



# GUARANTEED RIDE HOME CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

## WASHINGTON, DC METRO REGION FINAL REPORT

FY 2019 (JULY 2018 – JUNE 2019)

MARCH 17, 2020

# ABSTRACT

**Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey  
FY 2019 Washington, DC Metropolitan Region  
Published: March 17, 2020**

## **About Commuter Connections**

Commuter Connections, a program of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) which promotes ridesharing, bicycling, transit, walking, telework, work schedule alternatives, and other alternatives to single occupant vehicle commuting; provides ridematching for carpools and vanpools, incentive programs for alternative commuting, offers the free Guaranteed Ride Home program and organizes special events. Commuter Connections is funded by the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and U.S. Department of Transportation.

## **Credits**

Authors:

Nicholas Ramfos, Director, Transportation Operations Programs, COG/TPB  
Daniel Sheehan, Transportation Operations Program Manager, COG/TPB  
Douglas Franklin, Senior TDM Marketing Specialist, COG/TPB

## **Accommodations Policy**

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request. Visit [www.mwcog.org/accommodations](http://www.mwcog.org/accommodations) or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).

## **Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy**

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations prohibiting discrimination in all programs and activities. For more information, to file a Title VI related complaint, or to obtain information in another language, visit [www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination](http://www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination) or call (202) 962-3300.

El Consejo de Gobiernos del Área Metropolitana de Washington (COG) cumple con el Título VI de la Ley sobre los Derechos Civiles de 1964 y otras leyes y reglamentos en todos sus programas y actividades. Para obtener más información, someter un pleito relacionado al Título VI, u obtener información en otro idioma, visite [www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination](http://www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination) o llame al (202) 962-3300.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM BACKGROUND.....	<b>1</b>
SURVEY METHODOLOGY.....	<b>2</b>
SURVEY DESIGN.....	<b>3</b>
RESPONSE RATES.....	<b>4</b>
SURVEY RESULTS.....	<b>6</b>
COMPARISONS TO PREVIOUS FISCAL YEARS.....	<b>13</b>
WRITTEN RESPONSES.....	<b>18</b>
RECAP SUMMARY.....	<b>22</b>
APPENDIX .....	<b>23</b>

## **Background**

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) through its Commuter Connections program, under the auspices of its state funding agencies, has operated the Guaranteed Ride Home program (GRH) in the Washington DC Metropolitan region since January 1997. A “commuter insurance” program, GRH is designed to encourage ridesharing and transit use by providing a way home for qualifying commuters in the case of an unexpected personal/family illness or emergency, or unscheduled overtime when their normal alternative commute mode is not available. Many area workers who consider switching commute modes from Single Occupant Vehicles (SOV) to carpools, vanpools, and transit are concerned about being stranded at work if they unexpectedly need to leave before or after standard work hours. GRH eliminates this concern, and encourages carpooling/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 support air quality goals. The GRH program’s Participation Guidelines and survey samples used during FY 2019 are provided in the Appendix of this report.

During FY19 there were 8,108 registered members of the Guaranteed Ride Home program in the Washington, DC region. The number of members who took trips during the fiscal year was 1,600 (20%). A total of 2,304 trips were taken, an average of 1.4 per member. The vast majority, 94 percent of the survey respondents were pleased with the overall GRH service in FY 2019.

## **Survey Methodology**

The Customer Satisfaction Survey for GRH was conducted as an ongoing study throughout the fiscal year. All customers who obtained a free ride home through the program during FY19 were provided the opportunity to participate in the survey. Emails with a survey link were sent the day following the GRH trip. A portion of surveys (9%) were sent through the U.S. Postal Service, as no email address was available.

Both the hard copy and online surveys allow respondents to rate the GRH service and provide comments and suggestions; see Appendix for samples. 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

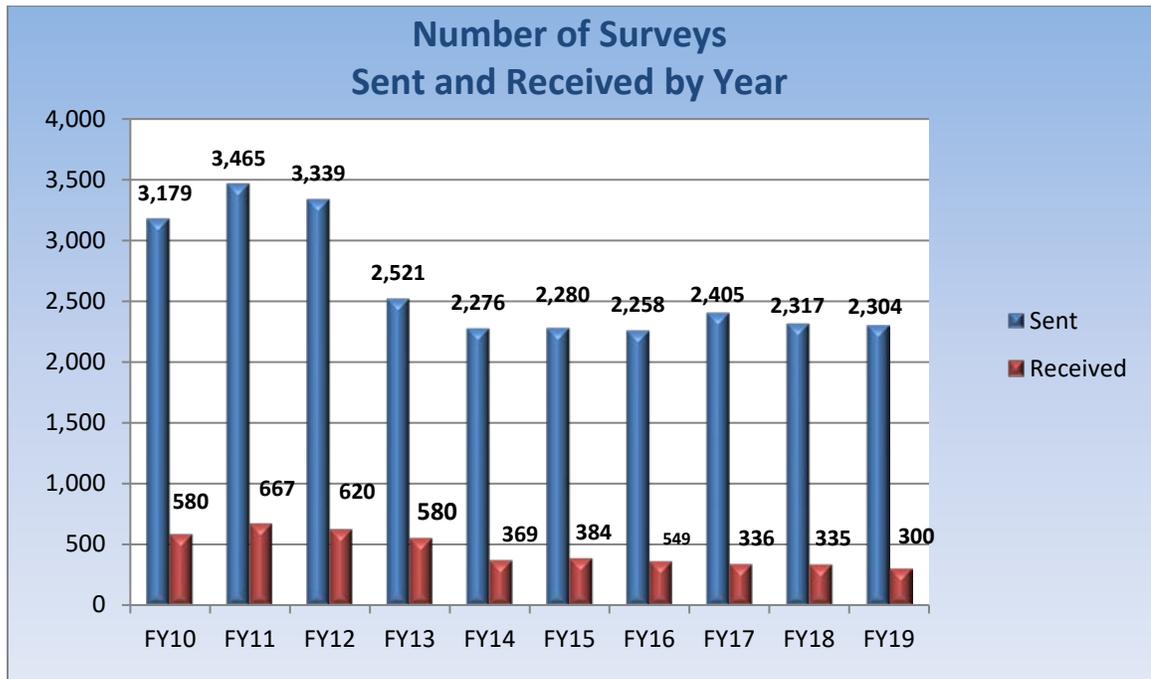
The FY 2019 survey consists of five multiple-choice questions, one fill in the blank and an area for comments. Four questions provide insight into customer opinions regarding various operational functions of GRH and ask respondents to rate aspects of the service by selecting one of four responses—"Poor," "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 provides such services under 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 transportation modes used for the GRH trips are selected by Diamond Transportation based on the type and severity of the emergency, distance traveled, and customer preferences.

