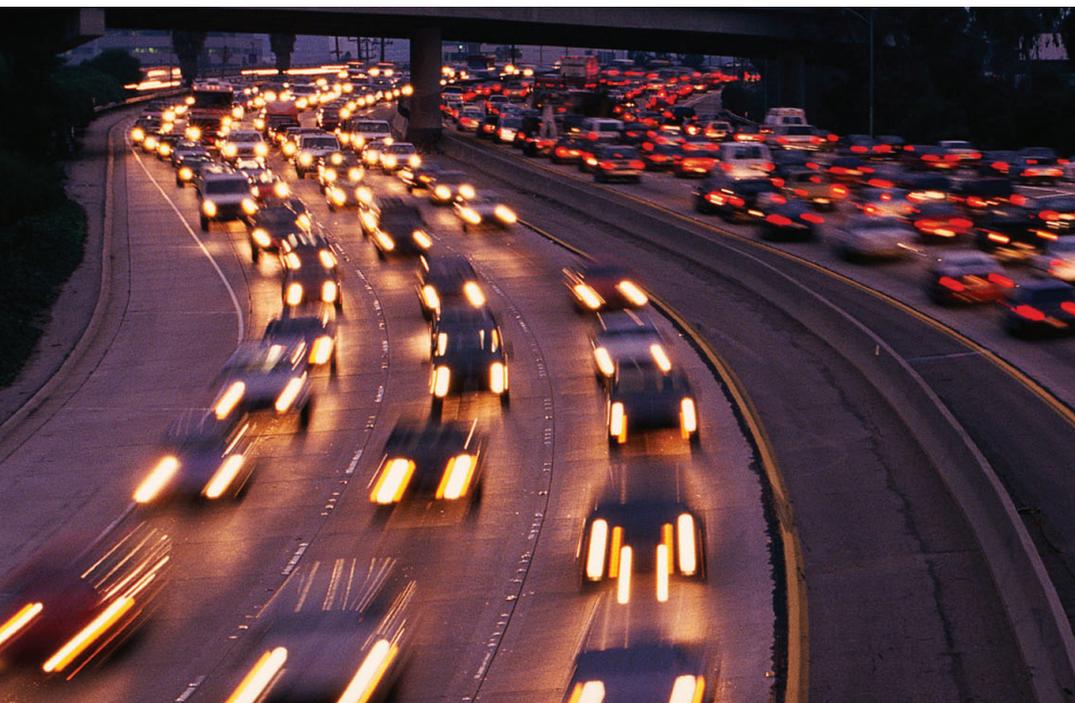




# GUARANTEED RIDE HOME PROGRAM EVALUATION • 2011

FINAL REPORT

JUNE 2012





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PROGRAM UPDATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the 2011 Alameda County Transportation Commission (CTC) Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program Evaluation. It provides an analysis of how well the program achieved its goals of reducing the number of trips Alameda County commuters took to work in 2011. It also includes a review of the program's operations and compares the results of the program in 2011 to previous years. The evaluation provides information about:

1. The program's success in increasing the use of alternative travel modes;
2. The effectiveness of the program's operations;
3. How the GRH program addressed the Alameda CTC Board concerns regarding: administrative costs, employer/employee contributions, and increased registration in south and central county;
4. Employer and employee participation in the GRH Program and rides taken in exchange for not driving solo to work; and
5. The status of Board recommendations made for the GRH program in 2011 and proposed recommendations for 2012.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Alameda County Guaranteed Ride Home gives commuters an "insurance policy" against being stranded at work if they need to make an unscheduled return trip home. By providing the assurance that commuters could get home in an emergency, GRH removes one of the greatest barriers to choosing an alternative to driving alone, addressing concerns such as, "What if I need to get home because my child is sick or I have unscheduled overtime and miss my carpool ride home?" For employees, the availability of guaranteed rides home is an incentive to find an alternative to driving alone to work and thus avoid contributing to traffic.

The Alameda County GRH program has been in operation since April 9, 1998. Over the last 14 years, the program has matured from a demonstration program with a handful of participating employers to a robust one with 4,784 registered employees and 250 active registered employers throughout Alameda County. Since it began, the GRH program has removed over 180,000 road trips per year by offering "insurance" of a ride home for registered employees when they have emergency needs that can't be met if they travel to work by an alternative mode. In 2011, 4,784 registered employees in the GRH Program took 405,000 less rides to work in their cars in

Alameda County. Of those employees, 55, or less than one percent, needed to take an emergency trip home through the GRH program. By enabling commuters to feel more comfortable choosing non-drive alone modes, GRH has an impact that goes far beyond the number of trips provided. The reduced number of solo car trips to work from those registered in the program in 2011 resulted in a savings of 11.7 million miles and a reduction of 3,300 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

The Alameda County GRH program is administered by the Alameda County Transportation Commission (CTC), whose mission is to plan, fund, and deliver a broad spectrum of transportation projects and programs to enhance mobility throughout Alameda County.<sup>1</sup> The GRH program was developed to help reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles on the road and as a means of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. As such, the program operates in conjunction with other programs that encourage individuals to travel by a means other than driving alone, such as Bike to Work Day, AC Transit EasyPass program and MTC's 511 program. The Alameda County GRH program is also promoted in conjunction with Alameda CTC's *Ride, Stride, Arrive* initiative which seeks to encourage bicycling and walking in Alameda County,<sup>2</sup> the Safe Routes to School Program, and VSPI commute vanpools. The Alameda County GRH program is funded entirely through grants from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's Transportation Fund for Clean Air.

