



## Sun Rideshare Pima County Annual Report FY 2008/09

### Commuter Development

**RidePro database activity** - FY 2008-09 was a year of growth and development for the Sun Rideshare commuter database. The focus of much of the outreach and marketing activity was to expand the database in order to provide more carpool matches, as well as more reliable matches. It also was necessary to delete commuter records with no activity for over 24 months and initiate a regular purge process of commuter records to ensure the integrity of the commuter data.

|                           |       |                              |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------|
| Active commuters on file: | 3,211 | -4%                          |
| Records added:            | 1,890 | +40%                         |
| Records deleted:          | 2,045 | 30,184 deleted in FY 2007-08 |
| Registered carpools:      | 312   | +109%                        |
| Registered vanpoolers:    | 157   | +38%                         |
| Registered bikers:        | 185   | not recorded in FY2007-08    |
| Registered bus riders:    | 417   | not recorded in FY2007-08    |

Staff attended the RidePro Users Group meeting held in Tucson to learn of upcoming system upgrades and enhancements, as well as to learn from other users across the country.

**Database Upgrades** – The PAG carpool matching system made great progress in the fiscal year with acquisition of an interactive carpool matching system funded by a grant from the Tohono O’odham Nation. Introduced by PAG in December 2008, the interactive system provides quick access to information regarding carpool partners, vanpool availability, transit routes and schedules, park-and-ride locations, and bike buddy matching. Travel routes and the location of the commuter’s travel options are displayed in Google Maps. Additional features of this system include a daily commute calendar, pollution savings calculations, Guaranteed Ride Home registration and immediate access to an emergency ride home.

This system upgrade allows greater communication with local commuters. E-mail notices are now being sent to commuters regarding promotions, events, new services, and transportation and air quality news. We are also able to run contests with prize drawings using the new commute calendar. The Bike Commuter Challenge and Clean Air Days contest made use of the commute calendar for its promotions in April 2009.

**Regional Guaranteed Ride Home Program (GRH)** – The GRH program was expanded to all commuters at all work sites in Pima County in FY 2008-09. No longer is the program restricted to workers at TRP employers. Participants must use an alternative mode at least twice a week and live and work in Pima County. The City of Tucson and Pima County have eliminated their own GRH programs and signed on to PAG's in an effort to reduce their expenditures. The number of registrants has grown from 271 in FY 2007/08 to 894 in FY 2008-09. Even with this growth in participants, the cost of the program is minimal and well within the budgeted amount. GRH is a great benefit for registrants and an incentive for commuters to enter their profiles in the database.

In May 2009, GRH was automated and registration was added to the interactive carpool matching system. Commuters also may access a taxi voucher through the same system. Now when an emergency arises, a registrant can log into the system to print a voucher and then call to schedule a pick-up. No more searching for the paper voucher when the need arises. The used voucher is automatically logged into the system, which eliminates the manual data entry of the old system.

**Vanpool Program** – Seven new vanpools began operating in FY 2008-09 for a total of 21 operational vanpools: three at Raytheon, two at Sargent Controls, and two at Federal Corrections. Sun Rideshare has been successful at growing the fleet of operational vanpools at TRP companies with a history of vanpooling, but it has been challenging adding vanpools at new companies. Sargent is the first new company to start a vanpool in several years. PAG has attempted to recruit new participants for a downtown vanpool, but has not yet succeeded in getting one started.

PAG subsidizes vanpools up to \$300 per month per vanpool. The total expenditure for the vanpool subsidy has been greatly reduced by requiring participants to maximize their employer subsidies first. Over half the vanpools are self-sustaining and require no subsidy from PAG.

PAG has attempted on several occasions to use JARC funding to start new vanpools for companies in suburban locations with no access to public transportation. Staff met with a couple hotel/resorts to develop viable and affordable vanpool programs. However, with the downturn in the economy, no one was willing to make a financial commitment to fund employee transportation. The effort will continue with all suburban and rural employers with low income workers.

