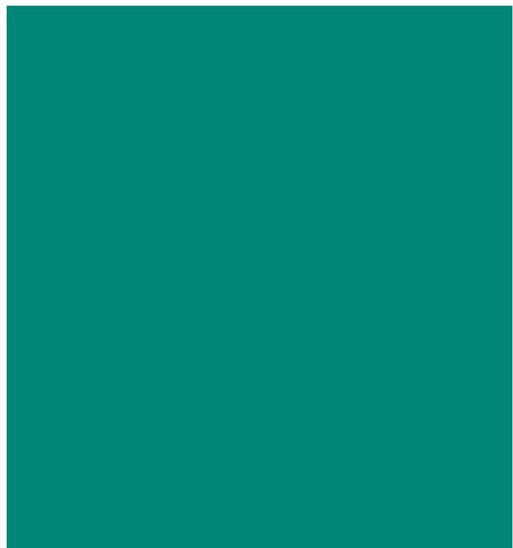




2014 GUARANTEED RIDE HOME  
PROGRAM EVALUATION  
Final Report



**2014 GUARANTEED RIDE HOME PROGRAM EVALUATION**  
Alameda County Transportation Commission

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Since 1998, the Alameda County Transportation Commission's (Alameda CTC) Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program has provided a free ride home in cases of unexpected personal emergencies for all employees that work in Alameda County and who did not drive alone to work that day. The goal of the program is to reduce traffic and improve air quality in the Bay Area by encouraging commuters to leave their cars behind.

## Program Changes in 2014

Prior to January 2014, the GRH program used vouchers to manage the provision of free rides home. At the time of registration, participants would receive a voucher, which could be used in exchange for a taxi or rental car ride home with a participating vendor. In January 2014, the program adopted a reimbursement model in which no vouchers are exchanged. Participants now arrange for their own transportation as they would otherwise—by calling a taxi or renting a car—and submitting their receipt for reimbursement. The transition enabled a complete refresh of the participant database, which now more accurately reflects active participation in the program.

## Evaluation Methodology

Two primary data sources are used to evaluate the GRH program: the program's database of registrations and usage as well as participant responses to an online survey in March of each year. **A total of 519 survey responses were received this year—a response rate of 22% and an increase from last year's 400 responses. As of December 31, 2014, 2,179 participants were active in the program's database.** The annual survey included 18 questions covering participants' program usage; their perceptions of program information, communications, and administration; and participants' information. The database collects information about participants' home and work locations, their primary means of transportation to work, and the approximate distance of their commutes in miles.

Together, these data form the basis of this evaluation report. Using this information, estimates of the following program impacts can be calculated:

- Estimated reduction in annual vehicle miles traveled
- Estimated fuel cost savings to participants
- Participant mode shifts due to the program
- Changes in frequency of drive-alone trips

## Estimated Program Impacts

The full summary of program impacts is included in Figure 1-1 below. Survey responses indicate the following GRH program impacts:

- 1,514 fewer drive-alone roundtrip commutes (or 3,028 one-way trips) were taken each week in 2014
- 28% of participants drove alone to work prior to participation in GRH as compared with 15% of participants after joining; most of the shift away from driving alone is absorbed by ridesharing
- In 2014, only 3.1% of participants took a ride using the GRH benefit
- Vast majority of participants heard about GRH through employer-led communications
- 40% of respondents are interested in being able to use peer-to-peer ridesharing services for rides home—this is an increase from 23% in the 2013 program year
- 30% of respondents have interest in using public transit (e.g. Amtrak) as a reimbursable option
- North County employers account for 74% of all participants enrolled in the GRH program
- 57% of participants commute from outside Alameda County
- The average trip distance among taxi and rental car reimbursement requests was 56 miles
- \$1,806 was spent to reimburse approved rides in 2014

**Figure 1-1 Summary of Program Impacts**

Category	2014 Statistics
Program enrollment at end of program year	2,179
Drive-alone roundtrips reduced (per week)	1,514
Drive-alone one-way trips reduced (per week)	3,028
Drive-alone roundtrips reduced (per weekday)	303
Drive-alone one-way trips reduced (per weekday)	606
Total drive-alone roundtrips reduced per year (52 weeks)	78,719
Total drive-alone one-way trips reduced per year (52 weeks)	157,438
Guaranteed Rides Home taken in 2014	37
Average commute distance of GRH participants in 2014	27.1
Average vehicle miles not traveled (per workday)	16,404
Annual vehicle miles not traveled (250 days)	4,100,962
Average U.S. fuel economy (miles per gallon)	23.3
Average gallons of gas saved (per workday)	704
Annual gallons of gas saved (250 days)	176,007
Average gas price in 2014 (California)	\$ 3.75
Average dollars not spent on gas (per workday)	\$ 2,636.58
Annual dollars not spent on gas (250 days)	\$ 659,146.09

## **Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2015/2016**

**1. Begin reimbursing rides taken with transportation network companies and on public transportation.**

Participants' desire for increased flexibility in transportation options reimbursable under the GRH program is strong and growing. GRH program staff will work with the Alameda CTC to craft GRH policies related to these program changes and implement any modifications supported by Alameda CTC.

**2. Increase strategic outreach and communication to continue growing GRH participation throughout Alameda County.**

We suggest the following strategic actions to continue growing GRH participation throughout the county; the responsible party is listed in parentheses:

- Create individual employer-based reports of participation to send to employer contacts on a quarterly or bi-annual basis (GRH program staff)
- Partner with Alameda County Chambers of Commerce to increase points of contact with county employers (Alameda CTC staff)
- Create a list of employer representatives who joined the program since the 2014 transition (GRH program staff) and contact those representatives to ensure they have the resources necessary to promote participation within their company (Alameda CTC staff)
- Continue existing outreach efforts through email blasts and staff representation at employer-sponsored events (Alameda CTC staff)
- Support Alameda CTC in creating marketing materials, as needed (GRH program staff)

**3. Monitor average trip distance among reimbursed trips.**

Unlike in previous years, the average trip distance among taxi and rental car reimbursement requests (56 miles) was significantly higher than the average home-to-work distance among participants overall (25 miles—as reported through the annual participant survey). Some of this trend could be explained by program changes. However, to ensure program costs are kept low, it would be important to monitor trip distances over the coming year.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### Alameda County’s Guaranteed Ride Home Program

Since 1998, the Alameda County Transportation Commission’s (Alameda CTC) Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program has provided a free ride home in cases of unexpected personal emergencies for all employees who work in Alameda County. All registered employees are eligible for this benefit on days they use an alternative mode of transportation to get to work. To receive the benefit, participants must have pre-registered and submit their taxi or rental car receipt along with details of their trip through the GRH website for reimbursement.

GRH is transportation demand management (TDM) strategy of the overall congestion management program. Specifically, it removes a commonly cited barrier to moving away from commuting by single-occupant vehicle (SOV), which is the need to get home quickly and independently due to an unexpected emergency or circumstance. Such circumstances may include a personal or family illness, unscheduled overtime, or a carpool vehicle breakdown. Funds for this program are provided by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District’s Transportation Fund for Clean Air in cooperation with the Alameda CTC.

### Program Goals

The goal of the GRH program is to reduce traffic and improve air quality in the Bay Area by encouraging commuters to commute using a method other than driving alone. The program supports the goals of Alameda County’s Countywide Transportation Plan (a long-range plan) and the Congestion Management Program (a short-range plan that supports the implementation of the Countywide Plan), as outlined in Figure 2-1.

