

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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February 20, 2014

Mr. Richard Stedman, Air Pollution Control Officer  
Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District  
24580 Silver Cloud Court  
Monterey, CA 93940

**RE: STOP WORK ORDER AND NOTICE OF TERMINATION  
FOR AB2766 GRANT 09-36, CARPOOL INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

Dear Mr. Stedman:

Thank you for meeting with RTC staff in November 2013 and for your letter of January 7, 2014 about the Carpool Incentive Program AB2766 grant 09-36. We acknowledge the Air District's decision to issue a Stop Work Order and Notice of Termination for this project.

We agree with the invoiced and paid amounts cited in your letter that total \$33,736. Two more invoices for work performed to implement and evaluate the grant program were not submitted. These additional invoices total \$27,684.28.

In your letter, you state that developing the program was the only activity nearly completed. In fact, the RTC went way beyond the start-up phase and conducted significant work to promote and implement the carpool incentive program. It was the main product highlighted and promoted by the RTC's Commute Solutions Program for three full years. The RTC also created a page on RTC's Commute Solutions website with full details on the carpool incentive program. This page was active until December 26, 2013.

The RTC had high expectations that this incentive program would have positive impacts on air quality and emission reductions in our region. We based this on outcomes of incentive programs throughout the state, region and country. Our proposal was to build an incentive program from the ground up by using free or low-cost tools and services. We budgeted 50% of the grant funds to the actual cost of the incentives. As discussed, some unforeseen challenges hampered these plans. Despite many course corrections, and redoubling of efforts, the program results were modest and less than we had hoped for.

One of the biggest delays and challenges had to do with replacing the trip diary system mid-way through the project after the vendor of the selected diary system discontinued the product. This problem was not a trivial one. Providing participants with a method to log and verify their travel behavior is a cornerstone of most successful incentive programs. Moreover, thorough and accurate data collection was a condition of the carpool incentive grant. Most firms offering trip diaries bundle their product with an entire suite of carpool matching services and cost

many thousands of dollars. Custom programming to create a trip diary for a specific program is another option. Time and budget constraints made these solutions prohibitive. At the time, our staff determined that the best alternative available was to use the new trip diary that was to be part of the San Francisco Bay Area's 511.org ride-matching software update. Once in use, we found that the new trip diary required a high degree of manual data manipulation and management to track participation and measure performance. Even worse, the system was clunky and not-friendly for users. Participants only wanted to track their carpool trips. But, at the 511.org website they were presented with so many other possible options and interactions, that it was confusing to do so.

It was also challenging to get people through the 2-step registration process. To register for the carpool incentive program, applicants filled out an application for the RTC. Registration for the trip diary service, required setting up a completely different account with 511.org. So, some users didn't complete the initial registration, possibly when confronted with the overwhelming "eligibility rules and requirements" necessitated by the Air District grant. Some otherwise eligible participants never tracked any trips in 511.org.

Activities conducted by RTC staff to promote and market the carpool incentive program were extensive. Display panels, posters, flyers, and emails were all produced and distributed via RTC's websites, at employer outreach events, Rideshare Month campaigns, Bike to Work and Open Streets promotional events. Marketing materials were designed to direct potential participants to the carpool incentive page on the RTC's Commute Solutions website. This page was updated and maintained for three full years. In October 2013, RTC posted a notice on the carpool incentive program web page notifying visitors that the program was no longer taking new applicants. This cutoff date provided a window for existing participants to complete logging their trips to qualify for the gas gift card incentive and time for RTC to conduct a follow-up survey of participants. RTC replaced the content on the carpool incentive webpage on December 26, 2013 with a "thank you for participating" message.

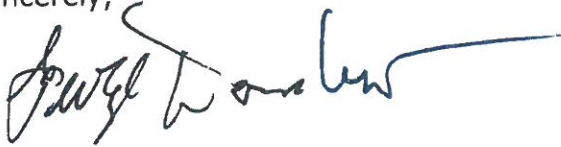
Initial marketing plans included extensive use of social media to create buzz and interest for the program. Due to some negative attention about the carpool incentive program that began in spring 2011, we were reluctant to utilize social media outreach methods to get the word out. Instead, we used traditional outreach methods described above as well as conducting special mailings to people looking for carpool partners through RTC's ride-matching service, tabling at Cabrillo College at the beginning of each semester, and promoting the program to the school communities of DeLaveaga Elementary and Harbor High as part of the TDM Outreach for the Highway 1 construction project. We customized the Santa Cruz County ride-matching homepage on 511.org to highlight the carpool incentive program. All of these methods produced few new participants.

In contrast to the statement in your letter that the program has been offline for some time, and despite the small numbers of participants, a great deal of time and effort was spent on program implementation and keeping the program running. Processing registrations, making determinations about eligibility, welcoming and communicating with program participants, downloading data from the travel logs,

issuing incentives and conducting outreach were ongoing until November 2013. In early summer of 2013, when grant funds budgeted for marketing and promotion had been fully expended and outreach efforts were ineffective at getting people to carry through with registration and completion of the trip diaries, a decision was made to continue to accept new registrants, but not to undertake any new marketing initiatives. This is the only part of the program that went "offline."

I hope this provides some insight into the challenges we faced with this program. In light of the Stop Work Order and Notice of Termination for the AB2766 grant 09-36: Carpool Incentive Program, the RTC has suspended all work on the project and does not plan to produce a final report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "George Dondero", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

George Dondero  
Executive Director

# Carpool Incentive Program – Summary

February 24, 2014

AB2766 Grant: 09-36

Grant awarded: \$120,000

Amount reimbursed: \$33, 736

## Data Points

- Number of new carpools formed: 51\*
- Occupancy per carpool vehicle (average): 2.45 people
- One way commute length (average): 22.9 miles
- Frequency of commute (average): 4.3 trips/week\*\*
- Duration or life of carpools formed: unknown
- Emission reductions over Project life: unknown
- VMT reduced over Project life: unknown

## Applications and Incentives

- Applications received: 113
- Qualified program participants: 68
- Participants who completed 24 one-way trips and received incentive: 27

## Trip Diary Statistics

- Average one-way commute length of participants: 22.9 miles
- Total number of one-way trips tracked in diaries: 1,549 trips
- Total VMT reduced: 21,000 - 35,500 miles\*\*\*
- Total participants who tracked some trips: 52

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## NOTES:

\* Some participants formed carpools with people who chose not to participate in the carpool incentive program

\*\* A question about “how often you carpool due to your participation in this program” was to be part of follow-up survey which was not conducted. The intake survey asked “How many days per week do you commute to your worksite or college”. The average answer to that question was 4.3 days/week.

\*\*\* This range reflects the fact that not all carpool members were incentive program participants. Further VMT reductions that were not recorded in the trip diary are not included in this summary.