### GRH Cost Effectiveness

By removing a critical barrier to alternative mode use, Guaranteed Ride Home made it possible to remove 405,441 one way trips during 2011, based on the data provided by our annual program survey. Dividing the annual cost of the program (\$120,000) by the number of trips reduced, results in a total cost of \$0.30 per one-way trip reduced.

## STATUS OF PROGRAM ISSUES RAISED BY ALAMEDA CTC COMMISSIONERS

In May 2011 and February 2012, the Alameda CTC Board raised the following primary concerns about the GRH program:

1. Why are the administrative costs such a high percentage of the total budget?
2. Should employers or employees contribute to the program?
3. Is the program being abused or overused by riders?
4. Can the number of registrations in South and Central Alameda County be increased?

The following section addresses the questions and requests raised by the board.

### 1. Administrative Costs

The cost-breakdown of the GRH budget includes:

- **20% - Outreach and Promotional efforts:** One of the main goals of the Alameda County GRH Program is to educate and encourage Alameda County employees to share a

<sup>1</sup> The Alameda CTC is a newly-formed countywide transportation agency, resulting from a merger of the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACOMA) and the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA). The merger was completed in February 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Ride Stride Arrive* is funded by Measure B, Alameda County's half-cent transportation sales tax, administered by the Alameda County Transportation Commission.

ride to work or use a more sustainable means of traveling than driving a vehicle alone. It is important to build awareness of the GRH program to encourage commuters to try a commute mode other than a single-occupant vehicle. To the extent possible, the program leverages these resources by relying on participating employers to promote the GRH program internally and by seeking co-marketing opportunities with local transit agencies and with organizations. The following is a list of outreach and promotional efforts performed in 2011:

- Focused marketing efforts to businesses located along transit corridors in the County, such as International Boulevard, Telegraph Avenue, San Pablo Avenue, Mission Boulevard, and Dublin Boulevard.
- Worked with business parks throughout the county to promote the program to employers and employees
- Worked with 511 Regional Rideshare, Enterprise and VSPI Vanpool programs, Chambers of Commerce, local transit agencies, etc. to help promote the GRH program through partnerships and marketing
- Contacted current employer participants to further promote the program to non-participants and distributed brochures to employers
- Performed outreach to current employers and employees to encourage the use of rental cars as a more convenient and cost effective alternative to taking a taxicab for longer trips
- Attended employer commuter fairs to promote program to employees
- Encouraged employers to promote the program using email blast announcements to employees not registered with the program
- **20% - Administration Costs:** General administrative tasks are required of any program. In the case of GRH, administration includes management of our participant database, distribution of trip vouchers, and managing contracts with taxi operators and rental car facilities. Day-to-day administrative tasks performed by Nelson\Nygaard include:
  - Customer Service: Answering the GRH hotline and responding to messages and emails
  - Participant Enrollment: Entering new participants into the GRH database, sending all the necessary materials to participants, following up with participants who have provided incomplete information, enrolling new employers
  - Database Management: Tracking vouchers, updating employee and employer information as needed
  - Answering Marketing Requests: Responding to requests for additional marketing materials and attending onsite events
  - Managing taxicab and rental car contracts: Monitoring taxi cab and car rental usage, reviewing all receipts, invoices, and vouchers for taxicab and car rental services, reviewing quality of service, and ensuring payment of service
- **15% - Direct Costs:** Includes the cost of all rides taken (taxi and car rental), as well as travel to work sites for community events, printing, office supplies, postage and telephone costs.
- **15% - Maintenance of Website & Updates to Program Materials:** The GRH website is consistently updated to provide seamless service to GRH employers and

employees. The database was updated to interface the online registration form with an online database, which made it easier to employers and employees to enroll in the program. It also reduced the amount of administrative time spent entering data. The GRH website and program materials are being updated to include a new logo and look consistent with Alameda CTC's look and branding. The rebranding effort provided GRH staff an opportunity to develop new program materials that will require less paperwork to be sent to program participants. In turn, this will reduce costs and time spent distributing program materials.

- **10% - Annual Employee/Employer Survey:** Nelson\Nygaard administers the annual survey to all program participants to measure program performance. The goal of the survey is to quantify the benefits of the GRH program such as number of single occupancy vehicles removed from the road, to determine the commute profile of participants, including distance and number of days they would have traveled without the program, and to assess participant satisfaction with the service. The annual survey also offers the opportunity to update the database and update employer and employee information.
- **10% - Draft and Final Annual Evaluation Report:** The annual evaluation is a key element of the GRH program. A thorough evaluation identifies lessons learned over the year and includes recommendations for improving the program and expanding its reach. The evaluation report reviews all program aspects over the calendar year, presents employer and employee survey results, and quantifies program benefits. The Annual Evaluation report is submitted to the Alameda CTC for approval and revised as needed.
- **10% - Monthly reporting to the Alameda CTC:** Monthly reports are sent to the Alameda CTC detailing program use in the month, updates to recommendations made in the previous calendar year, and any issues or problems encountered.

### **GRH Program Changes and Cost Efficiencies**

Numerous program changes and efficiencies have been made in 2011, which have allowed the GRH program to grow and operate more efficiently. These changes, which are described in more detail throughout the report, include:

- **Online registration for employers and employees.** Online registration has reduced the amount of administrative time associated with running the GRH program and has made it easier for employers and employees to enroll in the program. In 2010, the database was updated to interface the online registration form with an online database. In 2011, nearly all new employers and employees completed their enrollment applications online. Once an employee or employer fills out the registration form online, it is automatically entered into the GRH database in real time — eliminating the need for GRH staff to re-enter the same information. This change not only saves staff time, but it also allows new registrants to be enrolled in the system more easily and efficiently. An automatic email is sent to new applicants when they register that directs them to the liability waiver form. Time saved from data entry was spent on marketing and website updates to encourage more Alameda County employees to join the program.
- **Employer log-in.** New database updates allow employer representatives to log-in and access a list of the employees from their company who are enrolled in the GRH program. This allows the employer representative to update employee contact information and indicate which employees have left the company. It also provides valuable information to employers about the commute behavior of their employees. This new feature has allowed

employer representatives to be more involved with employee enrollment at their company and has also helped save program administration time.

