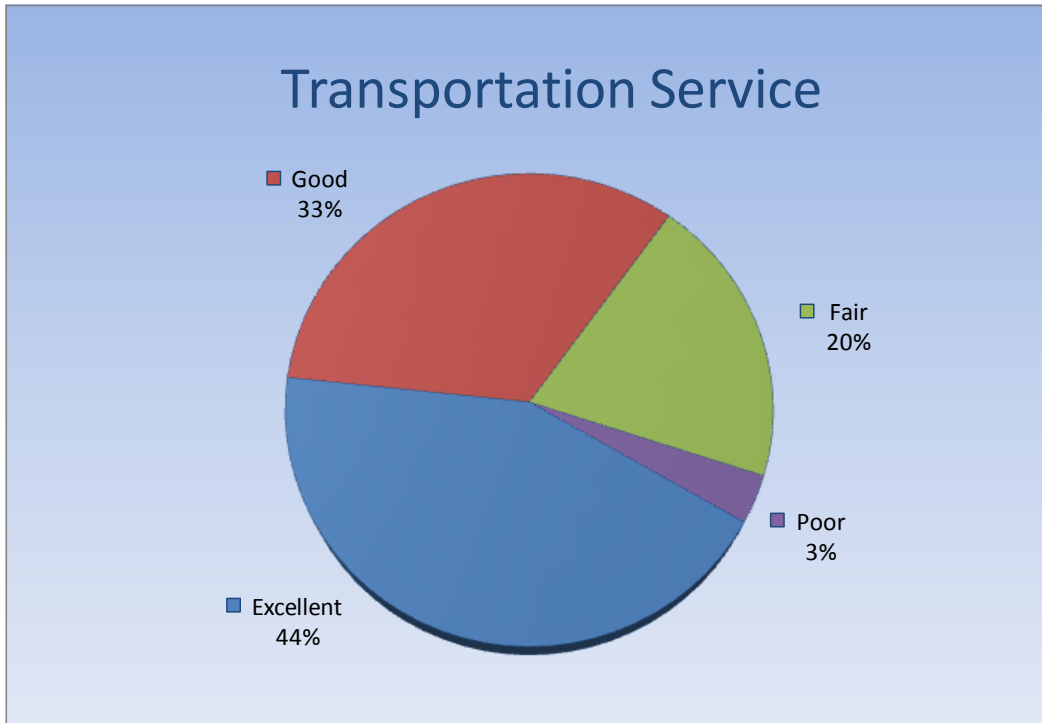


97% rated the trip reservations staff as either excellent or good.

