

INTRODUCTION

A Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) programme (also known as an emergency ride home) is an essential support measure for growing public transport patronage and increasing usage of other sustainable travel options to driving alone to work, such as ridesharing, cycling, and walking. GRH programmes overcome a significant barrier to use sustainable transport for the commute to work: employee concerns about not having access to transport in the event of a personal emergency during the course of the work day.



When employees have access to a GRH programme, confidence in commuting options increases, as does the uptake of ridesharing, taking public transport, cycling and walking. A GRH allows employees to request same-day transportation home from their workplace. It offers a taxi ride home, or to other relevant destinations (e.g., schools, medical facilities), for employees that used a sustainable travel option to commute to work on the day of the emergency.

HOW IT WORKS

GRH programmes are a core element of a majority of workplace travel plan programmes internationally. They are a relatively low-cost strategy to implement and are perceived as highly valuable by both employers and their employees.

It's pretty simple to create a GRH programme. Transportation costs may be paid by the programme directly, or reimbursed to employees at a later date. The recommended approach for any organisation is to maintain a simple system using taxi services, taking advantage of the existing taxi voucher programmes in place at many workplaces. By building on these existing systems, the programme will allow companies to use existing processes and any pricing or service level agreements already in place with the taxi provider(s) of their choice.

1 - Establish Guidelines

Here are some questions that you will need to consider when establishing a new GRH programme:

- > Who should be eligible for the service?
- > What circumstances should warrant providing a ride?
- > How should rides be provided?
- > How often will an employee be able to use the service?

Eligibility Requirements

Determining who will be eligible is one of the first steps to take in developing your programme. Your programme should evaluate eligibility criteria for when and how an employee may request a ride through the programme, as these criteria influence both user perceptions of the value of the GRH offer and budget-related issues around the number and amount of rides provided.

Suggested parameters used to restrict eligibility include:

- Employees must pre-register for the service.
- Employees must participate in the rideshare scheme.
- Employees must buy a public transport pass (weekly, 10 ride, or monthly).
- Employees must rideshare, bike, walk, or use public transport to work a minimum of:
 - > At least 2 or 3 times per week; or
 - > At least 8 to 12 times per month.

In addition to these eligibility requirements, most GRH programmes exclude employees who drove to work on the day they request a ride. Under this rule, for example, a GRH programme would not provide a ride to an employee who drove alone to work and then experienced car trouble.

Development of your programme will include refining these requirements to fit your organisational needs and culture.

Additional Criteria for Approving or Denying GRH

GRH programmes should also have guidelines to specify when rides will be provided. Here are some of the typical circumstances for which GRH programmes *approve* a ride request:

- Personal or family illness (e.g. sick or injured child);
- Personal or family emergency (including home related emergencies such as fire, burglary, etc);
- Required unscheduled (mandatory) overtime;
- Driver of the employee's rideshare group having to leave work early unexpectedly due to an emergency; and
- Driver of the employee's rideshare group having to leave work late unexpectedly due to required unscheduled overtime

- Employee must use a non-drive-alone travel mode for the commute to work on the day of the request. The employee's manager must sign-off on the request, certifying that the employee used a non-drive-alone travel mode that day.

Below are circumstances under which GRH programmes normally *deny* a ride request:

- Personal errands / pre-planned appointments, such as visits to the doctor or dentist;
- Public transport service disruptions (e.g. strike);
- Work-related travel, such as rides to the airport or business meetings across town;
- Rides to work;
- Social or professional event at work;
- Unapproved or optional overtime delaying employee's departure time; and
- Disabled vehicle that is easily repaired on-site (dead battery, empty fuel tank, flat tire).

Providing Rides

Your programme may use one or more means of providing a ride, including:

- Taxi, if the destination is within 40 kilometres (or if the employee is unable to drive or does not have a driver's license);
- Rental car;
- Public transport tickets or fares;
- Company fleet vehicle; or
- Ride with a co-worker.

If your organisation has an existing taxi voucher programme set up, it makes sense to use this approach when providing rides. This will be advantageous as you'll be able to build on these existing systems, processes and any pricing or service level agreements already in place with the established taxi provider(s).

Limiting Rides

Your programme should limit how often an employee can receive a ride home. Many programmes limit the number of rides per year, typically between two and 10. Some programmes also limit riders to a total dollar amount spent on rides, such as \$50 per trip or \$100 per year. Others do not enforce usage limits – they find that employees rarely use the service more than once per year. Although the costs would seem to be high, the reality is that most employees never use the GRH programmes.

Your GRH programme materials should describe the programme's usage limits.

