

CTR implementer interview

Yakima Valley COG, Alan Adolf, Brian Galloway and Larry Mattson

Wednesday, September 6, 11 a.m.

Interviewers: Susan Garber-Yonts

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

Larry has been Executive Director since Jan 2015 – 2.5 years. At the time he came on, the Homeless program was transferred from Yakima County to YVCOG. It was incredibly disruptive and has taken a lot of his time. Now, finally it is ramping down and he is familiarizing himself with all programs YVCOG operates. He/They dove into CTR/TDM programs after the homeless program demanded his attention for the better part of his job – 50-75% of his time. So he hasn't been able to spend time he'd like in CTR in Yakima valley, but he does have the opportunity now.

Alan Adolf came on April of 2017 with 20+ years of experience with Yakama Nation and Yakima County as a transportation planner. He is deeply familiar with transportation issues in the Yakima valley. He just started in April.

Brian Galloway came on in January. So, all three people are without a lot of experience with CTR. Their predecessor, Brian Curtin passed away. He was the CTR lead with historical knowledge of the program. We are trying to gather what we can from what he did. Brian Galloway has temporarily taken on CTR duties – trying to get up to speed.

We, three combined, are users of CTR incentives but not a lot of experience managing or implementing CTR programs.

Other historical factor – when Page Scott was ED of Yakima County, they were on the fence about whether they should be part of the CTR program statewide. They grappled with whether it was a good fit? Her efforts were successful in including YVCOG. Once the CTR program was here – it kept a low profile so it wouldn't make waves. My sense was Page was navigating the political winds of central Washington politics and didn't want a program that might be perceived to weigh around necks of private industry – just my assumption.

Now, we want to redefine and reinvigorate the CTR program. We are reviewing Brian's position description and adding safe routes to school & complete streets elements to the position. hoping to finalize the position description by the end of September.

Collectively, there is potential for much more than the program has been in the past.

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

The key issue is explaining the situation that we've been in since Brian departed mid June. We thought we had more time for cross training and review of schedules. Brian Curtin's passing deprived us from the opportunity to learn program information from the person who built it for 10-12 years. Now the main barrier is the education of how the program works, trying to retrieve some of the institutional knowledge as best we can and make sure we are complying with existing agreements, future planning desires of program on statewide basis and being able to integrate it with local constituency. Barriers are also some of our best new steps moving forward. Yakama Nation is in the RTPPO area. As they start going deeper into federally funded transportation programs they are finding they need to coordinate and communicate better with surrounding areas. CTR could definitely be a positive topic of interaction with them. There is still some

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“silo-ing” of similar interests that could be better integrated that would ultimately make the CTR program stronger.

We would also deeply benefit from training for us “newbies”.

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

When I was with the County I got to do the survey every year – for our dept of about 100 people. I have that 10,000-foot level eye view of what it was. Back 10-12 years ago, there were more agencies/businesses outside the MPO that participated. Some may still do it voluntarily but an opportunity to broaden our scope – outside the MPO area would create a better opportunity. A lot of our smaller jurisdictions are getting the opportunity to grow (Walmart distribution center, Ace hardware – colleges) and new facilities that either have high employment or high visitation are sprouting up through our entire County. Being able to take a CTR role in rural areas would be a great way to take advantage of additional resources

We would like to expand the service area – if allowed to do so.

Better tribal coordination – strengthen the coordination beyond staff level to political level.

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

Funding and staff support.

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

I wish we knew. Brian has been researching electronic files as far as CTR - nothing came up regarding CTR employer survey reports. It made me a little nervous, as it seems like it's an annual requirement.

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

I wish we knew. No information on his search. We are still going through cabinets/ electronic records and coming up blank.

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

What we're proposing to do in the time that we have now is to redefine the CTR program. We're going to build a logic model (like other non profits), which provides a problem statement about why we have this program. The model looks at outputs and research we need to deliver it. We hope to develop internally and share with WSDOT for feedback. We are hoping that new outcomes and outputs help us to obtain a measurement of effectiveness.

We strive for well-defined information about performance measures. We will not just rely on us to provide educational materials. We will be reaching out to other CTR programs throughout state and taking advantage of their best practices with a particular look at transitioning counties that are still heavily rural in most aspects with a metropolitan base and see how more established

larger programs can be reviewed and integrated into our areas as we continue to work on countywide transportation improvement.

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

This is only somewhat applicable with Wheel Options events coming up. We have done product-based incentives in the past: bike parts, bottles, and certificates to bookstore/movie theaters. We don't know at this time, which incentives are effective at changing behavior.

Economic factors not gift or prizes have had more potent impact on CTR usage in the valley. Not sure whether that would be carpool/vanpool or transit because most of our experience is that usage was a result of an economic challenge (because e of a lost job etc.). It is a more far reaching effect in Yakima County than you may see in a super metropolis situation (Spokane, Seattle Vancouver)

It keeps those who aren't fair weather CTR users engaged. Incentives based on ones pocketbook and quality and closeness to job seem to be more effective. It's hard to tell if any of these incentives have a long-term benefit. We need to investigate further as we move forward.

Is it important to have the state CTR law?

The state law is what gives the program credibility and allows us to approach jurisdictions and businesses. It allows the businesses to see we are legitimate and didn't just make the law up ourselves. We are a blend between an agricultural and metropolitan community. We are in a transition to a more metropolitan area.