

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

Program over the last few years is a major pilot program that includes a partnership between the City and DOTG focused on downtown area. The downtown area serves a large portion of businesses with over 100 employees. Downtown, geographically, has the highest level of transit and options other than SOV. The City and DOTG work together to develop programs, and the City utilizes DOTG's expertise to implement the overall CTR program – in coordination with the Pierce Trips team at Pierce County and Pierce Transit.

DOTG is interested in not just following standard CTR/TDM. We do use gift cards etc., but we are committed to thinking outside of the box. For example, our bike to a business program; gets businesses and people to really engage with businesses that support bikes. DOTG uses other alternatives and other means of getting people to think about how they move around the city for all of their trips with the hope that it transfers to commuting.

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

The hardest thing to do is to get to the decision makers at affected worksites. DOTG equips ETCs with all the information they need, but they often can't even get to their management; it's a large barrier. Reaching upper management would be helpful. We need support from higher up to "trickle down" to employees.

Non-compliance sites are, in general, a barrier. We reach out repeatedly to affected sites and still no response. Having WSDOT support to get heavy handed" is important. This way, DOTG could leverage WSDOT for help and support and have more authority from the top.

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

Two approaches to take either expand up or out. Expanding out would mean reaching more companies that are affected outside of the downtown area (many are w/in downtown). As businesses are relocated to Tacoma these numbers are increasing, and we also could reach the businesses that are in Tacoma but outside of the Downtown target area.

I think we would see more change by expanding up because we could concentrate our efforts on the businesses with existing relationships and have greater success in changing behavior. This would mean there is more staff available for hand holding. We would be able to do one on one activity with businesses – with innovative proposals. A good example of this is that we had a non-responsive site – Bates Technical College. Over the last six months staff went up one on one once a month building a relationship with their staff. We just surveyed with a 70% response after 6 years of being non-responsive. I attribute the success to hand holding. We don't have capacity to do with every business – additional resources can change that. We can be creative with small amounts of money – more would be more innovative to change behaviors and be more effective. Hand holding is directly linked to behavior change. Expanding up would be the recommended approach but either approach, with additional resources, would be beneficial.

We are willing to try new concepts related to shifting the mode split. In DOTG's recent TDM grant application, we have the intent of impacting the non-commute trips, while potentially

CTR implementer interview

City of Tacoma, Meredith Soniat and Downtown on the Go, Beka Burton

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Interviewer: Susan Garber-Yonts

having an impact on commute trips in the future. We are constantly thinking through how we can reach people and change behavior.

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

The most important thing is the data and consistency of data that the state provides. We use old reports. They are great to look back at past cycles to see what the trends have been. Data is super valuable to go to businesses to show where they come from and where they are now.

Also, the CTR law is a good starting point for conversations about compliance.

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

We take the data and put it into a one-page report on CTR. We use this as an information sheet for management to make changes within their organization. We/they can see how many people are using what modes. When we meet with upper management to discuss results, we dive into the weeds a little bit. If they are interested, we can help them decide about Orca passes or carpool/vanpool programs – whatever fits their needs.

We use a graphic heavy sheet that's easy to read and understand. The information makes business compete against one another. We can get a full downtown snapshot AND a picture of their own business so they can see where they rank. We created this because other businesses asked how they compare to their competitors. The comparison sheets have helped sell different programs.

DOTG's CTR work is focused on business. The city uses CTR data as background and baseline for mode split for downtown to set new targets thru plans/grant applications. They use the information to measure their success. Although this data only represents CTR-affected businesses downtown, it does give a snapshot of larger businesses that have a substantial impact on movement in the city.

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

Similar to the previous question, annual reports makes ETCs reach out to others in their organization to find out information like how many parking spots they have, who pays for what. It encourages ETCs to speak to others in their organization. They use this with CTR survey results to sell management on implementing spots for carpool and vanpools and find it important to reference for subsidizing and improvements for their programs serving employees.

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

One of the big things we use is a small business survey. DOTG sends out a survey to businesses with fewer than 100 employees. WSDOT had originally put out a small business survey a few years ago. The survey was awesome but the results could only be accessed by small businesses themselves. It would be helpful if the state could continue to use the survey and allow the DOTG's of the world to be able to access that data for reports. The inability to access the WSDOT data forced us to create our own version on survey monkey. WSDOT already has this tool. It'd be nice to let DOTG have access to data, as we do with the CTR survey to streamline the way data is gathered and for consistent data.

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

Gift cards and smaller incentives are great to get people to log their trips but not changing behavior. So. We found the ORCA passport program and subsidies (cash per day) are most effective. Some downtown businesses give employees \$3/day with a cap per month. Because it is so successful, we are working with business to increasing their programs to more cash per day to incentivize more employees to take advantage of alternative commute options.

We found that when ORCA cards are provided at business it is convenient and already in the hand of employees. I think people wouldn't use it if it wasn't already "in their hand".

Route mapping is also very successful but staff heavy. It includes one on one with employees having a discussion about where you live and where you work. Together we map out a solution. It is responsible for a lot of behavior change because of that. I attribute the success to one on one time together. Instead of just sending them a link to figure out their commute, we have a personal meeting. The more resources we have to do that more effective we can be.

Is it important to have the state CTR law?

Yes. Definitely. Knowing that state is behind us and DOTG when we go into businesses gives them support. It lets employers know that we are not just anybody coming in to tell them what they should do. It helps to engage with businesses and move the needle.