Transportation Service

Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

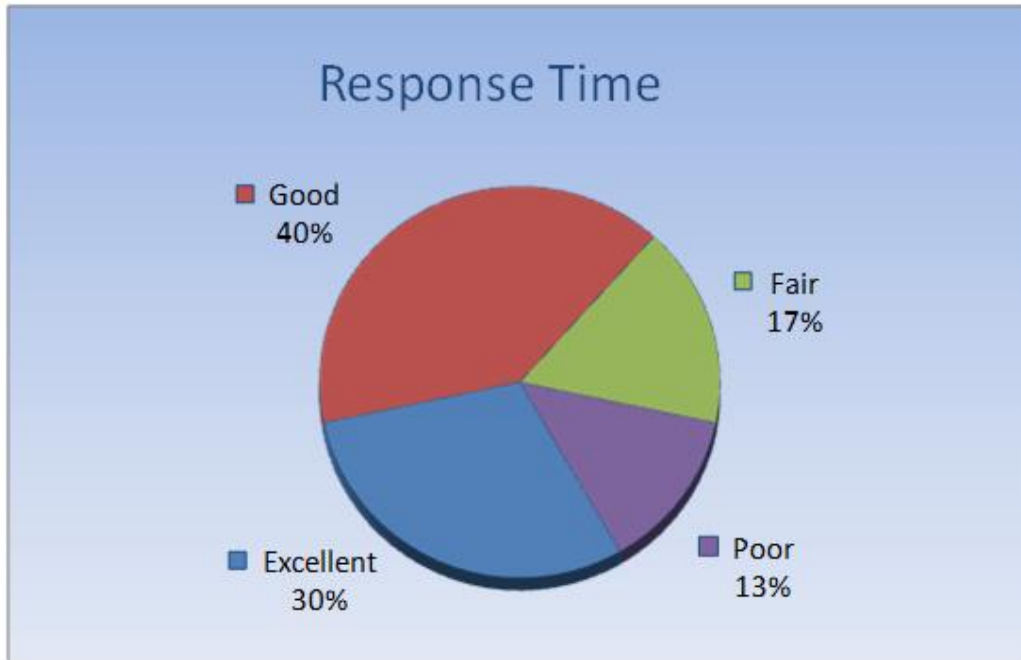


77% rated the transportation service as either excellent or good.

Response Time - Rating

Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate the response time?



70% rated the trip reservations staff as either excellent or good.

Response Time – Minutes

Percentages of Responses Received

Approximately how many minutes did you wait until your ride?

21% waited 15 minutes or less; 50% waited 30 minutes or less; and 50% waited more than 30 minutes.

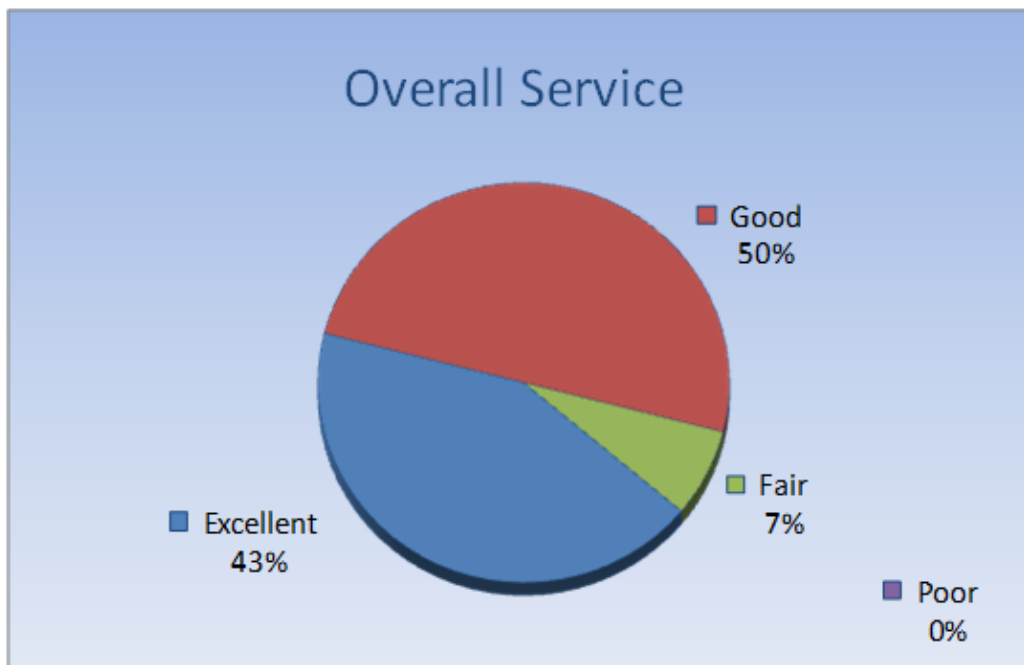


Average wait time was 44 minutes.