Abuse of GRH Programmes

Occasional abuse of GRH programmes is usually caused by miscommunication about your programme's purpose and rules. One way to safeguard against abuse is to ensure communication materials are clear and that employees and managers understand the rules about when emergency rides are permitted. It is recommended that you assign a GRH administrator to liaise with staff to answer questions and be available to pre-empt any

abuse. Pre-registration along with employee manager approval will help minimize potential abuse.

2 - GRH Administration & Management

A recommended approach for managing your programme includes the following:

- Assign a primary and secondary point of contact within the company to administer the GRH programme, including review of employee request forms and distribution and tracking of taxi vouchers.
- Market the availability of the GRH programme to employees.
- Track taxi voucher numbers, payment amounts, and GRH request forms.
- Conduct programme evaluation activities, potentially including employee surveys and/or focus groups, and interviews with senior management and/or GRH administrators for feedback on the programme.

Payment Arrangements

There are two main ways that GRH programmes pay for transportation: vouchers given to employees, and reimbursement.

Vouchers - An easy to use and hassle-free system for paying for a ride is to use vouchers that cover all, or almost all, of the cost of the ride. Programme administrators must arrange in advance for vouchers to be accepted by certain providers, which mean that employees can use only certain taxi companies. In some programmes, vouchers are distributed to employees in advance, to be used at any time; in others, the employee requests a voucher from their manager or programme administrator.

A benefit of using vouchers is that they provide an easy way for you to monitor and track your programme data. Many organisations use vouchers as a primary means to track ride costs, number of rides per employee per year, distance of rides, etc.

In the case of taxi service, the employee in need of a ride simply gets a taxi voucher/ chit from the project administrator or manager to present to the taxi driver in lieu of cash payment. The employer is billed later and limits can be placed on the amount of the voucher. There are generally restrictions placed on the number of times employees may use the service and the trip purposes (for example, most programmes do not allow employees to request rides in the case of appointments or overtime scheduled in advance). A lot of employers allow up to four taxi rides per year per employee, estimated at \$50 per taxi ride.

Reimbursement - Under reimbursement programmes, employees front the money to the driver or rental car company, then file for reimbursement later with the programme administrator. However, this type of arrangement may represent a hardship to low-income employees, who may not have enough cash to pay a taxi driver for a lengthy ride.

Here are some other voucher and reimbursement options:

- Voucher is valid for a set dollar amount or percentage of the fare. The employee pays any fare over that amount.
- Employee is reimbursed for 100% of the ride.
- Employee is reimbursed for a set dollar amount per ride.

3 – Budgeting for your GRH Programme

In general, GRH programmes are relatively low-cost, both in terms of direct (taxi payments) and indirect (staff time) costs.

Costs to Create a GRH Programme

The costs of creating and launching a GRH programme vary widely. Some programmes have started with just a few hundred dollars— enough to pay for materials and staff time to set up any vendor contracts. Other programmes have spent thousands of dollars on marketing campaigns to publicise their new service. Successful programmes can be started at either end of the cost spectrum.

Costs to Manage a GRH Programme

GRH programmes cost very little to maintain - on average, only a few dollars per eligible employee each year. Research on existing GRH programmes in the United States and Canada¹ show that GRH programmes are relatively inexpensive and require little administrative effort once they are up and running.

Research completed in 2007, assessed 55 programmes.

There are two ways GRH service delivery costs are calculated:

1. Utilisation rate (percentage of eligible users requesting rides per year), combined with the cost per ride, OR
2. Average cost per eligible user.

The 2007 research found the following across all 55 programmes:

1. Utilisation rates between 0% - 31% of eligible users, with a median result of 1.3% and an average result of 4.6%.
2. Average cost per eligible users of NZ\$0.00 – \$20.60, with a median of NZ\$0.50 and an average of NZ\$2.25.

¹ Menczer, William. Guaranteed Ride Home Programs: A Study of Program Characteristics, Utilization, and Cost. *Journal of Public Transportation*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2007. and Todreas, Ian. GRH: A Survey of Current Programs & Issues. US EPA, 2002.

The table below applies median and average data from the research, along with some “high” figures representing the data outliers from the 55 programmes surveyed, and displays subsequent costs per annum, assuming a target population for the pilot of 2,000 eligible employees. The first set of data uses a “utilisation rate” x “cost per ride” approach, while the second set uses the cost per user approach.



Based on this assessment, assuming Auckland follows international averages, the budget for taxi fares for an organisation with 2,000 employees is anticipated to be between \$4,000 - \$4,500.

However, the reality is that most employees never use the GRH programmes. **So, based on low usage rates, an organisation with:**

- > 1,000 employees could anticipate approximate costs of \$800 per year.
- > 500 employees could anticipate approximate costs of \$400 and so on.

