



TDM COORDINATOR PROFILE

LILLIAN BUNTON: BALTIMORE AND CARROLL COUNTIES

Lillian Bunton is the Rideshare Coordinator (RSC)/ Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Coordinator for both Baltimore and Carroll Counties, and works for The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC), which serves as the Council of Governments for Central Maryland. Gladys Hurwitz, with Commuter Choice Maryland, had the pleasure of interviewing Lillian about her experience working with businesses and commuters, insight on how commuters are traveling to work from Baltimore and Harford County, what she enjoys most about her job, and what she loves about working with Commuter Choice Maryland. To learn more about Lillian, keep reading!

Gladys Hurwitz: What does the Baltimore Metropolitan Council do?

Lillian Bunton: BMC connects the Baltimore region – how we travel, work and live – by identifying mutual interests and developing collaborative strategies, plans and programs. BMC is a resource for the region, which encompasses Baltimore, Carroll, Anne Arundel, Harford, and Howard Counties, along with the City of Baltimore.

GH: What do you love most about your job as a RSC/TDM Specialist?

LB: It is a wonderful feeling when someone sees me at an outreach event and says, “I signed up for that program, it’s been great!” Whether it’s a carpool, Guaranteed Ride Home or Bike to Work, helping someone have a happier commute just makes my day. I’ve also promoted “green” living throughout my working life, so knowing that those “happier commutes” are keeping our world a little more healthy is an added bonus.

GH: What are some of the most popular inquiries you get from commuters?

LB: The most frequent question/exclamation is “you mean it’s FREE!?” They’re so surprised that these services are free of charge. I do get to explain the benefits of less congestion, cleaner air, reduced highway maintenance costs, and a more mobile workforce that smart commuting gives us all. One misconception that I love clearing up: If you carpool with your spouse, neighbor or roommate, it’s STILL a smart commute and you qualify for Guaranteed Ride Home. Sharing the ride is always easy, and covered.

GH: What have businesses shared with you about their commuting needs for their employees?

LB: For the past few years, businesses have been looking for ways to “green” their profiles. TDM is an easy, low-cost way to do that. They are then delighted to find that offering commute options leads to less staff turnover and a more motivated workforce. Those employers who offer vanpool/transit pass programs really reap the rewards in terms of employee retention.

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-Lillian Bunton

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One challenge we've had since the beginning of the program is providing options to worksites in more rural areas. When an employer moves to a new location, they quickly discover that getting people to their buildings affects their bottom line. That's where carpooling, vanpools, and telework come in to save the day.

GH: What is a tip that you would like to give employers who are new to commuter benefits and want to get started?

LB: There are so many levels of participation, and it's easy for everyone.

- **To those companies on the fence:** Ask your staff! We can provide a commuter survey to see if your employees want to find a better way to work. Just send out the forms and we can analyze the results and report back.
- **To the company that wants to test the waters:** You can start simply by sending a company-wide email with benefits information, inviting your local TDM coordinator to set up a table in the lobby or lunchroom to answer questions, or just invite one of us to talk about your needs. We have materials and resources, and would love to help.
- **To the company that is ready to make a full commitment:** Be sure you have one or two staff members to serve as an on-site contact/coordinator and that they have the backing of management and budget.
- **For everyone:** Our data is secure. We use Commuter Connections software to do our carpool matching and GRH registrations, which is secure enough for the Federal Government and military. We also have the ability to limit your employees to matching with only others at your worksite, if you are in a secure facility.

GH: Any tips that you would like to give commuters who are looking for alternatives to driving alone to work?

LB: There are so many options out there; we probably have one that will work for you. Check out www.CommuterChoiceMaryland.com for an overview. Then ask your HR department if they have any commuter benefits available. You might be amazed at what they offer. Also, there's an app for that! The days of unwieldy transit maps and weeklong manual searches for carpool partners is over. Most of your legwork can be done online; from checking on the bus schedule at <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/transit>, to real-time carpool matching from MWCOG, (<https://tdm.commuterconnections.org/mwcog/>) to finding a regular carpool or vanpool at <https://www.commuterconnections.org>, information is at your fingertips.

GH: Do you have any projects in the pipeline that you would like our readers to know about?

LB: Since ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft have hijacked the "rideshare" identity, we're changing our name to avoid confusion. You'll be able to find us through "metrorideshare.com" for the next few years, but we'll have a new name and new look. We'll still have the same personal service and broad network of programs to help you.

GH: What are the top three things that you want businesses and commuters to know about your program MetroRideshare?

LB:

- **Our help is free.**
- **Commuter benefits are essentially a free perk for employers to offer staff. Why not add it to your benefits package?**
- **We're here to help you, whether you live, work, do business in, or commute through the Maryland/DC/Virginia region. Every jurisdiction has a coordinator ready to help!**

GH: What do you love most about working with Commuter Choice Maryland?

LB: Maryland has so much to offer commuters that sometimes finding the right resource can be overwhelming. We have TDM coordinators in every jurisdiction in the region, along with multiple transit providers. We serve commuters heading to or from DC, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. It's a huge program!