

Tell us about your CTR/TDM program and your role in it.

I created and currently manage the CTR / TDM program. CTR is subset of our larger program called smart trips. Smart trips includes all employer partners with a small number of them (employers) in the CTR program. The smart trip program promotes walk/biking/sharing rides and bus use to all ages. There are 200 smart trips employer program participants with only 15 CTR employers. There are, as you can see, many more smart trip employer partners than CTR employers. Smart trips has many components. The foundation is the users trip diary. They create online trip diary and record smart trips – times you use bike, transit, walking etc., instead of driving. In return they show you the benefits of using those modes and how you are contributing to the community. They provide information about calories used, money saved, and pollution savings – and incentivize those trips. Incentives are mailed to your house after certain thresholds – ie. 10 trips, 100 trips – coupons and/or monthly quarterly prize drawing can be entered after as few as 5 trips.

Programs work with little kids, seniors, middle schools (teach bike skills courses) and teach 7th graders how to ride bus and have summer camps for weeklong programs partnering with the local Parks and Recreation services. The program includes a mix of 16 kids in AM for walks – teaching them to navigate the city thru walks, bikes, transit etc.,. The weeklong camp culminates with a scavenger hunt by bus in groups of four with teen (no adult) – in the city. Senior citizens bus trips starting near the senior center teaches them how to ride the bus. We partner with lots of different entities; farmers market, health care providers, theaters to serve the community. Events /staff have shrunk lately.

What are the key barriers you need to overcome to make your program even better?

Money is always an issue. Consistency of money is bigger issue than the amount. Because of the way we do TDM in Whatcom County, there are no boundaries/age groups that we exclude in our program. We will do anything that works to promote and encourage people. There is not a logical funding source. CTR is for large employers and trips to work. Safe routes to schools addresses schools with infrastructure problems. I have yet to find source of funding that really fits a community wide approach and that is consistent. I am always looking for new partners – always scrambling – but it doesn't stop us. We'd do more, that's all.

There are other barriers we have no control over. The whole world is set up to assume that the auto is the main form of transportation and everything else is an alternative.

If you had additional resources, what would you do with them to make your program better?

I have had to cut out things that we used to do that we found beneficial. Primarily, I have had to cut staff. If we had more funds, we would do more experiential things – more bus bike rides, creating more opportunities for people to try using different modes. Words aren't enough to persuade them, they have to try it firsthand. The best ways to make it fun and easy are to create ways to orchestrate little events. Unfortunately, this takes planning time and staff time.

What is the single most important thing the state provides to your CTR/TDM program?

Consistent funding. It is helpful that a long time ago the CTR program brought employers to the table that wouldn't otherwise participate in these programs. It is still it is useful to have that there but more important in the beginning. Now they are at the table and fully participating, Consistency is vital.

How do you and your customers use the information from the CTR Employer Survey Reports?

We do not use it. There are two counties Clark and Whatcom that have taken option that CTR office offered us. They said if you want to use your community wide program as your CTR program you can do that – so you don't have to rely on employer reports as your sole measurement. You can measure in other ways, so we do. Smart trips programs provide reliable information. It tells us how many seniors we serve and how many participate in our events. We do not use employer survey reports. Frankly, our employers love not having to do them – they're a lot of work to get a high response rate.

How do you and your customers use the information from the Employer Annual Report and Program Description?

We don't do that either.

What other methods do you use to measure the effectiveness of the program?

We measure how many participate in our local events; how many little kids, how many 7th graders, teens have we taught at summer camps, how many senior bus trips etc., - We also rely on how many are using their trip diary.

Which subsidies and incentives that you have used are the most effective at helping people change their behavior?

We use a variety of incentives. Everyone has a different trigger that motivates them. We have low bar incentives that you can earn after hardly any effort so right away you're rewarded. We have incentives after 5 trips, and after every 100 trips – long-term participants. Others say that's not meaningful – for them we have prize drawing once/month \$250 every month and \$1000 every quarter – all incentives are important because we find different people are motivated by different things.

We also give first time rider passes. WTA, our local transit agency partners with us and gives us 23 monthly bus passes for people who have never tried riding the bus before . We remind ETC's that we have these passes, first come first serve, and employees can try transit for free for a month.

Some people don't need financial rewards. They just need to know that they are contributing to their community. Positive stats (on pollution, health etc.,) are enough for them.

CTR implementer interview
Whatcom Council of Governments, Susan Horst
Tuesday, September 5, 11:30 a.m.
Interviewer: Susan Garber-Yonts

Is it important to have the state CTR law?

I do believe the CTR law has brought people to the table. We still do the requirement that we must meet and conduct program reviews with our employers every other year and we do use that information. The reason we meet is the CTR law requires it although we do talk about a lot of things (best practices etc.) - the law is still important.

I don't know that it's critical and people wouldn't participate but why chance it! It would be lovely if we didn't focus so much on vehicles – if CTR could expand into a community wide program.