

Downtown On the Go Communication Plan Outline

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Downtown On the Go Communication Plan

Part 1 ~ Communication Plan Context

I. DOTG History

In the summer of 2008, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and the Tacoma Chamber hosted three transportation forums for downtown business executives. The forums were facilitated by local and regional transportation experts. As a result of these sessions, the business community overwhelmingly determined that it was ready to take action. As a result, the Downtown: On the Go! Transportation Partnership was formed.

The Partnership held a series of six meetings between January and June 2009, addressing transit routes, capacity, and programs; bicycling/walking infrastructure and amenities; car sharing; and telework. Members agreed in June 2009 to continue working to establish long-term funding and organization plans.

In early 2009, leaders from more than 17 downtown businesses formed the original *Downtown On the Go! Transportation Partnership*. Through a collective voice, the Partnership sought to identify and advocate for viable solutions to the parking and transportation challenges facing downtown businesses and commuters. Members of the partnership agreed in June 2009 to collaborate on commute trip reduction strategies, with a goal of 35% of employees using non-single occupancy vehicle commute options: transit, walking, biking, telecommuting, and car/vanpooling.

In October 2009, with funding through a City of Tacoma Energy and Efficiency Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), the Transportation Partnership's members reconvened to begin the process of creating sustainable funding and organization plans, as well as determine the form and function of this group.

Throughout late 2009 and the first half of 2010, the Partnership met monthly to build their mission, vision, and Downtown On the Go work plan for the next five years (2010-2015). They have since evolved into a more formalized Board of Directors, with additional options for "fan status" to those businesses that support the vision and mission of Downtown On the Go.

II. What is Downtown On the Go (DOTG)?

Downtown On the Go is the transportation advocate for anyone whose daily life is downtown. Program staff fulfill this role by educating about transportation choices other than driving alone; encouraging use of transit, ridesharing, biking, walking, and flexible work arrangements; and advocating for transportation choices and land use policies that promote a vibrant and integrated downtown. DOTG is steered by a board of directors representing 20 downtown businesses, organizations, and agencies committed to leveraging their resources and relationships to reduce the downtown drive alone rate by 11% by 2015.

III. DOTG Vision

Downtown On the Go envisions a vibrant, integrated downtown Tacoma – where daily life is enhanced by connecting people, green spaces, arts & culture, and jobs. Interdependent land use policies and transportation options reinforce an active, compact urban core that is connected locally and regionally, promoting a focus on the movement and interactions of people rather than cars.

IV. DOTG Mission

Downtown On the Go's purpose is to be the transportation advocate for anyone whose daily life is downtown.

We do this by:

- *Educating about transportation choices other than driving alone.*
- *Encouraging use of transit, ridesharing, biking, walking, and flexible work arrangements.*
- *Advocating for transportation choices and land use policies that promote a vibrant and integrated downtown.*

V. DOTG Critical Goal

Increase by 11% the number of employees' non-drive alone trips into/out of downtown Tacoma.

Part 2 ~ The Communication Plan

VI. Communication Plan Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics

1) Develop a seamless and consistent internal (among partners and agencies) strategy for communicating with external (anyone whose daily life is downtown) target audiences.

a. Strategy 1.a.

Refine the DOTG role in relation to the roles of other transportation related agencies/organizations and establish clearly defined networks and relationships.

- Outline roles and expectations of each of the three organizations involved in guiding DOTG (i.e. PT, COT, and Chamber) by developing a chart that identifies role descriptions.
- Establish clear physical boundaries for DOTG efforts.

b. Strategy 1.b.

Establish consistent messaging and shared graphic elements among internal partners/agencies.

- Create a toolkit of target audiences, key messages, talking points, and graphic elements that can be used by internal partners/agencies.

c. Strategy 1.c.

Develop a synopsis of DOTG objectives for partners and agencies.

- *Develop synopsis.*

d. Strategy 1.d.

Seamlessly direct individual commuters and employers to the correct agencies so they can meet their transportation needs.

- Maintain frequent DOTG staff contact with partners.

e. Strategy 1.e.