**Figure 2-1 Alameda County Goals Supported by GRH**

Alameda CTC’s Countywide Plan seeks a transportation system that is...	GRH Contribution
Supportive of a Healthy and Clean Environment	By reducing single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips and replacing them with alternative modes of transportation, the GRH program focuses its resources directly on reducing vehicle emissions and supporting a cleaner environment.
Cost-Effective	In comparison to the cost of building infrastructure, the GRH program focuses on the more efficient use of existing resources and is highly cost-effective at reducing SOV trips.
Multimodal	By promoting and incentivizing walking, biking, transit, vanpools, and carpools, the GRH program helps balance the county’s mode split.
Accessible, Affordable, and Equitable	By reducing barriers to alternative modes of transportation, the GRH program helps provide better access to lower cost options of the transportation system.

## **Administration, Program Eligibility, and Enrollment**

The GRH program administrator manages all day-to-day operations, answers daily emails and phone calls from participants, makes vendor payment, maintains and updates the program website, assists in program outreach and marketing, and provides other program assistance as needed.

The program administrator ensures all participants and covered rides home meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Participant must be employed full- or part-time within Alameda County and be at least 18 years of age
- Participant must have used one of the following commute modes on the day of the ride home:
  - Public transportation including BART, AC Transit, ACE, Wheels, Union City Transit, ferry, and Amtrak
  - Employer-provided shuttle or vanpool
  - Carpool or vanpool
  - Walk
  - Bicycle
- Ride home expenses due to one of the following circumstances on the same day as the ride home will be covered only if:
  - Participant or an immediate family member suffers an illness, injury, or severe crisis.
  - Participant is asked by supervisor to work unscheduled overtime, which causes participant to miss planned ride home. Supervisor verification will be required as part of reimbursement request.
  - Participant ridesharing vehicle breaks down or the driver has to leave early or late.
  - Participant has a break-in, flood, or fire at residence.
  - **Participant's commute bicycle breaks down on the way to or from work and cannot be repaired at participant's work site.**

## **Marketing and Information**

The GRH program is promoted through several channels including email, social media (Facebook and Twitter), employer transportation fairs, and Alameda CTC outreach events. Occasionally, special outreach is conducted to ensure new or large employers begin or maintain active participation.

On an ongoing basis, the program offers two main customer service channels: the Hotline phone number and the GRH email address. The GRH Hotline is available between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Throughout early 2014, it provided a critical service **easing participants'** transition to a reimbursement model in early 2014. GRH staff members also answer emails typically within 24 to 48 hours. When a participant registers or submits a request for reimbursement through the website, they receive an automated email about what to expect next.

## **2014 Program Changes**

Prior to January 2014, the GRH program used vouchers to manage the provision of free rides home. At the time of registration, participants would receive a voucher, which could be used in exchange for a taxi or rental car ride home with a participating vendor. In January 2014, the program adopted a reimbursement model in which no vouchers are exchanged. Participants now arrange for their own transportation by calling a taxi or renting a car, paying up front for the ride and submitting their receipt for reimbursement. To smooth the transition, any vouchers still in circulation were honored through the 2014 program year. The transition also enabled a complete refresh of the participant database, which should now more accurately reflect active participation in the program.

## **Annual Evaluation**

This report presents the results of the seventeenth annual GRH program evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to demonstrate the impact that the program has on single-occupancy vehicle use and its associated greenhouse gas emissions effects. The evaluation also reviews participant feedback on the effectiveness of program administration, statistics on employer and employee registration and trips taken, program impact on mode choice, and progress toward countywide goals.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

Two primary data sources are used to evaluate the GRH program. First, **the program’s** participant registration database **contains information on participants’ typical commutes and distance** between work and home. To supplement this information, an online survey was open to participants in March; responses provide further detail on the effect of the program on **participants’ commutes over time**.

### Annual Survey

Between March 10 and March 20, 2015, registered participants were asked to respond to an online survey covering their perceptions of the program and commute behaviors before and after their registration. The information provided in this survey is the primary means by which this report evaluates the ability of the GRH program to reduce vehicle miles traveled and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

The survey is divided into four sections:

- Program Usage
- Program Information (Communications)
- Program Administration
- Participant Information

### Online Database

In 2014, along with the transition from a voucher-based program to one based on reimbursements, the Microsoft Access database previously used to manage and monitor participation and usage was exchanged for an online database powered by Zoho software. The Zoho database is structured in three parts: participants, employers, and reimbursements. The table below show the information stored in each database.

**Figure 3-1 Zoho Database Information**

Participants	Employers	Reimbursements
Name	Contact information (name, email, mailing address, phone number)	Commuter mode on day of ride home
Contact information (mailing address, email, phone number)	Number of employees on site	Reason for ride home
Typical commute mode		Date of ride home
Approximate home-to-work distance		Reimbursement request amount
How they heard about GRH		Copy of receipt
		Approximate distance

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Each time a new participant submits a registration form, his or her information is added to the participant database. If the participant is employed by an employer not already catalogued, they are asked to provide the basic details of their employer (including a contact person), which is added to the employer database. Lastly, when participants use the benefit by taking an eligible taxi or rental car trip home, they submit a reimbursement request through the website. This creates an entry into the reimbursement database and alerts program administrators to the request.

## 4 DATA AND ANALYSIS

### PARTICIPANT SURVEY DATA

#### Employee Survey Summary

On March 10, 2015, GRH staff sent an email to all employees enrolled in the program asking them to complete an annual evaluation survey. There were two main objectives of the survey:

- To solicit participants' opinions about the quality of GRH customer service
- To determine how the program impacted their transportation mode choices

Survey responses were collected electronically through SurveyMonkey, an online survey service. Participants were informed that they could also complete the survey by phone or email by contacting the GRH Hotline. The perspectives heard in the survey responses supplement feedback gathered throughout from participants' email and phone contact.

Between March 10 and March 20, 2015, 519 responses were received for the 2014 program year (an increase of approximately 30% over last year). As of that time, there were 2,311 participants enrolled for **a survey response rate of 22%**.

It should be noted that the number of respondents (519) who took the survey is more than 14 times the number of GRH enrollees who took a ride in 2014 (37). This corroborates a finding from the survey that 90% of respondents report never having had occasion to take a guaranteed ride home since enrollment; 97% reported they had not taken a ride in 2014. Therefore, opinions regarding the program, described in the following sections, are not necessarily shaped by personal experience with using the benefit.

#### Program Usage

The purpose of this section is to gauge the impact of the GRH program on reducing drive-alone trips based on survey responses. Program effectiveness is measured by assessing participants' reported change in commute behavior before and after enrolling in the GRH program.

Using the data gathered on participants' commute modes, an estimate can be generated for the total number of weekly drive-alone trips replaced by the use of other modes for those enrolled in GRH. The data from the survey were used to calculate the percentage of respondents that never drove alone, or drove alone one, two, three, four, or five days per week both *before* joining the program and *during* the 2014 evaluation period. These percentages were applied to the overall set of active participants (2,179) to calculate the effect of the GRH program, which is just one of the Alameda CTC's suite of commute programs that addresses participants' drive-alone commuting frequency.

Figure 4-1 illustrates the results of this analysis using the methodology described above. Among the 2,179 active participants in 2014, **1,514 fewer drive-alone roundtrip commutes (or**

**3,028 one-way trips) were taken each week in 2014.** This is equivalent to a reduction of 157,456 total drive-alone, one-way trips per year.<sup>1</sup>

The estimated annual reduction in one-way trips due to program participation in 2014 is notably lower than for the 2013 program year. This difference is due primarily to the refresh of the participant database in January 2014. At the beginning of 2014, all participants were required to re-register in January 2014, which coincided with **the program's transition from vouchers to reimbursement**. This refresh updated the database to include only active, current participants (2,179 participants). The previous database had been used for many years without a comprehensive effort to refresh participant info (including 5,612 participants); therefore, it is believed that many of the participants in the old database had moved or changed jobs outside of the county. The estimate of annual one-way trip reduction relies on an accurate count of active participants; therefore, the 2014 estimate should reflect true numbers.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on the program enrollment as of December 2014 and 52 weeks per year.