Overall Service

Percentages of Responses Received

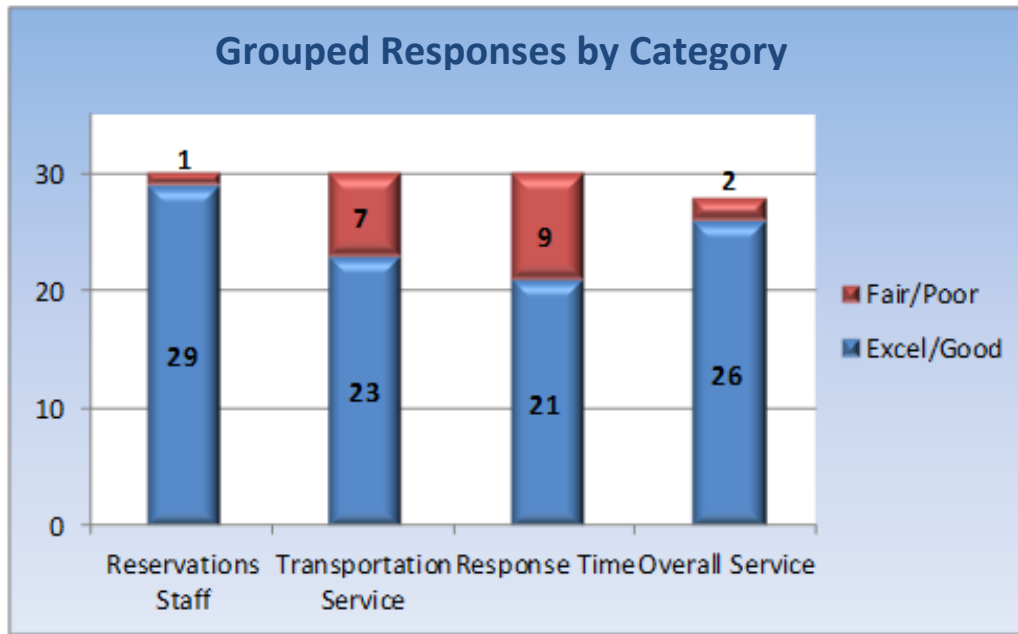
Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?



93% rated the overall service as either excellent or good.

Excellent/Good vs. Fair/Poor: All Questions

Number of Responses Based on Combined Satisfaction Levels

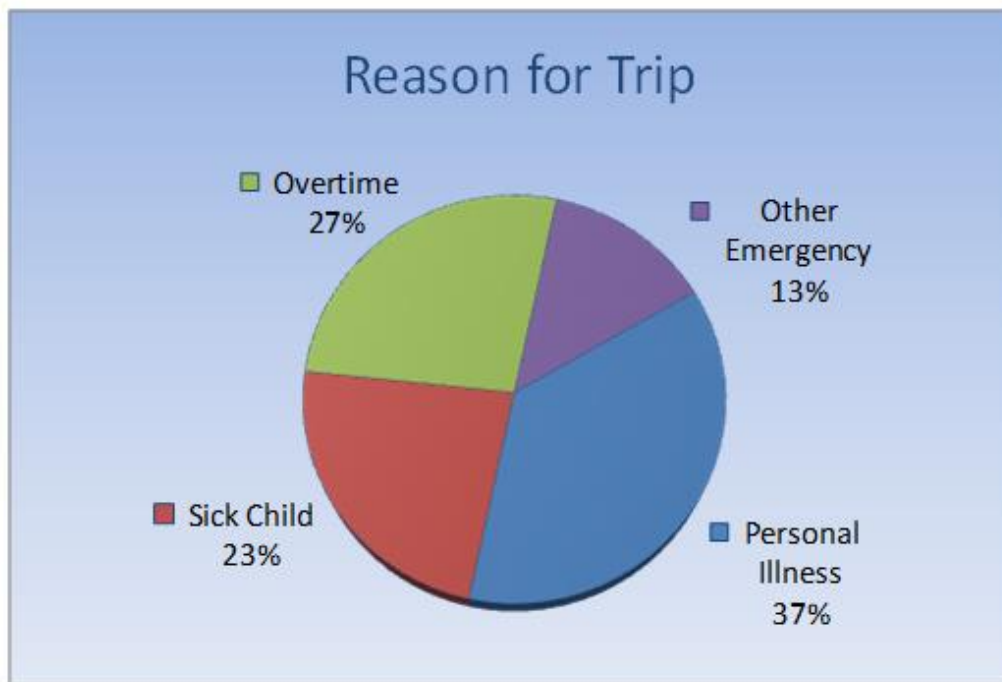


This chart emphasizes the overwhelming favorable ratings (excellent & good) compared to the less favorable ratings (fair & poor). For example, in the Transportation Service column, 23 respondents gave the category a favorable rating of either Excellent or Good, noted in the blue area. In contrast, only 7 respondents, shown on top in red, rated the Transportation Service with a less favorable “Fair or Poor” response.

