

# **Six-Year Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan 2016-2021**

## **RIDE Solutions**

prepared by

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original 2010 plan prepared by

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# Chapter 01: Overview of RIDE Solutions

## History of TDM Program

RIDE Solutions was founded in 2001 as a commute information and assistance service of the Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission (RVARC), which serves as the Planning District Commission (PDC) for the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area. The service was initially launched to address impending air quality issues and the expectation that the Roanoke Valley region would fall into air quality non-compliance under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules.

The program was expanded in 2008 to provide services in the New River Valley, which includes the Town of Blacksburg. The employer outreach portion of services in the New River Valley is operated through the New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC), to appeal to employers in the New River Valley. In 2012, the program expanded into the Region 2000 service area of the greater Lynchburg region, and in 2015 the expansion continued into southside Virginia in partnership with the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board (WPWIB). Including the commute sheds that feeds its immediate service area, RIDE Solutions serves commuters across central and southwest Virginia, and into West Virginia and North Carolina.

## Governance

RIDE Solutions is operated primarily as a program of the Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission (RVARC) with cooperation from the New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC), the Region 2000 Local Government Council (R2KLGC), and the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board. Three of these agencies are the PDCs for the Roanoke, New River Valley, and greater Lynchburg regions; while the fourth, the WPWIB, serves as the primary workforce development agency in the greater Martinsville and Danville areas. RIDE Solutions does not have a governing board separate from that of RVARC; the RVARC board governs RIDE Solutions as a part of RVARC. The Boards of each other partner agency also have minor roles in developing activities and setting goals through the annual Work Program, as well as approving local elements of the RIDE Solutions budget.

The RVARC board meets once each month at which time board members receive a staff report. The staff report includes a section describing RIDE Solutions' major activities and performance on various indicators when appropriate. RIDE Solutions' Program Director presents an annual report to the board during the grant application authorization process. RIDE Solutions also occasionally reports to the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) policy board and Transportation Technical Committee (TTC).

## Organizational Structure

RIDE Solutions has five staff members: The Program Director and TDM Technician, both of whom are based out of the Roanoke office; and regional coordinators for each of the NRV, Region 2000, and West Piedmont service areas. In addition, the West Piedmont program utilizes business services staff who promote RIDE Solutions service's alongside the menu of workforce-specific programs they bring to bear when engaging with area employers.

Several high-level RIDE Solutions' organizational/administrative functions are provided by RVARC, in its role as the parent organization. These include accounting and human resources. RVARC staff provides these services in the manner of outside consultants or vendors, with the RIDE Solutions Program Director having frequent and extensive coordination with other RVARC staff on the substantive aspects of these functions.

The job descriptions of RIDE Solutions' staff positions are detailed below:

Full Time Equivalent	Position	Job Description
1	Program Director	Responsible for administrative functions, employer outreach in the Roanoke region, marketing and promotional program development, social media management, media relations, government relations, and other high-level tasks.
.75	TDM Technician	Responsible for all ridematching service delivery, marketing program development, graphic design, event planning, public relations support, and some administrative tasks.
.5	New River Valley Coordinator	Responsible for employer outreach in the New River Valley area.
.5	Region 2000 Coordinator	Responsible for employer outreach in the Region 2000 (Greater Lynchburg) area. Will also serve as liaison to local government. Due to Lynchburg's distinct media market, Region 2000 Coordinator will bear additional responsibilities for media relations in line with the Program Director's marketing plan and brand image.
.5	West Piedmont Coordinator	Responsible for employer outreach in the West Piedmont (Greater Martinsville and Danville) area. Will also serve as liaison to local government. Will also coordinator with Program Director on marketing and public relations where the media market with Roanoke does not overlap.

## Service Area Profile

The RIDE Solutions service area, including the surrounding commute shed, includes the bulk of central and southwest Virginia. 593,000 people live within the service area, which covers 7,673 square miles (slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey). Overall population density

is 77 persons per square miles, but it's important to recognize that the region is comprised of a handful of small, dense urban areas and much larger swaths of rural land and small towns.

## Map of Service Area and Table of Localities



The table below lists the counties and cities that make up RIDE Solutions' service area, the combined RVARC, NRVRC, Region 2000, and West Piedmont regions.

Roanoke Valley		New River Valley	
1.	City of Roanoke	1.	Town of Blacksburg
2.	City of Radford	2.	Montgomery County
3.	City of Salem	3.	Pulaski County
4.	Town of Clifton Forge	4.	City of Christiansburg
5.	City of Covington	5.	Montgomery County
6.	Franklin County	6.	Giles County
7.	Botetourt County	7.	Floyd County
8.	Alleghany County	8.	City of Radford
9.	Town of Rocky Mount	9.	Town of Christiansburg
10.	Town of Vinton	10.	Town of Floyd
		11.	Town of Narrows
		12.	Town of Pearisburg
		13.	Town of Rich Creek
Region 2000		West Piedmont	
1.	City of Lynchburg	1.	City of Martinsville
2.	Town of Bedford	2.	City of Danville
3.	Bedford County	3.	Henry County
4.	Appomattox County	4.	Pittsylvania County
5.	Amherst County	5.	Patrick County
6.	Campbell County		

## Demographic Profile

The table below shows the historic and current populations for each region in the RIDE Solutions service area

	2000	2010	2020 (est.)
<b>Roanoke Valley</b>			
<b>Population:</b>			
Total Pop.	307,538	307,538	348,753
% Growth	6.6	6.6%	5.4%
<b>Age Groups (%):</b>			
Under 20	68,096 (23%)	68,096 (23%)	79,751 (23%)
20 to 64	182,677 (60%)	182,677 (60%)	196,565 (56%)
65 and Over	48,120 (17%)	48,120 (17%)	72,437 (21%)
<b>New River Valley</b>			
<b>Population:</b>			
Total Pop.	165,146	178,237	192,063
% Growth		7.93%	7.76%
<b>Age Groups (%):</b>			
Under 20		43,625 (24%)	45,786 (24%)
20 to 64		111,969 (63%)	116,114 (60%)
65 and Over		22,643 (13%)	30,129 (16%)
<b>Region 2000</b>			
<b>Population:</b>			
Total Pop.	228,616	252,634	271,133
% Growth		10.51%	7.32%
<b>Age Groups (%):</b>			
Under 20		64,017 (25%)	64,530 (23%)
20 to 64		148,995 (59%)	154,878 (57%)
65 and Over		39,662 (16%)	51,725 (20%)
<b>West Piedmont</b>			
<b>Population:</b>			
Total Pop.		249,182	255,605
% Growth		-0.4%	2.58%
<b>Age Groups (%):</b>			
Under 20		58,188 (23%)	56,198 (23%)
20 to 64		144,707 (58%)	140,475 (55%)
65 and Over		46,287 (18%)	59,932 (23%)

Sources: Virginia Employment Commission and US Census Bureau.

## Employment Profile

The major employment opportunities vary by the region served. In the Roanoke Valley and Region 2000, employment is more concentrated in the urban cores of the City of Roanoke and the City of Lynchburg and its immediate environs. In the New River Valley, Virginia Tech serves as an anchor for employment in Blacksburg, though there are a larger number of employers located in the more rural areas surrounding the core.

The West Piedmont service area has the largest number of major employers outside the urban cores of Martinsville and Danville. Indeed, provision of transportation through TDM services is as important as congestion and VMT reduction in this area.

When compared to other regions of Virginia, the RIDE Solutions service area is relatively sparsely populated, with an average of 77 persons per square mile versus 179 for the state average. Roanoke City and Blacksburg, and their respective counties of Roanoke and Montgomery, have densities above the statewide average. The City of Roanoke has the highest density in the region, with 2,207 persons per square mile within the city limits. Lynchburg comes in at 1,332 and Martinsville at 1,402.

According to the 2010 US Census, approximately 17 percent of the region's population was living below the poverty line, which is higher than the state average; however, it must be noted that the variations within the four major regions with the RIDE Solutions service area reveal a wide range in these numbers and for various reasons. The New River Valley's poverty rate, for example, is exacerbated by its high student count, overstating what we might refer to as typical poverty; meanwhile, the Roanoke Valley's poverty rate is slightly under the state average. Minority populations, including African-Americans (14 percent) and Hispanics (3 percent) are under-represented in the service area when compared with statewide averages. Again, it should be noted that these percentages can vary within each of the service area's four region, and between its urban and rural areas.

## **Transportation Facilities**

Roanoke's transportation system is a network of local and regional roads, freight rail (east-west, north-south), airport, transit, and an evolving system of sidewalks, greenways and bikeways. In 2017, passenger rail is slated to return to the region with the extension of the Northeast Regional line from Lynchburg to a new terminal stop in Downtown Roanoke.

The major interstate and regional routes are I-81, I-581, U.S. 220/Roy L. Webber Expressway, U.S. 460, U.S. 11, Virginia Route 11, and Virginia Route 114.

Norfolk Southern provides freight rail service.

Passenger and freight air services are provided through the Roanoke Regional Airport, VT Montgomery Executive airport, and the Lynchburg Regional Airport. Freight service and US Customs Services are provided at the New River Valley Airport.

In Roanoke, Valley Metro provides bus transit and paratransit service. Blacksburg Transit (BT) provides bus transit for the Town of Blacksburg and surrounding areas. BT Access, part of BT, provides paratransit service for the Town of Blacksburg. The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) provides fixed-route service in Lynchburg, while Piedmont Area Regional Transit (PART) provides fixed-route service in Martinsville, and Danville Transit provides service in Danville.

There are two inter-regional transit options in the RIDE Solutions service area: The Smart Way commuter bus between Roanoke and Blacksburg, and the Smart Way Connector between Roanoke and Lynchburg. The Smart Way commuter service runs daily with connections between downtown Roanoke, the airport, downtown Blacksburg, and Virginia Tech, with other stops along the way. The Smart Way Connector is explicitly designed to connect Roanoke to passenger rail at Kemper Street Station in Lynchburg. When passenger rail returns to

Roanoke this service will end, though it is unclear if it will be moved to make another inter-regional connection, such as between Roanoke and the Amtrak station in Clifton Forge.

