

Arlington County Commuter Assistance Program **Research Plan 2000-2002**

(Note: This is not a Primary Research Study)

PLAN AUTHOR:

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OVERALL PLAN PURPOSE:

- ☞ The purpose of this plan is to outline how Arlington County can best meet the opportunities and challenges ahead as the County continues to experience economic growth and the increasing demands of regional mobilization.
- ☞ This plan recommends a basic market research program to monitor the overall attitudes of existing and trial riders and track the retention of trial riders. The Metro rider and non-rider research base also is to be utilized.
- ☞ This plan also recommends a major new segmentation study of Arlington residents and non-residents. The study would provide usable data about a variety of market segments by neighborhood and corridor.

KEY INFORMATION INCLUDED:

Market Segmentation Study:

- ☞ Objectives
 - Increase ridership (by increasing use frequency of current riders and attracting new riders)
 - Increase transit's share of travel in the Arlington County market
 - Efficiently allocate resources to markets that represent the greatest potential for change in light of changes to the marketing mix
 - Provide for a market-driven creative platform for marketing and advertising materials
 - Enhance the image and reputation of public transportation to increase support for public funding
- ☞ Benefits
 - Designing responsive products to meet the needs of the marketplace
 - Developing effective and cost-effective promotional strategies
 - Providing insights on present marketing strategies
 - Providing data to base resource allocation decisions
 - Ongoing consumer and market segmentation analysis provides important data to identify which long-range planning strategy (market growth or product development) should be emphasized

Database Surveys:

- ☞ Over the 2000 – 2002 period, attempts to develop trial ridership will include various imbedded research devices to facilitate the development of a database of trial riders

- ☞ The database will be used for telemarketing efforts and serve as a tracking mechanism to help determine:
 - Ridership retention
 - Percentage of first time riders
 - Demographics
 - Reasons for riding or not riding
- ☞ A Random call-back survey of individuals who tried riding the bus will be administered. Questions would include:
 - Attitudinal (i.e. overall experience, what do they like most etc.)
 - Communications (i.e. Web site, Commuter Stores etc.)
 - Evaluation of advertising
- ☞ Three surveys to be conducted in conjunction with telemarketing call-backs, keeping the cost of the program low

Qualitative Research:

- ☞ Information System Testing
 - Before committing to types of information formats and investing in program prototype displays and signage, the options should be tested
 - Test options by allowing a representative sample of the population to look at the pieces, try to use them, and express their opinions
 - Recommend that focus groups be used – 6 groups of 10-12 people
 - Half with current riders and half with non-riders
 - Professional moderator probes to find out current use of information, likes and dislikes.
 - Test participants in their ability to use existing information for trip planning and give an opportunity to see new technologies, use them, and comment about them.
 - Use feedback to identify modifications or additions to enhance information pieces and system design as needed
- ☞ Advertising Testing
 - If the segmentation study indicates any other target groups or shift in the attitudes of the existing target the existing campaign should be modified.
 - These modifications should go through two or three focus groups to make sure the modifications are on target

Co-op Research:

- ☞ The existing research studies to be utilized include:
 - WMATA 1998 system wide on-board survey
 - Transportation Research Board, TRB Market Segmentation Study in WMATA's service area, Northwest Research Group, 1997.
 - Profile of the WMATA Travel Market, WMATA Market Analysis, 1995.
 - WMATA Ridership Analysis Study, Peter Harris Research Group, 1995.
 - WMATA Service Based Market Development Study, Ilium, 1994.
 - WMATA Service Area Usage-Attitude Assessment, The Gallup Organization, 1993.
- ☞ This plan will also identify other supporting research tools to help anticipate Arlington County population trends, demographic information, route trends, route structures, transit information materials and resident/employee access to transportation solutions
- ☞ Access to regional and local planning documents will enable us to better determine the direction and budget for programs that will support area land use and environmental planning.

OTHER RELATED STUDIES, PLANS & DOCUMENTS:

2005 Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS) Fiscal Year Annual Report
2006-2008 Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS) Research and Evaluation Plan

AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS:

Final Plan

KEY WORDS:

ACCS, Arlington County, Arlington County Commuter Services, Attitudes, Awareness, Demographics, Market Segmentation, Perceptions, Planning, TDM, TDM Planning and Administration, Transit, Transportation Demand Management