Reason for Trip

Percentages of Responses Received

What was the reason for your GRH Trip?



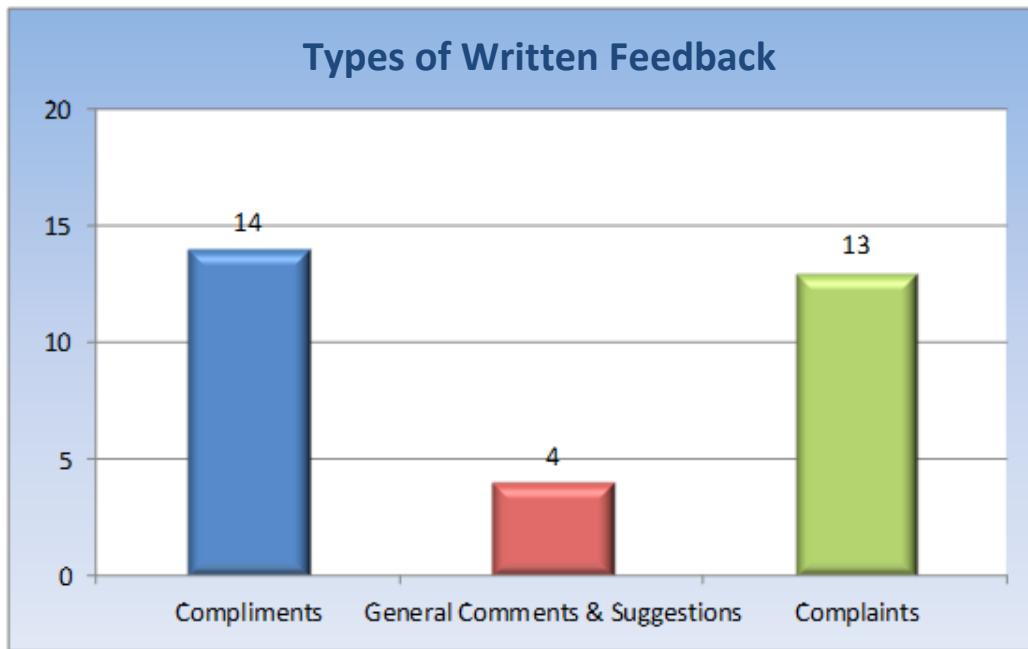
At 37%, personal illness was the most common reason given for using GRH.

Written Responses

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, survey respondents were offered the option of providing written comments. All feedback is valuable for assessing customer attitudes regarding specific service areas, and helps to gauge the general pulse of the program. The total number of written responses equaled 22 out of 30 returned surveys, 73 percent of survey participants.

The open-ended written responses included compliments, suggestions, complaints, and comments. Respondents were allowed to check all that applied, and a significant amount of feedback given fell into more than one type of written response category, hence bar chart numbers may total more than 22. A respondent may have given a compliment about a specific aspect of the experience coupled with a complaint about a completely separate aspect. For example, *“Overall the experience was a positive one. My complaint is with the taxi. The taxi smelled very strongly of smoke.”*

