ALAMEDA COUNTY
CONGESTION MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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February 9, 2009
Agenda Item 3.1

Memorandum

Date: January 30, 2009

To: Plans and Programs Committee

From: Diane Stark, Sr. Transportation Planner

Subject: Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program Evaluation

Action Requested
It is recommended that the Board approve the Program Evaluation of the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program. At its May 22, 2008 meeting, the CMA Board recommended that an independent evaluation of the Guaranteed Ride Home Program be completed and that alternatives be developed and evaluated for participating employers to contribute towards funding the program. The program evaluation assesses the GRH program and operating principles and compares the principles, budget, funding sources, and program elements to other county programs, and reviews alternative funding mechanisms to support the program. The following recommendations are made: 1) continue to rely exclusively on TFCA grants to fund the GRH Program for now, 2) merge the GRH program with other GRH programs in the Bay Area, 3) expand the GRH program into a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program (pending new funding), and 4) require employers to contribute toward the cost of the GRH program (after certain conditions are in place).

Next Steps
Submit Draft Program Evaluation to the CMA Board for approval at its February meeting.

Discussion
In May 2008, as part of their action to accept the 2007 Annual Evaluation Report for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program (GRH), the Board directed staff to conduct an independent review of the Guaranteed Ride Home Program. They asked that the review include a discussion of ways to transition employers from Transportation Funds for Clean Air (TFCA) funding for rides to the employers paying for rides for their registered employees.

A consulting firm, Eisen/Letunic, was hired to complete the program evaluation. The evaluation had four components:

- Compare the GRH program to other County Programs,
- Assess the historical performance of the program against the program's original guiding principles,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the surveys and make recommendations for improvement, as needed, and
- Review alternative funding strategies for the program.

Comparing GRH to Other Programs

The GRH program was compared to eight other GRH programs on a number of performance measures, as summarized in the attached summary Table. Four of the programs were county-level programs in the Bay Area, one served four counties in southern California, and three were in other states: King County, Washington; Boston; and Washington D.C.. The comparative analysis noted the following highlights:

- *Minimum # Employees per Employer*: The CMA's program is the only one that requires employers to be of a minimum size (i.e. a minimum number of employees per employer).
- *Costs of Program*: It is very difficult to compare the costs of the CMA's program to others because it is the only stand-alone program. That is, it is not part of a larger Transportation Demand Management (TDM) package that includes vanpools, carpools, and bicycling and walking promotions. The annual cost appears to be within the range of other programs, if you could split out the GRH portion of the program
- *Funding Sources*: The GRH programs that were reviewed were funded either solely through public sources, such as TFCA and local sales tax; a mixture of public funding and employer contributions; or solely through employer contributions. A more detailed discussion of funding is included on the following page under "Alternative Funding Strategies."
- *Supportive TDM Programs*: All other GRH programs reviewed offered additional TDM programs and services. These include offering financial incentives for using transit, vanpools and carpools; ridesharing and ride-matching services; and promotions for walking and bicycling.

Annual Survey Instrument Effectiveness

The evaluation reviewed the survey instrument and made recommendations to improve its effectiveness. Recommended additions, which asked employees and employers how they valued the program were made and are being incorporated into this year's survey.

Program Principles

The Board adopted three program principles when the Guaranteed Ride Home Program was launched. The consultant was asked to evaluate how well the Program was meeting the intent of the principles. The following observations were made:

Principle 1: Maximize shift from driving alone to transit, carpooling, bicycling and walking

The evaluation of this principle was based on two performance measures: 1) effectiveness in changing commute behavior of program participants, and 2) reductions in emission of air quality

pollutants. To evaluate these measures, GRH annual surveys and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's (the Air District) evaluation of the GRH program for its funding were reviewed. The surveys demonstrated a shift from driving alone to using alternative modes of transportation. Furthermore, the Air District found that the GRH program was more than twice as cost effective as other projects under the ridesharing category applying for TFCA funds. The Air District bases its estimates of emission reduced on a project's potential to encourage a shift in commuting behavior away from single occupancy vehicles.

Principle 2: Determine value of GRH to employers and employees

The GRH program collects information on the satisfaction of employees and employers in using the program. Overall, users of the program are consistently satisfied with the program. However, the survey does not collect quantitative or qualitative information on the value of the program on time or monetary savings. The program evaluation recommends changing survey questions to better quantify how employees and employers value the program. These questions are being added to this year's survey.

Principle 3: Develop a sustainable program (if possible)

The GRH program has successfully secured funding from the Air District's TFCA program for the past 10 years. The GRH program scores very highly with the Air District's TFCA program and is one of five GRH programs in the Bay Area (out of six programs) that receive TFCA funding. Although it has remained sustainable in doing so, it has relied on a sole funding source. Therefore, alternative funding strategies were evaluated and are presented below.

Alternative Funding Strategies

The evaluation reviewed alternative funding strategies with the goal of shifting from the Air District's funds to include employer contributions. The evaluation included a review of 11 other programs.