- **Increased use and awareness of the car rental requirement.** Rental car use accounted for 42% of all rides in 2011. Fifty-eight percent of surveyed employees stated that they were aware of the rental car requirement in 2011. This is an increase from 2009, when 41% of participants were aware of the requirement and 2010, when 51% were aware of this requirement. This increase shows that outreach efforts increased the level of awareness about the car rental requirement and saved the program money by encouraging longer trips to be made with a rental car instead of a taxi. Due to the rental program requirement and outreach about it, the program realized an estimated savings of approximately \$1,350 on ride costs in 2011.

The program changes and updates in 2010 and 2011 have allowed the GRH program to grow and operate more efficiently without increasing the overall program budget. The result is the lowest cost per eliminated auto trip in the program's history.

## 2. Employer/Employee Contributions

In response to the Alameda CTC Board's concerns about employers or employees contributing towards funding for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, GRH staff developed a technical memorandum that investigated potential methods to introduce a participant fee for program users. This memo, shown in Appendix B, analyzed various methods of instituting a fee program and determined their estimated impacts on the program in terms of participation, revenues, and costs. Based on the analysis, two methods were developed for collecting participant fees. The first would require new participants to pay an up-front fee upon enrolling in the program. The second would request a fee from participants each time a new voucher was requested (this would also include new enrollees as well as current enrollees that have taken a ride and need a new, replacement voucher). Based on the potential revenues from employee fees and estimated costs to administer the fee, it was found that the amount of revenue that would be collected from participants would either balance or not fully cover the operational costs of collecting and accounting for those funds. When factoring in start-up costs, potential financial reporting costs, and loss of program participants, both proposals would actually cost the program more than the estimated revenue that would be generated with the fees. In addition, based on three years of surveys, the changes would result in significant program attrition which would conflict with overall goals of reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Therefore, GRH staff recommends against charging a fee for this program, particularly while grant funds are available to cover the cost of the program. Charging a fee should be reconsidered if the program becomes part of a larger TDM program following recommendations of the Countywide TDM Plan expected to be completed in 2014. This is consistent with other programs throughout the U.S. that offer a suite of commute benefit programs.

Employer fees were not considered as an alternative to employee fees for several reasons: 1) employees are the main beneficiaries of the program, 2) employer surveys show a high rate of attrition should a fee be charged, 3) employers volunteer staff time to serve as liaison in promoting and administering the program at their employment, 4) the GRH is a stand-alone commute benefit program, unlike other programs with employer fees throughout the U.S., 5) employers are not required to participate by state legislation or local ordinances, as in other programs with employer fees, and 6) the economic climate does not support employer fees, with several large employers leaving the GRH program as they have left Alameda County or reduced their staff.

### 3. Program use

A total of 4,784 employees and 250 employers located in Alameda County were registered in the GRH program in 2011. In exchange for registering in the GRH Program and agreeing not to drive alone to work for one or more days per week, each registrant is eligible for up to six free emergency rides per year. Although each registered participant may take up to six rides in a one-year period, the rate that guaranteed rides are taken is very low. Most program participants (92%) do not ever take a guaranteed ride home. For example, for the year 2011, a total of 28,704 potential rides could have been taken based on a total enrollment of 4,784 employees and a maximum of six rides allowed per employee per year. However, only 55 rides were actually taken in 2011, which is less than 1% (approximately 0.19%) of potential rides. This indicates that registrants see the GRH program as an “insurance policy” and do not abuse or overuse the program, and that the security of having those trips available provides a powerful tool in assuring participants that they will not be stranded at work, removing a barrier to non-drive alone commutes. The limitation of six rides per employee per year continues to be appropriate. Very few program participants have reached the limit since the program’s inception. In 2011, the highest number of trips taken by a single participant was two.

### 4. Targeted outreach efforts to Central County and South County

Targeted outreach efforts to Central County and South County in 2011 resulted in a 33% increase in enrolled employers in Central County and a 16% increase in South County. This reflects responsiveness to the Board’s direction to specifically focus on these areas to broaden the reach and use of the GRH Program. Although the GRH program has been consistently marketed throughout Alameda County, the majority of registered employers have been located in North and East County. To encourage increased participation in South and Central Alameda County, in 2011, the GRH program focused marketing efforts on employers in these areas. In 2011, the Program Administrator contacted the chambers of commerce of Newark, San Leandro, Union City, Hayward, and Fremont and city staff from Union City and San Leandro, as well as businesses along the LINKS shuttle route in San Leandro, and school districts in south and Central County.

Location	Number of Employers		% Change
	2010	2011	
North County	126	159	26%
East County	52	57	10%
South County	19	22	16%
Central County	9	12	33%
Total	206	250	21%

## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

The program evaluation consisted of an examination of the program’s operations and outreach functions, statistics on employer and employee participation and use, data from the surveys of participating employees, and recommendations for program changes and enhancements. The following sections present the major findings from the evaluation.

Employers of all sizes located in Alameda County have been eligible to participate in the GRH program since June 2009. Prior to that time, the GRH program required an employer to have at least 75 employees to register with the program. Opening the eligibility to all employees in Alameda County coincided with an increased number of employees making the commitment to travel to work by alternative modes. The combination resulted in the program’s all time highest enrollment of 4,784 employees in 250 businesses in 2011. It has also resulted in a reduction of 405,496 one-way vehicle trips in 2011, or 3,899 vehicle roundtrips per week.<sup>3</sup> During the same year, the number of rides that were taken in the program was a record low of 55. This represents less than one percent of eligible rides that employees could have taken. It also illustrates the “insurance” nature of the program (See charts below).