## Response Rates

### Number of Surveys Sent and Received Past Decade

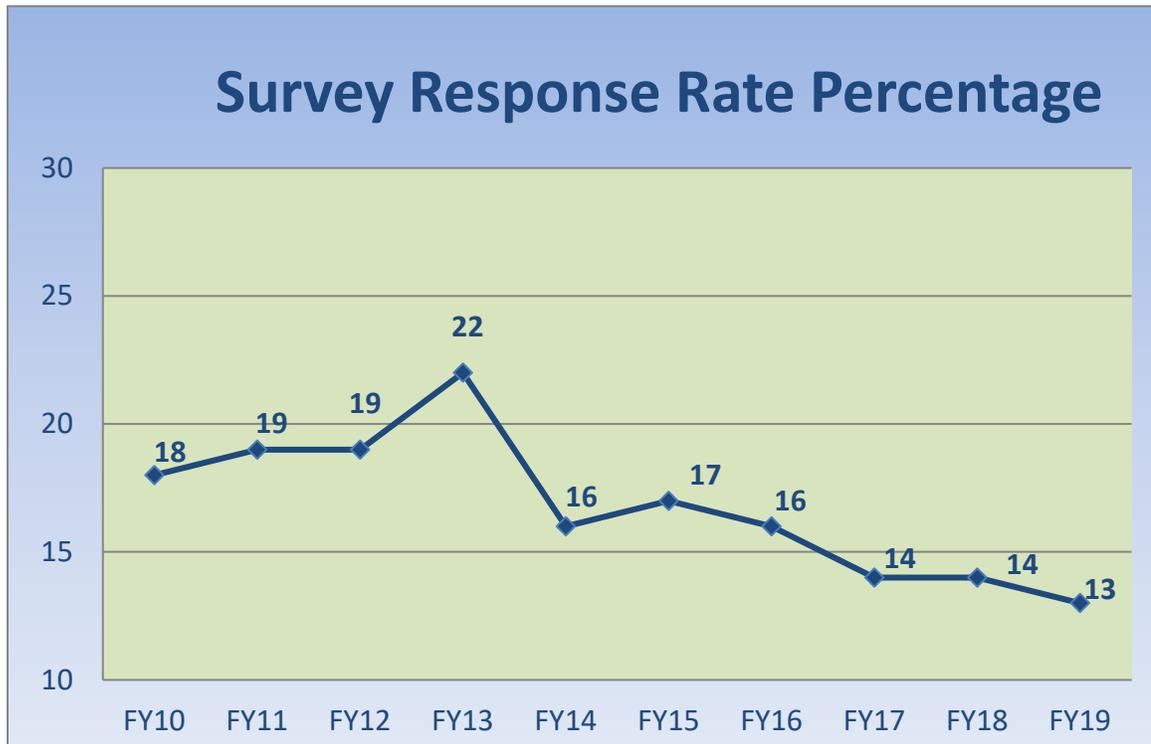
Of the 2,304 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2019, 300 completed surveys were received.



### Response Rates in Percentages - All Fiscal Years.

The response rate in FY19 was 13 percent, a notch below the previous year. The precipitous nine point drop from FY13 to FY14 occurred when the survey changed to an online system. Online surveys are easier to ignore and are often seen as spam or end up in junk folders. Physical survey cards tend to have more impact. In many households, the volume of emails received have easily surpassed traditional postal delivery mail. Another plausible reason why there are significantly fewer online responses may be due to the fact that many GRH customers realize that online surveys no longer provide anonymity.

7



## Fiscal Year 2019 Survey Results

This section indicates survey results from the 300 respondents for fiscal year 2019.