Pulaski Transit operates a fixed route in the Town of Pulaski. New River Valley Senior Services provides paratransit service for the New River Valley area.

The Ferrum Express provides limited fixed route service between Ferrum College in Franklin County, Rocky Mount, and Roanoke. The primary audience for the service is students of Ferrum College.

Franklin County Aging Services offers by-appointment for transportation to medical services for individuals 60 years or older who have disabilities, who need specialized transportation for wheelchairs and other assistive devices, and Medicaid recipients who lack transportation for medical services.

A series of off-road greenway segments connects areas within the Roanoke, Lynchburg, and New River Valley metro areas. Within Roanoke, the Roanoke River Greenway is the longest contiguous segment, running from Bridge Street in the center of the city to the Southeast Roanoke neighborhood, with on-road bike or pedestrian connections to Downtown. In Blacksburg, the Huckleberry Trail connects Virginia Tech to the Corporate Research Center, New River Valley Mall, and Christiansburg Recreation Center, with plans to expand to the Aquatic Center in the next few years. Some existing greenway segments provide off-road bike/pedestrian commuting options. The Roanoke region's Conceptual Greenway Plan envisions a 26-mile contiguous greenway connecting Salem to Explore Park and many activity centers and neighborhoods in between, providing an excellent bike commuting option.

In addition to the off road facilities, on-road accommodations such as signed bike routes and extensive sidewalk networks complement bike and pedestrian access to activity centers such as recreation and employment. Such paths also effectively extend the transit network by easing foot and bike traffic to bus stops and shelters, and by allowing pedestrian and bicycle access from transit routes to employment and other centers.

## **Commuting Patterns**

Because of the diversity within the RIDE Solutions program area, commute distance can vary from sub-region to sub-region. For example, in the Roanoke market, 92% of commuters remain within the region. Here is a breakdown of commuting patterns for each of our four service areas, via US Census Bureau data and the Virginia Employment Commission. Note that the following data is based on MSA commuting behavior. While a subset of total commuters and commuter patterns in each region, it is nonetheless representative of where the majority of commuters are travelling and how they are moving between and within the RIDE Solutions service areas:

### **Roanoke**

- People who live and work in the area: 104,975
- In-Commuters: 50,744
- Out-Commuters: 28,651
- Net In-Commuters (In-Commuters minus Out-Commuters): 22,093



### **Top 10 Places Residents are Commuting To:**

- Montgomery County, VA: 3,516
- Lynchburg city, VA: 1,540
- Henrico County, VA: 1,348
- Henry County, VA: 1,175
- Fairfax County, VA: 1,056
- Bedford County, VA: 1,028
- Richmond city, VA: 964
- Chesterfield County, VA: 879
- Martinsville city, VA: 797
- Danville city, VA: 769
- **Out-commuting to NRVRC (New River Valley) area: 3,516**
- **Out-commuting to Region 2000 (Lynchburg) area: 2,568**
- **Out-commuting to West Piedmont (Martinsville/Danville) area: 2,741**

### **Top 10 Places Workers are Commuting From**

- Bedford County, VA: 8,323
- Montgomery County, VA: 4,771
- Henry County, VA: 2,322
- Pulaski County, VA: 1,898
- Lynchburg city, VA: 1,566
- Floyd County, VA: 1,493
- Campbell County, VA: 1,334
- Pittsylvania County, VA: 1,152
- Augusta County, VA: 1,116
- Henrico County, VA: 955
- **In-commuting from NRVRC (New River Valley) area: 8,162**
- **In-commuting from Region 2000 (Lynchburg) area: 2,900**
- **In-commuting from West Piedmont (Martinsville/Danville) area: 3,474**

### **New River Valley**

- People who live and work in the area: 44,768
- In-Commuters: 22,786
- Out-Commuters: 19,798
- Net In-Commuters (In-Commuters minus Out-Commuters): 2,088

### **Top 10 Places Residents are Commuting To:**

- Roanoke city, VA: 4,060
- Roanoke County, VA: 2,221
- Salem city, VA: 2,056
- Wythe County, VA: 851
- Tazewell County, VA: 498
- Franklin County, VA: 476
- Carroll County, VA: 421
- Botetourt County, VA: 420
- Lynchburg city, VA: 391

- Mercer County, WV: 386
- **Out-commuting to RVARC (Roanoke) area: 8,853**
- **Out-commuting to Region 2000 (Lynchburg) area: 391**
- **Out-commuting to West Piedmont (Martinsville/Danville) area: 0**

#### **Top 10 Places Workers are Commuting From**

- Wythe County, VA: 1,844
- Roanoke County, VA: 1,842
- Roanoke city, VA: 1,368
- Carroll County, VA: 1,226
- Franklin County, VA: 751
- Monroe County, WV: 717
- Mercer County, WV: 682
- Henry County, VA: 646
- Tazewell County, VA: 635
- Patrick County, VA: 569
- **In-commuting from RVARC (Roanoke) area: 2,119**
- **In-commuting from Region 2000 (Lynchburg) area: 0**
- **In-commuting from West Piedmont (Martinsville/Danville) area: 646**

#### **Region 2000**

- People who live and work in the area: 64,873
- In-Commuters: 25,982
- Out-Commuters: 34,247
- Net In-Commuters (In-Commuters minus Out-Commuters): -8,265

#### **Top 10 Places Residents are Commuting To:**

- Roanoke city, VA: 6,188
- Roanoke County, VA: 3,152
- Salem city, VA: 1,560
- Henrico County, VA: 1,529
- Richmond city, VA: 1,042
- Fairfax County, VA: 1,026
- Pittsylvania County, VA: 919
- Chesterfield County, VA: 895
- Franklin County, VA: 833
- Halifax County, VA: 830
- **Out-commuting to RVARC (Roanoke) area: 11,733**
- **Out-commuting to NRVRC (New River Valley) area: 0**
- **Out-commuting to West Piedmont (Martinsville/Danville) area: 0**

#### **Top 10 Places Workers are Commuting From**

- Pittsylvania County, VA: 2,707
- Roanoke County, VA: 1,350
- Halifax County, VA: 1,250
- Roanoke city, VA: 924
- Danville city, VA: 882

- Augusta County, VA: 807
- Franklin County, VA: 634
- Chesterfield County, VA: 615
- Botetourt County, VA: 583
- Charlotte County, VA: 565
- **In-commuting from RVARC (Roanoke) area: 2,908**
- **In-commuting from NRVRC (New River Valley) area: 0**
- **In-commuting from West Piedmont (Martinsville/Danville) area: 0**

## West Piedmont

- People who live and work in the area: 60,055
- In-Commuters: 22,276
- Out-Commuters: 36,126
- Net In-Commuters (In-Commuters minus Out-Commuters): -13,850

### Top 10 Places Residents are Commuting To:

- Roanoke city, VA: 6,027
- Roanoke County, VA: 2,534
- Rockingham County, NC: 2,211
- Campbell County, VA: 2,035
- Salem city, VA: 1,715
- Guilford County, NC: 1,536
- Lynchburg city, VA: 1,525
- Montgomery County, VA: 1,360
- Halifax County, VA: 1,073
- Henrico County, VA: 764
- **Out-commuting to RVARC (Roanoke) area: 10,276**
- **Out-commuting to NRVRC (New River Valley) area: 1,360**
- **Out-commuting to Region 2000 (Lynchburg) area: 3,560**

### Top 10 Places Workers are Commuting From

- Halifax County, VA: 1,431
- Caswell County, NC: 1,407
- Rockingham County, NC: 1,334
- Roanoke city, VA: 1,089
- Roanoke County, VA: 1,087
- Bedford County, VA: 1,006
- Campbell County, VA: 647
- Montgomery County, VA: 636
- Lynchburg city, VA: 560
- Guilford County, NC: 472
- **In-commuting from RVARC (Roanoke) area: 2,176**
- **In-commuting from NRVRC (New River Valley) area: 636**
- **In-commuting from Region 2000 (Lynchburg) area: 2,213**

From the data, the following is clear:

- The Roanoke region has the highest number of in-commuters of the entire service areas, drawing mostly from each of its adjacent partner areas. As the geographic center of the RIDE Solutions service area, this is not surprising.
- West Piedmont and the New River Valley each have commuting patterns that include neighboring states, extending the effective commute shed of RIDE Solutions into North Carolina and West Virginia.
- Of all the non-Roanoke regions, West Piedmont has the largest percentage of commuters who are remaining within the RIDE Solutions service areas. The New River Valley and Region 2000 each have significant numbers of commuters travelling to the areas east and west of the current service area.

# Chapter 02: Existing TDM Services and Staffing

## Customers

Today, RIDE Solutions focuses on the work-related commute and, in so doing, serves two primary customer groups: work-related commuters and their employers.