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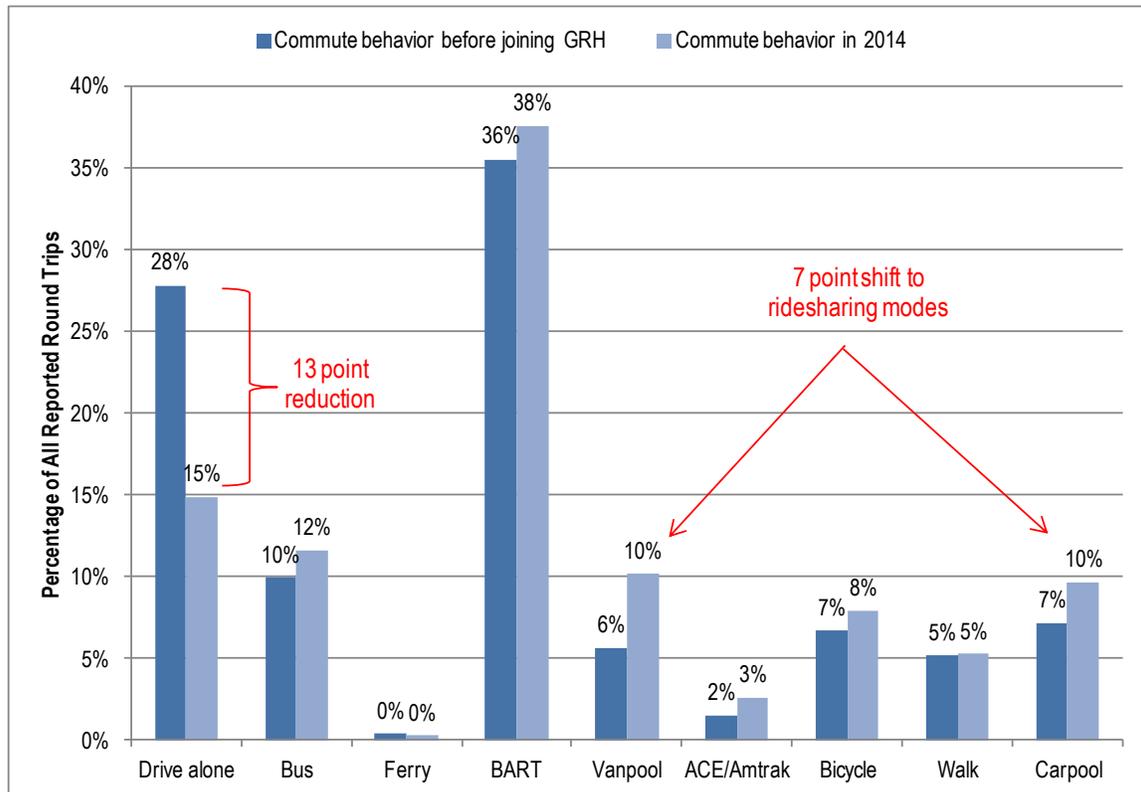
**Figure 4-1 Total weekly drive-alone trips before and after joining GRH**

Frequency	Before Joining Program			After Joining Program (2014 commute behavior)			Roundtrip Increase or Decrease (weekly)
	Percentage of Respondents	Number of People <sup>1</sup>	Total Drive-Along Roundtrips (weekly)	Percentage of Respondents	Number of People <sup>1</sup>	Total Drive-Along Roundtrips (weekly)	
Never drive alone to work	58%	1,269	0	69%	1,495	0	0
Drive alone 1 day per week	7%	160	160	12%	258	258	97
Drive alone 2 days per week	5%	101	202	6%	122	245	43
Drive alone 3 days per week	4%	89	266	4%	80	241	-25
Drive alone 4 days per week	6%	126	506	3%	72	287	-219
Drive alone 5 days per week	20%	434	2,171	7%	152	760	-1,410
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,179</b>	<b>3,304</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,179</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>-1,514</b>
<sup>1</sup> Extrapolation of percentages of respondents to the total program enrollment of 2,179 (total enrollment as of December 31, 2014)							

## Commute Behavior

The reduction in annual drive-alone trips corresponds to an increase in the use of the other modes that the GRH program is designed to support. In particular, ridesharing (in the form of carpooling and vanpooling) absorbs more than half of the shift away from driving alone. Figure 4-1 illustrates the change in participants' commute modes as exemplified by the estimated annual round trips.

Figure 4-2 Before and After Weekly Mode Split



Not only has the program shifted participants to other modes, it has reduced the number of days each individual participant commutes by driving alone. **Further, survey responses indicate that most of the shift away from driving alone four or five days per week is toward not driving at all—suggesting that GRH enables participants not only to shift their behavior, but also to shift it significantly.** See Figure 4-3.

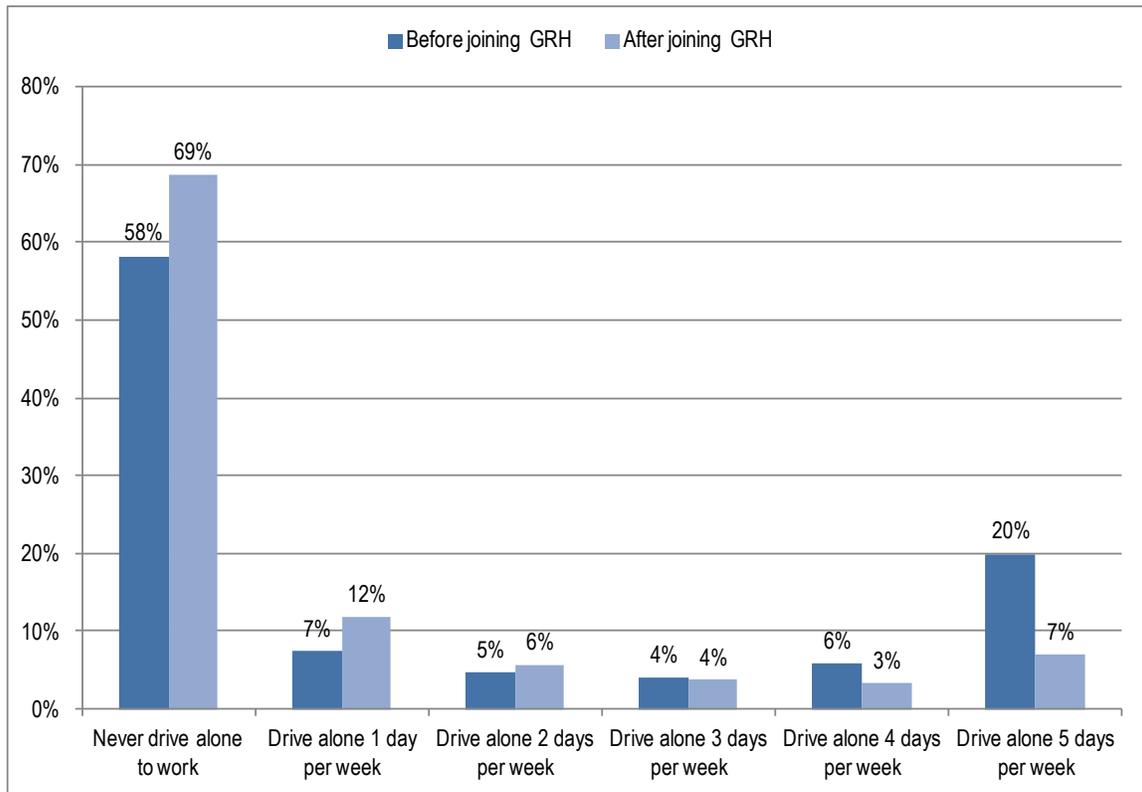
Three final points of data collected regarding participants' commutes cover home-to-work distance, program usage, and participants' likelihood of changing modes had the GRH program not existed.