Types of Feedback

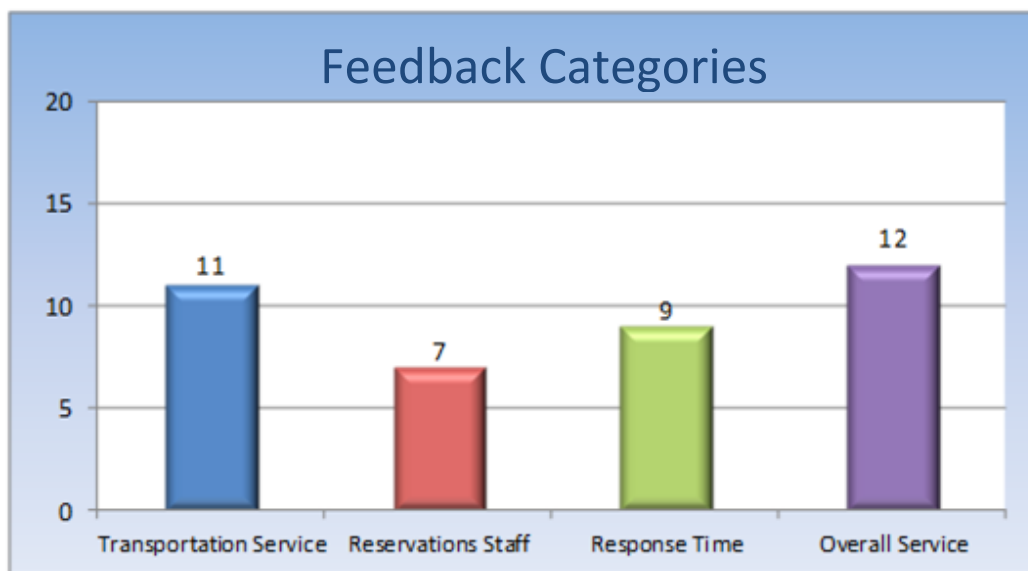


About an equal number of compliments and complaints were given by respondents.

Written Feedback Categories

The vast majority of respondent feedback fell into more than one category, as respondents were allowed to check all that apply, hence the below chart adds up to more than the 22 who provides written feedback. Respondents were prone to comment about multiple aspects of the service provided. The example below touched on all four areas; reservations staff, transportation service, response time, and overall service.

“My ride from Ft. Meade, MD to Arlington, VA was excellent. I was very sick and wouldn't have made it home taking my normal 2 hours and 30 minutes taking Commuter bus to Odenton rail station to get on MARC train, Metro Rail and Metro Bus, and then walking to get home. I am so grateful for this service. The driver of the cab was really great and considerate. I recommended to all my commuter co-workers to register for this service and how great my experience was; when I needed it. The Reservation staff answered all my questions and got my ride to me very quickly.”



Respondents who provided written feedback commented on a variety of areas. The transportation service and overall service categories received about an equal number of comments.

Compliments ☺

More than half, 64 percent of the 22 written comments contained compliments. Many were expressions of gratitude for the GRH service. Respondents provided personal stories about how GRH helped them during a crisis situation. Respondents frequently complimented more than one area of service; therefore the combined response numbers for each area will be more the total number of surveys with compliments.

The vast majority compliments were about Overall Service, followed by the Transportation Service. The breakdown of compliments by category are as follows: 11 of 22 compliments were made about the Overall Service, 50 percent; 4 compliments were made about the Transportation Service, 18 percent; 5 were made about the Reservations Staff, 23 percent; and 2 were made about Response Time, 10 percent. It should also be noted that compliments received regarding the Transportation Service almost exclusively pertained to taxi trips, as only a small percentage of the trips used the rental car service.

Compliments from FY14:

- Customer service was great and informative. Driver was on time and courteous.
- Friendly and efficient service. This was my first time using GRH and it's great to have for emergencies.
- I love this service, I've used it several times.
- I was impressed by how easily I was able to get to my daughter's school when she was sick.
- I really appreciate the service being there and when I used it in previous years the response time was excellent.
- It's a great service to employees in an emergency.
- Love this service!!! It is a relief to know that it is an option - if needed.
- My commute was great and the cab driver was very respectful.
- Extremely happy with the service! Thank you.
- My ride was excellent. I was very sick and I am so grateful for this service. The driver of the cab was really great and considerate. I recommended to all my commuter co-workers to register for this service and how great my experience was; when I needed it. The Reservation staff answered all my questions and got my ride to me very quickly.
- Overall the communication was very well.
- Overall the experience was a positive one. I am grateful for the GRH program.
- The staff was courteous and very helpful. The driver was professional. It really made the experience enjoyable, considering I was sick - the reason I needed to use the service. Thank you GRH!

- The GRH person was really nice and was very accommodating to my emergency and the time that I must be at the hospital for my child's discharge process.

Complaints ☹

More than half, 55 percent (13) of the 22 written comments contained complaints. Half of the respondents, who cited a complaint, also gave a compliment.

Most of the complaints, 5 were about the transportation service, 38%; response time had 4 complaints, 31%; reservations staff received 2 complaints, 15%; and complaints about the overall service were made by 1, <1%. Complaints received under the transportation service category almost exclusively pertained to taxi trips, as a small percentage of trips used the rental car service.