Build a base of internal representatives who are willing to communicate DOTG's mission, vision, and goals to external audiences.

- Once DOTG organizational structure is determined, include this as a role for board members.

2) Increase recognition of and identification with the DOTG brand as a one-stop shop for transportation services and resources in the downtown.

a. Strategy 2.a.

Saturate downtown Tacoma with the DOTG brand.

- Advertise within downtown, using lobby kiosks in large buildings (e.g. Columbia Bank & Wells Fargo), magnetic signs on vanpool van spots in downtown, and other signage.
- Add website link to partners' websites.

b. Strategy 2.b.

Establish a 1-2 line statement/catch phrase that communicates this message (e.g. For people whose daily lives are downtown).

c. Strategy 2.c.

Create a concise DOTG packet of explanatory materials and support materials.

- Create a basic DOTG brochure.
- Create a presentable information packet for each of the target audiences.
- Order letterhead, envelopes, business cards, etc.
- Assemble consistent trade show materials.

d. Strategy 2.d.

Determine appropriate levels of education and methods for delivery to diverse target audiences.

- Use CTR survey data, and consider additional informal surveying.
- Develop a staff meeting presentation program that is offered to "member" businesses as a benefit of membership.

e. Strategy 2.e.

Determine appropriate levels of resource provision and methods for delivery to diverse target audiences.

- Use CTR survey data, and consider additional informal surveying.

- Via the Transportation Plan Program for Small Businesses, work with businesses to determine their needs and address their specific transportation challenges/concerns.
- f. Strategy 2.f.
Create multimodal materials that are attractive and useful to target audiences (e.g. lunchtime walking maps, “how to” guides, etc.)
- g. Strategy 2.g.
Further develop the DOTG logo, increasing usage of this logo on all DOTG activities, events, and communiqués.
- h. Strategy 2.h.
Assess the feasibility of a DOTG website.
 - Determine goals of website creation (review Dec. meeting)
 - Determine interaction of website with PierceTrips.com.
 - Begin researching website creation cost.
 - Begin general design of pages within site.
 - Assemble an interdisciplinary team of stakeholders as a website steering committee to review the site.
 - Create a Facebook DOTG page and use it to direct “fans” to the website and relevant materials.
- i. Strategy 2.i.
Increase the social media presence of DOTG.
 - Create a Facebook DOTG page and use it to direct “fans” to the website and relevant materials.
- j. Strategy 2.j.
Assess the feasibility of a physical location for a DOTG “one-stop transportation shop”.

3) Position DOTG as an informed and accomplished downtown stakeholder among transportation decision-makers, employers, and employees.

- a. Strategy 3.a.
Document and promote accomplishments of DOTG.
- b. Strategy 3.b.
Develop synopses of DOTG priorities for each mode and base advocacy efforts off of these synopses.
- c. Strategy 3.c.
Communicate DOTG’s message and priorities to relevant downtown leaders.
 - Understand the values of individual downtown leaders and connect DOTG vision/mission to these values in messaging.
- d. Strategy 3.d.
Regularly speak to downtown stakeholder groups.
- e. Strategy 3.e.
Organize and host regular forums/symposiums that provide educational opportunities or discussion around topics that further support DOTG goals and priorities.

- Host quarterly or biannual forums, symposiums, or round tables that promote the organization’s advocacy, encouragement, and education mission components.
 - Host additional discussion or feedback based events as needed to encourage maximum input of DOTG target audiences on multimodal initiatives.
- f. Strategy 3.f.
Commit to continual and active involvement in decision-making groups, and pursue opportunities to be involved in organized downtown groups.
- Commit to involvement in decision-making groups that align with key goals of DOTG – economic development, transportation, land use, environment/sustainability, employee wellness.
- 4) Implement a Communications Plan that establishes a long-term relationship with target audiences, developing trust and credibility that leads to audiences’ active participation in the organization.**
- a. Strategy 5.a.
Offer biannual Transportation Innovator Awards to employers and highlight winners to build brand recognition and encourage additional employer involvement in DOTG.
- Determine goals of award distribution.
 - Determine the parameters for award receipt.
 - Determine number of award winners each year.
 - Determine a method for promotion of the award and past/present award winners.
- b. Strategy 5.b.
Promote how we have been a successful stakeholder in downtown transportation initiatives.
- c. Strategy 5.c.
Develop an endorsement strategy for downtown transportation efforts that further the goals and priorities of the DOTG work plan.
- d. Strategy 5.d.
Offer a form of regular communication to downtown stakeholders via a monthly newsletter.
- e. Strategy 5.e.
Create a DOTG incentive/reward program.
- Determine who receives incentives/rewards, why, and when.
 - Ensure that incentives/rewards do not conflict with the awards distributed by CTR and Pierce Transit.