- The **average home-to-work distance among respondents is approximately 25 miles.** This one-way trip distance ranges between 1 and 100 miles among respondents.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Note: this is a similar average and range to what is found in the program's full participant database (average 27 miles; range 1 to 129 miles), suggesting that survey respondents are representative of overall program participation in this regard of their commute.

- **In 2014, only 3.1% of participants took a ride using the GRH benefit.** This is slightly higher than for 2013 (2.1%), suggesting that the transition to reimbursement increased the usability of the program. Almost 10% of respondents had used the program since they joined (exactly the same as in 2013).
- Approximately two-thirds of respondents would continue this commute behavior even without the GRH program benefit; 23% would increase the days per week when they drive alone; and 11% would begin driving alone every day. This response suggests that **the GRH program significantly reduces single-occupancy vehicle use among at least one-third of participants.** This portion represents a slightly higher percentage than the 2013 survey response.

**Figure 4-3 Propensity of driving alone among GRH participants**



**Program Information**

About half of program participants report that they did not look for additional program information after registering with the program. The other half relies primarily on the GRH website and their employer representative for additional information. It should be noted that less than 1% of respondents utilized the GRH Facebook or Twitter accounts to find more information and less than 2% use the program hotline.

Though most people did not request additional program information, over 90% of those who did found that the clarity of information in published brochures and on the website to be either good or excellent. The same is true for the response time and information received through the GRH Hotline.

Lastly, **the vast majority of participants heard about the program through employer-led communications.** About one-third hear of the program during benefits enrollment; 39% from their employer during other times; and 14% from information posted at work.

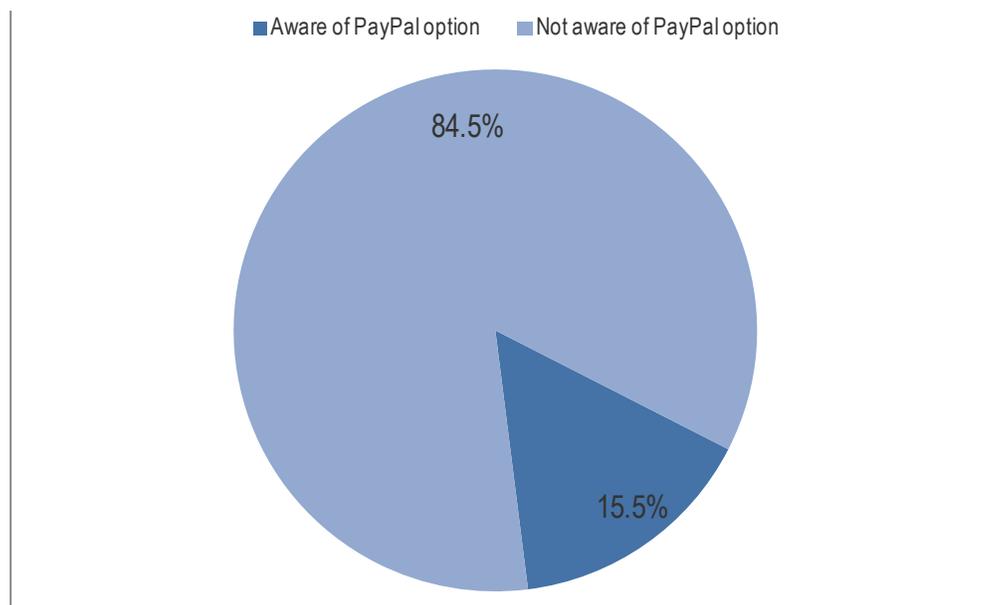
### Program Administration

A third section of the survey asked participants for their opinions of program administration. Questions covered the usability of the website, awareness of reimbursement options, awareness of **the program's Facebook page, interest in expanding the policy on the types of transportation** that can be reimbursed, and an open-response question asking for general feedback on their experiences with the program.

**Website usability:** As noted previously, most participants have not utilized the GRH program benefit directly. Of those who indicated they had used website functionality such as online registration, reimbursement requests, or account updates, almost half indicated that the usability of these functions is excellent and an additional 50% indicate that usability is good.

**Reimbursement administration:** Alongside the program transition to reimbursement in 2014, participants were given the option of receiving reimbursement checks in the mail or by online payment service PayPal. As of the time of the annual survey, no reimbursement requests had asked for reimbursement through PayPal, so participants were asked about their awareness of this option. Only 15% of respondents were aware of this option. However, even fewer than that had requested a reimbursement in the first place. This suggests that there is higher than expected **awareness of the PayPal option and that low usage more accurately reflects participants' comfort** with traditional checks than their lack of awareness of the PayPal option.

**Figure 4-4 Participant awareness of PayPal reimbursement option**



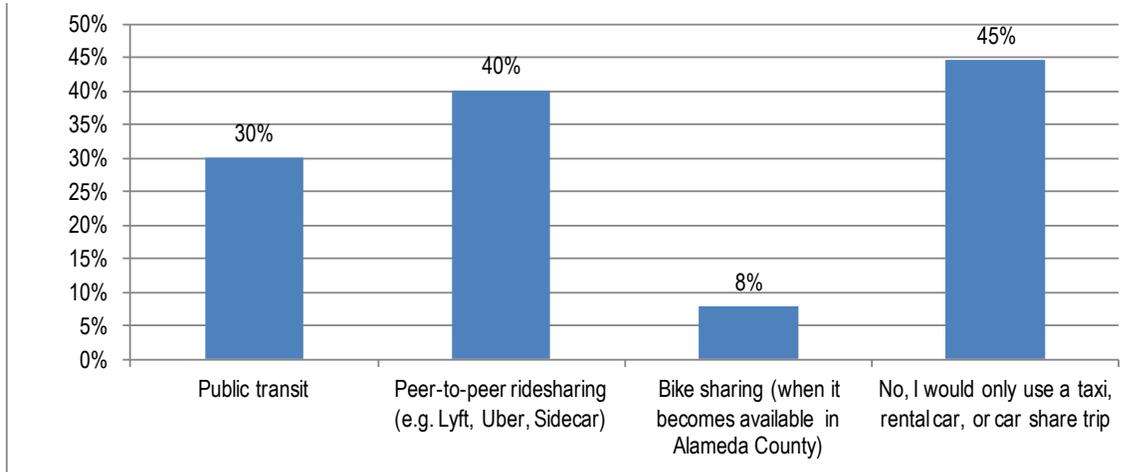
**Social media:** Similarly, though less than 1% of respondents indicated using the GRH Facebook page for obtaining information about the program, more than 7% reported being aware of it.

**Reimbursable rides home:** In early 2015, the Alameda County Guaranteed Ride Home began approving rides home taken through car sharing services Zipcar and City Carshare. Program staff has noticed an increasing number of inquiries related to reimbursing peer-to-peer ridesharing

companies (such as Lyft, Uber, and Sidecar), so participants were asked to report their interest in using this option for rides home as well as three other modes: public transit and bike sharing.

**Forty percent of respondents are interested in being able to use peer-to-peer ridesharing services for rides home—this is an increase from 23% in the 2013 program year. Additionally, 30% of respondents have interest in using public transit (e.g. Amtrak) as a reimbursable option.**

Figure 4-5 Participant preference for additional ride home options



**General feedback:** Lastly, participants were asked to provide program staff with general comments and feedback on the program, its administration, and any other topics they would like staff to know about. The feedback received is overwhelmingly positive. Below is a selection of both positive and negative feedback. Negative feedback and suggestions through this process are taken seriously and suggestions for ways to address them are included in the recommendations chapter.