Category	2011 Savings
Cost per Trip Reduced	\$0.30
Drive-alone roundtrips reduced per year	202,748
Drive-alone one-way trips reduced per year	405,496
GRH rides taken in 2011	55
Average commute distance of GRH users	30.2
Average miles saved per workday	47,100
Annual miles saved per work year	11,774,980
Tons of CO2 not released	3,300
Average U.S. vehicle fuel economy (MPG)	33.8
Average gallons of gas saved per workday	1,393.50
Annual gallons of gas saved per work year	348,372
Average gas price in 2011	\$3.83
Average dollars not spent on gas per workday	\$5,337
Annual dollars not spent on gas per work year	\$1,334,265

Fourteen years of employee and employer surveys of enrolled participants have shown that the availability of a “back-up” way to get home is often incentive enough to encourage employees not to drive alone. According to the 2011 survey results:

- 33% of participants stated that without the GRH program they would not use an alternative travel mode or would use one less frequently.
- 29% of participants stated that, with the program, they use alternative modes four or more times a week.
- 93% of respondents stated that the GRH program likely encourages participants to use alternative modes more often.
- 65% of respondents stated that the program was at least somewhat important in encouraging them to use alternative modes at least one more day per week.

In a program like GRH, increasing participation with decreasing rides taken is the goal of the program. This combination shows that while the program is effective at removing barriers to alternative mode use, the program is being used correctly as an “insurance program” and is not being used excessively. In fact, less than 1% of the potential rides available were taken by registrants in 2011.

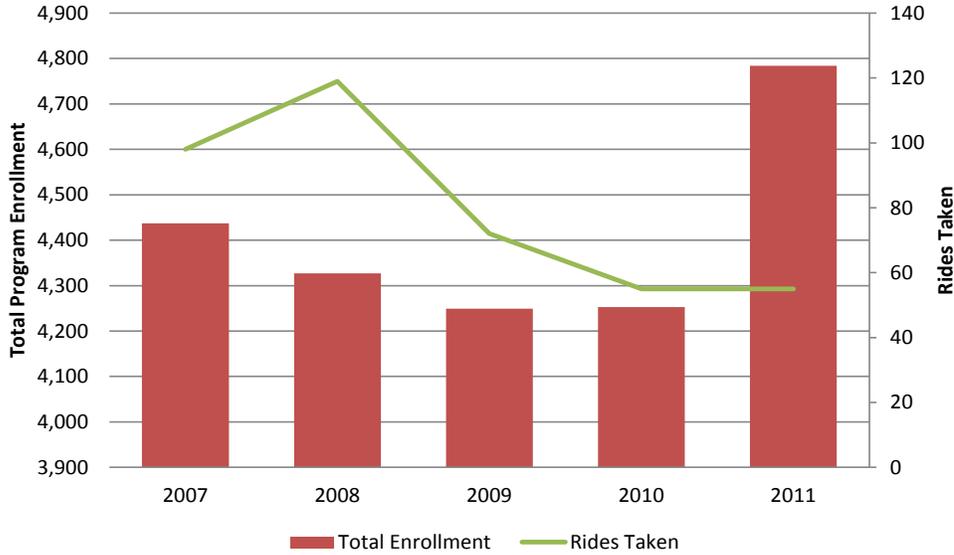
Based on the average reported commute distance by GRH participants and the number of registered participants, the GRH program eliminated approximately 11.7 million vehicle miles from roadways in 2011.<sup>4</sup> It is estimated that the program saved participants approximately \$1.3

<sup>3</sup> Based on 2011 survey results described in Chapter 4.

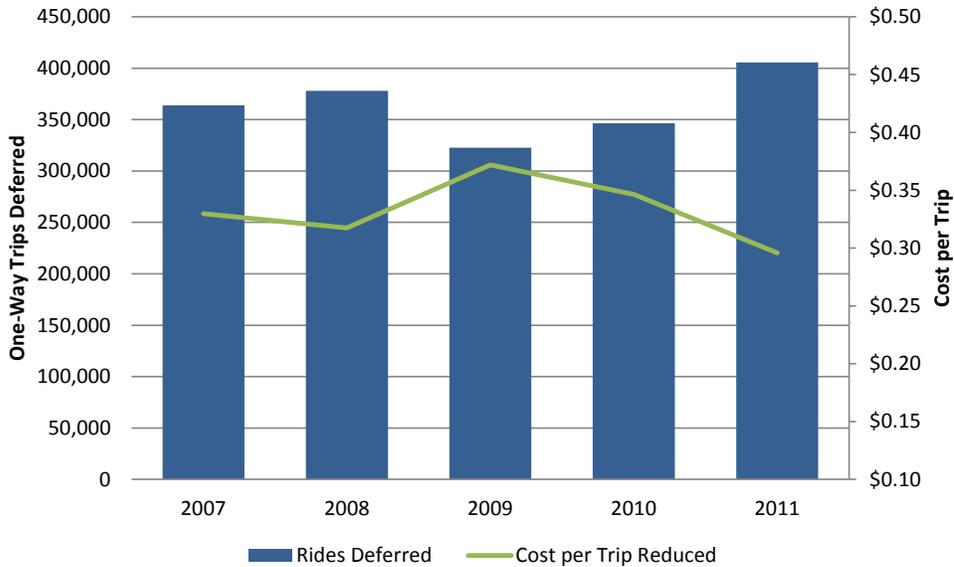
<sup>4</sup> 3,899 drive alone roundtrips per week = 7,798 one-way trips per week = 1,560 one-way trips per weekday (based on 1,560 reported reduced weekday one-way trips by participants from the annual survey, 250 days in a work year, and the average reported commute distance of 30.2 miles).

million annually on fuel expenses in 2011, which is the equivalent of saving 348,372 gallons of gas or 3,300 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>5</sup> These goals were accomplished at a cost of 30 cents per trip removed.