All but one of the six Bay Area programs are funded at least in part through TFCA funds. Alameda County and Santa Rosa are funded entirely through TFCA grants. In addition to TFCA funds, other public fund sources used for the programs include half-cent sales tax (Contra Costa and Solano, San Francisco) and CMAQ funds (Solano/Napa). San Mateo County is the only Bay Area program that does not receive TFCA funding and relies primarily on the local half-cent sales tax with some employer contributions

Outside of the Bay Area, public funded GRH programs include Southern California, which is funded by general funds from four public agencies, sales tax and TFCA funds. Austin is funded by sales tax and an individual annual participant fee. Washington D.C. is funded by contributions from the Council of Governments and several Departments of Transportation.

The two programs fully funded by employers were King County, Washington and Boston. King County has state legislation that support employers funding the program. Boston was part of a TMA fee for employers. Both programs also included a range of TDM programs in addition to the GRH program.

Based on a review of funding strategies for other programs, the CMA could use one of the following funding strategies:

1) Continue to obtain funding from TFCA,
2) Obtain funding from a mixture of public and private sources. The public sources could be expanded to other sources, such as the local transportation tax; the private source would be employer contributions, or
3) Fund the program entirely from employer fees.

Because the CMA program is a stand alone program that does not include complementary TDM programs, as other programs with employer contributions do, and because we have no legislation to support employer based programs, it is not recommended at this time that employers contribute to funding the GRH program. Instead, the following, recommendations are made:

Program Recommendations:

1) Continue to rely exclusively on TFCA grants to fund the GRH Program.
The evaluation recommends continuing to fund the program through TFCA grants for now. This is because the GRH program competes for TFCA grants and is one of six programs funded through this program. This, coupled with not offering any other TDM program for employers makes it difficult to get other funds solely for the GRH program.

2) Merge the GRH program with other GRH programs in the Bay Area.
Merging the program would provide economies of scale in marketing, and would allow the opportunity to incorporate additional commute alternatives. Also, GRH programs in other counties benefit some employees who work in those counties but live in Alameda County.

3) Expand the GRH program into a comprehensive TDM program
In light of the fact that every other GRH program is part of a larger TDM package of programs; the opportunity for economies of scale in administering the program; as well as the combined effect of further reducing single occupancy vehicle (SOV) usage through a package of TDM programs, the evaluation recommended expanding the GRH program into a comprehensive TDM program. This would also have the benefit of fulfilling the TDM requirement of the Congestion Management Program, and would provide alternatives to the SOV, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and help in reducing greenhouse gases. New funding would be required to implement this recommendation.

4) Require employers to contribute toward the cost of the GRH program (after certain conditions are in place).
Requiring an employer contribution could result in some employer attrition in the program. The other counties that do charge employers offer a range of TDM programs. Also, the Air District has consistently highly ranked and funded the GRH program. Prior to charging employers, the evaluation recommends that the program add a more robust TDM program. That should be preceded by employer surveys about contributions to the program and stronger incentives for employers to provide commute alternative benefits for their employees.

COMPARISON OF GURANTEED RIDE HOME PROGRAMS
JANUARY 2009

GRH Programs	Eligibility	Limitations	Number of Employees	Number of Employers	Annual Cost	Fund Source	Number of Rides taken/year	Average Ride Cost	Other TDM Programs
San Mateo GRH	Any employer in county regardless of number of employees	No program limit on the number of rides No limits on ride distance	41,000 (all employees are automatically registered)	55	N/A	Transportation sales tax Employer contributions	200	N/A	Yes
Solano/Napa Emergency Ride Home	Any employer in county regardless of number of employees	3 rides/employee/month 6 rides/employee/year 100 miles distance max	78	52	N/A	TFCA CMAQ	7	$103.00	Yes
Commute Smart (4 southern California Counties)	Any employer in 4 counties regardless of number of employees	4 rides/employee/year No limit on the distance	358,592 (all employees are registered)	642	N/A	Counties sales tax for transportation	224	$70.42	Yes
King County Home Free Guarantee (Seattle)	Any employer college or other group in County	8 rides/employee/year 60 mile distance	150,000 (all registered)	483	$ 412,000	Employer contributions (required by state Commute Trip Reduction Law)	7,328	$44.00	Yes
ABC TMA GRH Boston	Any ABC TMA Employer member	6 X/employee/6 months No limit on ride distance	75,000 (all registered)	31	$ 125,000	Employers TMA fee	83	$46.90	Yes
Commuter Connections GRH (Washington DC Metropolitan Area)	Any employer in area regardless of size	4 X/employee/year No limit on ride distance	140,487	N/A	$ 545,000	General funds of Metropolitan Washington Council of Government and other Commuter Connections jurisdictions	3,006	$67.00	Yes
511 Contra Costa GRH	Any employer in area regardless of size	2 rides/employee/month 6 rides/year No limit or ride distance	3,800	586	N/A	TFCA & Transportation Sales Tax	600	$67.00	Yes
San Francisco Emergency Ride Home	Any employer in area regardless of size	4 rides/employee/year No limit on ride distance	N/A Employers do not register	150	N/A	TFCA, Transportation Sales Tax, city & county funds, employer contribution	500	N/A	Yes City has "Transit First" Policy requiring employees to have TDM programs
Alameda County CMA GRH	75 employees/employer in county	2 rides/employee/month 6 rides/employees/year 100 miles distance	4,437	155	$ 135,000	TFCA	98	$86.13	No

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