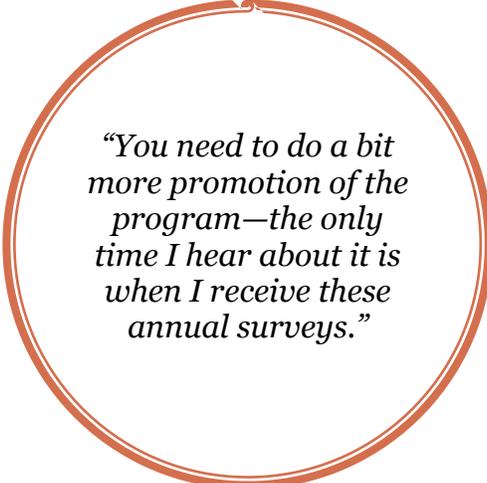
Select positive feedback:

- “With the availability of GRH, I have been able to comfortably and confidently ride the ACE Train knowing that if I am required to stay late (after the last ACE Train has departed Fremont) that I can easily make it home.”
- “Great to know it is there for me in a pinch. I have two young children at home, and GRH provides peace of mind I can get to them in an emergency.”
- “Since I know I can get back home safely in case of emergency, I am more likely to use public **transportation.**”
- “I’m too afraid of being stuck to try commuting by train/bus without the backup of GRH. Knowing I can get home...makes it feel safe.”
- “Staff are always impressed to learn about this county-provided **benefit.**”

*“My wife is pregnant and I bike to work. GRH gives me the confidence that if I need to get to her quickly or go to the hospital in an emergency I can do that.”*

Select negative feedback and suggestions:

- “GRH promises to help but, in practice, is limited in how helpful they are. Start reimbursing Uber and that opinion might change. I had a horrible experience with a traditional cab while suffering from a migraine. The driver harassed me after I requested a receipt and then withheld my change to ensure he got a tip. This would never have occurred if I had been allowed to choose Uber or similar program.”
- “I think it could be better integrated into existing modes of transportation. E.g., be able to directly reimburse from car share orgs or cab companies, be able to get info to website at bike shops, bike stations, posters on buses and taxis. I would likely have a hard time fishing for the info when I need it. And waiting until I get home to process my reimbursement is a barrier.”
- “**I think it’s** great that you are working to add new mobile functionality. But I hope you **won’t** drop non-mobile access in the process... I am not a smart phone owner.”
- “If you add Lyft I will use it much more, because that is how I get **around when I’m** not taking public transit or driving like I usually do. **It’s** also much cheaper than taking a taxi so I think that will **save the program a lot of money.**”
- “Since it is cheaper and convenient to use BART and bus for me, it would be beneficial to have public transit as a reimbursement vehicle for unexpected travel needs. **I’ve** had late unexpected meetings and have used public transit but have not been able to get **reimbursed.**”



*“You need to do a bit more promotion of the program—the only time I hear about it is when I receive these annual surveys.”*

## Respondents’ Characteristics

Responses were received from employees of approximately 200 companies. Only 1% of respondents had changed jobs to another employer in Alameda County in the last year, suggesting that information in the participant database remains up to date for at least one year.

## OVERALL EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION

Statistics presented in this section represent the full set of program participants from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. This data was collected through participant registration and, unlike the annual survey, represent the full sample of participants.

**Due to the program’s transition in 2014 to a reimbursement-based program primarily, all participants in the program’s database through December 31, 2013 were asked to re-register** in order to refresh participant account information (such as home address, employer, and primary commute mode of transportation). Because of this database refresh, the total count of participants for the 2014 year is less than reported in previous years. In the process, previously registered individuals either who had changed jobs outside the county or chose not to re-register for another reason dropped out of the database. Therefore, unlike in previous years, the data

presented below does not include comparisons to previous year employee and employer participation.

## Employee Participation

As of December 31, 2014, there were 2,179 participants had registered for GRH. Figure 4-6 summarizes how these participants are spread across Alameda County’s four planning areas:

- North County, encompassing the cities of Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, and Piedmont
- Central County, encompassing the cities of Hayward and San Leandro and the unincorporated communities of Ashland, Castro Valley, Cherryland, and San Lorenzo
- South County, encompassing the cities of Fremont, Newark, and Union City
- East County beyond the East Bay hills, including the cities of Dublin, Livermore, and Pleasanton, and the unincorporated communities of Sunol and other smaller communities in the East Bay hills

**Figure 4-6 Participants by Planning Area<sup>3</sup>**

Planning Area	Number of Participants	%
Central County	105	5%
East County	382	18%
North County	1,610	74%
South County	69	3%

**North County accounts for 74% of all participants enrolled in the GRH program.**

North County includes the two busiest employment hubs in Alameda County—Downtown Oakland and the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>4</sup> North County also has high coverage of rail and high-frequency bus lines and, compared to other planning areas, an urban form that favors walking and biking. East County has the lowest population density in Alameda County and the highest concentration of protected agricultural land. It is served by the Dublin/Pleasanton BART and West Dublin/Pleasanton BART stations and 18% of participants work in East County. Central County and South County each have 5% or less of GRH participation. Although they are well-served by BART, AC Transit, and other commuter options such as Amtrak, few large employers are located in these areas.

We can also look at participation by employer. The following data (Figure 4-7) represent the top 10 employer sites in terms of program registrants as of December 31, 2014. It should be noted that these are employer *sites* (e.g. staff of Alameda County *Social Services*) and not employers overall; participation by the employer overall (e.g. staff of Alameda County) may be larger than what is shown in Figure 4-7.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: 13 participants (representing 1% of registrants) in the database reported employers outside of Alameda County, so they are not reflected in this table.

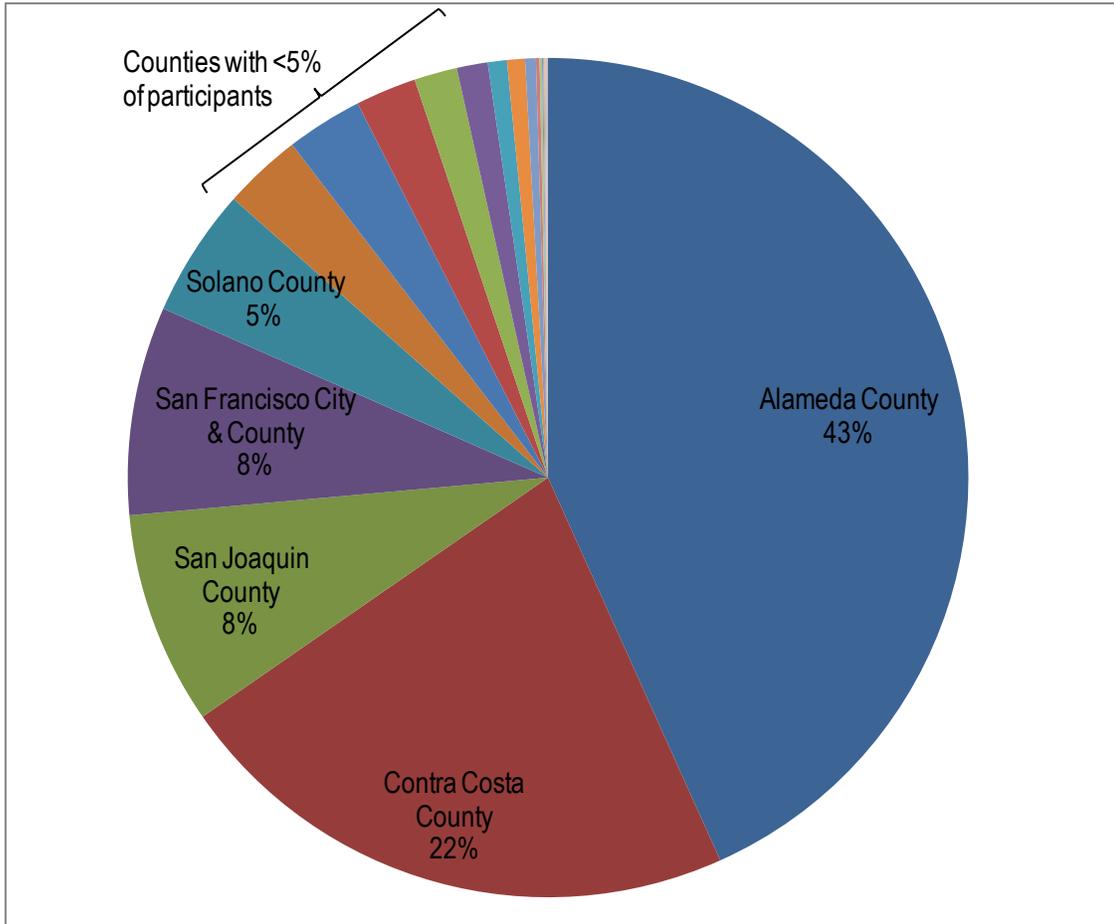
<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employment-Household Dynamics On the Map Tool

