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## Cash for Commuters Travel Survey

### Overview

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, sponsors the evaluation of Atlanta transportation demand management (TDM) programs. TDM programs are designed to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. The Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) conducted the Cash for Commuters Survey to assess travel behavior changes associated with the incentive program and to estimate travel and emission reductions generated by program participants.

The Cash for Commuters (CFC) program, the first regional commuter based incentive program administered by The Clean Air Campaign, encourages drive alone commuters to switch to an alternative. Commuters earn up to \$180 cash over a 90-day period, or \$3 for each day they use a commute alternative.

### Methodology

A total of 302 CFC program participants completed the random telephone survey in early August 2003. The overall confidence level for the survey is +/- 4.95% in 95 out of 100 cases (95% confidence level).

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The CFC \$3 a day incentive program was effective in encouraging commuters to begin and continue using commute alternatives. Seven in ten (71%) survey respondents continued to use their primary commute alternative three to six months after the program ended. The high rate of respondents who continued using an alternative mode suggests it is unnecessary to contact participants immediately after their enrollment period to determine if they need further assistance to maintain commute alternative use. However, providing additional information to participants at program enrollment that will encourage continued alternative mode use may be helpful. For example, providing participants information about how to find a new carpool partner or information on other commuting alternatives would be helpful in instances when participants lose their carpool partner following completion of the program.

About one-quarter (28%) of survey respondents stopped using their primary commute alternative after participating in the CFC program, discontinuing use on average after seven weeks. The majority of respondents indicated that outside circumstances, such as changes in schedules or work locations (50%) or the loss of a carpool partner (36%), were the primary reasons they reduced or stopped using it.

Nearly half of the respondents (45%) stated the incentive played a factor in their decision to start using a commute alternative. Receiving a financial incentive was one of several factors respondents considered before deciding to make a commute change. Factors such as a desire to save money (30%) and finding a carpool partner (23%) were also considered.

#### *Factors Individuals Considered Before Making a Commute Change...*

1. CFC \$3 a Day Incentive	45%
2. Saving Money	30%
3. Finding a Carpool Partner	23%
4. Stressful Driving Situations	12%
5. Traveling on Congested Corridors	11%



Many CFC participants were on the verge of trying a commute alternative.

Nearly one-third (30%) of respondents said they would have been “very likely” to start using a commute alternative without the CFC program, while 54% said they would have been “somewhat likely.” These findings suggest many CFC participants were on the verge of trying a commuting alternative and that the CFC incentive was the final prompt needed before making a change.

About 27% of the survey participants typically used a commute alternative at least one day per week prior to their participation in the incentive program. Program guidelines prohibit commuters from participating in the CFC program if they already use a commute alternative as a typical means for traveling to work. The prior use of alternative modes before enrolling in the program may be attributed to commuters misinterpreting program rules or participants providing false information. As such, program coordinators should continue to carefully check the accuracy of travel applications and logs submitted by participants. It also may be necessary to improve the education of employer supervisors about eligibility criteria. On a positive note, these participants did show a willingness to try different commute alternatives, with only 7% continuing to use the commute alternative they were using before they enrolled in the program. This finding suggests the CFC program increased commuters’ awareness of commuting alternatives and made them more receptive to using a range of alternative modes.

#### **Post-Enrollment Travel and Air Quality Emission Reductions**

As of August 2003, approximately 1,800 commuters participating in the CFC program had been placed in alternative commute modes. These commuters are eliminating 1,290 vehicle trips and 30,400 vehicle miles per day. As a result, two harmful ozone causing pollutants—oxides of Nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)—are also being reduced. Reductions achieved on a daily basis are .033 tons of NO<sub>x</sub> and .038 tons of VOC.

For more information, visit  
the Resource Library at  
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The Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) is a membership based non-profit leading efforts to develop, demonstrate, and educate the public about clean transportation technologies.

