



Report 08.535
Date 21 July 2008
File TP/11/01/02

Committee Regional Land Transport
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Implementation

Regional Carpool Programme

1. Purpose

To provide the Committee with information and overview of a carpool initiative that the Transport Strategy Implementation Department is exploring in order to encourage the uptake of carpooling and decrease single occupancy vehicle commuter travel in the region.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Over the years Greater Wellington has made steady progress towards implementation of a regional carpool programme. Greater Wellington initiated carpool programme projects in 2001 and 2003. These projects were unsuccessful, however, largely due to software technology capabilities and security and safety issues around the council providing a publicly accessible site. Since that time both software technology and the knowledge base around successful carpooling programmes has increased markedly. Ridematching software allows commuters to enter their journey details through a secure website and matches them with other users (work colleagues) making similar journeys.

Over the last two years, Greater Wellington has been exploring the application of a carpool programme for the region through its Travel Plan Programme for Workplaces which was launched in early 2007. The aim of introducing a regional carpool programme is two-fold; to decrease single occupancy vehicle commuter travel and to support workplace travel plans in the region.

Carpooling is most successful when used for regular, consistent journeys. The journey to work is the most common regular journey. Internationally,

carpooling with co-workers is proven to be more effective in producing greater reduction in vehicle trips and vehicle km travelled than ridesharing with family and friends. Those riding with co-workers are far more likely to consider commuting costs, comfort, and stress.¹

Research has shown that one of the main barriers to achieving a shift from solo car driving to sharing a ride is the lack of access to information about people making similar journeys. Personal safety and security of information have also been identified as key barriers for the uptake of carpooling.

Workplaces then provide a natural environment in which to provide information and measures to encourage and support solo car drivers to carpool. Carpool programmes delivered through workplaces have the potential to mitigate these issues through the use of consistent technology, information and supporting materials providing confidence to the user in the use of their information and in the pool of potential matches.

Several web-based commercial public message boards do exist in New Zealand to support carpooling but their effectiveness is limited for several reasons:

- Public message boards allow users to list journeys and browse lists to find matches. This works well on a small scale, but achieving critical mass needed to guarantee matches mean that the lists become too long to be useful.
- Public message boards don't provide any level of personal security for the user and workplaces are unlikely to encourage their employees to use them. Programmes run by and endorsed by the workplace provide users with a level of quality and assurance from the employer.
- Public message boards lack the ownership necessary to provide the supporting measures to make the matching service successful. Matching services, whether on-line or not, require supporting measures such as a Guaranteed Ride Home policy, incentives such as priority parking and ongoing marketing and communication.

4. Discussion

Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA) recently undertook a carpool pilot project through the Travelwise Workplace Travel Plan programme. The pilot, aimed at establishing the feasibility of providing carpool software to support organisations implementing travel plans, ended in June of this year. Refer to Attachment 1 for a summary of this trial.

Through the latter part of ARTA's trial, Greater Wellington contracted a consultant to investigate and assess carpool software options appearing in NZ over the last year for both Greater Wellington and ARTA.

¹ Car Pooling with Co-Workers in Los Angeles: Employer Involvement Does Make a Difference. R Young. (1995)

Four software solutions were assessed including that used within ARTA's trial. One, RidePro, presented the best overall solution in terms of the following factors:

- Experience and history of solution in the marketplace
- Pricing
- Solution package on offer
- Comprehensive and robust instant matching capability
- Established relationships
- Professionalism of vendor representative
- Timeliness of response to questions and emails
- Availability of a working demo of the solution.

Based on a demonstration, the preferred software option proved to be far more robust than that used in ARTA's trial with far superior matching abilities, a better user interface and more features and functionality in addition to sophisticated reporting modules.

It should be noted that software plays only small role in developing a successful carpool programme. Conclusions from the ARTA trial and research into other carpool programmes internationally have identified four key factors for success.

Firstly, software is only as good as the numbers that are registered and the quality of the matches. Ride matching software typically works for high density areas and may not be the right tool for small individual organisations. Intranet bulletins, bulletin boards and other existing communication tools, partnered with meet and greet events are in some cases all that are required.

Secondly, car pooling is a very interpersonal activity. It is essential that any technical solution be backed up by a process of meet and greets (eg. carpool morning teas, workshops, "lunch and learns") and other events where individuals can meet potential carpool partners. Third, a key element of any successful carpool programme is driven by marketing and communication – getting the word out there. A large proportion of the cost of successful carpool schemes is promotion and marketing.

Finally, carpooling is more likely to be successful when incentives are available. Setting up attractive incentive programmes go hand in hand with marketing carpool schemes. Possible incentives include reduced cost or free parking, priority parking, or reward programmes.

Based on these key factors, Greater Wellington's approach to a regional programme will differ from ARTA's in that the programme will be available to all businesses in the region wishing to register, not just those developing workplace travel plans. Particular emphasis, however, will be to target those large employment sites, or high density employment areas where public

transport or active mode options are constrained and where a large proportion of staff drive solo to work.

Employer clusters will also be established with groups of workplaces in close proximity thereby expanding the pool of registrants and potential matches. Registrants will have the ability to match with staff from just their own organisation as well as with those from other registered organisations. This offers a level of security for individuals, and the organisations in the clusters, providing opportunities for matching individuals with others whom did not know they lived close to each other or that they travelled the same route everyday.

5. Next Steps

It is anticipated we will launch a regional carpool programme in mid-March 2009.

Over the next six months officers will finalise software implementation and develop an administration process for the council and organisations involved in the programme.

In addition, resources to support organisations including guidance documents and marketing tools and templates that organisations can use within their own carpooling schemes will be developed.

Officers will also work with Corporate Communications and have sought assistance from New Zealand Transport Agency marketing and education to develop and deploy an appropriate marketing and communications plan.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1: Summary of ARTA Carpool Programme Trial