### Reservation Staff

#### Percentage of Responses Received

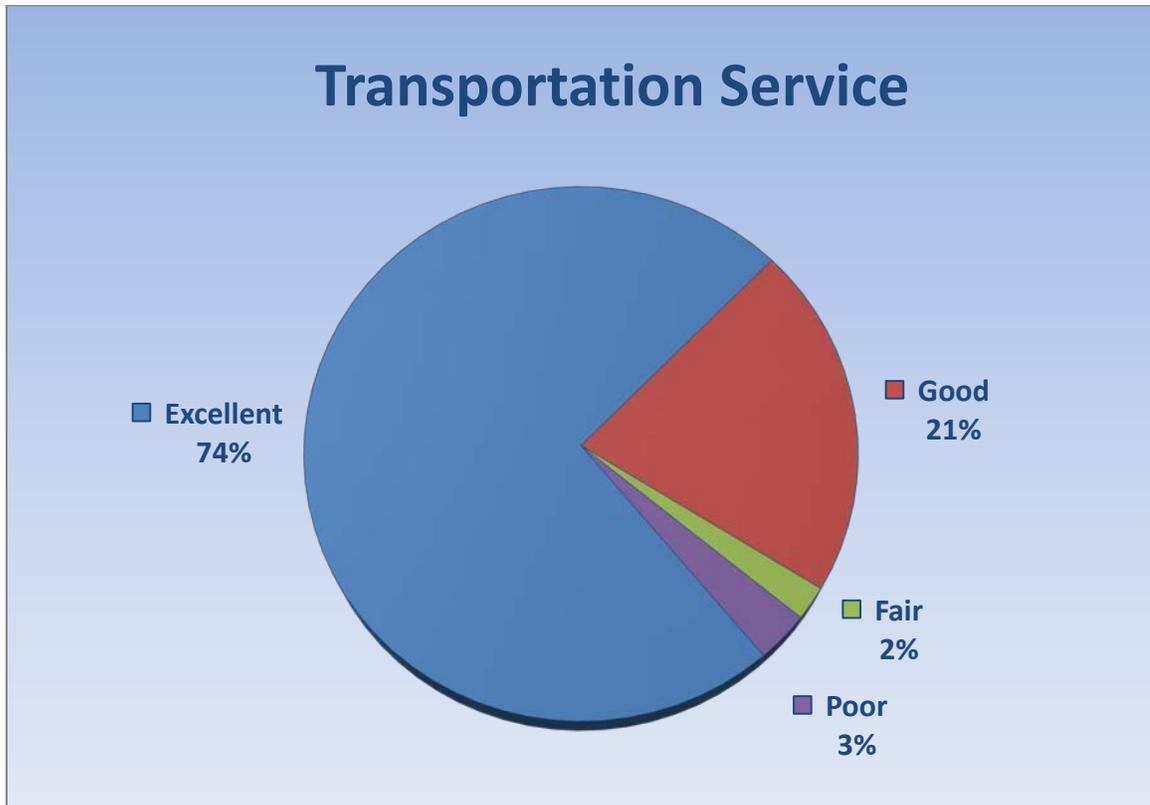
How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservation staff?



## Transportation Service

### Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?



## Response Time - Rating

### Percentage of Responses Received

How would you rate our response time?

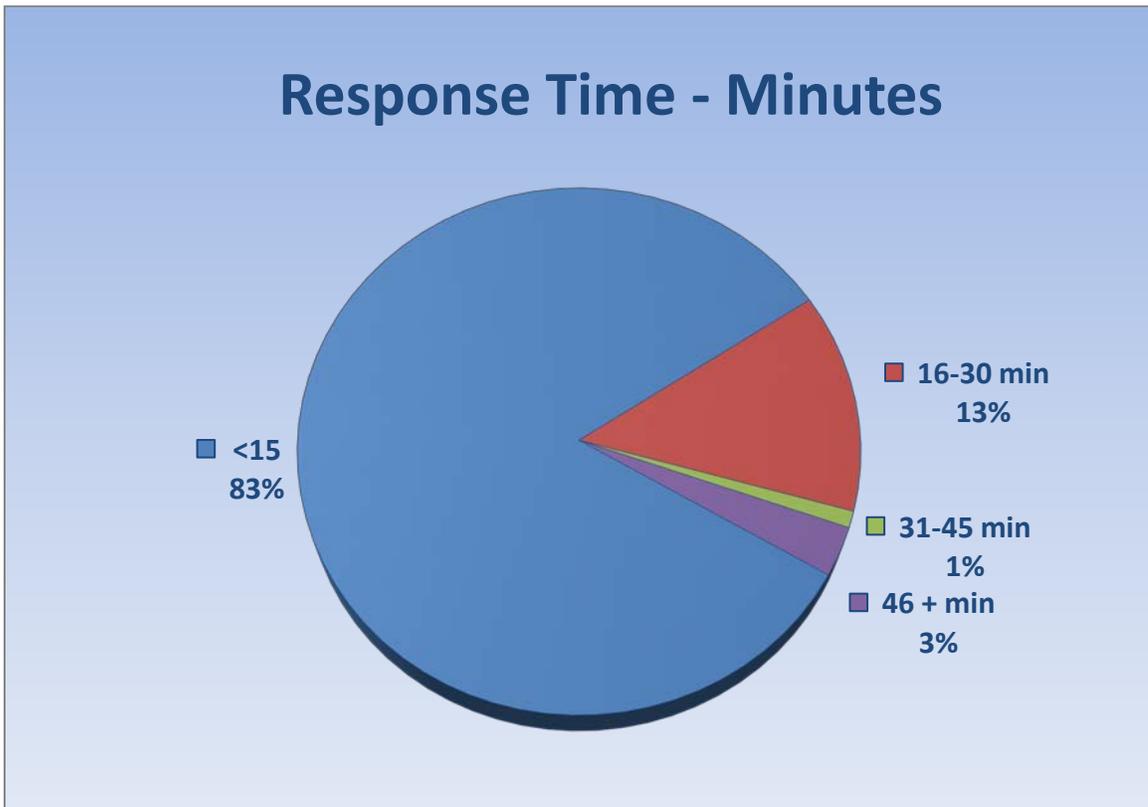


## Response Time – Minutes

### Percentages of Responses Received

Approximately how many minutes did you wait until your ride?

Average response wait in FY19 was 13 minutes, and the percentage of customers with a wait time of 30 minutes or less was 96%.