**GRH Annual Enrollment and Rides Taken**



**Number of Trips Deferred and Cost per Trip Reduced**



<sup>5</sup> Based on the calculated number of annual miles reduced, the annual US vehicle fuel economy reported by the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics (33.8 MPG), and the average Bay Area fuel price per gallon reported by MTC in 2011 (\$3.83)

## Employer and Employee Participation

The 2011 calendar year experienced a 78 % increase in the number of new employee registrants compared to 2010, when there were 736 employees enrolled in the program. Employee enrollment levels in 2009 and 2010 had experienced a decline due to larger companies downsizing or closing because of the recession. Current enrollment levels are similar to those seen in 2008, before the economic downturn. The total number of actively registered participants increased from 4,253 in 2010 to 4,784 in 2011. In addition, 49 new employers enrolled in the program in 2011, bringing the number of registered employers to 250. Of the 49 new employers, 33 were in companies with less than 75 employees. This represents the second largest peak in new enrollment in the program since it started. The second largest peak in new employer enrollment occurred in 2008 when 56 new employers enrolled, due to the informal partnerships the GRH program formed with the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA) and the Emeryville Transportation Management Association (TMA), as well as record high gas prices. The next highest employer enrollment took place in 2011, reflecting increased marketing efforts and the availability of the GRH program to all employers in Alameda County for the third year. In addition, on-line registration has made it easier for employers and employees to enroll in the program.

- The total number of registered participants in the program increased 12% since 2010 and the number of new employees who enrolled in the program increased by 78% compared to new enrollment in 2010. 2011 saw the largest growth in employee enrollment since before the economic downturn in 2008.
- From the program's inception in 1998 through 2011, only 1,571 rides have been taken in 14 years, or less than 1% of eligible rides.
- A total of 55 rides were taken during the 2011 calendar year, for an average of approximately five rides per month.
- Ninety-two percent of the employees enrolled have never taken one emergency ride. This demonstrates the "insurance" nature of the program and shows that participants do not abuse the program. Of the employees who have taken an emergency ride since the program inception (1998), 80% have taken only one or two rides.
- The two most common reasons to take a guaranteed ride home in 2011 were "personal illness" (25% of rides) and "unscheduled overtime" (11% of trips). Other reasons people took rides were for family member illness, personal crisis, carpool or vanpool driver had to stay late or leave early, or carpool or vanpool broke down.
- Those who carpool or vanpool are more likely to use a guaranteed ride home trip than those who use other alternative commute modes. Sixty-one percent of guaranteed rides home were used by car- and vanpoolers.

## Program Savings

- The average trip distance decreased by 6% in 2011 compared to 2010. The average trip distance for all trips in 2011 was 32.1 miles.
- The average taxi trip distance declined 27% to 20.1 miles and the average rental car trip distance increased 25% to approximately 65.9 miles.
- Since car rental trips are charged by flat fee, their increase in mileage helped contribute towards cost savings for the program. This trend demonstrates that most GRH

participants are using taxis for trips that are 20 miles or less and are using rental cars for trips greater than 20 miles.

- The average trip cost—for both cab and rental cars-- was \$68.84. Due to the high use of rental cars for long trips during this time, this trip cost is lower than the \$77.36 it would have been had all trips been taken by cab. For distances greater than 20 miles, rental cars are more cost effective for the program than taxicabs.
- The cost of a rental car trip is \$55.00. Savings from using rental cars totaled approximately \$1,337 in 2011. The 23 rental cars used in 2011 represent nearly half (42%) of all trips taken in 2011.

## Employee Survey

The 2011 survey was distributed and completed by registered employees primarily online. Of the 4,784 employee registrants currently in the database, 918 surveys were completed, resulting in a 19% response rate. This represents a 5% increase in the response rate from 2010 (14%). Respondents represent 85 different employers throughout the county or 45% of all active employers that have one or more employees registered with the program.

New questions were added to the employee survey this year about the perceived value of the program and different ways to market it. The goal of these questions was to determine the level of interest in the program if employers are required to pay a fee to participate in the future. Another goal was to determine effective ways to market the program. The results of the survey are described below.

“GRH was critical to my decision to use the ACE train at my previous job, since it ran only two trains each day.”  
Mizuho OSI Employee, Union City.

## Use of Alternative Modes

The GRH program continues to be successful in encouraging the use of alternative modes. According to 2011 survey responses:

- When asked how important GRH was in their decision to stop driving alone, 65% of respondents who used to drive alone said that it was at least somewhat important.
- A very high number (93%) of respondents stated that they think that the GRH program encourages people to use alternative modes more often. If the GRH program were not available, 33% of respondents reported that they would no longer or less frequently use an alternative mode of transportation.
- After joining the GRH program, respondents using alternative modes four or five days per week increased by 29%. The number of respondents driving alone five days per week dropped from 24% to 7%.
- These survey findings were used to extrapolate

“Although I have yet to use this service, being a single mom, it’s nice to know I have that voucher should something happen at home. Thank you!” Valley Care Health Systems Employee, Livermore.

the impact of the program on the travel behavior of all participants. The program reduces an estimated 3,899 single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips per week or 202,748 roundtrips per year.<sup>6</sup>

- Commute distances of program enrollees are generally 50 miles or less (84%). Over half (54%) are between 10 and 39 miles.
- Most program participants travel to work during the peak commute hours of 7-9 AM in the morning (65%) and 4-6 PM in the evening (73%).