4 – Register Employees

Registering employees who are eligible for a guaranteed ride home has a lot of administrative and marketing benefits. You can use the opportunity to verify eligibility and create a database of users. Registration is also a great time to educate employees about how and when to use the programme and will help you manage your programme effectively.

The following is an example of procedures that will help you manage your programme effectively and keep abuse to a minimum.

- Get employees to pre-register for your programme. Once you have collected the pre-registration forms, verify that each prospective participant meets the programme’s eligibility criteria.
- Send registered participants an informational welcome package that includes:
 - Welcome letter;
 - Instructions on how to obtain their GRH; and
 - Post-ride feedback form (including post-ride questions and manager approval).

- After each use, process the forms received and send the employee a new set of instructions and post-ride forms.

5 – Marketing your GRH Programme

To ensure that your programme achieves its goal - increasing the number of employees who do not commute by single occupant vehicle – employees must be aware of its existence and know how to use it. Getting the word out to employees is not always easy. One challenge is that by its nature, employees do not utilise the programme often, so they may forget that it is available. Therefore it's important to communicate regularly with staff and spread the word. Employees will be excited to learn about the service, and your organisation deserves public recognition for its efforts to reduce commuting-related pollution, congestion, and stress.

Educating Employees

Once you have established your programme parameters, you will need to communicate those guidelines to your eligible employees. Here are some ways to promote your service:

- New employee orientation;
- Workplace intranet site;
- Company/ travel plan newsletters and emails;
- Morning teas and transportation fairs (e.g. rideshare network group);
- Brochures available where public transport passes are sold on-site; and
- Brochures or signs in the company staff/ lunch room.

Internal Marketing

Spreading the word about your GRH programme to employees is important. The more employees know about the GRH programme, the more likely they will try out a new commute option. And for those already taking public transport, ridesharing, walking, or cycling, the more reassured they will be with their choices.

Since most employees will seldom need to use the service, regular programme announcements and bulletins will help remind employees that it exists. Sending out regular communications like newsletters and email announcements will help to spread the word about your programme.

Maintaining your GRH Programme

Although the low usage of guaranteed ride home programs means that it should be relatively easy to maintain the program, the following tasks may still need attention:

- Meet with taxi companies to discuss any billing or usage issues;
- Promote programme to employees (because employees use the service infrequently, they may forget about its availability);
- Ensure registration lists are up-to-date;
- If employee travel surveys are done regularly, add questions about guaranteed ride home programmes.

Evaluations and surveys are a great way to gather information and feedback that can be used to adjust and improve your GRH programme. They collect feedback that help you gauge the response time of ride vendors, the ease with which employers can request rides, and employees' overall satisfaction with the service. This feedback is also important for gauging the value the service provides to employees.

APPENDIX – GRH, INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

TRAVEL IMPACTS

GRH schemes contribute to an increase the use of alternative commute modes as well as protect gains in the use of these modes that have been made for other reasons. The greatest impacts have been upon public transport use and carpooling.

The impact of a GRH scheme is most valuable when considered as part of the decision making process by employees, whether changing to or sticking with alternative transport modes, or in achieving an actual shift in the mode used.

US studies have found that removing GRH associated with public transport systems would have a negative effect. In the most extensive research of its kind, employees registered with a GRH programme in Washington DC were surveyed as to how they had changed their travel behaviour after joining the GRH scheme and their attitudes as to its usefulness. The GRH scheme was an important contributing factor to choice of mode for Washington DC employees:

- 56.6 percent of employees registered with the GRH scheme used public transport, compared to just 16.6 percent who were not registered;
- 26.1 percent of GRH registrants had previously driven to work alone before joining the scheme, compared to 4.6 percent who did so after registering;
- use of long distance employee rail rose from 12.6 percent to 20.2 percent amongst employees who joined GRH; and
- the percentage of employees catching the bus rose from 15.6 percent pre-GRH to 21.3 percent post joining GRH.

The Washington DC employees were also asked about the influence of GRH on their commuting choices. The largest percentage of respondents (71 percent) said that GRH helped to encourage them to maintain their use of alternative transport modes. But about 25 percent of respondents said they started using alternatives when they joined GRH. A small percentage (4 percent), said they increased the number of days they used alternative modes.

When asked to rank how important GRH was to them in changing or maintaining their alternative commuting mode, 46 percent said it was very important to them in terms of changing to their alternative mode while 40 percent of respondents said it was very important in maintaining their use of their current alternative mode. When asked about other factors that might be influential in their commuting choice (such as saving time or money, traffic congestion etc.). 40 percent of respondents said that no other factor was as important as GRH in their choice.