**Web Site Activity** – In FY 2008-09, vast improvements were made to the Sun Rideshare Web pages. A new URL was created that allows commuters to go directly to the Sun Rideshare home page. New links were created that provide commuters and employers easy access to relevant information. The interactive carpool matching system was added, providing quick data about all the transportation options available for the commute trip. More updates are planned for the next fiscal year, including revamping the Sun Rideshare Web site to make it more user-friendly and simpler to navigate. Web site visits to the Sun Rideshare page increased 56 percent with almost 18,000 visits in the fiscal year.

## **Employer Development**

**TRP employers** - The 2009 annual plan was administered electronically for the first time. On June 1, each Transportation Coordinator (TC) was sent a link to an Internet site for the 2009 Activity Inventory Report. After creating an account, each TC filled out a questionnaire regarding their travel reduction activities. For most sites the process was easy to follow and responses were received without a hitch. However, for others, the data was not transmitted to PAG and they had to redo their plan or fax in a hard copy. A more reliable Internet survey tool will be used next year to prevent the transmission problems encountered with the introduction of the Activity Inventory Report (AIR).

Two-hundred, eighty-four employers submitted a plan in 2007 compared to 300 in 2009. There are 31 new work sites in 2009 and 15 employers did not submit a plan, went of business, or dropped below 100 employees. The number of employees in 2007 was 121,262 vs. 125,940 in 2009, an increase of 3.9 percent. Results of the survey will be reported in a future report. With the survey responses in hand, outreach staff will be able to target employers in need of guidance and encouragement and train those TCs not familiar with all the services available.

**Sales Meetings and Presentations** – In FY 2008-09, outreach staff was successful in having an in-person meeting with most TRP companies. The goal was to touch base with every company, review travel reduction activities and address any transportation issues for the employer. Vanpooling was presented to companies in suburban locations as a means of providing affordable and reliable transportation.

Outreach staff recruited area employers with less than 100 employees to join the TRP network. These companies were included in all TRP communications and invited to participate in Sun Rideshare promotions and contests. By adding these companies, more commuters have access to Sun Rideshare services and are informed about transportation and environmental topics.

## **Outreach, Marketing and Communications**

**New Brand for RideShare** – In cooperation with marketing efforts to create awareness of a regional transit system, Pima Association of Governments' RideShare program is now known as **Sun Rideshare**. The local transit vehicles will be branded under the names of Sun Tran, Sun Shuttle, Sun Van and Sun Express. The new brand was introduced in January at a large kick-off event for the entire Sun System.

New marketing materials will be created with the Sun Rideshare logo. The Web site has already been updated, as well as exhibit materials. The 21 commuter vans in operation were decaled with new Sun Rideshare logos similar to the design of the Sun Tran buses.

**Chambers of Commerce and Professional Organizations** – Outreach staff worked to establish new partnerships with trade associations, business groups and chambers,

community agencies and professional organizations. Staff made presentations at monthly meetings for area chambers and business groups to introduce Sun Rideshare services to the staff and membership. Newsletter articles were sent to such groups as the Bar Association, Metropolitan Tucson Chamber of Commerce, TREO, and Society for Human Resource Management regarding air quality actions items for the summer ozone season. Directors of these various groups were added to the distribution list for all employer communications.

**Newsletters** – The quarterly TC newsletter has become a great tool for Sun Rideshare to discuss hot topics and publicize new services and events. It is published at the end of each quarter and posted on the PAG Web site. It can be printed on legal paper and distributed at the work site. The distribution list has grown to 437 contacts.

Each issue features one of the more active TCs who is making things happen at his or her workplace. A commuter spotlight is also one of the regular features of the newsletter. We try to highlight successful company activities, briefly describe any new services available and include a calendar of important dates. Articles are kept short, but links are provided for additional information.

**E-Alerts** - Transportation Coordinators were sent e-alerts at least 15 times over the fiscal year. E-alerts pertain to upcoming events and meetings, air quality advisories, and new service introductions. E-mail communication is a good way to keep the rideshare message in the minds of the employer contact, but we try to keep them to a minimum so our contacts are more likely to read them and not get agitated with too many e-mails.