**Commuters:** RIDE Solutions serves a variety of commuter types, each of whom choose different modes for different reasons. They can be broken down in roughly the following segments:

- **Urban Commuters:** Urban commuters live in or near the urban cores of RIDE Solutions various service areas – primarily Roanoke, Blacksburg, and Lynchburg. They have relatively short commutes and are less likely to make commute decisions based entirely on reducing transportation costs. They are more likely to be bike and transit commuters rather than carpoolers. They may be making a transportation decision based on a lifestyle or philosophical reason in addition to or instead of a pure financial reason.
  - A further subset of the urban commuter is the carless commuter. They commute more often by transit or bike, and might even be transit or bike dependent, though their mobility depends largely on the services offered by their jurisdictions – Valley Metro’s transit service in Roanoke and the GLTC service in Lynchburg are both more robust offerings than the services in either Danville or Martinsville, while Blacksburg’s BT service is the most robust of all offerings in terms of ridership, headway times, and technological support.
- **Suburban Commuters:** Suburban commuters live outside the urban core and generally have access to few if any alternatives besides driving alone. They are commuting to worksites within their suburban boundaries or, more likely, to the more employment-dense urban core. They are likely not transit commuters as their areas are not served by transit, though they may use park-and-ride to access regional or local transit service. They are likely not bicycle or pedestrian commuters, as most of the suburban landscape in the RIDE Solutions region is not conducive to safe bicycle and pedestrian commuting, both in terms of infrastructure and topography. A few may carpool, though their commute distances are such that carpooling may not seem worth the trouble. Some may telework. On the whole, this is not the strongest market for RIDE Solutions except for the relatively small number of commuters who may be motivated by philosophical or other impulses to use an alternative commute mode

**Employers:** Recognizing that direct employer involvement in supporting ridesharing lifts employees’ use of ridesharing modes, RIDE Solutions has a strong employer outreach effort. RIDE Solutions’ outreach program covers its entire service area, with relationships between employers and the program managed by the regional coordinators of each geography. It should be noted that some employers have worksites in multiple geographies – both Carilion

Clinic and Virginia Tech, for example, have a strong presence in both Roanoke and the New River Valley. Often, policies that support or incentivize the use of alternative modes may be implemented at both the local and corporate levels; i.e., by either site-specific HR or facilities department, or enterprise-wide by a central HR or sustainability person.

The number of employers that participate as RIDE Solutions partners has increased slowly but steadily over the past few years. Currently, RIDE Solutions has 40 active partnerships representing over 40,000 employees in its service area.

RIDE Solutions' employer partners participate at varying levels. The Program Director estimates that slightly less than half have a more aggressive level of involvement with RIDE Solutions, offering an array of alternative transportation to their employees. The level of involvement for most of the other employers is less substantial, such as dissemination of transportation information to employees. Carilion Clinic is the major employer partner in the Roanoke Valley area, Virginia Tech is the major employer partner in the New River Valley area, and The Results Companies is the major partner in the West Piedmont area.

Based on RIDE Solutions' current base of employer partners and prospects, the profile of employers that embrace and promote TDM include:

- Large employers with a significant number of long-distance commuters
- Employers who have implemented a sustainability or "Green" initiative
- Employers with a large enough employee base that there is matching carpool matching potential among employees of the same worksite.
- Rural employers in need of transportation provision who rely on carpool matching to offer reliable transportation options.

It should also be noted that there are differences among the four major service areas. New River Valley employers who have signed up with RIDE Solutions tend to have employees that commute longer-distances, work non-traditional hours, or have more limited transportation options than those in the Roanoke Valley. The Roanoke Valley and Region 2000 commuters profile more similarly with many commuters staying within their respective region, and West Piedmont has far more commuters, traveling longer distance for employment, and often have little or no access to reliable transportation.

## Programs and Services

Programs and services provided by TDM agencies are typically grouped into three categories:

- Modal options, such as vanpools and transit, refer to services that expand the availability of non-single-occupant vehicle (non-SOV) modes of travel.
- Financial incentives, such as free or discounted transit passes, include services that offer a financial benefit or advantage for use of non-SOV travel options.
- Support services, such as Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH), are services that make use of non-SOV modes more convenient.

RIDE Solutions does not directly operate or fund any services in the modal options category, nor does it offer any financial incentives. All of RIDE Solutions' services fall into the category

of support services. Information about RIDE Solutions' programs and services can be found on RIDE Solutions' Web site ([www.ridesolutions.org](http://www.ridesolutions.org)). Listed here is an overview of the major services provided by the agency, as well as performance indicators in each of these service areas. This section analyzes trends in usage of these key services.

## **Carpool/Ridematching**

Carpool ridematching remains a core service of the program. This service is administered through a database program that matches commuters who want to carpool with other commuters who have similar origins and destinations, routes, and time-of-day travel preferences as do the applicant commuters.

Currently, ridematching is performed through the "GIS/T-Rideshare" application, a non-supported custom module built on the ArcView version 3.1 platform. While applications are accepted electronically, matching, communication with commuters, and customer relationship management is managed manually by the TDM Technician and the Program Director. These services are managed for all four regions in the RIDE Solutions service area out of the Roanoke office.

This database contains records of commuters who have applied for a RIDE Solutions carpool match and who have chosen to remain in the database for continued ridematching opportunities, either because they have yet to form a rideshare arrangement or because they are interested in increasing the number of commuters in an existing carpool.

In 2013, RIDE Solutions developed a new website with a two-tiered membership system. Registrants could create an online account through the website as the first tier, and then request a carpool match as a second tier. Registrants doing so would appear in both the website and GIS/T-Rideshare database. However, registrants could also create an online account to access certain services – such as Guaranteed Ride Home – without requesting a carpool match, even if the commuter indicated they were carpooling.

In doing so, RIDE Solutions staff undertook a clean-up process of the GIS/T-Rideshare database. That clean-up reduced that number to 388. Since then, the carpool database has climbed back to 711 as of February 2016. In addition, the website database now sits at over 1,200 accounts.

## **Vanpool Matching/Leasing**

Due to relatively short commutes and the lack of congestion in the RIDE Solutions service area, vanpool usage is not well-developed. In fact, RIDE Solutions does not provide vanpool leasing service. While a few potential vanpool users might be registered in the ride-matching database, vanpool matching is not part of the regular RIDE Solutions' service offering.

In the region, only Virginia Tech runs a vanpool service, operating three vans purchased through their fleet contract, with costs covered by the pre-tax Commuter Choice benefit, and limited to Virginia Tech employees. These vans serve mostly employees traveling from West Virginia, far Southwest Virginia, and the Alleghany Highlands region.

## **Guaranteed Ride Home**

RIDE Solutions offers the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) service to anyone who commutes at least two days each week via carpool, vanpool, transit or bicycle. This program is administered by the Program Director who is responsible for registering users and approving rides.

Users are registered for GRH through the creation of an online account at [ridesolutions.org](http://ridesolutions.org). Once approved, commuters may access their vouchers through their member dashboard. Once printed, the voucher may be cashed in with a participating taxi provider. Each user is allowed four trips per year on the service, though users employed by a participating employer partner have unlimited access to the program. Currently, there are over 40 such employer partners in the RIDE Solutions program. Users arrange their own trips and present a GRH voucher to the taxi driver before making the trip. After a voucher is downloaded from the website, the user account must be manually enabled by the Program Director or TDM Technician to allow the user access to their next voucher. When a used voucher is received from a taxi company, the Program Director checks the expense for approval, including that the trip was made from work to home, and not vice versa. Approximately 20-30 trips each year are made using this service.

As new ride-hailing and other taxi-like services come into the market, RIDE Solutions is investigating a revision of its Guaranteed Ride Home program to become more flexible and allow services like Uber and Lyft to qualify for Guaranteed Ride Home rides.

## **Employer Services**

RIDE Solutions' employer services are designed to encourage major employers in the service area to implement TDM services at their worksites. This outreach offers RIDE Solutions an opportunity to reach commuters through worksite-based promotions. Employers can also offer some RIDE Solutions services as benefits to their employees. The main services that RIDE Solutions provides to employers include:

- On-site consultation, events, and presentations;
- Transit and ridematch materials for distribution to employees;
- Employee zip code density plots showing concentrations of residential locations of employees;
- Electronic surveys of employees to gauge interest in RIDE Solutions' services;
- Consultation services for the implementation of TDM-oriented incentives such as preferential parking and transit benefits; and
- Carbon-footprint calculation and calculation of other environmental impacts from trip-reduction programs.
- Consultation and support on certification programs, notable the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Business designation.

## **Telework**

RIDE Solutions provides extremely limited telework assistance by way of the seasonal promotion of the telework tax credits offered by the Commonwealth of Virginia during the fall of each year.



## **Bicycling/Walking**

RIDE Solutions, as an arm of RVARC, has a substantial interest in promoting biking and walking as modes of transportation. Indeed, in the Roanoke region, the promotion of cycling is the strongest component of the RIDE Solutions program. RVARC develops the Roanoke Valley pedestrian and bicycle plans and the Web site offers a range of tools and tips for bicyclists, including:

- Interactive bike map;
- Bike to Work routes;
- Guide to bicycle commuting;
- Bicycle touring routes (e.g. Art by Bike)
- Safe Bike Route development assistance
- Bicycle Incident Reporting Tool

RIDE Solutions participates in many bicycle promotional activities, such as the organization of various community rides like the Tweed Ride and St. Patrick's Day Bike Mob. It is also the driving force behind National Bike Month celebration activities across its service area through three key events:

- The Clean Commute Challenge, which encourages commuters to pledge to use an alternative mode during the month of May. Bicycle trips are incentivized. In addition, participants may log trips to earn additional rewards.
- The Bike Shorts Film Festival, which screens local films created both locally, regionally, and internationally at venues in each of its four service areas. The festival reaches both cyclists and non-cyclists alike, with the goal of positioning cycling as a fun, creative, accessible activity that benefits a community whether an individual bicycles or not.
- The Night Rider's Ball, a end-of-bike month party offering free entry to cyclists and participants in the Clean Commute Challenge, as well as free bicycle valet parking. Capitalizing on Roanoke's brand as a musical downtown, the outdoor show brings cyclists and non-cyclists together in a celebration of bike month, encourages bicycle transportation to the show, and frames cycling as a fun, accessible activity. Unlike the previous two events, the Night Rider's Ball takes place only in Roanoke.
- Other, small events – such as commuter breakfasts, mayoral proclamations, tune-up clinics, and more, take place across the service area.

RIDE Solutions focuses on practical riding. Even in organizing social or recreational rides, an effort is made to explore those rides on urban streets to encourage participants to become comfortable with street riding. The focus on practical, casual riding is an attempt to balance out the region's well-earned reputation as an excellent place to mountain bike and road-ride for the hardcore performance cyclists.