## Overall Service

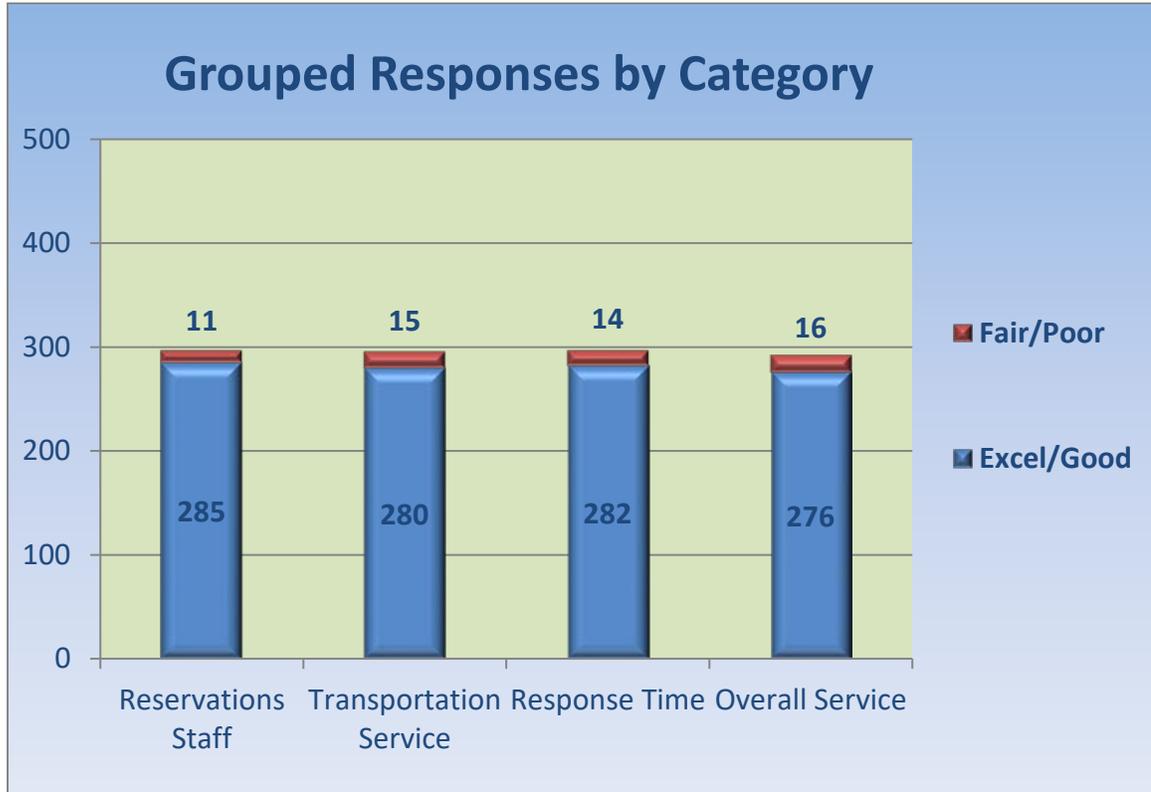
### Percentages of Responses Received

Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?



**xcellent/Good vs. Fair/Poor: All Questions**

**Number of Responses Based on Combined Satisfaction Levels**



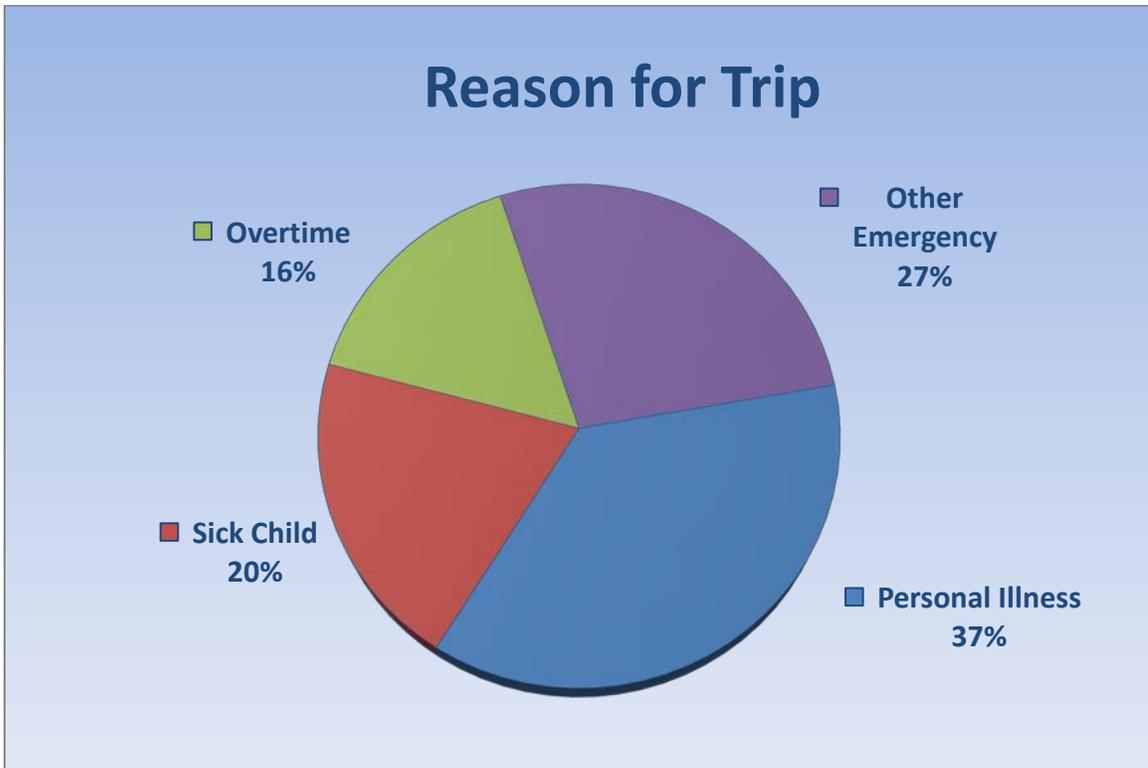
**Grouped Responses by Category**

This chart emphasizes the overwhelming favorable ratings (excellent & good) compared to the less favorable ratings (fair & poor). For example, in the first column, 285 respondents gave the Reservations Staff category a favorable rating of either Excellent or Good, noted in the blue area. In contrast, only 11 respondents, shown on top in red, rated the reservations staff with a less favorable “Fair or Poor” response.