**Figure 4-7 Participants by Employer Site (Top 10)**

	Employer Site	Planning Area	Participants
1	Kaiser Permanente Oakland Regional Offices, 1800 Harrison Street, 6th Floor, Oakland	North County	168
2	Lawrence Livermore National Security, P.O. Box 808 East Avenue, L-695, Livermore	East County	92
3	Kaiser Oakland Medical Center, 280 W. MacArthur Blvd., Commuter Services, Oakland	North County	78
4	City of Oakland, Personnel; 150 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, 3rd Floor, Oakland	North County	66
5	Alameda County, 1405 Lakeside Drive, Oakland	North County	66
6	Safeway Inc., 5918 Stoneridge Mall Road, Pleasanton	East County	55
7	Kaiser Permanente Regional Offices, 1950 Franklin Street, Oakland	North County	54
8	Alameda County Social Services, 2000 San Pablo Avenue #420, Oakland	North County	52
9	Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC, 7000 East Avenue, Livermore	East County	49
10	U.S. Coast Guard, Various locations, Oakland/Alameda	North County	48

While the GRH program is designed to serve people who work in Alameda County, participants' home locations span several Bay Area counties and beyond. The vast majority of participants (65%) live in either Alameda (43%) or Contra Costa (22%) counties. Eight percent commute from San Francisco or San Joaquin County, 5% from Solano, and less than 5% from each of the other counties. **With 57% of commuters coming from outside the county, the program has a high potential for reducing vehicle miles traveled and its associated greenhouse gas emissions.**

**Figure 4-8 Participants by County of Residence (through 2014)**



To further represent commute patterns, Figure 4-9 illustrates the top five origin/destination pairs among participants' commute trips. **The most common commute among participants is within Oakland and the most common destination (work location) overall is also Oakland.** Even though only 8% of participants reside in San Francisco County, San Francisco-to-Oakland is the second most common commute trip. Participants whose usual commute trip coincides with these top five origin/destination pairs rely heavily on public transit as their primary commute mode. This reflects the availability of high-frequency/high-capacity transit in these areas.

**Figure 4-9 Top Five Home-to-Work Commute Trips among Participants**

Commute Origin-Destination Pair	Primary Commute Mode	Participants
Oakland–Oakland	Transit	86
	Bike	43
	Carpool	25
	Walk	18
	<b>Oakland–Oakland Total</b>	<b>172</b>
San Francisco–Oakland	Transit	86

Commute Origin-Destination Pair	Primary Commute Mode	Participants
	Bike	2
	Carpool	2
	<b>San Francisco–Oakland Total</b>	<b>90</b>
Hayward–Oakland	Transit	59
	Carpool	10
	<b>Hayward–Oakland Total</b>	<b>69</b>
Berkeley–Oakland	Transit	44
	Bike	20
	Carpool	3
	<b>Berkeley–Oakland Total</b>	<b>67</b>
Fremont–Oakland	Transit	41
	Vanpool	4
	Carpool	2
	<b>Fremont–Oakland Total</b>	<b>47</b>

## Employer Participation

As of December 31, 2014, participants from 450 employers had registered. As explained above, the word “employers” here represents employer sites; employers that have multiple sites or departments (such as Kaiser Permanente or Alameda County) are counted separately. The GRH database from 2013 and earlier counted these separate locations as one entity, which could explain the growth in employer representation between 2013 (292 employers) and 2014 (450). The difference may also be due partly to the program no longer requiring employers to be registered for participants to sign up; participants from new employers are able to sign up without having to go through their human resources department.

**Figure 4-10 Employers by Location versus Participants by Location**

Location	Employer Sites (2014)	% of All Employers	Participant Representation
<b>North</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>74%</b>
Alameda	46	11%	
Berkeley	53	12%	
Emeryville	36	8%	
Oakland	160	37%	
<b>East</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Dublin	17	4%	
Livermore	13	3%	

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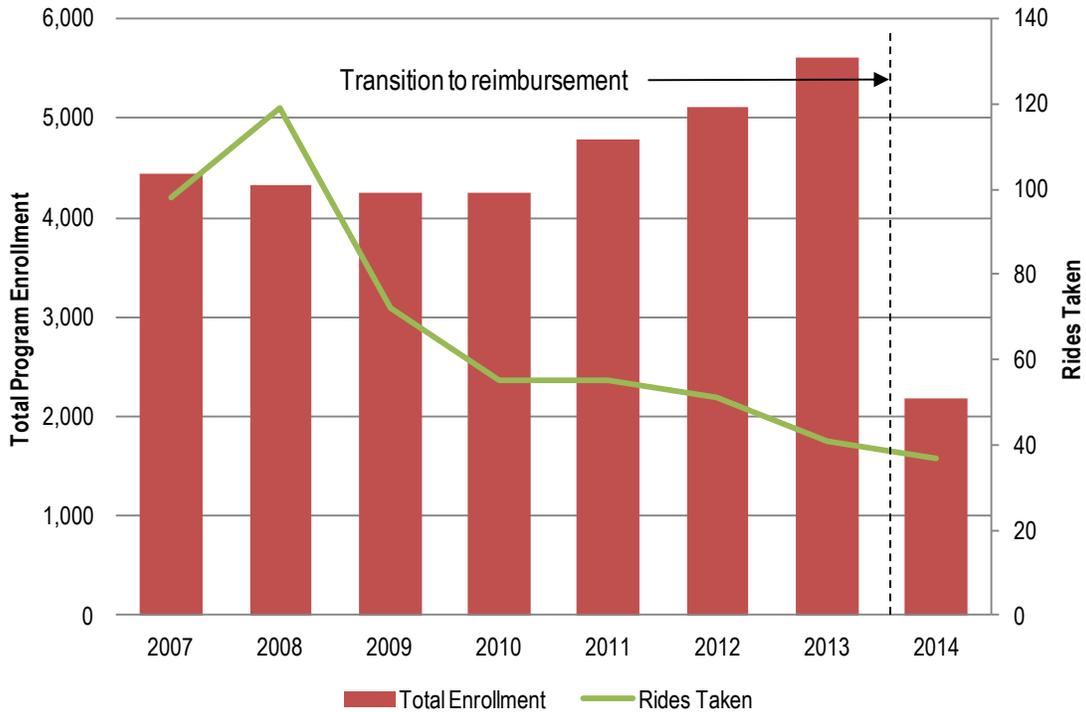
Location	Employer Sites (2014)	% of All Employers	Participant Representation
Pleasanton	48	11%	
<b>South</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Fremont	23	5%	
Newark	1	0%	
Union City	5	1%	
<b>Central</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Hayward	20	5%	
San Leandro	12	3%	

The distribution of GRH-enrolled participants across planning areas is similar to the distribution of employers. A slightly higher percentage of participants work in North County than the percentage of employers located there, which could be an indication of the higher number of large employers in Oakland and Berkeley (i.e. more employees per employer).