This work is backed by other US research:

- a 1999 survey of Metro-North Railroad's GRH-eligible employees, 16 percent said they would stop taking the connecting bus service without GRH;
- 12 percent of employees in Sacramento transportation management association's GRH programme said that they would stop using public transport without an emergency ride guaranteed;
- 26 percent of the University of Washington's monthly public transport pass holders said the school's Reimbursed Ride Home programme was important to their commuting decision; and
- 13 percent of Kaiser Permanente's San Francisco employees stated in a 2002 survey that the company's GRH programme was influential in their choice of alternative commuting modes.

In Auckland, a survey of TravelWise Workplace participants have indicated that GRH schemes are an important factor in decisions to use alternative modes. Out of 6325 respondents:

- 18 percent indicated that a Guaranteed Ride Home Scheme is an important factor in using public transport. In some organisations this figure was 40 percent with other organisations at the lower end of 11 percent;
- 33 percent indicated GRH is an important factor in car pooling. In some organisations this figure was above 50 percent with other organisations at the lower at 25 percent; and
- 14 percent indicated GRH would help in use of cycling and walking as a commute mode.

There was a noticeable correlation to the location of the organisation and the type of alternative transport mode that GRH plays in shifting people to. Organisations where GRH was identified as significant for Passenger Transport are located in high – medium service areas. Organisations where GRH identified as significant for carpooling were in less serviced areas or areas such as Rodney and Manukau.

BENEFITS AND USE

GRH programmes generally require minimal funding (excluding staff time to operate). The cost of subsidising trips is dependent upon the amount of use. While seen as a key factor for behaviour change towards non SOV trips, the actual use of the “insurance” scheme is relatively low. Examples of use per scheme are found in programmes run in the US:

- The 2004 evaluation of the US based Employee Connections GRH Scheme identified that the average cost per registered employee was very low at only \$1.69. The overall use of GRH programmes was not significant, with the average use registered employee at 4.57%.
- The Victoria Transport Institute sites older studies that estimate that Guaranteed Ride Home is used by less than 10% of eligible employees in any one year.

Evaluations from international programmes show anecdotal evidence that GRH consistently promotes non-SOV commuting including public transportation. The Victoria Transport Policy Institute has identified GRH impacts in the following table:

Impact	Rating
Reduces Total Traffic	3
Reduces Peak Period Traffic	3
Shifts car travel to alternative	3
Increased passenger transport	3
Increase Ridesharing	3
Increased cycling	2
Increased walking	2

Rating (3) = Highly Effective

GRH schemes offer an equitable initiative making alternative modes more attractive and feasible, by providing benefits to non-drivers, and by accommodating high-value trips, such as domestic emergencies. Lower-income employees are also likely to place a high value on this benefit, because it helps them save money and avoid unexpected expenses.

EXAMPLES OF EXISTING GRH PROGRAMMES

Examples	Description
<p>Alameda County CMA www.grh.accma.ca.gov</p>	<p>Participants enrol in the programme and issued a voucher good for a free ride home in a taxi or rental car in case of one of the specified emergencies. Call the transportation provider directly to arrange for a ride. After fill out a follow-up questionnaire. Return the pink copy of the voucher and completed questionnaire by mail or fax and a new ride voucher is sent.</p> <p>Employers must be located in Alameda County and have 75 or more employees or be part of a registered business park. Employees must be permanent full-time or permanent part-time employees and live within 100 miles of their worksite</p>
<p>511 Contra Costa www.511contracosta.org/ridehome.html</p>	<p>511 Contra Costa Sponsored by all twenty jurisdictions in Contra Costa County, California is a comprehensive transportation demand management programme, which promotes alternatives to the single occupant vehicle. Participants and their employers must pre-register in the programme. All applicants are required to complete an evaluation form Voucher must be obtained (in advance) and used a commute alternative on the day the Guaranteed Ride Home voucher is needed.</p>
<p>MetroTransit www.metrotransit.org/riderprogrammes/grh.asp</p>	<p>Metro Transit is the transportation resource for the Twin Cities, offering an integrated network of buses, trains as well as resources for those who carpool, vanpool, walk or bike. Employees who ride the bus or train, carpool, vanpool, bike or walk at least three days a week to work or school Employees who register a carpool or vanpool are automatically enrolled in the Guaranteed Ride Home Programme. Registered employees receive two coupons every six months. The coupons are valid (up to \$25) on any regular workday for a bus, train or taxi.</p>
<p>San Diego County Pollution control District www.ridelink.org/Employee_Services/Guaranteed_Ride_Home/Index.asp</p>	<p>RideLink is the regional employee and employer transportation assistance programme sponsored by SANDAG (the San Diego Association of Governments). The Guaranteed Ride Home programme will provide a taxi or rental car, depending on the distance between work and home. The service can be used up to three times per enrolment year by registered participants, with a minimal co-pay. The service will either take you home or back to your car parked at a transit station or Park & Ride</p>
<p>Employee Connections http://www.employeepage.com/ridehome.htm</p>	<p>Employee Connections has created a network of providers who offer several transportation options to get employees home quickly and safely.). Eligible employees must use alternative commute modes at least twice a week, and on the day that a ride home is requested.</p>
<p>Denver Regional Council of Governments www.drcog.org/index.cfm?page=GuaranteedRideHome</p>	<p>Guaranteed Ride Home provides a free taxi ride home from the office for employees who have an emergency arise on a day that they used alternative transportation. The programme is offered as an added benefit of the following programmes: Vanpool, RTD's Eco Pass, T-REX Value Pass. Guaranteed Ride Home can also be purchased as a reasonably priced stand-alone service.</p>