RIDE Solutions also works with employers to promote bicycle commuting. RIDE Solutions participates in the development of the bike element of the Roanoke Valley Long-Range Transportation Plan. RIDE Solutions has seen an enormous growth in the interest in and use of bicycling in the Roanoke Valley and has tapped into/sponsored a number of events to build awareness of bicycle safety issues and the need for better accommodations.

RIDE Solutions serves on both the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Bicycle Advisory Committee and the City of Roanoke's Bicycle-Friendly Community Committee.

## **Public Transportation**

RIDE Solutions does not operate any transit service, but does promote transit services provided by other organizations in the region. For example, RIDE Solutions offers transit maps and schedules, provides links on its Web site to all regional transit service operators, participates in "Try Transit" promotions, and includes a transit trip planning tool on its Web site. RIDE Solutions also maintains the General Transit Feed Specifications (GTFS) for Valley Metro, Pulaski Area Transit, Radford Transit, and the Mountain Express. The feed allows the use of Google Maps to plan transit trips. Maintenance is handled through the use of the GTFS-Editor open source software by Conveyal, and is offered free of charge to transit providers in the service area.

## **Other TDM Services & Activities – Marketing**

RIDE Solutions places a heavy emphasis on marketing as a tool for increasing interest in its services. As noted in the Finance section later in this plan, more than one-quarter of RIDE Solutions' total budget is allocated for marketing activities and promotional items. But RIDE Solutions' total annual budget is small for a TDM program that serves a region as large as its service area. So, the marketing allocation is a small absolute amount and quite a modest investment when measured on a per-commuter or per-resident basis.

The four regions that make up RIDE Solutions are served by a number of media markets, some of which overlap by channel and others of which do not extend beyond their borders. For example, The Roanoke Times is the daily newspaper for both the Roanoke and New River Valley regions, with some extension into the West Piedmont area. Therefore, a presence in the newspaper serves at least two, possibly three, markets. However, Region 2000 is served by the News and Advance, which covers only the greater Lynchburg market and therefore requires its own ad buys and media relations effort. Further, while the areas major television stations – WSLS, WDBJ, WSET, and WFXR – cover all four markets, WSET is based out of Lynchburg and tends to be focused on Lynchburg-area news, while the others are headquartered in Roanoke. On the whole, the Region 2000 market tends to operate more independently than the other three markets.

### **Marketing Messages**

Given the absence of congestion and HOV lanes in RIDE Solutions' service area, attracting commuters to alternative modes with the classic ridesharing benefit message of "save time" or faster or less frustrating commutes is not relevant or meaningful. Thus, RIDE Solutions' primary marketing message has focused on the potential monetary savings associated with ridesharing. This message resonated during the summer of 2008, when gas prices were high, but has had less impact in recent months now that gas prices are lower.

RIDE Solutions also incorporates a green message into its communication outreach efforts. This is due, in part, to the green movement gaining traction as a national trend

and the fact that, among the Roanoke region’s ridesharers, “help decrease pollution” is the second most important perceived benefit of ridesharing.

With the expansion into West Piedmont, RIDE Solutions has also marketed its carpool matching service as a way to provide transportation to commuters who lack reliable options.

## **Marketing Outreach Methods**

RIDE Solutions advances its message using a range of communication methods to raise general program awareness and increase interest in specific program elements. While RIDE Solutions deploys traditional media using TV, radio ads, and newspaper, the TDM agency attempts to leverage scarce marketing funds through the use of low cost “guerrilla marketing” communication methods. Examples include:

- **Social Media** – RIDE Solutions makes extensive use of free online social media sites to promote its message and connect with supporters. RIDE Solutions maintains an active presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram. These social media sites not only provide a means to help reach new prospects for ridesharing, they also link RIDE Solutions’ growing network of commuter rideshare advocates and strategic partners.
- **Events** – RIDE Solutions sponsors regional events related to their services such as “Bike Month” and “Art by Bus.”
- **Carpool Announcements** – RIDE Solutions posts announcements for all new carpool registrations in the Rideshare section of the Roanoke, Blacksburg, Lynchburg, and Martinsville Craigslist, to its Twitter feed, on its blog, and via its Facebook fan page.
- **Media Relations** – RIDE Solutions regularly utilizes earned media – news stories – to help sustain awareness of RIDE Solutions and rideshare options. RIDE Solutions also has formed strong partnerships with New Media outlets, such as the Star City Harbinger, an online “newspaper” covering issues in the Roanoke Valley.
- **Blogging** – The RIDE Solutions program director and regional coordinators offer regular commentary on transportation- and energy-related issues on its blog at [ridesolutions.org](http://ridesolutions.org). Blogging is a key part of the search-engine optimization efforts that drive traffic to the website.
- **RIDE Solutions’ Web Site** – [www.ridesolutions.org](http://www.ridesolutions.org) is the center of the agency’s marketing efforts. All communication outreach activities and promotions direct prospects, customers, and partners back to this online information resource center. The Web site includes:
  - » Online account registration for access to Guaranteed Ride Home, trip logging, contests, and other promotions;
  - » Google Transit trip planner;
  - » Ride Solver calculates how much money could be saved through carpooling;
  - » Map of current registrant locations;
  - » List of new carpools;
  - » Interactive Google map of park-and-ride locations;
  - » Information for employer partners;

- » Information about regional air pollution;
- » Links to other programs that support alternative transportation;
- » Versions of all marketing and promotional material; and
- » An events calendar for RIDE Solutions sponsored and other partner events.

## **Customer Contact/Information Dissemination**

The majority of customer contact occurs through RIDE Solutions' Web site, as online channel is the preferred method of obtaining information for most of RIDE Solutions' constituents. However, when Internet access is an issue, or if a constituent simply prefers the use of mail or the telephone, interactions are conducted in this way as well.

RIDE Solutions strives to return communications as soon as possible, and tries to have all match lists sent out within 24 hours of receipt of a registration. RIDE Solutions also disseminates information to commuters at employer sites.

## **Related Mobility Programs**

RIDE Solutions' current services are focused primarily on ridematching services to facilitate carpooling and telework among commuters. They target both commuters and employers. However, there are other transportation services programs in the region that provide related services to improve mobility and transportation options for other groups of the population. Some of these groups include:

- Human service transportation programs:
  - RADAR is a non-profit corporation that has provided rural public transit services and specialized transit primarily in the "Greater Roanoke Valley" for over 33 years. RADAR services are aimed at physically or mentally disabled, or transportation disadvantaged individuals. Drivers are trained in passenger assistance, defensive driving CPR, and wheelchair securement procedures to make trips safe and enjoyable.
  - BT Access provides paratransit services to qualifying residents in the Town of Blacksburg.
  - New River Valley Senior Services provides transportation services to seniors and the disabled in the New River Valley.
  - Community Transit, under the umbrella of new River Valley Community Services, provides transportation for clients as part of its behavioral health services programs.
  - Franklin County Aging Services provides transportation service to senior and the disabled in Franklin County.

# Chapter 03:

## Mission Goals and Objectives

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

This section outlines the strategic framework that will guide the growth and development of RIDE Solutions and its services over the next six years. An analysis of the program's strengths weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in light of current area needs and projected changes in the future was conducted to produce goals and objectives the program will work towards and performance standards to monitor the program's progress.

#### Strengths

- Well qualified, dedicated, and enthusiastic staff. In particular, the Program Director has expertise in numerous functional areas that are needed for a TDM program with a small staff.
- Substantial administrative support from RVARC frees RIDE Solutions' staff for service delivery.
- Willingness to be creative and explore innovative methods to reach potential customers.
- Generally viewed as an effective organization, with moderate support among local jurisdictions.
- Expanded regional boundaries – partnerships with the New River Valley, Region 2000, and Martinsville/Danville regions allow for maximum coverage of commute patterns that affect each jurisdiction.
- Regional comprehensive sustainability plans in both the New River Valley and Roanoke – Livable New River Valley and Livable Roanoke Valley, respectively – each identify transportation choice as a key component of their regions' success.

#### Weaknesses

- RIDE Solutions' very limited staff resources is a weakness on several fronts. First, this limits RIDE Solutions' ability to undertake new initiatives that could expand awareness, program participation, and overall impact of the agency on the Roanoke area. Second, limited staff resources place a burden on existing staff to manage and mine the expanded regional boundaries. Third, small staff resources is a weakness when it comes to one of the core practice areas – employer-based transportation programming. This is the reason for the gradual accumulation of new employer partnerships over the last few years. It takes significant time to identify and close a prospective client and then to develop a highly customized program to meet the specific needs of their employees at each worksite.
- Funding is heavily drawn from a single source (80% DRPT grant), making RIDE Solutions vulnerable to financial crisis if this source of funding is disrupted.

- RIDE Solutions' position as a program within RVARC might suggest it does not have authority over its decision-making and budget, potentially restricting the roles it could adopt and the partnerships it could form.