## Customer Service Ratings

The annual evaluation survey includes two questions to evaluate the participant's level of satisfaction with the customer service provided in the program. Additional information on service satisfaction is collected in the survey that participants return after they have taken a ride.

- The administrative functions of the GRH program continued to receive very high ratings for the quality of customer service, which is consistent with previous years' evaluations.
- In 2011, more than two-thirds of respondents rated "clarity of information" as "excellent" or "good." Of those respondents who had called the GRH Hotline, "hotline assistance" received a combined "excellent" or "good" rating of 90%. These numbers are very similar to 2010 results.

"When I called for a question, the staff was respectful and very helpful."  
Kaiser Permanente Employee,  
Oakland.

## Program Value

Employees were asked if they would be willing to pay a usage fee for every ride home taken (e.g., a fee equaling up to 25% of the total cost of the taxi or rental car).

- Forty-three percent of participants said they were not sure if they would continue participating in the GRH program if they had to pay a usage fee and 23% said they would no longer participate in the GRH program if they had to pay a usage fee. Thirty-four percent said they would be willing to pay a usage fee, which is a 1% decrease in willingness to pay compared to last year, when 35% said they would be willing to pay.

"GRH is an important and progressive program. GRH is valuable to me because of the assurance it provides that I have access to a car in an emergency. The only way to decrease vehicular traffic is to provide services that make the reasons for driving fewer and fewer, and GRH is doing vital work toward this end." Broadlane Employee, Oakland.

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<sup>6</sup>Using the data gathered on the frequency of alternative mode use, an estimate can be generated for the total number of drive-alone trips replaced by alternative mode trips for those enrolled in the GRH program. Figure 4-8 in Chapter 4 shows the percentage of respondents for each frequency category before and after joining the program. The total number of people in each category is then extrapolated based on the total 2011 program enrollment of 4,784 people. The number of roundtrips per week is calculated using the frequency and number of people in each category. Based on this analysis, approximately 3,899 drive-alone roundtrips or 7,798 drive-alone one-way trips per week were replaced by alternative mode trips by those who joined the program. 7,798 drive-alone on-way trips per week X 52 weeks = 405,496 trips per year.

## Employer Survey

In 2011, the program gained 49 new employers, representing a total of 736 employees, while losing only 4 employers. Participant losses were concentrated at employers that relocated outside of Alameda County. Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream relocated its Oakland office to Walnut Creek in 2011. Agilysys closed its Emeryville facility at the end of 2011 and all employees were either relocated outside of Alameda County or now work from home. Similarly, the Clorox Company closed its Oakland branch and all employees have been moved to its Pleasanton location. The Clorox Pleasanton branch is already enrolled in the GRH program and all new employees were introduced to GRH at a Welcome Event in Pleasanton.

Of the 250 employers currently enrolled in the program, 56 surveys were completed, resulting in a 22% response rate. New questions were added to the employer survey this year about the perceived value of the program and different ways to market it. The goal of these questions was to determine the level of interest in the program if employers are required to pay a fee in the future. In addition, employers were asked how to more effectively market the program to employees.

### Use of Alternative Modes

- The survey asked the employer representatives how important the program is in encouraging employees to use alternative commute modes more often. A large majority (84%) reported that they feel participation in the program at least somewhat encourages more alternative mode use.<sup>7</sup>
- Most employers reported that they provide some type of commuter benefits in addition to GRH. The most popular programs are bicycle parking and Commuter Checks.

“Since my one-way commute on public transit takes significantly longer than it would take to drive, GRH is a huge psychological boost that keeps me using public transit. I've never used it [the GRH Program], but I feel so much more secure knowing I can get home quickly in an emergency.” *Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Employee, Livermore.*

### Program Management

- The survey asked respondents how long they have managed the program for their company. In 2011, 73% of respondents have been with GRH for one or more years, compared to 77% in 2010 and only 57% in 2008. Thirteen percent of employer representatives have managed the program for less than six months.
- All employer contact respondents stated that their GRH workload is either “manageable” or that they “could do more work if needed.” No employer contacts stated that it was too much work.
- A large majority of employers (74%) inform their new employees about the GRH program and market the program as an employee benefit.
- One of the important features of the program is the instant enrollment voucher, which allows persons not registered in the program to enroll and immediately receive a guaranteed ride home in case of emergencies. Eighty-eight percent of employer representatives stated that they have never issued an instant enrollment voucher, a

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<sup>7</sup> Employers were asked whether they thought that the GRH Program encourages employees to use alternative commute modes more often. Employers did not take a poll or individual survey of their registered employees.

higher number than 2010, when 82% of respondents stated that they had not issued an instant enrollment voucher.

### Customer Service Ratings

The survey includes two questions to evaluate the employer representatives' level of satisfaction with the customer service provided with the program in 2011.

- The administrative functions of the GRH program received very high ratings for the quality of customer service, which is consistent with the employee survey results. Eighty percent of respondents stated that the clarity of information is either "excellent" or "good." Of those who have used the GRH Hotline, all respondents stated that the service they received was "excellent" or "good."
- When asked how employers find answers to questions they may have, 71% indicated they use the GRH website (69% on their computer, 2% on their phone). Twenty-one percent said they call the GRH hotline.

