

## COSTS AND BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH WSDOT CTR PROGRAMS

**Introduction.** Washington has sought to reduce commute trips to the workplace in 9 of the state's most populous counties. Such a reduction is sought to ameliorate congestion on the roadway, improve air quality, conserve fossil fuels, and promote environmental quality. Legislation has been in place since 1991 requiring both private and public employers of 100+ employees in those 9 counties to formulate plans for the implementation of varied incentives to encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel. This legislation requires the WSDOT to monitor (by means of a biennial employee survey) progress toward a quite ambitious goal of a 35% reduction in SOV travel by 2005. This goal remains quite far from being met; the most recent survey-based estimate is that a 7% reduction has been achieved thus far.

**Research Approach.** This study reports on findings from a special survey of employees in public and private sector organizations participating in this "commute trip reduction" (CTR) program. The questionnaire developed for this study is designed to gather information on the nature of "switchers" -- that is, those employees who are indeed making use of alternatives to SOV travel to the workplace. What is their **profile**? What factors -- *internal* to their beliefs and values and *external* in their context for making decisions about commute trip modes of travel -- distinguish switchers from SOV commuters? What level of support obtains for a market approach to SOV reduction by attaching a price to the choice of SOV workplace commuting? The answers observed to these questions, and sharing the survey findings and detailed comments of employees for their own organizations with local ETCs, are the principal deliverables associated with this project.

The project final report sets forth the results of the employee survey, set against a fairly thorough reading of the research literature in this area. Over 900 employees in 16 diverse (public and private, large and small, western, central and eastern region) organizations participating in the program returned completed surveys. The majority of these surveys were accompanied by lengthy comments, signifying that the survey did indeed touch the deeper roots of employee decision-making in this area of individual choice. Of 902 respondents, 372 indicate that they are "switchers" to alternatives to SOV commuting.

**Conclusions and Recommendations.** A profile of the switcher does emerge from this study based on both bivariate and multivariate (multiple regression and discriminant analysis) analyses. Switchers tend to value CRT incentives, come from organizations where the CTR program is strongly supported, engage in other environment-protective activities, perceive the presence of reasonably convenient alternatives to SOV travel, and be less concerned with the "convenience and flexibility" benefits of SOV commuting than SOV commuters. While there is clearly not a majority sentiment favoring SOV pricing, there is indeed evidence that a significant minority of employees are willing to experiment with some type of market-oriented pollution/congestion costing policy directed to the urban transportation gridlock phenomenon.

The report authors' policy recommendation is that the commute trip reduction program be continued, that the current public information media campaign be maintained, and that the tax incentive funds be increased to promote wider participation by smaller (less than 100 employee) firms/agencies. Given the connection observed between environmental regarding attitudes and beliefs and commute trip choices, it is argued that the statewide dialog on salmon recovery and environmental protection in the context of Washington's growth management act (which concentrates growth within designated urban boundaries) will make CTR efforts timely for years to come in the Evergreen State.

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