VII. Strategies & Tactics High Priority List

- ❖ Strategy 2.a. → Saturate downtown Tacoma w/ DOTG brand.
 - Lobby kiosks for information distribution.

- Website link to partners' websites.
- ❖ Strategy 2.c. → Create a concise packet of explanatory DOTG materials for distribution to target audiences.
 - Presentable information packet that includes a brochure, as well as support materials.
- ❖ Strategy 2.g. → Further develop the DOTG logo.
- ❖ Strategy 2.h. → Assess feasibility of a DOTG website.
 - Outline goals for website.
 - Obtain estimates.
 - Choose web designer.
 - Create preliminary design.
 - Consult with stakeholder team to review and improve design.

VIII. Target Audiences & Key Messages

(Messages should communicate the DOTG mission.)

1) Primary Audience - Anyone whose daily life is downtown.

a. All Audiences

- i. Key Message #1: Transportation choices other than the single occupancy vehicle are individually and collectively beneficial for many reasons.
 1. Cost-savings
 2. Environment
 3. Quality of Life
 4. Economic Development
 5. Benefits to the Economy
 6. Social Justice
 7. Health, Fitness & Well-being

b. Downtown Employers

- i. Key Message #1: Transportation options are critical to downtown economic development, creating a vibrant downtown that is about the movement of people on the street rather than the movement of cars.
- ii. Key Message #2: Offering employees transportation choices is better than providing parking stalls for them (i.e. purchasing their parking directly).
- iii. Key Message #3: Parking structures and stalls and other car based infrastructure are extremely costly to businesses and taxpayers.

- iv. Key Message #4: Parking on-street is for visitors, clients, and customers, while off-street parking is for employees, especially employees new to downtown.
- v. Key Message #5: Employers can incentivize commute options by providing subsidies, support, and encouragement for their employees.
- vi. Key Message #6: Collaboration among downtown businesses via the Transportation Partnership provides a critical and unified voice in the downtown transportation conversation.
- vii. Key Message #7: DOTG connects the dots for transportation in the downtown, acting as a resource for information on all modes of transportation, and funneling employers, employees, and residents to the correct agencies for further support and information.
- viii. Key Message #8: With 2,000 employers and 32,000 employees, downtown Tacoma is the #1 daily destination for commuters in our region. For this reason, DOTG focuses its advocacy efforts on the boundaries of the downtown.

c. Downtown Employees

- i. Key Message #1: Transportation choices are important to all commuters, regardless of an individual's commute choice (i.e. even if a commuter chooses to use his car, those that ride the bus make it more efficient for him to do so by reducing traffic congestion).
 - 1. 20,000 car trips taken off the road on an average week day due to bus service
 - 2. 50,000 bus boardings on an average weekday
- ii. Key Message #2: Using a commute option other than a drive alone vehicle even one or two days a week goes a long way in realizing those benefits.
- iii. Key Message #3: Support is available for employees via DOTG (and ETCs for CTR regulated employers) in their search for a transportation choice that is right for them.

d. Downtown Residents

- i. Key Message #1: You *can* live car-free or with one less car in downtown Tacoma, and DOTG is doing everything it can to make this an easier and more realistic option for a wider variety of residents.