## Opportunities

- The region is slated to grow in both population and employment. This means greater VMT. The overall increase in VMT will, in turn, fuel the overall need for TDM and RIDE Solutions to play an increasingly important role in maintaining and enhancing the efficiency of the region's transportation system.
- Limited population growth in the urbanized areas due to topographical restrictions. Thus, as each region's population continues to grow in the suburban counties, it is expected that more commuters will be traveling longer distances to reach the major activity centers.
- Future growth of activity centers will place increasing demands on employer-based services. For example, what will be a rapidly growing VTC medical school complex will benefit from TDM program support and a wider range of transportation options (i.e. car-sharing, transit, bike-pedestrian, etc.) The regions' new employment centers will also increase the demand for intra-region access and mobility movement.
- Municipalities, employers, and nonprofits increasingly understand that transportation choice intersects a number of interest areas – including poverty, health, and sustainability. Organizations such as Live/Work Healthy Lynchburg, Healthy Roanoke Valley, the Roanoke Refugee Dialogue Group, chambers of commerce, and others, have all engaged RIDE Solutions in various projects. This can help expand RIDE Solutions' reach with little in the way of additional resources, while also cementing its value within other organizations.
- The effect of increased fuel costs on residents of the region will increase interest in and demand for TDM alternatives.
- A growing, older population is expected, one that will be much healthier and more mobile than today's seniors. This will result in an increase in non-work related VMTs. In addition, trip support for continuous access to healthcare providers and/or coordinating human services and patient delivery will increase in importance and demand. This presents an opportunity for RIDE Solutions to address non-commute trips through transportation demand management strategies.
- The telework-related interest and subsequent demand trends among employers and workers will require RIDE Solutions to develop and deliver greater telework-related expertise and portfolio of telework services. This might be further accelerated by the expansion of rail into the Roanoke Valley and the connection of workers to Northern Virginia by wifi-enabled passenger trains.
- Biking and walking growth in popularity offers additional potential for RIDE Solutions. Many regions in the RIDE Solutions service area boast significant bicycling opportunities along greenway, on-road, and off-roads networks, but additional bike lanes would support the growing popularity of bicycling as a commute mode.

## Threats

- As always, cuts in Virginia's budget could cause financial distress for RIDE Solutions' current operations and future growth.

- Compared to other areas of the State, residents of the RIDE Solutions service area have a relatively short commute, both in terms of distance and time. Additionally, the area has one of the lower congestion levels in Virginia. Most (80%) are satisfied with their commute. Thus, commuters may be reluctant to consider, much less adopt alternate modes as a way of relieving stress and saving time. This direction may not produce the return on investment to justify traditional ridematching.
- The number of new employer partners that can be recruited is limited by the amount of time RIDE Solutions' staff has available after all of the other mandatory activities (such as ridematching, special events, grant reporting, etc.) have been completed. Thus, at a time of rising awareness and expectation of stakeholders, RIDE Solutions' effectiveness and impact will be gated by the fact that its services are extremely customized and labor-intensive.

## RIDE Solutions Program Strategy

The RIDE Solutions program has grown from a TDM agency housed in the Roanoke – Valley Alleghany Regional Commission to an agency spanning three Planning Districts and a Workforce Investment Board. As established earlier in this document, the program encompasses a commute shed stretching from West Virginia to North Carolina, from Wytheville, VA in the west to Lexington, VA in the east. As such, the need for flexibility within the program is paramount, as specific needs and resources within each service area and available through partner organizations may vary.

That said, there are some overarching strategies that will help the program reach its mission. This long-term strategy has five components:

**Position RIDE Solutions as the Community Mobility Expert** – This strategy is an expansion on and outgrowth from a similar strategy established in our 2010 Long Range TDM Plan. There, regional trends suggested a focus on green and sustainable transportation. While that need remains, our expansion into new service areas and overall market trends suggest that this focus might be too limiting. Instead of focusing on just the environmental impacts of TDM, RIDE Solutions will further grow its reputation as an expert of the overall community aspects of TDM. By community aspects, we mean that TDM, when successfully deployed, makes communities safer, cleaner, economically stronger, and more culturally and socially vibrant.

- In short, TDM makes our communities better places to live.
- Our overarching public relations and marketing campaigns will support this idea, though focusing in on particular aspects as appropriate. For example, our presence in West Piedmont may focus on the role of TDM in workforce access, getting people to jobs and jobs to people, while in Roanoke we may focus on bicycle and pedestrian transportation because of the area's focus on the outdoors as its primary economic development strategy.
- Even in its employer outreach efforts, RIDE Solutions will link employer actions and benefits to the ways in which those actions make employers stronger partners in the improvement of their surrounding communities. This will provide employers not only the measurable outcomes of the specific TDM program deployed – whether new carpools formed, parking demand reduced, reduction in employee absenteeism, or any other

number of items – but qualitative outcomes on the employer’s positive impact in the community.

- Within this strategy, it is important to note that RIDE Solutions’ focus is transportation. That is, while the work we do overlaps with other kinds of activities in the region – especially recreational cycling and other outdoor activities – our focus is on mode shift for practical, necessary trips. Since transportation encompasses more than just the daily commute, it also means an expansion of the kinds of trips we might talk about and the kind of programs we run to incorporate shopping, dining, social, and other trips into our program. There are several implications of this strategy:
- Employer programs might be considered successful even without massive commute mode shift. An employer in a downtown setting, for example, might encourage its employees to walk to a restaurant for lunch rather than driving to a location on the edge of town. Similarly, employees might be encouraged to organize carpools to meetings rather than drive independently. All of these kinds of mode shift indicate a positive impact on the community but are a departure from our traditional focus on commuting.
- We will need to broaden our view to include not just those cohorts to whom we are promoting mode shift, but to also improve the experience of those already participating in a TDM mode. For example, it will not be enough simply to encourage new folks to make the choice to ride a bike to work. We will also need to look at those populations who are already riding a bike to work out of necessity and made sure their experience is safe. This could mean additional education programs in targeted neighborhoods, focus on infrastructure improvements, etc. If we are going to successfully communicate community benefits, we need to not only encourage people to switch modes by educating them on the individual benefits, but educate the community on ways to better support those folks who are already doing what we want them to.
- This does not preclude RIDE Solutions from focusing in on particular elements of TDM or particular employer/community needs; rather, it provides a context that better allows RIDE Solutions to answer the question “Why is TDM important?”

**Promote RIDE Solutions’ Business Focus** – Focusing on business-to-business marketing and using third-party relationships to identify and cultivate prospects does not mean keep a low business profile. To be credible, just the opposite has to happen.

- RIDE Solutions will invest in its business image and reputation. This will include developing a more formalized business outreach process and suite of products to meet various business partner needs, as well as continue the efforts of establishing RIDE Solutions as a knowledgeable resource for in the business community.

**Focus on the Greatest Point of Leverage – The Business Market, Not Residential** – Given RIDE Solutions’ existing and anticipated future financial resources, or lack thereof, there is simply no way the organization can launch and sustain a professional-level consumer marketing campaign. We will continue to apply resources, staff and budget, to a business-to-business strategy.

**Secure Alternative Funding** – RIDE Solutions’ reliance on DRPT grants as a dominant source of funding could present a problem in the future if that funding stream were reduced or eliminated. RIDE Solutions will continue to seek alternative funding sources, including but not limited to seeking sponsorship opportunities for its Bike Month and related events.



**Explore New Services and Products with Appropriate Mobility Partners** – In servicing companies and organizations across the region, opportunities to provide new mobility-oriented services will continue to emerge. To the extent funding partners are at the table, develop more formal plans and initiatives to better serve all partner regions, as well as prospective bike/walk and transit commuters and new wave of seniors with limited mobility.

- Build on the region’s support for cycling. Create and support bicycle sharing/renting systems that could serve high-density areas such as downtown and the new medical campus and/or as a transit feeder system.
- Develop new transportation services for the aging population. This could include taxi and paratransit feeder system that targets concentrations of “future carless households” to the current fixed route transit system. Integrate the most promising TDM concepts into regional transit development planning.
- Increase transit ridership by improving public perception of transit, advocating for plans that establish a vision for the growth of transit, and educating employers about incentives and schedule structures that allow their employees to take advantage of transit options.

## Goals, Objectives and Strategies

- **Goal 1** – TDM is recognized and deployed as an essential component of the region’s ability and success in building a vibrant and livable community.
- **Goal 2** – RIDE Solutions is THE regional expert and authority on TDM and transportation-related impacts, including greenhouse gas footprint (GHG) assessments, economic impacts, and mobility solution planning.
- **Goal 3** – RIDE Solutions is an integral part of the region’s business community’s ability to attract and retain a highly skilled and educated workforce through its promotion of alternative transportation and TDM strategies.
- **Goal 4** – Meet new and emerging market needs in the region by expanding and strengthening RIDE Solutions’ service and program offerings.
- **Goal 5** – Continually improve the operation, funding resources, and services provided by RIDE Solutions.

## Agency Objectives and Strategies

In the short term (1-6 years), RIDE Solutions will continue to increase its capability, experience, and success with the employer market through the deployment of partnership business-to-business sales team. These initiatives will help RIDE Solutions dramatically increase the overall impact it can have on its service area and begin to position the organization as THE go to resources for all environmental issues and impacts related to transportation/travel.

In the medium term (7 to 15 years), RIDE Solutions will continue to provide a solid base of TDM support services to area employers and their employees. The program will expand in scope in terms of the organization’s ability to plan, service, and grow highly customized employer-based transportation programs.

More substantial changes to the region will take place over the long-range timeframe (16 to 25 years). As RIDE Solution's area population continues to grow and change over the long term, the service needs of RIDE Solutions' core customer groups will change as well. Over the long term, the key to RIDE Solutions' sustained growth and relevancy will be directly related to the organization's ability to serve non-employer segments, including the region's aging population.

**1. Goal: TDM is recognized and deployed as an essential component of the region's ability and success in building a green and sustainable community.**

1.1. Objective: Build awareness of and support for TDM as a core component of the region's sustainability model.

Short-Term Strategies:

- 1.1.1. Position TDM as a core component of the region's sustainability model. Showcase linkage between TDM and smart and sustainable growth and quality of life/unprecedented natural resources.
- 1.1.2. Pursue internal and on-site education for RIDE Solutions' personnel on sustainability and link to TDM.
- 1.1.3. Create a comprehensive advocacy education program that can "speak to" a range of target audiences, including college students, business leaders/employers, and retirees.
- 1.1.4. Actively pursue opportunities in the community to provide sustainability-TDM relationship "education" through public speaking, serving as sustainability/TDM expert member of community/civic/professional organizations and consulting.
- 1.1.5. Further mine the New River Valley and Lynchburg regions. Create and implement mirco-marketing plans for each area.