### Marketing and Outreach

- Employer representatives were asked how they market the GRH program to their employees and to provide their opinion on different strategies that would be effective in marketing the GRH program to new participants.
- Most employers indicated that they make periodic companywide announcements. Twenty-four percent of employers said they use email blasts or include information in company newsletters, and 26% include information on the GRH program as part of their employee benefits orientation for new employees. Thirteen percent of employer representatives said they rely on word of mouth to market the GRH program to their employees.
- Thirty-seven percent of employers felt that internal marketing through the employer contact is the most effective marketing strategy. Nearly a third of respondents felt that a referral program (refer a friend, enter for a prize) can help market the GRH program to new participants. Twenty percent of respondents felt that transportation fairs and onsite outreach were the best forms of marketing, and 11% thought social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+) could be useful for informing employees about the GRH program.

"I send emails to all employees suggesting that they sign up." *The College Preparatory School Employer Representative, Oakland.*

### Rental Car Awareness

Starting in 2007, the annual survey started asking employer representatives about their awareness of the rental car recommendation for rides over 20 miles and requirement for rides over 50 miles for non-emergency rides.

- The majority (81%) of employer representatives stated that they were aware of the requirement. In 2007, less than half of employer representatives knew about the rental car requirement; in 2008, 69% of employers knew about the requirement; in 2009, 72% of employers knew about the requirement; and last year, 79% of employer representatives knew about the rental car requirement. This shows that marketing outreach has increased awareness of the rental car requirement. As awareness of the rental car

requirement for long-distance non-emergency trips increased, so did rental car usage (see Program Savings).

### Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Usage Fee

Employer representatives were asked which (if any) TDM benefits they would be interested in offering their employees. A follow-up question asked how likely their organization would be to continue with the GRH program if there were a nominal fee each time an employee used the service. They were told that the service fee could be up to 25% of the total cost of the taxi or rental car ride.

- Employers were most interested in offering Commuter Checks and free or discounted transit passes to their employees. The results are similar to the 2010 evaluation.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents stated that their continued participation would be “very unlikely” or “unlikely” if the program charged a usage fee. Thirty-nine percent of employers thought that their participation would either be “very likely” or “likely.” This is a 4% increase in willingness to pay from last year, when only 35% stated that their participation would either be “very likely” or “likely.”

### Program Value

The employer survey asked questions specifically addressing the perceived value of the GRH program compared to other transportation benefits offered at the participant’s workplace.

- Over half of respondents (55%) stated that they thought that their employees value the GRH program as much as or more than other transportation benefits offered by their employer.
- Twenty percent of respondents stated that their employer does not offer any other transportation benefits.

“This is one of the best programs seen to encourage commuting on transit.”  
*Doric Group of Companies Employer Representative, Alameda.*

## GUARANTEED RIDE HOME 2012 RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, the Alameda CTC has continued to be successful in changing Alameda County employees’ mode choice for work commutes from driving alone to using alternative transportation modes. Data from this year’s participant survey indicate that the program is continuing to reduce the number of drive-alone trips made within the county by eliminating one of the significant barriers to alternative mode use – namely, the fear of being unable to return home in the event of an emergency or unplanned overtime.

The 2012 Guaranteed Ride Home recommendations are based on an evaluation of the program issues raised by the Alameda CTC Board, and the following funding and schedule considerations:

- Current TFCA funding for the GRH Program has been approved by the Air District and Alameda CTC Board through November 2013;
- The next TFCA funding cycle is 2013 to 2015;
- Alameda CTC plans to prepare a Countywide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan, which is expected to be complete with recommendations in 2014. The TDM

Plan will include recommendations for the Alameda CTC's role in the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, as well as other countywide TDM strategies that aim to reduce vehicle trips and greenhouse gas emissions, and comply with the Congestion Management Plan, AB32 and SB 375.

**2012 GRH Program Recommendations:**

**For current TFCA-funded GRH Program through November 2013**

1. Continue operating and evaluating the program with administrative and outreach cost efficiencies, including:
  - a. **Initiate** new program efficiencies, such as updating the website to include links to alternative travel modes, establishing online ride vouchers, and use social media
  - b. **Educate and encourage** use of the GRH program throughout the County, regardless of employer size, with a focus on increasing registration in South and Central county
  - c. **Continue operating and supporting existing program** registrants and monitoring effectiveness of program, including for its appropriate usage
  - d. **Explore changes in policy** to reduce barriers to using the program such as requiring employees to register through employers, improving methods of signing up employers, and increasing use of the program by transit users.

**Prior to submitting an application for 2013-2015 TFCA funding**

2. Submit recommendations for next steps for the GRH program, subject to approval by Board, which could include:
  - a. **Continue** the GRH program with cost efficiencies (see 1a) or
  - b. **Include** the GRH program in a countywide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program administered by Alameda CTC. The TDM Plan should include funding recommendations including a review of employer or employee fees for a combined alternative commute incentives program. Implementation of recommendations would be initiated after the TDM Plan is complete (2014).
  - c. **Consolidate the program into a regional program or combine with other counties**, subject to interest and funding of regional or countywide agencies, or
  - d. **Phase out the program** with 250 businesses and 4,784 employees countywide and recommend other specific ways and funding to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions in Alameda County.

More detailed recommendations for 2012 are discussed below.