**TC Spotlight** – As mentioned previously, a new TC is featured each quarter in the Transportation Coordinator Update. The article and photo are then posted on the Web site for several months. This is a great way to recognize those coordinators doing the right thing and give new ideas to those feeling less motivated.

**Advertising** – In FY 2008-09, there was a minimal amount of advertising. Posters at bus shelters and benches ran for a few months starting in August 2008 when the gas prices were at their peak. Bus cards (11"x17") advertising the Downtown Merchant Coupon Book giveaway were placed in the interior display areas on all the buses from January 2009 to March 2009. Posters also were placed in retail venues around town advertising the coupon book. PAG ran television and radio spots for the Live Breathe Clean Air Campaign in the summer of 2009. The Sun Rideshare Web site was mentioned on the radio spots.

#### **Media Coverage** –

Quarter 1:

KGUN 9, ABC affiliate, presented money saving driving tips on their morning "Traffic Update" and demonstrated the link to the Sun Rideshare page and cost calculator. The link remained on their home page for a few months.

KVOA 4, NBC affiliate, presented two segments on the "Good Morning Tucson" show with interviews of carpoolers and vanpoolers on how they were saving money in their work commute.

The *Arizona Daily Star* printed an article on carpooling in August. The *Tucson Citizen* printed an article on bicycle commuting and alternate mode use by two of their reporters for one week.

#### Quarter 2:

A press release announcing the coupon book and online availability was issued to the media. The *Tucson Citizen* placed the article on the front page. KGUN Channel 9 made the announcement during the morning traffic report. A press release was sent announcing the 2007 TRP Employer Recognition for outstanding achievements based on the 2007 TRP survey results. The winners were listed in the PAG Regional Outlook.

#### Quarter 3:

Articles about the coupon book promotion appeared in: *Natural Awakenings Magazine*, *Downtown Tucsonan*, *Metropolitan Tucson Chamber of Commerce newsletter* and *Tucson Citizen*.

#### Quarter 4:

KOLD and 92.9 The Mountain provided great coverage of the Clean Air Days and Bike Fest events in April. Sun Rideshare had an early morning segment on KOLD during Bike to Work Week.

**Community Events** – Brown bag lunch presentations were held in downtown Tucson. The sessions were free and open to the public. There was a session on bike commuting and safety, carpooling and vanpooling, and riding the bus. Additional sessions were held to introduce the new express bus service for downtown workers.

Program materials were distributed at the Sustainability and Energy EXPO9 on March 6-7. Materials were given out to attendees at the British Car Roundup event in Tucson. Sun Rideshare participated in the Earth Day fair, the Green Living Fair at the Habistore, and sponsored the Green Commute Fair in downtown Tucson during Clean Air Days in April.

**Marketing collateral** – Throughout the year PAG offered pens and post-it note pads at outreach events to commuters interested in ridesharing. These items contained program contact information and the Web address. A marketing card was produced to highlight the benefits of sharing the ride with the high gas prices. This was a colorful card on card stock, so it could be easily displayed at the workplace. Contact information and the program Web address were included on this marketing card.

**Web Site** - The TRP and Sun RideShare pages of [www.pagnet.org](http://www.pagnet.org) are continually reviewed and updated with features of interest to employers and employees. The TC spotlight is updated quarterly, as well as the commuter spotlight. There were 17,806 visits to the rideshare page on [pagnet.org](http://pagnet.org). Web site visits were not tracked in previous years.

#### **Promotions/Special Projects-**

**Downtown Merchant Coupon Promotion** – “Get Downtown Together and Win,” was the message to promote commuter registration on [www.884ride.org](http://www.884ride.org). All new registrants received a Downtown Merchant Coupon book as a reward. The promotion ran from Jan. 1 to

March 31, 2009. The coupons were good until June 30, 2009. The promotion was designed to drive new visitors and potential clients to the newly installed interactive carpool matching system. The coupon book was positioned as an incentive for new users to check out the capabilities of the matching system.

Forty-one downtown merchants provided a discount or a special two-for-one offer for the promotion. There was no cost to the merchant to participate in the coupon book. Each merchant received a coupon book and flyers/posters to put out in their place of business. The promotion was publicized on the Web site, in the TC newsletter, posters were placed around town at retail outlets and on all the Sun Tran buses, press releases were issued, and all registrants in the database were notified.