1. Options available = transit, carpool, vanpool, biking, walking, alternative work arrangements, and hopefully in the near future, car-sharing.
 2. Downtown is the hub of transportation infrastructure, with easy downtown, local, and regional connections - so it's the best place to live car-free.
- ii. Key Message #2: DOTG is working closely with other downtown partners to bring car-sharing to Tacoma, and sees the increase in residential densities as critical to reaching this goal.
 - iii. Key Message #3: Using a commute option other than a drive alone vehicle even one or two days a week goes a long way in realizing those benefits.
 1. Downtown is the best "20 minute" neighborhood, with ample access to the necessities of daily life and more. Living downtown allows for less use of your drive alone vehicle.

e. Downtown Property Owners

- i. Key Message #1: Property owners play a critical role in providing incentives for residents to locate downtown and do so without frequent use of a car.
- ii. Key Message #2: Getting people out of their cars and into other modes promotes increased development in the downtown.
 1. People, not cars, make purchases, visit restaurants, and shop at local merchants. Getting people to walk, bike, and even use transit helps people to frequent parts of downtown that they otherwise would not.
 2. Cars require parking, which is expensive and an inefficient use of space, especially surface lots. These areas are not conducive to economic development and create dead spaces in the downtown.

f. Downtown Leaders

- i. Key Message #1: DOTG is an advocacy organization focused on the movement of people rather than cars through access to a variety of transportation options and infrastructure.
- ii. Key Message #2: Collaboration among downtown businesses via the Transportation Partnership provides a critical and unified voice to the downtown transportation conversation.

- iii. Key Message #3: Voters want options, especially young voters who are increasingly recognizing that the cost of cars outweighs the benefits.
- iv. Key Message #4: Access to transportation is also about social justice – providing a means for transport to lower income populations is critical to overall economic well-being.
- v. Key Message #5: An increased state and federal emphasis on livable communities means that state and federal funding will be increasingly tied to the development of holistic communities that offer transportation options.

2) Secondary Audience

a. *Visitors, Clients, Customers*

- i. Key Message #1: Transit, walking, and biking are low cost options to a rental car.
- ii. Key Message #2: DOTG aims to make downtown Tacoma more connected to other business districts and the region so that visitors can easily move about with a car.
- iii. Key Message #3: DOTG aims to free up parking for downtown visitors, clients, and customers by targeting transitioning employees from use of parking stalls to use of transit.

IX. Communication Tools for Target Audiences & Key Messages

1) Downtown On the Go Board of Directors

- a. Distribute information to partnering organizations via Board
- b. Establish key Board spokespersons to “champion” DOTG work

2) Website

- a. Develop and regularly update the new website

3) Newsletter

- a. Distributed monthly; post on website
- b. Consider a more easy to use template (i.e. email newsletter vs. an email attachment)

4) Lobby Kiosks

- a. Develop and place in large office buildings (with permission of building manager) by end of 2010
- b. Used to display both permanent and temporary information

- 5) Email Distribution Lists**
 - a. Use for specific events
- 6) Social Media**
 - a. DOTG currently has a Facebook page
 - b. Use page to steer people to website and vice versa
 - c. Use to promote events and message
 - d. Continue to develop
- 7) Blogging**
 - a. Update the BIA blog frequently
 - b. Use the “News & Events” page of the new website
- 8) Direct Mail**
 - a. Useful for specific campaigns and events
- 9) Press Releases, Appeals to Specific Press Organizations**
 - a. Useful for specific campaigns and events
- 10) Special Projects & Promotional Opportunities**
 - a. Use of logo, resources, staff time for projects and events in support of DOTG objectives (i.e. assume role of organizer, sponsor, supporter)
- 11) Meetings w/ Downtown Stakeholders**
 - a. Maintain frequent contact with key leaders/stakeholders
 - b. Support key leaders/stakeholders with messaging and access to information
 - c. Speak to downtown groups
- 12) Guerilla Communication**
 - a. Trade show items (i.e. umbrellas, bags, etc.)
 - b. Unique event promotion
 - c. “Merchandise” that promotes DOTG vision, mission, values
 - d. Unique campaigns
- 13) Additional Methods**
 - a. Letters to the Editor
 - b. Advocacy letters of support/opposition