Guaranteed Ride Home Programme



<p>City of Albuquerque www.cabq.gov/transit/ridegu.html</p>	<p>Transit Department's insurance offering for those in the Bernalillo County area that regularly use alternate modes of transportation at least three times a week (those who buy a monthly bus pass are automatically registered). This service can be used up to five times a year for true emergencies such as personal illness, family illness, unscheduled overtime or any other emergency that requires you to leave work or school.</p>
<p>TMA for San Luis Obispo County www.rideshare.org/</p>	<p>Ride-On, the TMA for San Luis Obispo County in Central California: Offers door-to-door GRH service anywhere in the area on weekdays between 8 am and 7 pm. In the event of an emergency, authorized staff calls Ride-On to request a Guaranteed Ride Home. The TMA will send a vehicle within 15 minutes.</p>
<p>Tri Met www.trimet.org/employers/GRH.htm</p>	<p>For employers who offer a transit pass programme or a subsidy for employee alternative commute options, TriMet will provide a free taxi ride if a participating employee has a family emergency, gets sick during the work day, or even if they work unscheduled hours. Eligible companies are those with work sites located in the TriMet service district who offer a minimum subsidy of \$10 per month for employees who use transit or who carpool, vanpool, bike or walk to work.</p>

APPENDIX – GRH PROGRAMME POLICY EXAMPLE

The Guaranteed Ride Home programme at *[Company Name]* is an important component of the *[Rideshare/ Travel Plan Project Name]*. It provides a ride home to all staff who choose an active and/or sustainable transport modes such as ridesharing, cycling, walking and public transportation if they find themselves in a personal emergency and need to unexpectedly get home quickly.

The Guaranteed Ride Home should be available in the event of:

- Personal or family illness (e.g. sick or injured child);
- Personal or family emergency (including home related emergencies such as fire, burglary, etc);
- Required unscheduled (mandatory) overtime;
- Driver of the employee's rideshare group having to leave work early unexpectedly due to an emergency; and
- Driver of the employee's rideshare group having to leave work late unexpectedly due to required unscheduled overtime
- Employee must use a non-drive-alone travel mode for the commute to work on the day of the request. The employee's manager must sign-off on the request, certifying that the employee used a non-drive-alone travel mode that day.

If the expected event occurs after hours any available pool vehicles can be used provided it is back before the vehicles first appointment the next morning.

The Guaranteed Ride Home should not be used for:

- Personal errands / pre-planned appointments, such as visits to the doctor or dentist;
- Public transport service disruptions (e.g. strike);
- Work-related travel, such as rides to the airport or business meetings across town;
- Social or professional event at work;
- Unapproved or optional overtime delaying employee's departure time; and
- Disabled vehicle that is easily repaired on-site (dead battery, empty fuel tank, flat tire).

A staff member wanting to utilise the programme will need to get a Taxi chit from *[location within organisation, person/place]*. The travel expenditure will need the approval of the staff member's manager either prior to or during the next working day.

If approval is sought after the travel has occurred and is deemed not to be in compliance with the Guaranteed Ride Home Programme policies, the staff member will have to reimburse the organisation for the cost of the travel.

There are no set limits for how often the programme is used by a single staff member, but the use of the programme is being monitored to ensure abuse does not occur. If consistent abuse

Guaranteed Ride Home Programme

of the programme is found resolution will *[description of the relevant organisational investigation and disciplinary processes]*.

For more information on the Guaranteed Ride Home programme, its eligibility or processes, please contact *[Travel Co-ordinator and contact details]*.