Sample of actual complaints from FY14:

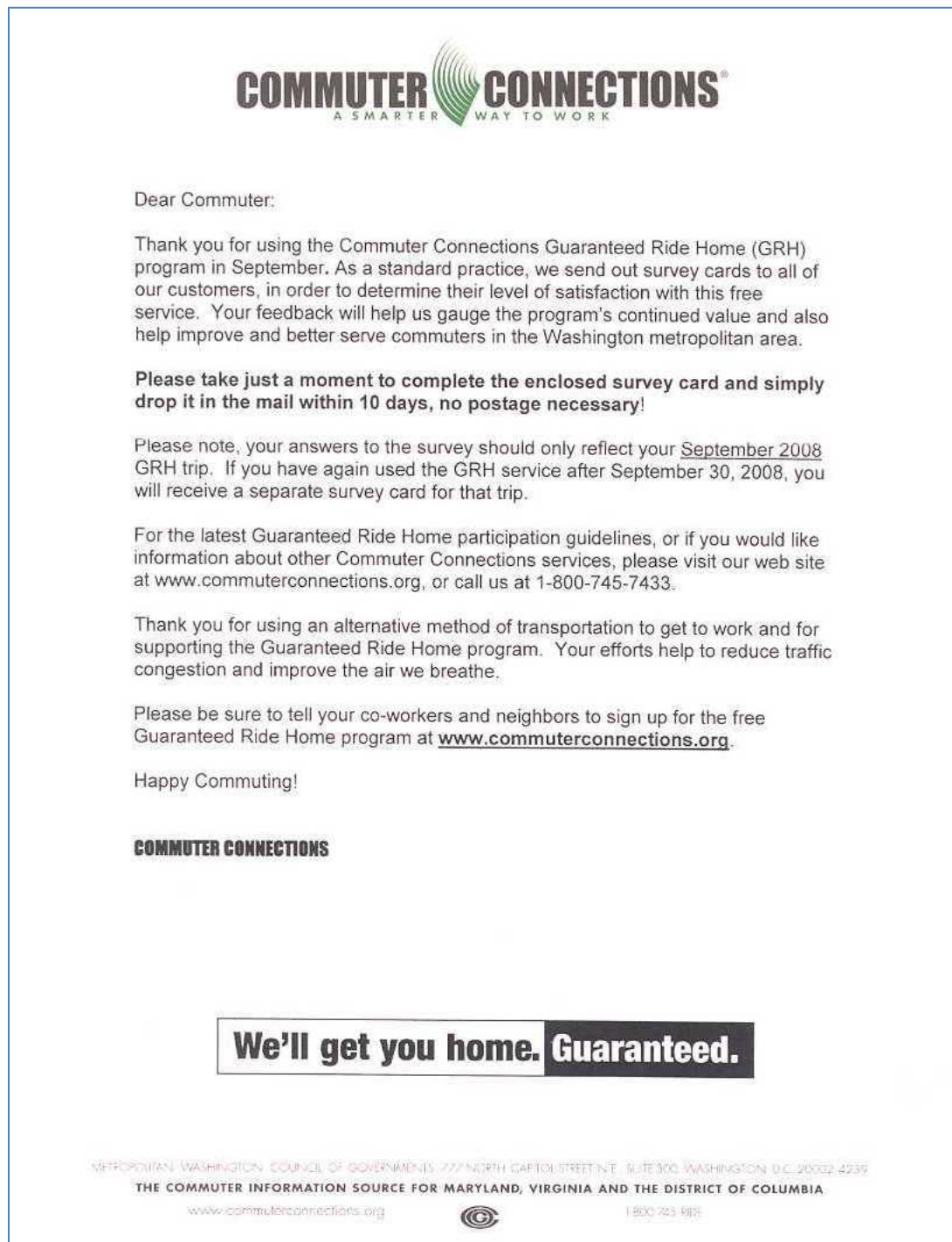
- Cab driver asked too many questions - didn't like.
- I believe the response time was excessive, it was a long wait.
- I had to wait for almost an hour before the cab arrived.
- It took me over 40 minutes to get through to request a ride and another 65 minutes to wait for the cab. I'm not sure if the number of people using the service has increased significantly but if it is you may want to consider more phone support. I tried to call back to find out how much longer the cab would be after 45 minutes and it took me over 20 minutes to get through to someone. It would immediately send me to voice mail prior to that. Unfortunately the service is becoming unreliable.
- The wait time needs to be cut down.
- Taxi driver needed directions to my building which held up his arrival time.
- The driver was not familiar with procedures.
- The taxi driver couldn't find me. It took me several calls back to the GRH office to correct it. By the time the taxi showed up, 90 minutes passed.
- The minivan was in poor condition. It was hot & humid day, the a/c didn't work. Check engine light on and hesitation when pulling off from stop lights and signs.
- The taxi was a complete mess - I almost didn't want to sit down - the fabric on the inside of the taxi was stapled up every so often, and it dangled down in places - gross ride overall!
- There should be service close to all areas you service. My driver had to come to Harford County from Montgomery County.