The promotion was successful in generating new users. Five-hundred and eighty coupon books were mailed out to new registrants. There were 5,392 Web visits during the three-month promotion.

Property Management Partnership – Staff began contacting commercial property managers in the downtown area to promote Sun Rideshare services to their tenants. Presidio Management Group donated street level conference room space for five brown bag lunch sessions. One property manager has started selling bus passes out of the property's office.

Staff began an outreach effort to residential property managers proposing a partnership to educate their tenants on the services offered by Sun Rideshare and the benefits of alternate modes. HSL Properties with 28 tenant complexes will distribute materials at each location and conduct a survey of their tenants to measure interest in the rental offices to sell bus passes.

Arizona Department of Transportation – Single Occupant Vehicle Grant - PAG became the sponsor for a research grant that will recommend a "tool box" of options to evaluate incentives to reduce single-occupant vehicles. The consultant submitted a final report to ADOT in May 2009.

Clean Air Days 2009 – PAG participated once again in Bike Fest and Clean Air Days in April 2009. PAG sponsored the Green Ways to the Work Fair which was held downtown on April 22, Earth Day. The event ran midday for several hours and attracted downtown workers and visitors who were interested in learning about alternative transportation. Alternative fuel vehicles and a Sun Tran bus were on display.

PAG sent representatives to other events during the month, such as the Earth Day Festival, the Green Living Fair at the HabiStore, and Bike to Work Day in downtown Tucson. A number of TRP companies hosted their own bike and Earth Day events, which PAG also participated in.

One of the new features of the interactive matching system is a commute calendar that allows any registrant to record their transportation mode and mileage for their work trips. The system then calculates their pollution and VMT savings. For the first time, this new feature was used for the Bike Fest and Clean Air Days contests. Participating commuters created their

profile in the carpool matching system and logged in regularly to record their daily commutes. Prize winners were selected from the commuters that recorded a certain number of bike trips or other alternative mode trips. Fewer people participated in the Clean Air Days contest than in previous years, but the new system recorded actual mileage and trip reductions rather than commuter pledges to do things during the month.

- 365 people reporting at least one commute representing 134 different employer locations.
- 8,645 alternative mode trips reported, only work trips does not include other type trips
- 57,747 vehicle miles eliminated
- 1,290 pounds of CO, 187 of NO<sub>x</sub>, 136 of VOCs, and 53,570 of greenhouse gases reduced

## **Ordinance Review**

In 1988, Travel Reduction Ordinances (TRO) were adopted by member jurisdictions of Pima Association of Governments (PAG) to improve air quality, in particular reduce carbon monoxide emissions. Since that time, Pima County has reduced carbon monoxide emissions dramatically and has been designated attainment for all criteria pollutants.

Since the adoption of the Travel Reduction Ordinances in 1988 there have been few changes. However, the challenges facing our community have changed. As a result, PAG set out to find ways to make the TRP more relevant to our current transportation, air quality and energy needs, and accessible to more residents of Pima County. In addition, the administrative and financial burden of the annual survey and plan required by the TRO has become a strain for the participating employers and PAG, as well as a distraction from the mission of the program.

After a thorough review and discussion over a 12-month period, the EPA, ADEQ and PDEQ recommended that we stay the course as set forth in the current ordinance. PAG does have some flexibility in how to implement the requirements of the ordinance, so every effort will be made to streamline the administrative tasks of the ordinance. As required by the State Implementation Plan for Pima County, employers with 100 or more employees will continue doing the following things:

- Appoint a transportation coordinator
- Disseminate travel reduction information
- Complete an annual plan
- Conduct an employee survey

PAG continues to recruit new companies to participate in the program and require an on-site liaison. A new commuter brochure is being developed that contains information about all the travel modes and Sun Rideshare services. It will be perfect for display and distribution at the work site. As discussed above, the annual plan was completed this summer. It will continue to be distributed electronically at the same time each year to all employers. The employee survey will resume next year in an electronic format.