### **Trip Statistics**

In 2014, a total of 37 reimbursement requests were received—four fewer trips than had been taken under the voucher program in 2013. Program staff had predicted trips to increase in 2014 due to the increased ease of using the program (participants no longer had to keep track of vouchers), but this was not the case. Part of the reduced number of trips may be due to the lower overall registration, however those who were registered in 2014 represent the most up-to-date (and therefore potentially active) participants. Figure 4-11 illustrates the changes in program use over time.

Figure 4-11 Enrollment vs. Usage over time



**The reimbursement requests were split almost equally between taxis and rental cars—18 by rental car and 19 by taxi.** Two of these requests were denied due to a violation of one or more program rules. In one case, the participant requested to be reimbursed for a taxi ride home taken due to a public transit delay, which is not a covered circumstance as published in the Program Guidelines (page 3). In the second case, the participant used Uber (a transportation network company) for their ride home, which is a mode currently not covered by the program (as described on page 3 of the Program Guidelines). Figure 4-12 summarizes the reimbursement requests, costs, and approvals for the 2014 program year. Of note among the requests is the fact that **almost 60% of participants requesting reimbursement for a trip home commute primarily by carpool, whereas less than 30% of participants overall report using carpooling or vanpooling for their commute.** Therefore, GRH is very helpful for people relying on ridesharing to get to work, which is also more likely to be used in areas where transit service is low.

Figure 4-12 2014 Reimbursement Requests

Method of Ride Home	Requests	Total Reimbursement Request	Total Approved Reimbursement	Average Reimbursement Request	Average Approved Reimbursement
Rental Car	18	\$964	\$867	\$54	\$48
Taxi	19	\$1,000	\$939	\$53	\$49
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>\$1,964</b>	<b>\$1,806</b>	<b>\$53</b>	<b>\$49</b>

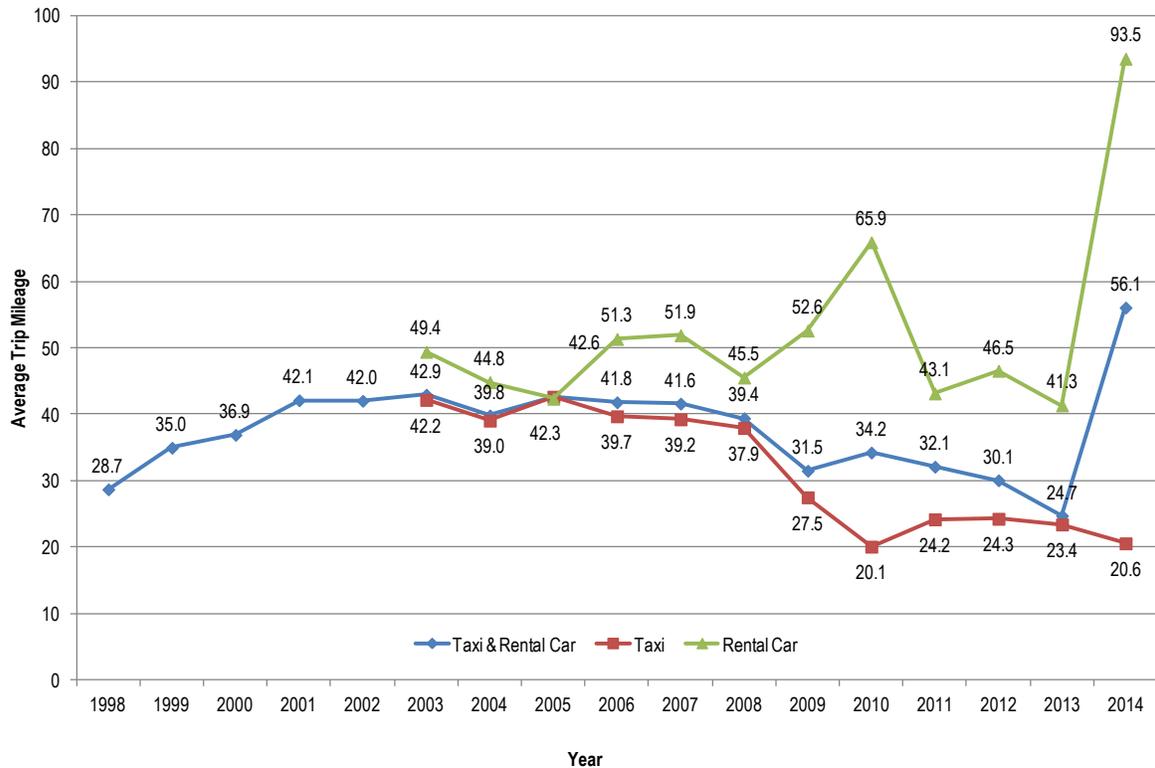
**Unlike in previous years, the average trip distance among taxi and rental car reimbursement requests (56 miles) was significantly higher than the average home-to-work distance among participants overall (25 miles—as reported through the annual participant survey).** Figure 4-13 illustrates the trend over time. There are a few reasons why trip distance may have increased in 2014.

First, with the transition to reimbursement, the process for collecting information about participants' trips fundamentally changed. Rather than relying on the taxi driver or rental car company to fill out trip information on the voucher, participants themselves estimated trip distance when submitting their reimbursement request. There is some inconsistency between participants; while most reported round-trip distance for rental cars, some reported only one-way trip distance. This discrepancy means that direct comparisons between 2014 and previous years may not be advisable.

Second, alongside the transition to reimbursement, outreach to participants was increased. Additionally, program guidelines were refreshed and clarified. This new and increased access to program information may have clarified to participants that rental cars should be used for longer trips, whereas taxis are appropriate for shorter trips. Indeed, participants increased their use of rental cars as a proportion of trips taken under the program (in 2013, only 7% of trips were taken using rental cars). If participants with longer commutes increased their use of the program due to increased outreach, this could explain part of the increased rental car trip distance in 2014.

Third, because the quantity of trips taken by taxis was higher in previous program years, the influence of trip distance for each of those trips on the overall average for taxi trips would be diminished. Therefore, a higher average trip distance among rental car trips may indicate that participants more clearly understand that rental cars are most appropriate for longer trips.