Recap Summary

Of the 198 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2014, 30 surveys were completed, 15 percent. The vast majority, 93 percent of survey respondents were pleased with the overall GRH service. Written responses were provided by 73 percent of the respondents (22), and 64 percent of the written responses contained compliments (14). The level of compliments (14) and complaints (13) were about equal. For every category, good or above ratings were given by at least 70 percent of respondents. The average wait time was 44 minutes. Half waited 30 minutes or less; and half waited a greater length of time. At 37 percent, personal illness was the most stated reason for using the GRH service. Unscheduled Overtime was the second most reason.

Appendix

Sample Cover Letter Sent with Survey Card



Sample Survey Response Card





NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

First Class Mail Permit No. 10532 Washington, DC

Postage Will Be Paid By Addressee



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS
 METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 777 NORTH CAPITOL ST NE
 SUITE 300
 WASHINGTON DC 20077-0637



Thank you for using Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH).

We'd like to know how you feel about our program.

Please take a moment to complete this card and drop it in the mail. Your response is greatly appreciated.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
1. How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. What was the reason for your GRH trip? <input type="checkbox"/> Sick Child <input type="checkbox"/> Overtime <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Illness <input type="checkbox"/> Other Emergency
2. How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. How would you rate our response time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Approximately how many minutes did you wait until receiving your ride?	_____ minutes				7. Your name: (optional) _____ 8. Comments: _____ _____ _____

1-800-745-RIDE • www.commuterconnections.org



We'll get you home. Guaranteed.

Sample Online Survey

Commuter Connections GRH Satisfaction Survey

We'd like to know how you feel about our program. Please take a moment to complete this survey. Your response is greatly appreciated.

How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservation staff?

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Excellent

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Excellent

How would you rate our response time?

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Excellent

Overall how would you rate our GRH service?

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Excellent

Approximately how many minutes did you wait until receiving your ride?

What was the reason for your GRH trip?

- ☐ Sick Child
- ☐ Personal Illness
- ☐ Unscheduled Overtime
- ☐ Other Emergency

Please Provide us with any comments about your GRH experience.

Do you consider your comments to be a: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Compliment

- ☐ Suggestion

- ☐ Complaint

- ☐ General Comment


Do your comments refer to: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Taxi or Rental Car Service
- ☐ Overall Service
- ☐ Reservation Staff
- ☐ Response Time

GUARANTEED RIDE HOME PROGRAM PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Guidelines are subject to change without notice.

Call 1-800-745-7433 or visit www.commuterconnections.org for current Participation Guidelines.