Medium-Term Strategies:

- 1.1.6. Continue to showcase linkages between TDM and smart and sustainable growth and quality of life/unprecedented natural resources. Use earned media and business partnership's owned media to profile linkages.
- 1.1.7. Continue to pursue actively opportunities in the community to provide sustainability "education" through public speaking, serving as sustainability/TDM expert member of community/civic/professional organizations and consulting.

Long-Term Strategy:

- 1.1.8. Work with partners to showcase Roanoke as national model on TDM-inspired sustainability. Provide national earned media to local TDM advocates to spread the word and validate TDM's role and impact in the community.

1.2. Objective: Build the number of active TDM advocates or ambassadors across the community.

Short-Term Strategies:

- 1.2.1. Continue to use RIDE Solutions' Ridematching database as a growing social network of TDM advocates.
- 1.2.2. Establish strong call to action – "join the cause" request and related collateral material to sign people up or obtain "green behavior pledge" as part of advocacy education program. Tailor call to action to a range of target audiences, including college students, business leaders/employers, and retirees.

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- 1.2.3. Drive people to register on RIDE Solutions' Web site to stay connected and involved. Over time, exposing them to rideshare and other transportation-related ways to support community sustainability.

Medium-Term Strategies:

- 1.2.4. Formerly brand RIDE Solutions' growing number of TDM advocates as a popular social movement.
- 1.2.5. Create a speakers bureau and provide training for members of this group to advance TDM-sustainability practices throughout the region within their personal spheres of influence.

Long-Term Strategy:

- 1.2.6. Potentially, turn the growing advocate movement into a formal 501(C)(3) association with mission, events, memberships, etc.

**2. Goal: RIDE Solutions is THE regional expert and authority on TDM and transportation-related green house gas footprint (GHG) assessments and mobility solution planning.**

- 2.1. Objective: Build awareness of and support for RIDE Solutions as THE green mobility expert – the regional authority on GHG footprints – impacts and solutions related to transportation choices and behaviors.

Short-Term Strategies:

- 2.1.1. Position and develop RIDE Solutions' position as THE green mobility expert – the regional authority on GHG footprints – impacts and solutions related to commuters transportation choices and behaviors.
- 2.1.2. Move to a Smart Trips model of ridematching product – RIDE Solutions will grow on its reputation for individual customer service with the move to a Smart Trips model of ridematching product. Until the region is aware of the array of options available, and local governments invest more into expanding those options, the role of RIDE Solutions will be to use its ridematching product as both a service (providing answers to specific commute services requests; i.e..carpool match lists) and educational tool (providing information on commute options not requested by the customer but still applicable; i.e. transit routes and stops). The effect will be to meet the customer's needs and then "up-sell" them on options they might not have considered and the associated benefits. Because this is labor intensive, RIDE Solutions will move to increase staff by a part-time administrative assistance in 2010.
- 2.1.3. Expand Web site with neighborhood-to-neighborhood generalized trip planning product modeled after Arlington County's Carfree Diet marketing campaign.

Medium-Term Strategies:

- 2.1.4. Hold public symposiums with business partners showcasing the relative roles and impacts.
- 2.1.5. Create and conduct annual impact presentation and annual reports to all elected bodies and major associations in the region.
- 2.1.6. Produce and deliver annual impact report to all RIDE Solution stakeholders.
- 2.1.7. Implement automation of Smart Trips-type commuting product.
- 2.1.8. Develop a vanpool framework and provide consulting services to businesses and organizations wanting to start vanpools for commuters

Long-Term Strategy:

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2.1.9. Subscribe to latest technology software that will be available in 10-15 years that make Smart Trips planning a ubiquitous self-service “application.” Integrate Smart Trips service model into strategic partners’ domains businesses, business associations, news media, civic groups, etc. Ensure that everywhere residents turn, they are accorded the tools and resources to make smarter trip decisions.

2.2. Objective: Secure the in-house expertise, resources, and tools for RIDE Solutions *to accurately measure and report individual commuters’ and organization-level GHG footprints.*

Short-Term Strategies:

2.2.1. Work with DRPT to utilize the new GHG Calculator to conduct corporate GHG footprint audits. Once in the door, use GHG footprint audits as the introduction to the power of employer-based TDM programs. Show impact scenarios. Based on response, deliver appropriate TDM plans and assist with corporate-wide implementation.

2.2.2. Train staff to become more informed and knowledgeable on GHG footprint related to transportation to ensure proper use of the new GHG Calculator and other resources and tools for RIDE Solutions to accurately measure and report individual commuters’ and organization-level GHG footprints.

Medium-Term Strategy:

2.2.3. Include sustainability/GHG expertise as required skill of RIDE Solutions new hire.

Long-Term Strategy:

2.2.4. Work with local Chamber and economic development officials to quantify Roanoke’s community’s overall GHG Footprint. Showcase role of employers’ individual GHG Footprints and actions to reduce footprints through influence over employees’ commute decisions.

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**3. Goal: RIDE Solutions is an integral part of the region’s business community’s enlightened focus on regional sustainability and corporate-related green actions to protect and enhance the area’s quality of life/outdoors living opportunities for the region’s highly skilled and educated workforce.**

3.1. Objective: Increase awareness and familiarity of corporate GHG footprints related to employee commutes and the relatively easy steps that can be taken to reduce corporate footprints and realize indirect corporate business practice benefits (retention, recruitment, productivity gains, etc.).

Short-Term Strategy:

3.1.1. Help orchestrate through partners a sustained business-to-business communications campaign showcasing leading companies and CEOs embracing TDM/sustainability – and demonstrating the role and impact of RIDE Solutions in bringing about business GHG reductions.

Medium-Term Strategy:

3.1.2. Evolve business communications campaign into “success campaign” – difference made to date...why 100 companies have contributed.

Long-Term Strategy:

3.1.3. Unified all of the players around a community-wide seamless approach. Create a region-wide emissions reduction “United Way-Like” campaign. Create community-wide reporting mechanism to fuel momentum and celebrate the number of program participants.

3.2. Objective: Increase the number of business partnerships with other leading business associations and organizations advancing the sustainability cause where

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RIDE Solutions is THE “go to” resource for GHG transportation-related footprint assessment and mobility-related solutions.

Short-Term Strategy:

- 3.2.1. Make strategic business arrangements with the leading business associations and organizations advancing the sustainability cause in the region where RIDE Solutions is THE “go to” resource for GHG transportation-related footprint assessment and mobility-related solutions.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

- 3.2.2. Continue to cultivate existing and make new strategic business partnerships.
- 3.3. *Objective: Directly serve a growing number of the area’s largest employers – VTC medical school, Va. Tech, Carilion Health System, etc. to make TDM-related sustainability a major corporate focus and action.*

Short-Term Strategy:

- 3.3.1. Create RIDE Solutions’ targeted business development sales plan for the largest employers such as VTC medical school, Va. Tech, Carilion Health System, etc. – to make TDM-related sustainability a major corporate focus and action.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategies:

- 3.3.2. Continue to directly target and approach largest businesses. Where appropriate, create targeted business development plans for optimal prospects.
  - 3.3.3. Continue to work with largest companies and organizations (VTC medical school, Va. Tech, Carilion Health) to help serve as testimonials and corporate ambassadors to recruit other business.
- 3.4. *Objective: Increase the total number of RIDE Solution partners with GHG footprint reduction mobility plans in place.*

Short-Term Strategy:

- 3.4.1. Finalize corporate green certification partnership with local Cool Cities, CN2020, and local Chamber. Provide service support. Finalize corporate green certification partnership with local Cool Cities, CN2020, and local Chamber. Provide service support as the Chamber provides highly efficient sales program to open doors for RIDE Solutions as part of green/sustainability audit team. RIDE Solutions will focus on GHG footprint related to employees commute decisions and behavior.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

- 3.4.2. Continue to work with Cool Cities, CN2020, and local Chamber in targeting and servicing businesses. Focus efforts on business categories most receptive to participation in GHG audit program and most effective in changing employees’ commute behavior.
- 3.5. *Objective: Increase the overall demand for additional business-related sustainability services from the success of RIDE Solutions’ involvement.*

Short-Term Strategies:

- 3.5.1. Document and merchandise the reduction in corporate GHG footprints and the corporate business practice benefits (retention, recruitment, productivity gains, etc.) realized by partners.
- 3.5.2. Work with partners and media to showcase impact of participating businesses.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

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**4. Goal: Meet new and emerging market needs in the region by expanding and strengthening RIDE Solutions' service and program offerings.**

4.1. *Objective: Expand RIDE Solutions' customer base by serving emerging market needs.*

Short-Term Strategies:

- 4.1.1. Work closely with VTC health care complex as it opens and expands.
- 4.1.2. Work with PDCs and rural counties to support human services program needs. Start by studying with the PDC the most appropriate roles in serving the underserved today and the future with shifting demographics.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

- 4.1.3. Identify and explore new opportunities through annual planning process.

4.2. *Objective: Build RIDE Solutions' product and service offerings.*

Short-Term Strategies:

- 4.2.1. Conduct annual customer and business partner feedback surveys to assess RIDE Solutions' ability to meet current customer and partner needs and identify any unmet needs.
- 4.2.2. Use customer and partner feedback to inform the creation of annual service development plan that explores and prioritizes needs.
- 4.2.3. Through annual service plans, plan for vanpool service startup framework and customized one-to-one trip planning service.

Medium-Term Strategies:

- 4.2.4. Continue to hone customer feedback loops.
- 4.2.5. Launch and sustain vanpool service and customized one-to-one trip planning service.
- 4.2.6. Offer event ridematching services

Long-Term Strategy:

- 4.2.7. Continue to hone customer feedback loops to direct new service development efforts.