## Reason for Trip

### Percentages of Responses Received

What was the reason for your GRH Trip?

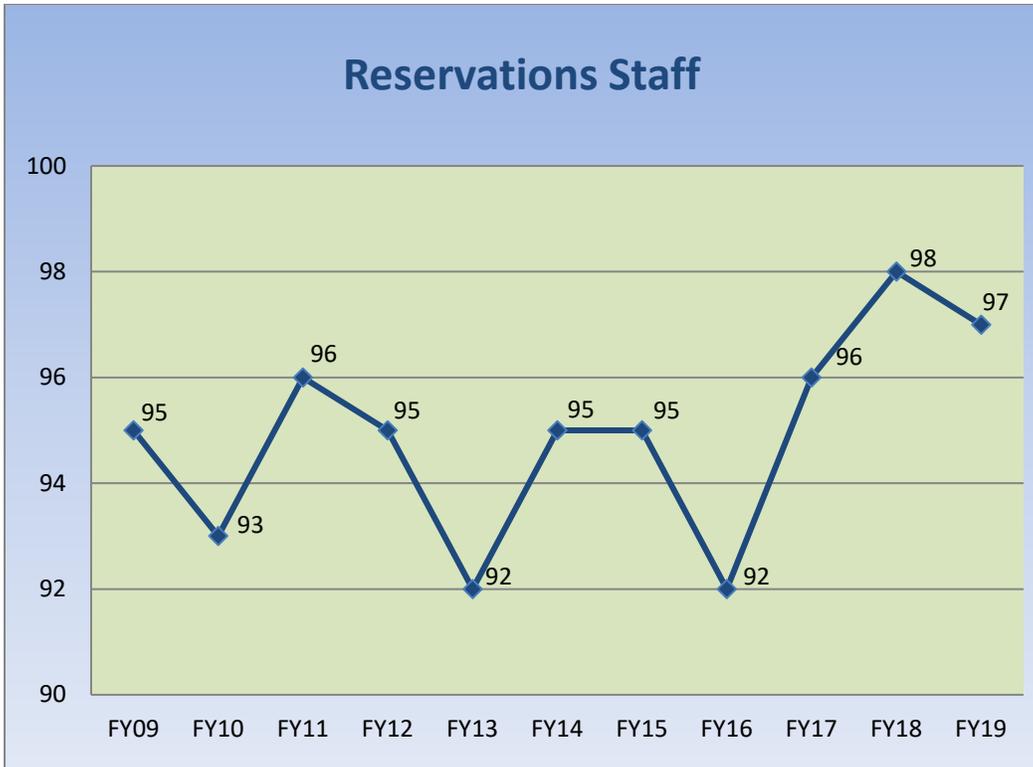


Personal Illness was the reason most given for using the GRH service.

## Comparison to Previous Fiscal Years

### Reservations Staff

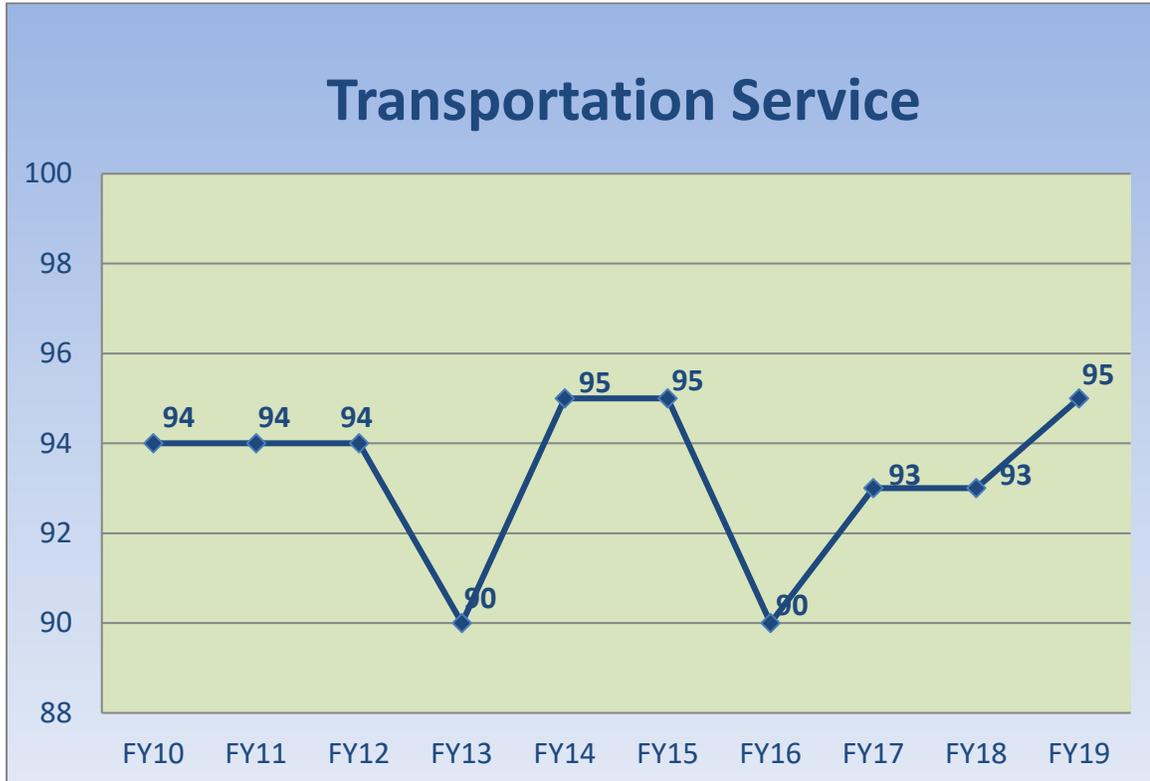
How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff?



Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good)

## Transportation Service

How would you rate the taxi or rental car service?



Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good)

## Response Time

Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good)

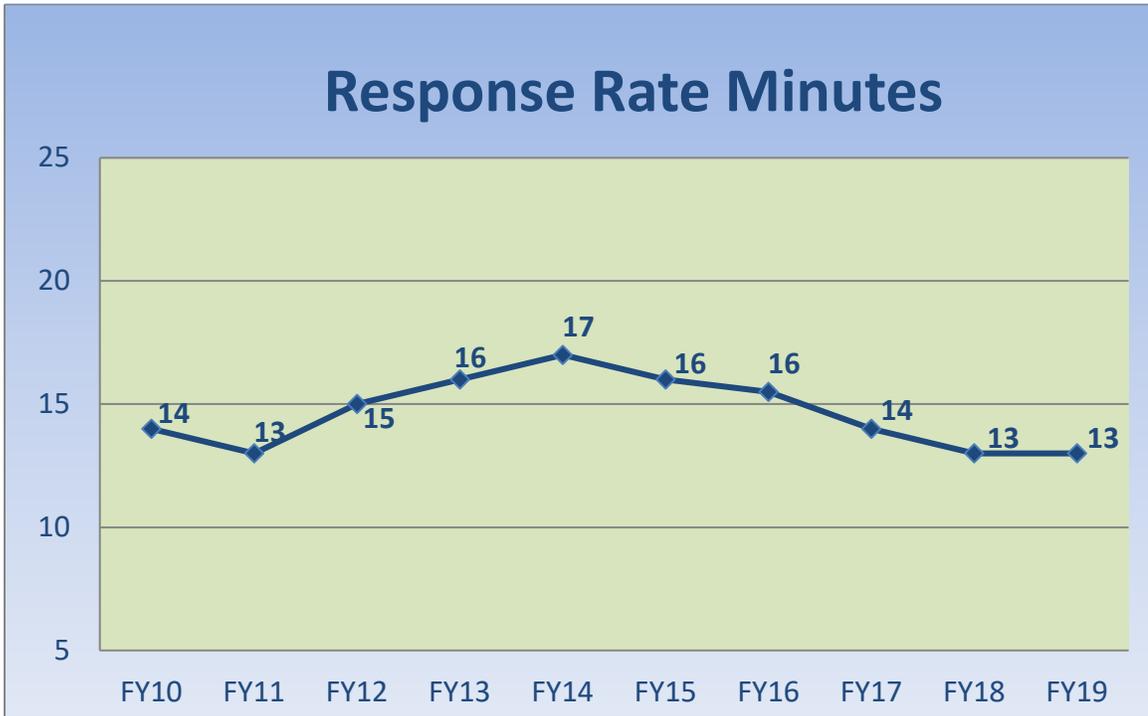
How would you rate our response time?



Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good)

## Average Response Time – Minutes

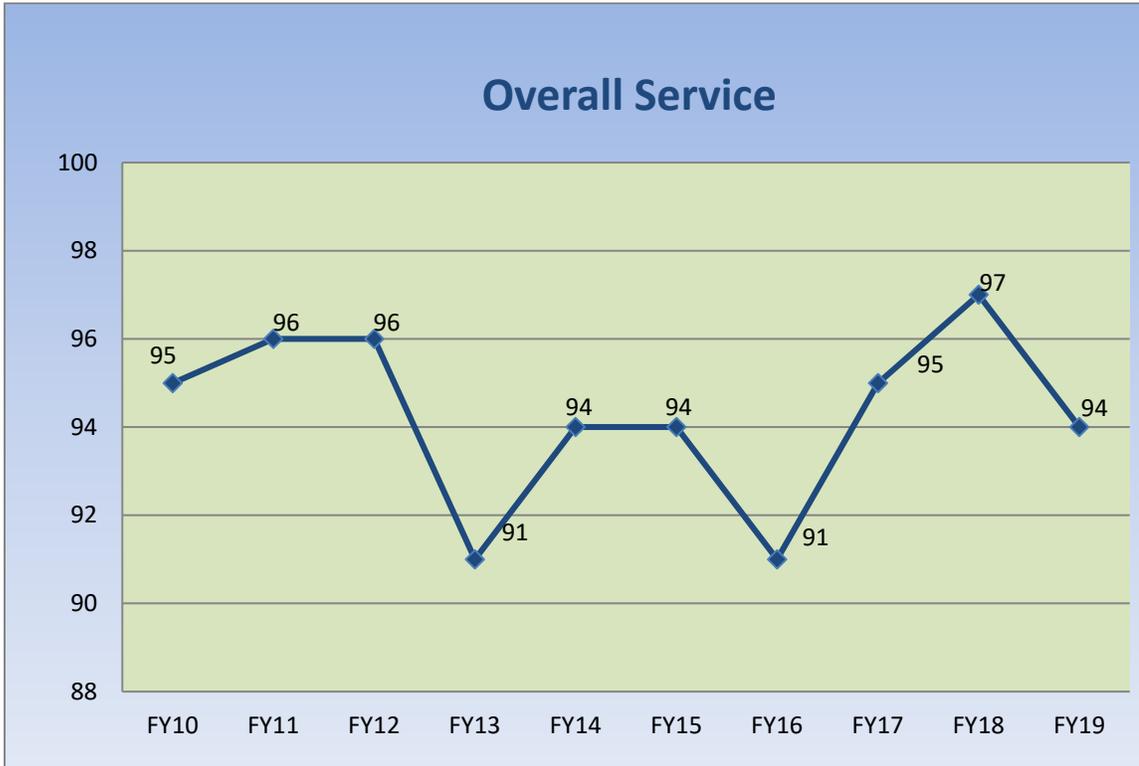
Approximately how many minutes did you wait until receiving your ride?



Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good)

## Overall Service

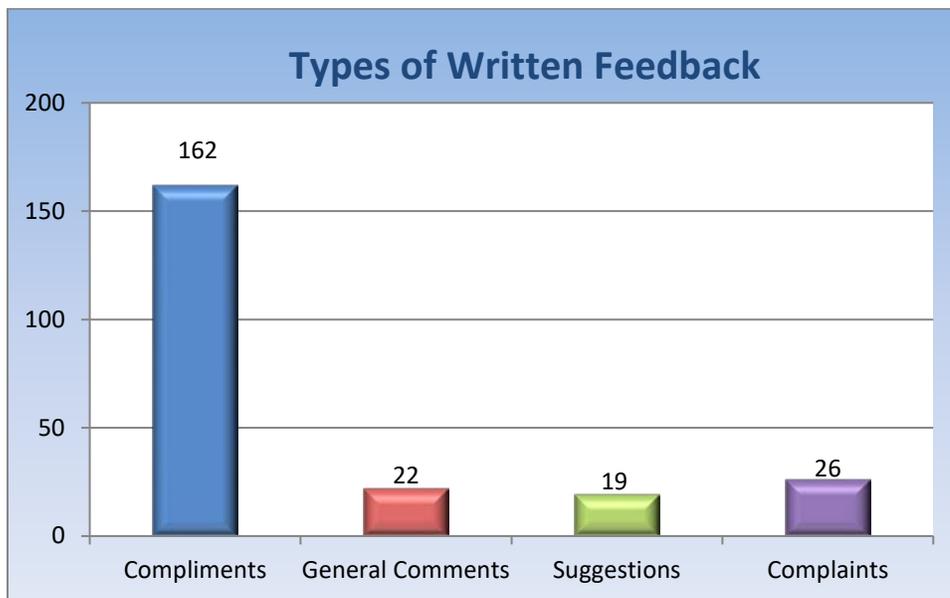
Overall, how would you rate our GRH service?



Percentage of Responses with Favorable Ratings (Excellent and Good)

## Written Responses

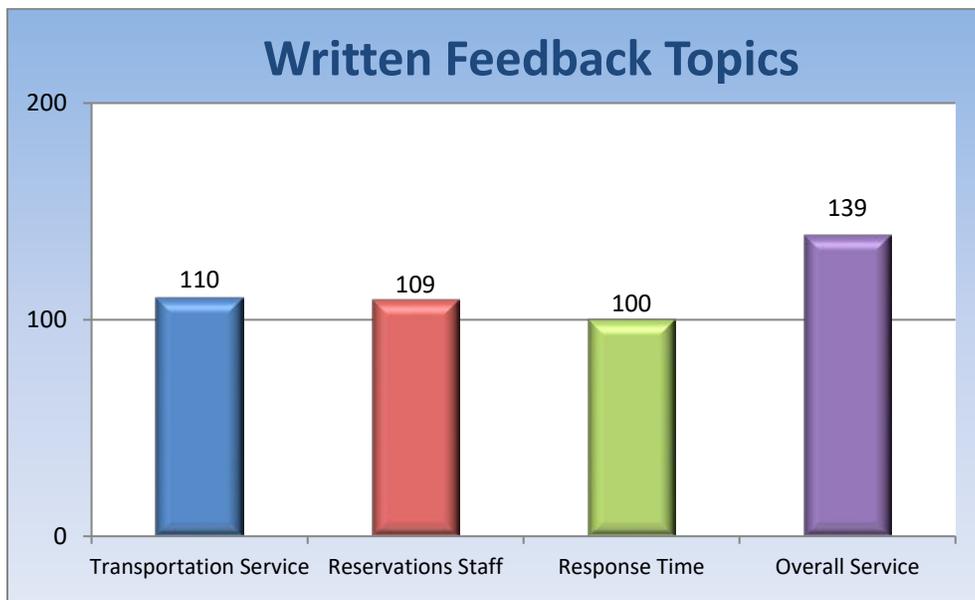
In addition to the multiple-choice questions, survey respondents were offered the opportunity to provide open-ended written comments. The types of open-ended written responses included compliments, general comments, suggestions, and complaints. Feedback is valuable for assessing customer attitudes regarding specific service areas and it helps to gauge the general pulse of the program. The total number of respondents who provided written comments were 208 out of 300 returned surveys, more than two-thirds (69%). About 10 percent of the comments received fell into more than one type of feedback. For example, a respondent's comments could contain both a compliment and suggestion, or even a compliment and a complaint. For this reason, the numbers below add up to more than the number of total respondents who provided comments.



The feedback given was overwhelmingly positive.

## Written Feedback Categories

The category with the most mentions within written comments pertained to the Overall Service provided. At least half of the respondents mentioned two or more categories within their comments, therefore the numbers below add up to far more than the number of respondents who provided comments. For example, a written comment could mention both the reservations staff and the response time.