1. Commuters must be officially registered with Commuter Connections before using the Guaranteed Ride Home service. Commuters must provide the supervisor name and phone number and at least two (2) phone numbers (home/cell and work) in order to register for GRH service. Registered commuters are those who have received an official registration letter and GRH ID card from Commuter Connections. Commuters who have not been officially registered may use the GRH service one time, providing they meet all other eligibility criteria. This is referred to as a “one-time exception.” Any commuter granted a one-time exception must officially register *before* additional GRH trips are granted. Registered and one-time exception commuters must be carpooling, vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling, or walking to their site of employment at least two (2) days per week **and** on the day they use the GRH service. GRH is only available to people commuting to and from work.
2. **Commuters must call Commuter Connections and receive authorization from Commuter Connections prior to using the GRH service.** Commuter Connections will issue an authorization number(s) to the commuter to approve a GRH trip. **Commuters will not be reimbursed for trips not authorized by Commuter Connections.** After approval, Commuter Connections will make the GRH trip arrangements for the commuter and, if necessary, provide instructions on how and where the GRH transportation provider will pick up the commuter. Commuter Connections is equipped to provide wheelchair accessible transportation as part of the GRH service as needed.
3. Registered commuters may use the GRH program up to four (4) times annually from their official registration date. Commuters who received a one-time exception then officially register with Commuter Connections may use the GRH service three (3) more times within 12 months from the date of their one-time exception GRH trip. The GRH trip credits are non-transferable.
4. Commuters must re-register annually to maintain their GRH registration. Commuters must contact Commuter Connections to re-register and update their registration information.
5. The GRH program may only be used in cases of unexpected personal or family emergency, unexpected illness, or unscheduled overtime. **Cases in which the GRH program cannot be used include, but are not limited to the following: previously scheduled medical appointments, trips to the hospital or emergency room for a commuter that needs medical attention, personal errands, transit service disruptions and/or delays, business related travel, working late without a supervisor’s request, weather emergencies, any type of building closings or evacuations, and natural disasters.**

6. Requests to use the GRH program because of unscheduled overtime must be made *before* the commuter's registered work end time, *and* a supervisor's verification will be required at the time of the request.
7. GRH service is available between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except designated program holidays and any planned and/or unplanned Federal Government office closings. **GRH TRIPS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE 10:00 P.M to ensure that the commuter has received their ride. Designated program Holidays include: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.**
8. To be eligible, a commuter must be physically working in the following areas in Washington, D.C. or Baltimore, MD. The area includes the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's; the City of Baltimore, and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William; and the City of Alexandria as well as all cities within the aforementioned counties.
9. Eligible commuters can live anywhere inside **the areas listed in Guideline #8** or in any of the following areas: Allegany, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot or Washington counties in Maryland; and Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Madison, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Warren, or Westmoreland counties, the City of Fredericksburg, or the City of Winchester in Virginia; and Berkeley, Hampshire, or Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Adams, Franklin, or York counties in Pennsylvania. Any residence outside of the above-mentioned areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
10. All GRH trips must originate from the commuter's work location. Depending on the nature of the emergency, and home and work locations, a commuter using the GRH service may be required to use a taxi, car rental, transit, or any combination of these services to reach their destination point. **Commuter Connections will determine the type of service used and will issue a valid GRH authorization number at that time.**
11. Commuter Connections will pay for one vendor service and/or one transit service per request. If the GRH trip uses a taxi, Commuter Connections will pay for all charges, excluding gratuity, to the destination. **The commuter is responsible only for tipping the taxi driver.** Cancellation on the part of the commuter of a GRH trip may count as one of the four annual trips.

If a transit option is used for part of the GRH trip, the commuter will be mailed a transit reimbursement voucher. The transit reimbursement voucher must be submitted back to Commuter Connections within thirty days of transit use in order for payment to be made. Please allow 45 days for reimbursement. A commuter's supervisor must sign the transit voucher for any trip granted because of unscheduled overtime in order for the reimbursement to be issued.

If the GRH trip is made by rental car, the commuter is responsible for signing a standard rental agreement, showing a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, providing a credit card number for collateral, returning the rental car within a 24-hour period, and the following charges: gasoline refueling charges, taxes, purchase of insurance (if necessary), and additional rental charges if auto is not returned within a 24-hour period (unless Commuter Connections has given prior approval for additional rental time). The commuter will be responsible for any loss or damage to the rental car.

12. GRH is a free service provided by Commuter Connections at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). COG will use its best efforts to provide the Guaranteed Ride Home in accordance with the guidelines shown above. By requesting assistance from the Guaranteed Ride Home program, the participant in the program explicitly acknowledges that COG assumes no liability for the timeliness of the GRH participating vendor(s) or any accidents that may occur on the conveyance.

07/16/10