4.3. *Objective: Increase the number of Telework!VA corporate clients across the region.*

Short-Term Strategy:

- 4.3.1. Work with Telework!VA to launch, and support a major telework initiative across the region.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

- 4.3.2. Continue to support Telework!VA's success across the region.

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**5. Goal: Continually improve the operation, funding resources and services provided by RIDE Solutions' Strategies:**

5.1. *Objective: Measure and report RIDE Solutions' outcomes and customer satisfaction of RIDE Solutions' programs and services.*

Short-Term Strategy:

- 5.1.1. If resources are available, evaluate RIDE Solutions' customer satisfaction levels, and programs and service outcomes.

Medium-Term Strategies:

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5.1.2. Continue to monitor success and customer satisfaction of RIDE Solutions' programs and services.

5.1.3. Continue to conduct appropriate regular surveys for measuring customer satisfaction with all services.

5.2. Objective: Obtain additional funding sources.

Short-Term Strategy:

5.2.1. Formulate a plan to identify and seek additional funding sources. Include potential sources such as the Carilion Foundation and the Foundation for Roanoke Valley, as well as fees from GHG audits.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

5.2.2. Implement funding development plan – seek to cultivate new and diverse sources.

5.3. Objective: Evolve RIDE Solutions into the optimal long-term organizational structure as it serves a growing clientele across an expanded territory.

Short-Term Strategy:

5.3.1. Formulate a plan to explore the optional long-term organizational structure for RIDE Solutions as it serves a growing clientele across an expanded territory.

Medium- and Long-Term Strategy:

5.3.2. Continue to periodically review and update RIDE Solutions' Long-Term TDM Plan based on market experience, new opportunities, and feedback from customers and stakeholders.

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# Chapter 04:

## Service Changes and Expansion Plan

### Conformity with State Six-Year Plan

This Plan is designed to address the TDM needs of the RIDE Solutions service area of central and southwest Virginia, while matching the State's Six-Year Improvement Program's (SYIP) planning horizon.

The statewide six-year improvement plan for the Salem and Lynchburg Districts contain a number of projects including transit, bicycle, and pedestrian project, such as transit access projects, streetscape and pedestrian improvements in the Town of Christiansburg; greenway work in the cities of Salem and Roanoke; Riverside Park Master Plan work in Lynchburg; and a number of other smaller streetscape improvements in towns across the two VDOT districts. No major highway or corridor projects are noted, though during this period we will see the completion of a number of projects including the I-81 exit 150 in Roanoke and the East Main Street improvement project in Salem, as two examples.

To the best of our ability to determine, no work projected to occur over the next six years is expected to have a major impact on commuter traffic – either in terms of providing new accommodations for commuters, whether highway, transit, or other; or, in creating barriers to existing commuter traffic. The challenges and opportunities noted above in terms of rural access to employment, increasing residential and employment density in the region's urban cores, and long commute distances for some parts of the service area are expected to remain largely unaffected by major transportation projects. Accordingly, the focus of RIDE Solutions over the next six years will be on the expansion of its core services, continued outreach to employer partners, and a focus on transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation options in certain of its communities.

### Expected Areas of Growth

Changes in the RIDE Solutions service area will impact how and where people choose to travel. Residential, commercial, and other developments will introduce new residents, employers, employees, and other potential TDM customers and partners. Similarly, changes such as highway improvements, or development of new transit services will impact where people travel (activity centers) and what types of transportation options are available. The following are the major transportation-related infrastructure improvements identified in local planning documents that may affect TDM program needs in the region over the next six years.

#### Future Transportation Facilities and Programs

- Bicycle facilities, including bike lanes, greenways, and paths throughout the region.
- Passenger rail station in downtown Roanoke providing access to Amtrak service to DC and beyond



- Widen sidewalks in downtown Christiansburg and continue with the Downtown Improvement project.
- Completion of the Roanoke River Greenway
- New parking policies in downtown Roanoke will bring back metered on-street parking
- Future Activity Centers

The transportation facilities described above serve and will continue to serve current activity centers around the region, especially the downtown areas. Over next 6 years, however, the RIDE Solutions region will see significant growth in several of its activity centers that will have implications for the region's transportation system, as well as significant opportunities for the region's TDM services. The major activity centers of the future are expected to include the following:

- The Riverside Center in Roanoke, home of Carilion Clinic and the Virginia-Tech Carilion Research Institute, will continue to grow. Having been zoned as "downtown" by the City of Roanoke in 2012, the area has continued to see not only commercial but residential growth. Across the street from the Clinic and medical school, a multi-use development called The Bridges has already brought residential, restaurant, commercial, and entertainment facilities to the 22-acre site. As the development continues into future phases, and as infill development continues on Carilion's Riverside property, residential and employment density will grow.
- The Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg, associated with Virginia Tech, has opened its Phase 2 development which doubled the size of the park allowing for additional growth in high-tech startups. The CRC is connected to Virginia Tech by the Greenway system and the region in general via the Smart Way Bus. The profile of the companies in this park would suggest the growth in young professional or Creative Class workers who will value TDM services.
- Downtown Roanoke's growing residential population indicates potential conflict between commuters and residents who will be competing for parking space. As of 2015, over 1,300 residential units are available in downtown, with several new properties expected to become available in the near future. Currently, residential units are leasing as fast as they can be built, suggesting no end to this kind of development in the near future. In fact, the pace of development is extending the effective boundaries of downtown – both formally, as in the aforementioned Bridges development with its official zoning as "downtown," and informally, as downtown Roanoke's West End is seeing investment both publicly and privately. Ed Walker, a significant force in downtown Roanoke's residential renaissance, has purchased the former Health Department building in this part of the city. If past performance is any indication, this redevelopment of this property could serve as a catalyst for significant residential and commercial development. Finally, pressure for developable land in downtown has already put pressure on surface parking. In 2008, the Taubman Museum of Art was built on a surface parking lot, and in 2015 construction began on a hotel, overtaking a significant lot at the corner of Williamson Road and Franklin Road. It is likely that developers will continue to look at surface parking lots in the central business district as productive space.

- Roanoke County is undertaking a new Community Strategic Plan that may see additional citizen pressure to implement transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, increased paratransit service, and other mobility programs.
- Blacksburg Transit will be completing the Virginia Tech Multimodal Transfer Facility. This 12,000 square-foot, two-story facility will serve as a central location for all transit service at the Virginia Tech campus, featuring a total of 22 bus bays. The facility will also feature paratransit drop -off and pick up, kiss and ride drop off, bikeshare, and bicycle parking/storage.
- Virginia Tech was founded in 1872 as a land-grant college named Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College. Virginia Tech is now a comprehensive, innovative research university located in Blacksburg. With a current enrollment of over 32,000 in 2016 it has the largest full-time student population in Virginia and is the largest employer in the New River Valley.
- Radford University is located in the New River Valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is known for its strong faculty/student bonds, innovative use of technology in the learning environment, and vibrant student life on a beautiful campus. It is the fourth largest employer in the NRV region. With an enrollment of nearly 10,000 in 2016, Radford was selected as one of the Southeast's best universities by The Princeton Review for nine years in a row since 2008.
- Based on facility size and demographics, the West Piedmont anticipates continued demand from customer service centers operated by the Results Companies and Telvista in Martinsville and Danville respectively.
- The West Piedmont region anticipates increased demand across industrial parks including the Danville Cyber Park, Airside Industrial Park, Berry Hill Mega Site, Cane Creek Centre, Riverview Industrial Park, Commonwealth Crossing Business Park, Patriot Centre Industrial Park and the Clearview Business Park. Some of these locations are new facilities that are just now beginning to attract businesses. As they continue to attract more employers, a greater emphasis will be placed on providing services to these locations. Business Services teams in the West Piedmont region have already had discussions with local employers regarding rolling out services offered through Ride Solutions in a bundled approach directly targeting each of the businesses located in individual parks.
- Significant employment growth in Botetourt County will increase transportation demand along the 221 corridor.
- Franklin County's new Regional Business Park (Southway) along Route 220 County between the towns of Boones Mill and Rocky Mount. The vision for the new park is a campus-style development with community amenities that will be attractive to modern companies looking for an immersive location instead of a traditional industrial park. The Park is expected to accommodate up to three million (3,000,000) square feet of advanced light manufacturing, warehouse/distribution and office/technology space. To further differentiate the park from competitors, the overall design is expected to encompass recreation areas, event grounds, produce auction, greenspace,

walking/biking trails, water features, a tourist welcome center and public safety buildings among other uses. The park development has a proposed 150 space park and ride including a proposed electric vehicle charging station. This 550 plus acre park will attract businesses and many other visitors with demand for ride solutions for the employees of the new businesses.

### **Projected travel patterns**

Based on the aforementioned population and employment projections, projected travel patterns will change in a number of ways:

- **Congestion in downtown areas and in several high-density activity centers:** The resident and employer-based population growth in the RIDE Solutions service area over the next six years is not too dramatic from a total numbers perspective. There is plenty of room to absorb the projected growth with little overall disruption or crowding. Further, that said, there is employment growth expected outside of the urban cores that will put some additional strain on already congested roads – Deschutes Brewery in Roanoke will be sited at the current Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology (also known as the Blue Hills Industrial Parl), and while that project is contingent upon an extension of the greenway network to the site, it is unclear if this will be a recreational or transportation path; therefore, more pressure will be put on the 460 corridor to deliver employees to the area. The current Valley Metro route 31x already provides some transit service to the industrial park by connecting to Valley Metro’s existing network at Campbell Court and providing express service to the park. Employment growth in Southside and the New River Valley over the next six years will likely see current patterns reinforced, which means growing travel to the rural and suburban industrial parks and commercial centers outside the core.
- **More longer-distance commuters:** Job growth may actually outpace population growth, suggesting that some workers will commute from outside the region to work in the RIDE Solutions service area.
- **Aging population:** A growing aging population will result in an increase in non-work related travel.
- **Increase in Biking/Walking:** Current interest in bicycling and pedestrian walkways will continue, particularly due to concern about energy and commitment to sustainable lifestyle. The region’s Greenways should attract greater usage as the system is connected to employment centers.