**Existing GRH Program with TFCA funding approved by Board through November 2013:**

- 1a) **Initiate new program efficiencies, such as updating website to include links to alternative travel modes, establishing online ride vouchers, and using social media.**

New program efficiencies should be initiated in 2012-2013, including:

- *Update website content and links for easy online use and access to other websites with alternative transportation modes, such as transit, carpool, and bicycle and pedestrian routes.* To increase awareness and use of the GRH program, the website should provide easy access for employees in Alameda County to gather information about their commute options. The updated GRH website can contain a page with links and information on multi-modal support including carpool, vanpool, bike, walk, and transit in Alameda County. This information can be used by employer representatives to promote commuting options for their employees. It can also be used for new employee orientations to help guide employees exploring a variety of commuting options. Providing this type of information will help ensure that the GRH program is understood in the context of overall commuting options rather than just a stand-alone commute alternatives program in Alameda County.
- *If feasible, set up a system for online vouchers for those registered in program.* Online vouchers can be helpful to reduce the amount of administrative time spent mailing packets to registered users. Currently, most information is mailed to users, including vouchers and follow-up surveys when a ride is taken. A great deal of administrative time can be reduced if these tasks become automated and available online.
- *Initiate a social media marketing campaign to promote the GRH program to employers and employees throughout Alameda County.* Social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, are commonly used by other programs and services in Alameda County, including Alameda County Safe Routes to School Program, Oakland Broadway Shuttle, BART, and Alameda Harbor Bay Ferry. In addition, many large and small employers use social media to announce community events, such as Transportation and Health Fairs. Social media tools would help marketing and co-marketing efforts become more effective, allowing GRH to promote events in Alameda County and stay in communication with major employers and other program partners. The social media campaign would be coordinated with Alameda CTC's initiation of social media.

**1b) Focus new marketing on increasing awareness of the availability of the GRH Program to all employers in Alameda County, regardless of size; and continue to expand the program's reach to underserved areas, such as South and Central County. This includes using creative outreach and education strategies, such as co-marketing.** (Complementary social media and website update recommendations are included in number 1a, above).

*Targeted Outreach:*

- *Encourage Small Businesses:* In February 2009, the employer size requirement was eliminated and the GRH program became available to any employer in the county, regardless of size. It is recommended to continue to increase program awareness among smaller businesses in Alameda County in order to further encourage mode shifts from driving alone to alternative forms of transportation. This can be accomplished through cost-effective measures such as working with partner agencies to further co-marketing efforts and using social media.
- *Encourage South and Central County Participation:* Educate and encourage use of the GRH program throughout the County with a focus on increasing registration in South and Central county. See Outreach Methods, below.

*Cost Savings Message:*

- *Educate enrollees about Car Rental Requirement:* Outreach should continue to inform new employers and employees about the car rental requirement for rides over 50 miles. This effort should include continuing to telephone and email participants who used the program for non-emergency rides and live over 50 miles from their workplace to remind the participant of the program requirement, and attaching reminders to all vouchers about the requirement.

*Outreach Methods:*

- *Varied Outreach:* GRH staff should continue to work with chambers of commerce and create press releases to advertise the change in the program and continue to form partnerships with TMAs and business associations to more effectively market the program to all employers regardless of size. Additional outreach strategies can include: local newspapers, newsletters, magazines, radio ads, and community fairs.
- *Co-marketing* is based on developing partnerships with agencies whose missions are similar to GRH and who seek to encourage the use of sustainable transportation in Alameda County. Co-marketing efforts not only expand the reach of GRH marketing efforts in a cost-effective manner, they help present GRH as a service that complements alternative modes of transportation. These efforts include continuing and expanding collaboration with partner agencies, such as the Alameda CTC Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, Alameda CTC Safe Routes to School Program, East Bay Bicycle Coalition, 511, VSPI commute vanpools, and AC Transit EasyPass Program, to expand the reach of GRH marketing efforts in a cost-effective manner. With GRH's recent rebranding, new marketing materials can be developed for use at marketing events.

**1c) Continue to manage the existing program, provide customer support and services, and monitor and report program use and effectiveness.**

- *Ensure ongoing efficient operations* with excellent service for registered employers and employees. This includes maintaining the database, monitoring the requirement for employees to use rental cars for non-emergency rides greater than 50 miles, monitoring appropriate usage of rides, managing agreements and invoices with cab companies and car rental agencies, and maintaining the website, as needed.
- *Employee and employer surveys* should be completed as part of the annual program evaluation report. The surveys for the 2012 evaluation should be scheduled for late January/early February 2013.

**Prior to submitting an application for 2013-2015 TFCA funding**

**2. Submit recommendations for next steps for the GRH program, subject to approval by Board, which could include one or more of the following:**

- a) Continue** the GRH program with cost efficiencies (see 1a, above).
- b) Include the GRH program as part of a countywide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program** administered by Alameda CTC, in coordination with implementing recommendations proposed the Alameda CTC's Countywide TDM Plan. Recommendations should include a review of employer or employee fees for a combined alternative commute incentives program. Implementation of recommendations would be initiated after the TDM Plan is complete (2014). The Final Draft Countywide Transportation Plan includes a

recommendation for Alameda CTC to prepare a Countywide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. The TDM Plan will review several TDM strategies and recommend Alameda CTC's role in their implementation in compliance with the Congestion Management Plan, AB 32, SB375 and regional and local goals and policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. As part of this effort, the GRH Program will be reviewed as a TDM program that encourages alternative travel modes during commutes. A recommendation will be made regarding the role of Alameda CTC GRH program as a possible part of a larger TDM commute strategy and possible funding alternatives that could be used, including the feasibility of initiating employer or employee fees.

**c) Consolidate the program into a regional program or combine with other counties**, subject to interest and funding of regional or countywide agencies.

- Staff should meet with MTC and regional Congestion Management Agencies implementing GRH programs and determine the feasibility, interest and fund sources to combine Alameda County's GRH program with one or more county programs or MTC's 511 program.

**d) Phase out the program** with 250 businesses and 4,784 employees countywide and recommend other specific ways and funding to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions in Alameda County.

- *Determine the procedures, cost and schedule of phasing out the Alameda County GRH program*, including, and not limited to, contacting the 250 employers and approximately 4,700 employees registered in the program, determining a system to invalidate remaining ride vouchers, changing the website and materials.