**Figure 4-13 Average Trip Distance<sup>5</sup>**

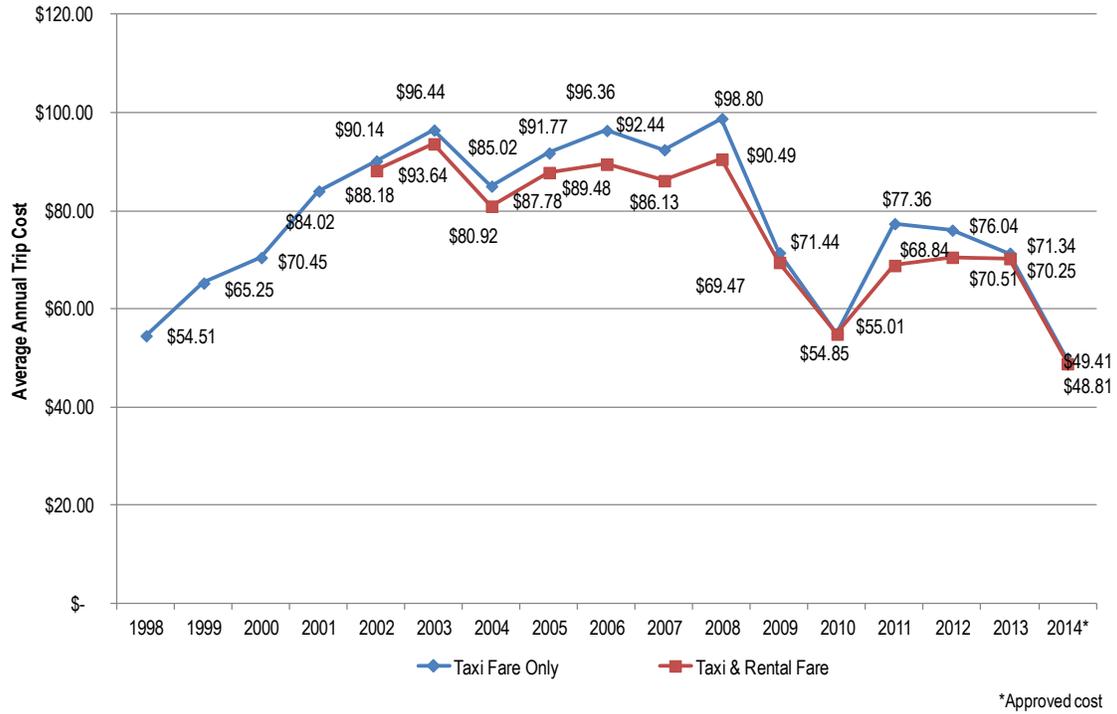


Last, Figure 4-14 illustrates the average cost per trip over the last 17 program years. **In 2014, the overall average cost per trip declined significantly from \$71.34 to \$49.41.** This decrease reflects participants’ increased reliance on rental cars for trips over 20 miles, which costs the program much less than a taxi ride. The shift to a reimbursement model—which requires participants to pay the upfront cost of their ride home—could be encouraging participants to take less costly rides. Further, participants low reliance on the PayPal reimbursement method—which allows them to be reimbursed in a more timely fashion—indicates that paying upfront is not a significant barrier to participation.

<sup>5</sup> For program years prior to 2013, the trip distance was reported by the taxi driver or rental car company. For 2014 and after, the trip distance was reported by the participant on the reimbursement request form.

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**Figure 4-14 Average Trip Cost by Year**



## 5 OVERALL PROGRAM IMPACT

The Alameda Guaranteed Ride Home program saved 2,179 participants over \$650,000 in fuel costs throughout 2014. This savings is due to an annual reduction of 4.1 million vehicle miles traveled on Bay Area roads.

**Figure 5-1 Summary of Program Impacts**

Category	2014 Statistics
Program enrollment at end of program year	2,179
Drive-alone roundtrips reduced (per week)	1,514
Drive-alone one-way trips reduced (per week)	3,028
Drive-alone roundtrips reduced (per weekday)	303
Drive-alone one-way trips reduced (per weekday)	606
Total drive-alone roundtrips reduced per year (52 weeks)	78,719
Total drive-alone one-way trips reduced per year (52 weeks)	157,438
Guaranteed Rides Home taken in 2014	37
Average commute distance of GRH participants in 2014	27.1
Average miles saved (per workday)	16,404
Annual miles saved (250 days)	4,100,962
Average U.S. fuel economy (miles per gallon)	23.3
Average gallons of gas saved (per workday)	704
Annual gallons of gas saved (250 days)	176,007
Average gas price in 2014 (California)	\$ 3.75
Average dollars not spent on gas (per workday)	\$ 2,636.58
Annual dollars not spent on gas (250 days)	\$ 659,146.09

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2014 Recommendation Status

**1. Consider the use of small incentives to increase engagement with GRH.**

This recommendation primarily referred to increasing engagement with the annual survey. This year, we received 519 survey responses for a survey response rate of 22%—higher than any recent program year. Without the use of incentives, program staff was able to increase the quantity and rate of responses through a well-timed reminder email (two-week survey open period; reminder email two days prior to the due date).

**2. Investigate other transportation providers that could be eligible for reimbursement as part of the Alameda CTC GRH program.**

In early 2015, the GRH program added car sharing (Zipcar and City Car Share) to the list of eligible providers. The change is reflected on the GRH website and in the published Program Guidelines.

Program staff members also have collaborated with other Bay Area Guaranteed Ride Home program staff and consulted with program managers around the country to understand the state of the practice in reimbursement programs. In April 2015, GRH program staff submitted a memorandum of case studies demonstrating a trend towards allowing trips taken with transportation network companies (e.g. Lyft, Sidecar, and Uber) and on public transit to be reimbursed. As of the time of this report, Alameda CTC staff is working to make a determination for Alameda County.

**3. Continue to enhance marketing and outreach through coordination with Alameda CTC to increase GRH program participation throughout Alameda County.**

The Alameda CTC currently promotes GRH through several channels, including email blasts to participants, social media posts, printed materials, co-promotions with other Alameda programs, and by attending several hundred events each year, including transportation fairs hosted by employers.

GRH program staff assisted the Alameda CTC in its outreach efforts by providing language for email blasts to participants about program changes and improvements. In addition, employer-level program statistics were prepared and sent to a few employer contacts who requested an update on their company's participation. Overall, program staff has reduced outreach and marketing efforts to keep overhead costs associated with program administration low.

**4. Support the development of a countywide TDM “one-stop-shop” clearinghouse website oriented towards employers as part of the proposed Comprehensive TDM Program Approach recommendations.**

On February 25, 2015, the Alameda CTC launched *Commute Choices* (<http://commutechoices.alamedactc.org/>), its new transportation demand management website. This website is designed to serve the needs of both human resources staff and employees within the county. *Commute Choices* provides easy access to organized information on public transportation, ridesharing, biking, walking, and specialized transportation options for seniors and children. This new website helps commuters make smart choices and provides employers with a comprehensive transportation resource for promoting alternatives within the county.

## Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2015/2016

### 1. **Begin reimbursing rides taken with transportation network companies and on public transportation.**

Participants' desire for increased flexibility in transportation options reimbursable under the GRH program is strong and growing. Throughout the 2014 program year, staff fielded several phone and email inquiries regarding the use of transportation network companies within program limitations and had to reject a reimbursement request from a participant that had used Uber to get home in an emergency. Forty percent of survey respondents are interested in being able to use peer-to-peer ridesharing services for rides home—an increase from 23% in the 2013 program year. Thirty percent of respondents have interest in using public transit (e.g. Amtrak) as a reimbursable option. In addition, these other transportation options often offer a cheaper alternative to taxis or rental cars, which would enable the GRH program to support increased participation.

GRH program staff will work with the Alameda CTC to craft GRH policies related to these program changes and implement any modifications supported by the CTC.

### 2. **Increase strategic outreach and communication to continue growing GRH participation throughout Alameda County.**

The 2014 program transition from a voucher-based to a reimbursement-based model coincided with a complete refresh of the participant database. The intended effect of this refresh was to re-establish a group of *active* participants who are up-to-date on the latest program eligibility requirements and guidelines. As evidenced by their high-level of engagement with the annual survey, the current set of participants are in fact highly engaged with the program. An unintended effect of this refresh process is the reduction of overall participation; strategic marketing efforts could increase the number of employees within Alameda County registered with the program and the program's overall impact.

We suggest the following strategic actions; the responsible party is listed in parentheses:

- Create individual employer-based reports of participation to send to employer contacts on a quarterly or bi-annual basis (GRH program staff)
- Partner with Alameda County Chambers of Commerce to increase points of contact with county employers (Alameda CTC staff)
- Create a list of employer representatives who joined the program since the 2014 transition (GRH program staff) and contact those representatives to ensure they have the resources necessary to promote participation within their company (Alameda CTC staff)

- Continue existing outreach efforts through email blasts and staff representation at employer-sponsored events (Alameda CTC staff)
- Support Alameda CTC in creating marketing materials, as needed (GRH program staff)

**3. Monitor average trip distance among reimbursed trips.**

Unlike in previous years, the average trip distance among taxi and rental car reimbursement requests (56 miles) was significantly higher than the average home-to-work distance among participants overall (25 miles—as reported through the annual participant survey). Some of this trend could be explained by program changes such as the way trip information is collected, the promotion of car rental services for trips over 20 miles, and the need for participants to pay upfront the costs of their ride home. However, to ensure program costs are kept low, it would be responsible to monitor increased trip distances over the coming year.