## **Meeting New Needs**

Despite the changes noted above, RIDE Solutions does not see a need for significant expansion at this time. Most commuter needs can be met under the current funding and program scope or with increased participation by area employers. To the extent that service expansion may be necessary, RIDE Solutions sees that possibility in three main areas:

- **Vanpooling:** As noted earlier, RIDE Solutions does not operate vanpools in the region and has not engaged any employer-sponsored vanpools. However, we do see a market for a regional vanpool program. The challenge with vanpooling is the need to engage a

third-party vanpool provider. At this time, efforts to work with Enterprise Rideshare and VRide have been fruitless. However, DRPT has recently initiated a conversation about statewide vanpool programs that could help kickstart a local program in Southwest Virginia. Without more information about the scope and resources involved in this effort it is impossible to know what financial resources might be involved, though we anticipate at the very least accessing Vanstart and Vansave funds in some capacity. Ultimately, we would look to this program to assist in setting up the proper structure to bring NTD funds into the vanpool program, so we would not expect ongoing state funding once the vanpool program was up and running.

- **Workforce Expansion:** With the successful partnership with the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board, RIDE Solutions sees an opportunity to work with other workforce organizations to offer commuter services along with traditional workforce solutions, combining employer outreach efforts, and seeking similar efficiencies. While no specific geography is identified at the moment, it is likely that expansions into far Southwest Virginia to include the Mount Rogers and Wytheville area would be considered. These expansions would be modeled, financially and structurally, off the current West Piedmont model. An expansion into the two Workforce boards serving the areas immediately adjacent to RIDE Solutions' existing western border could be expected to cost approximately \$50,000 for each board service area. This would include \$10,000 in local funds from each board, likely from Federal sources, and the addition of one part-time local coordinator in each region.

RIDE Solutions expects to partner with Roanoke's Workforce Development Board, housed within the same building as RIDE Solutions and part of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, to fund a full-time Businesses Services position. Modelled after the West Piedmont program, this position will perform networking, cold-calling, meetings, and related sales and outreach to promote the benefits to TDM to businesses in the greater Roanoke area. Being a dual Workforce/TDM position, this individual is expected to have greater success getting into businesses since they will be presenting TDM as one of a slate of business programs, including training, certification, and related Workforce efforts. Experience in West Piedmont shows that employers have a great comfort level with Workforce-related outreach, and through initial meetings with the Business Services team find that transportation is also an issue to be addressed, opening the way to implementing TDM programs. We expect to provide \$30,000 towards this position, of which 20% will be matched by Workforce Development Board funds.

- **Bikeshare:** Implementation of bikeshare service within the Roanoke Valley is a distinct possibility as advancement of technology in bikeshare systems makes them more affordable in smaller deployments in smaller communities. Recently, Zagster bikeshare has opened discussions of bikeshare implementation in City of Roanoke with RIDE Solutions as a major stakeholder in the program. While the exact role of the TDM program is yet unclear, it is likely RIDE Solutions will take on a management and funder role. From a labor perspective, this is unlikely to require time or staff outside of our current structure. From a funding perspective, we would anticipate becoming a sponsor of such a system at a \$10,000/year level.



# Chapter 05: Financial Plan

## Short Term

The following tables shows RIDE Solutions' expenses by functional area over the next six years, and expected revenue over the same period.

### Program Expenses, Six-Year Horizon (In Thousands of Dollars)

Program or Service Enhancement	Year 1 FY 2017	Year 2 FY 2018	Year 3 FY 2019	Year 4 FY 2020	Year 5 FY 2021	Year 6 FY 2022
Staff/Administration	\$278	\$278	\$278	\$278	\$278	\$278
Marketing	\$88	\$98	\$103	\$108	\$108	\$108
Incentives/Subsidies	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6
Operations	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$402</b>	<b>\$412</b>	<b>\$417</b>	<b>\$422</b>	<b>\$422</b>	<b>\$422</b>

### Revenue, Six-Year Horizon (In Thousands of Dollars)

Income	Year 1 FY 2017	Year 2 FY 2018	Year 3 FY 2019	Year 4 FY 2020	Year 5 FY 2021	Year 6 FY 2022
Sponsorship	\$10	\$10	\$15	\$20	\$20	\$20
State TDM Grant	\$299	\$306	\$306	\$306	\$306	\$306
Vanpool Initiative	\$19	\$19	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
NTD Reimburse.	\$0	\$0	\$19	\$19	\$19	\$19
Local Funds	\$69	\$71	\$71	\$71	\$71	\$71
Workforce Funds	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$403</b>	<b>\$412</b>	<b>\$417</b>	<b>\$422</b>	<b>\$422</b>	<b>\$422</b>

**Administration/staff** – RIDE Solutions will contribute \$30,000 towards a full time Business Services position in partnership with Roanoke's Workforce Development Board.

**Operations** – RIDE Solutions expects to maintain current operations, including partnerships with the New River Valley Regional Commission, Region 2000, and West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board.

In addition, if the proposed statewide vanpool initiative launches as proposed, RIDE Solutions expects to tap into that funding to support four vanpools.

Finally, assuming the Roanoke Valley moves forward on bikeshare, RIDE Solutions expects to fund that as a marketing expense, via sponsorship, at \$10,000 a year.

**Marketing** – RIDE Solutions plans on slowly growing our marketing budget, and to have that growth come from expanded corporate sponsorship of our events, particularly our annual Bike Month series of events.

# Chapter 06:

## Program Monitoring and Evaluation

### Overview of Past Evaluation

Program evaluation is a function that is often short-changed by TDM agencies simply due to insufficient funding required to conduct the research and data collection required for comprehensive evaluations. This is the case with RIDE Solutions relative to many of the Commonwealth's 15 TDM agencies. Annual efforts to assess the performance of RIDE Solutions' services, using commonly accepted TDM industry "best practices," would have required half of RIDE Solutions' budgetary resources.

Despite this funding resource challenge, RIDE Solutions has consistently deployed low cost, program performance tracking, as well as periodically solicited feedback from ride-match and emergency ride home participants through surveys designed to assess the extent to which these services have influenced or assisted participants to start or increase their use of non-SOV modes.

### Current Performance Monitoring

Despite the lack of available funding program assessment, RIDE Solutions recognizes the value of periodic assessment and currently practices several activities to assess the performance of its services and to understand customers' needs better. Two examples include marketing effectiveness and program participation.

- **Marketing Effectiveness** – RIDE Solutions measures the effectiveness of programs that drive new registrations. The online registration form asks registrants how they heard about RIDE Solutions. In addition, by tracking both the advertising activities and the number of new registrations, RIDE Solutions is able to determine if registration levels are higher during months when specific advertising campaigns or events are in effect. This type of analysis cannot accurately account for all regional factors, but does provide an initial opportunity to study the effectiveness of different advertising campaigns.
- In addition, awareness of RIDE Solution's name and advertising efforts are periodically tracked by the Virginia State of the Commute Survey.
- **Program Participation** – RIDE Solutions also tracks monthly participation in several services and solicits feedback from ridematch and GRH participants through post-matching follow-ups designed to assess the extent to which these services have influenced or assisted participants to start or increase their use of non-SOV modes. These tracking data are compiled in an end-of-year summary that is delivered to the RVARC Board at the time RIDE Solutions is preparing its work program for the following year.

Again, RIDE Solutions has not had budget available to conduct reliable marketing assessment surveys to test awareness and behavior change in a methodologically strict way.

These base performance measures serve as a starting point for developing a more comprehensive performance measurement system.

## Current Performance Measures

### Commuter Customers

- Total Calls
- Follow-up efforts/verifications
- Total Unique Visitors to Web Site
- Total Database Matching Registrants
- Total GRH Registrants
- Total program inquiries
- Clean Commute Day registrations
- RIDE Solver online calculator submissions
- Electronic newsletter registrations
- Safe Bike Route requests
- Transit map requests
- Incident Report submissions
- Miles logges

### Employer Customers

- Total Employer Clients
- Presentations/outreach efforts

### Events

- Participants/Visitors
- Registrations
- Electronic newsletter registrations

### Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission Performance Measures

- Congestion Reduction
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Usage
- Transit Usage
- HOV Usage

## Future Evaluation Criteria

It is envisioned that the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduced and air quality impacts avoided will be added to the list of RIDE Solutions' future performance measures. For now, the DRPT performance measures provide estimated VMT reductions as a good starting point. In



the future, RIDE Solutions will start to capture self-reported VMT reduction from program participants, in addition to commute miles and time-related information that are already being collected.

RIDE Solutions hopes to partner with the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute on an annual or semi-annual regional transportation survey in the style of the Commonwealth's State of the Commute survey. This survey and related efforts would help capture other qualitative information about program awareness and impact such as:

#### Awareness and Attitudes

- Awareness of Options
- Awareness of RIDE Solutions and Its Services
- actors Influencing Mode Choice
- Consideration of Alternative Modes

#### Participation/Use of Services

- Sources of Information
- Inquiries
- Contact with RIDE Solutions
- Usage of Specific Services
- Frequency of Use
- Length of Time Using
- Barriers to Trial
- Consideration of Future Use
- Current Services
- New Programs

#### Satisfaction

- Overall Satisfaction Ratings for Transportation System and Support
- Overall Satisfaction Ratings for RIDE Solutions
- Reasons Behind Ratings
- Areas for Improvement
- Unmet Needs

#### Overall Impact

- Mode Split
- Shifts to Non-SOV Modes Motivated by Use of Services – Trail and Continued
- Perceived Benefits of Mode Change – Personal, Business, Societal
- SOV Trips Eliminated – Cars Taken Off Road
- VMT Reduction
- Environmental Consequences