## Compliments

With 162 of 208 respondents providing compliments, positive feedback was overwhelmingly (78 percent) the most prevalent kind; this measured more than six times the rate of complaints. Many respondents provided personal stories about how GRH helped them during their emergency situation, while others simply expressed gratitude. Some explicitly credited GRH as a reason which allowed them to use an alternative commute mode.

Samples of actual compliments from FY19:

- My experience was excellent, my driver was very courteous and knowledgeable of route. Please keep program.
- Fast, convenient, friendly - so happy to have this service available!
- Exceptional customer service and fast response time.
- I was very impressed with the timely response and grateful to be a part of a great service to commuters.
- My daughter was in a horrific auto crash and I had no way to get to my car. Within 10 minutes a taxi was waiting outside. The GRH representative provided outstanding service and offered her sympathy and encouragement.
- Absolutely fantastic experience. Having GRH available is a life saver in times like these. The GRH phone rep and taxi driver were both professional, helpful, and expeditious.
- I'm so happy that I signed up for this program. I carpooled and was not the driver and would not have made it to my emergency appointment w/o the program!
- I'm so thankful for this service. I'm very glad it was there for me when I needed it.
- I appreciate the efforts that were taken to ensure that I was provided a ride home during my illness. The timeliness of the service was outstanding.

## Complaints

A total of 26 survey respondents provided complaints about the GRH service; 12.5 percent out of the 208 written responses. Many of the complaints are beyond Commuter Connections' direct control.

Sample of actual complaints from FY19:

- After picking me up, the driver immediately went to the gas station which caused additional anxiety, as I had received a call from my alarm company about glass breakage at my house.
- Didn't use the E-ZPass lanes (guessing that's too costly for the service).
- Driver was supposed to call me and did not. He left the pickup location and came inside the campus while I ran outside the campus to wait for him at the pickup location. Took 25 minutes longer.
- Driver drove roughly. I was little scared of his driving.

## **Recap Summary**

Of the 2,304 surveys distributed in fiscal year 2019, 300 or 13 percent of surveys were completed. The vast majority, 94% of the survey respondents were pleased with the overall GRH service. At 37%, Personal Illness was the reason most reported for using the GRH service. Written responses were provided by 69% of the respondents, the overwhelming majority of which (77%) contained compliments. Compliments outweighed criticism more than 6 to 1. For every program category, good or above ratings were given by 94% or more of the respondents. Average response wait was 13 minutes and 96% waited 30 minutes or less.

# Appendix

## Sample Cover Letter Sent with Survey Card



Dear Commuter:

Thank you for using the Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in May 2019. As a standard practice, we send out survey cards to all of our customers, in order to determine their level of satisfaction with this free service. Your feedback will help us gauge the program's continued value and also help improve and better serve commuters in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

**Please take just a moment to complete the enclosed survey card and simply drop it in the mail within 10 days, no postage necessary!**

For the latest Guaranteed Ride Home participation guidelines, or if you would like information about other Commuter Connections services, please visit our web site at [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org), or call us at 1-800-745-7433.

Thank you for using an alternative method of transportation to get to work and for supporting the Guaranteed Ride Home program. Your efforts help to reduce traffic congestion and improve the air we breathe.

Please be sure to tell your co-workers and neighbors to sign up for the free Guaranteed Ride Home program at [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org).

Happy Commuting!

**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS**

**We'll get you home. Guaranteed.**

## Sample Survey Response Card



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS.**  
A SMARTER WAY TO WORK



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



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
COMMUTER CONNECTIONS  
777 N CAPITOL ST NE STE 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](http://www.commuterconnections.org)



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS.**  
A SMARTER WAY TO WORK

**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

## Survey Response Table

Survey Questions	Responses	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
Trip Reservations Staff	E	81%	84%	80%	71%	76%	83%	79%	84%	85%	86%
	G	12%	12%	15%	20%	19%	12%	13%	12%	13%	11%
	F	4%	2%	3%	6%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	2%
	P	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	5%	1%	1%	1%
Taxi or Rental Car Service	E	72%	75%	71%	70%	74%	74%	71%	77%	74%	74%
	G	21%	20%	23%	20%	21%	21%	19%	16%	19%	21%
	F	4%	3%	4%	7%	2%	2%	6%	4%	4%	2%
	P	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Response Time	E	76%	82%	77%	70%	73%	75%	73%	81%	83%	82%
	G	16%	12%	14%	18%	14%	16%	17%	13%	13%	14%
	F	4%	4%	5%	7%	7%	5%	4%	2%	1%	1%
	P	4%	2%	4%	5%	6%	4%	6%	4%	3%	3%
Overall Service	E	81%	84%	80%	73%	73%	81%	77%	80%	85%	82%
	G	14%	12%	16%	18%	20%	13%	14%	15%	12%	12%
	F	3%	3%	2%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	1%	4%
	P	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%	2%	5%	2%	2%	2%

E = Excellent

G = Good

F = Fair

P = Poor

## WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA GUARANTEED RIDE HOME PROGRAM PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Guidelines are subject to change without notice. Call 1-800-745-7433 or visit [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org) for current Participation Guidelines.

1. Commuters must be officially registered with Commuter Connections before using the Guaranteed Ride Home service. However, 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 trips are granted. 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. 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 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 may contact Commuter Connections to re-register and update their registration information or request re-registration through the Commuter Connections website.
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 doctor, urgent care center, emergency room or hospital 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 office or building closings and/or evacuations, natural and/or man-made disasters. If any of the above unqualified cases should lead to a qualifying reason, the trip will be denied due to its underlying cause.**
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 the Washington, D.C. or Baltimore, MD regions. These areas include: 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 registered 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 form. The transit reimbursement voucher must be completed and 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.

01/19/16