

DRAFT: Pierce County, Debbie Germer and Pierce Transit, Karen Henderson, Sharon Stockwell and Charmaine Riley

Friday, July 14, 11 a.m.

Interviewers: Rich Lee, Michael Wandler, Robin Rettew, Stan Suchan

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

We operate in a partnership mostly among Pierce County, City of Tacoma and Pierce Transit, We operate under the umbrella of Pierce Trips.

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

A lot of the TDM/CTR programs are staffing and time intensive. That's a huge barrier to our ability to be successful. There's so much we want to do and accomplish and we need staffing to make that happen. We are not aware of ways to minimize the need for intensive staffing. We don't have resources to do proper analysis of trip data. We struggle to figure out what will work in Pierce County, mostly a suburban setting. Better idea for downtown core. We don't have an efficient way to distribute information efficiently and cut through the noise. We have to use lots of different avenues to get information out, but don't know if we're talking to new people. Mostly trying to get to end user – it's difficult. A key barrier to a lot of CTR/TDM programs is public perception. We're working to disprove a lot of negative public perceptions, vanpooling, bicycling, etc. ETC turnover is a huge barrier. That goes along with comments about having enough time. We spend time training a new ETC, especially during survey years. They delegate the role to others after they go through a survey year. Companies don't always assign the ETC role to the correct person in the company. They often feel they have assigned the role to the right person, but when you question that employers don't feel that we're appreciating their efforts. ETCs often don't get the management support they need. Support is still top down in Pierce County. The messaging needs to be incorporated into everything. It needs to come from the governor to county executives, needs to disseminate out to economic development. More people hearing and understanding the message. It's a top down message. We can try to do grass roots and staff level up, but it's not effective here in Pierce County. We need those at the highest levels to support and talk about TDM/CTR.

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

Always behind the eight ball when it comes to technology. We could be better served by tech by can't afford to keep up with the latest and best tech. We're government, we can't react quick enough to innovate and use tech to our best advantages. We don't have the money. Until we find more efficient ways to get the message out, we'll need to use an intensive staffing approach. Another area, which is staff intensive, where we could expand would be to identify newly affected employers. We don't have the time or staff to put toward that. New employers could add new ideas and new people. New employers/markets would add new energy to the program; help buoy those that have been in the program by generating renewed interest.

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

The state could provide or facilitate a timely and consistent avenue for sharing information with other jurisdictions. We get some through TAG and WSRO, but don't have something more consistent. We get ideas – but there's no one place to go. Another thing that the state could do would be to gain permission to use grant funds on incentives and food. The Governor's Commute Smart Awards. Keep doing what you are doing now; continued state support is important and helps us be successful.

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

I don't know how our customers use them. I'd be curious to hear how other jurisdictions answer that question. We provide it to employers but we don't know what they do with it. We provide employers an executive summary, something ready to hand off to their management team. We don't know whether or not ETCs did that yet. The report is too much to digest, for a quick read. We custom produce the summary for our ETCs. Colorful. Custom. Results, compare to other sites, ideas of things they could be doing.

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

We use it to confirm compliance. Sometimes we can identify a weakness. For example, if it was a strong area for bicycling and they have no bike infrastructure we can identify that opportunity.

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

Data on Pierce Trips helps. Gets us some information about participation in statewide and local campaigns. I also set up ORCA business accounts for employers. That data is very good to see how many employers have Orca Passport accounts, how many trips, etc. We just don't have the ability to do the good analysis. We're understaffed so it just doesn't happen here. WSDOT could help us get more information out of the data.

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

Employers who provide some sort of transit or vanpool subsidy could take the next step and provide incentives for other options like carpoolers, bicyclers and walkers. We tend to provide incentives to get people's attention. It'd be nice if we could get to the place where we don't need those incentives, but we still need them as we develop better options. The federal funding issue with no gift card. We went to the transit board to use some of our funds for incentives. Saved our programs in a way. It'd be nice if we could use state dollars for incentives. When we try to measure the performance of our grant we weren't able to offer a survey incentive, which hurt response rate. This is a common practice. It would be helpful if the state could even make small changes to incentives rules, such as allowing us to offer an incentive for responding to a survey.

Is it important to have the state CTR law?

Yes. Universally. That law is the foundation, it's the reason we are able to do the work we do. Allows us to go after grant dollars. A good chunk of the work would fall to the wayside without the law. City of Tacoma alternative plan tested this. Only a certain number of Tacoma employers are affected by the alternate plan, but other employers who were really strong in the CTR program in the past haven't been as engaged. The pilot opened the door for some employers to turn from stars to silence. An unfortunate end result of the alternative program.

Did you have specific technologies in mind? I think I am mostly concerned about end-user tools. Things that would help the user connect to their options. Electronic signs at Tacoma Dome Station for arrivals and departures. Tons of different apps out there, don't know if they're the most useful. How do we incentivize people to log trips. Gamification was popular for a while. We don't even know what we should be doing but are so behind in resources we don't explore it. Marketing opportunities with tech seem like a good opportunity.

State currently provides support that we value. Money. Help with compliance issues with state agency. Wish you could give us more support. Glad to see the responsiveness from the state on updating the survey report. Wish there was more online, the Website is a lot better than it used to be. We use the Website. When we have new employers come on board I send both Pierce Trips and WSDOT links to

shore up our credibility. Anytime the state says you need to do this and backs us on it, which helps a lot. Disconnect between the board/policymakers and implementers isn't as great as it used to be but it's still there. Anything that you put online and can make available, such as online surveying. Anything that saves us time and says this is more than us, it's a state thing. Staff support is huge. We couldn't do it without you.

Feels like you have to jump through way too many hoops to get a quarter million dollars. Just set up points for doing things instead of requiring things. Public-private partnership requirement. Match dropped to ten percent. No points for how that match comes together, more points for hard dollars versus in-kind dollars. Calculation for VMT super cumbersome. Ton of administrative requirement for a small amount of money. Surprised on the fact that there may only be one or two projects chosen. Projects done quickly and get measurements quickly. Given the grant criteria, King County has a competitive edge.