THE PERFECT MATCH

Massachusetts: A Statewide Approach to Ridesharing

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MIT Real-Time Rides
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In the Beginning . . .

- 1970s gas crisis
  - MassPool forming carpools
  - Shoebox to mainframe
  - 1978 CARAVAN » Vanpools
The Next Decade...

- 1980s – CARAVAN » Multimodal
  - Statewide info service
  - Employer outreach
  - Proprietary PC-based ridematching
On the Move . . .

- 1990s
  - Improving air quality
  - Mitigating congestion
  - Forming TMAs for regional efficiency
  - Improved proprietary ridematching, including vanpool, rail, and express bus routes
Exploring New Markets & Technology...

- 2000s – MassRIDES
  - Ridematching online
  - Ridematching pilot projects
  - Behavior change – mode shift
  - From commuters to other traveler markets
Matching Many in MA

Applications Collected by Year

- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
My Theory
My Theory – Out the Window

- Plenty of Questions
  - Tech as Tool or Product
  - Re-defining Touch in the electronic age
- Think Outside the Database
On-line Survey

- ACT Members in US
- Active TDM Programs/Services
- 22% Response
Survey Says…

- Everyone has a Ridematching System
- 50% Off-the-Shelf w/Customization
Survey Also Says...

- **Chief Operating Features**
  - Web-based – instant response
  - Remote or on-site server evenly split
Matching Conventions
- More are radius than route-based
- **Personal preferences prevail**
- Few are GIS/map-based
- Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ match to secondary site
Slicing & Dicing Data

- Reports
  - Most have standard usage reports
  - About ½ have VMT or pollutant reports
  - Few can report mode split
Many Match Options

- Carpooling is King
  - Everyone matches people to people
- Most Match to P&R, Vanpools, Carpools, Shuttles
- Many Match for Bicycling & Walking
Verify & Clarify

- Most Use e-mail & e-newsletters to Verify Data Accuracy
- Many Use Telephone Calls and Direct Mail to Verify & Up-date
Touch is Mostly Tech

- Follow-up to Encourage Mode Switch
  - Most use e-mail
  - Half = Personal contact at events
  - Many use mailings and telephone calls
Preferred Influencers

- Providing Matches
- Short-term Financial Incentives
- Some Rely on Telemarketing
What I Like Most

- Ease of Use
- Immediacy
- Reports for Program Management
What I Like Least

- **Technical Limitations**
  - Lacks program management features
  - Cannot interact with other computerized services in area

- **User Limitations**
  - Not enough registrants
  - Requires much personal touch to make matches
If I Could Change One Thing...

- Route Matching
- Vanpool/ERH Management
- Improve Mapping Component
- Communicate Related Services
Testing New Technology

- Pilot projects at worksites, TMAs
- Varied systems & services
  - Traditional worksite/commuter
  - Web-based personal trips
  - Cell phone match-ups
What we saw...

- Employers, TMAs love data
- Travelers love simple and quick
- **People don’t always like what’s new**
- Context & marketing count
What Did I Learn?

- Decide if ridematching is a tool or a product
  - Choose system accordingly
  - Balance ridematching within program

- Allocate financial & human resources
What Else Did I Learn?

- Technology has a short shelf life
  - Don’t hang your success on the latest gizmos and gadgets
  - Demand techno-flexibility
People have a short attention span
  - Build flexibility into marketing
  - Mix up your messages – something for everyone over time

Be relentless in the pursuit of mobility
One Last Thing...

Will Carpooling Ever Be Cool?