



## 2018 Urban Boomer Outreach Campaign Final Report

This project was supported by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and CarShare Vermont.

## **Introduction**

CarShare Vermont sought FY 18 UPWP funding from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to develop a comprehensive outreach campaign targeting people aged 51-69.

Historically, carsharing programs across the country have primarily served a younger demographic (people aged 18-45). However, recent research has indicated that Baby Boomers are increasingly relocating to urban areas that offer increased mobility options. As they enjoy a more active, multimodal lifestyle, many are choosing to reduce their vehicles ownership.

We wanted to understand if this trend is consistent here in Chittenden County, and whether this growing demographic is ripe for carsharing. Our goals for this project were to conduct market research, conduct outreach in collaboration with partners, and increase membership among this population.

We hoped to achieve the following goals by completing this project:

- Research about the transportation habits and preferences of local Baby Boomer population.
- Comprehensive outreach campaign (with collateral) that can be used on an ongoing basis to promote carsharing and multimodal lifestyle among population.
- Increase CSVT membership among target population by at least 12%.
- Increase public awareness about multimodal lifestyle.
- Develop new partnerships with groups supporting this work.

## **Phase I: Market Research**

We hired the design and communications firm Make New to assist us with market research. There were two key components of our research. First, we analyzed demographic information and usage data of our existing members to identify and understand any trends. Second, we conducted a survey of all our members aged 50+ to understand their primary motivations for joining and using CarShare Vermont.

We were pleased to achieve a 46% response rate to our survey of members aged over 50. Consistent with findings among our membership at large, respondents indicated

that the main motivations for using our service were cost savings, saving time, and concern for the environment, in that order. Working with Make New, we incorporated these values into our campaign messaging and materials.

## **Phase 2: Campaign Development & Outreach**

We wanted to create an explicit web presence for our campaign that we could point people to for more information and also evaluate the success of our outreach efforts. Make New developed the brand “CarShare Today” to hone in on the key values our target audience identified as motivators for carsharing—money and time savings first, in addition to concern for the environment.

The site provided information about specific common trip costs and compared them to the costs of owning a vehicle, or more specifically, a second vehicle. Additionally, the site showcased the diversity of our fleet, indicating how certain vehicles may meet a specific trip purpose—highlighting our pick-up truck, for example, for hauling and chores. Overall, the website introduced new imagery and colors that sought to reinforce CarShare Vermont as a local, community-based nonprofit. For example, there are original illustrations of our vehicles in action at recognizable locations, such as City Market.

Make New deployed a targeted social media campaign to test various communication strategies and then hone in on the most compelling messages. Through our website, we were able to evaluate which Facebook ads generated the most interest. Consistently, messaging and images that emphasized cost savings and showed how CarShare Vermont replaces the need for a second vehicle were most successful, even though the membership offering was the same across the ads.

Alongside our web presence, we conducted two postcard mailings. The first was sent to our existing members (aged 50+), inviting them to encourage their friends to join CarShare Vermont and offering a generous promotion (for the friend) and reward (for the member). Next, we sent out a general citywide mailing to residents in our target demographic.

We also collaborated with partners who work and/or serve with adults age 50 and up to inform them about CarShare Vermont and how it may be a good fit for their

audiences. We reached out to AARP, HomeShare Vermont, Burlington Housing Authority, Winooski Housing Authority, Age Well, City Market, Local Motion, and others and asked them to share information, including a membership promotion, with their constituents and members.

We organized joint events with several of the above organizations. We also recruited CarShare Vermont volunteers to host house parties for their neighbors in neighborhoods where we have a presence. Some of these events were better attended than others, but all provided the opportunity to engage with the community and with our members.

### **Conclusion & Results**

During the project we saw a 16% increase in applicants aged over 50 compared to the same period the year prior. We increased membership among this age group by 8% (again compared to the prior year). While our membership growth goal among this population was 12%, we are pleased with our results and our efforts to achieve them.

As we think about the campaign and reflect on the strategies deployed, we feel confident that our messaging was appropriate and on-point, but we wish we had had more time to devote to direct, in-person outreach. We believe we were more successful with face-to-face communication over social media; however, initiating opportunities for in-person communication requires significantly more time and staff resources. Looking ahead, we will continue to leverage our partnership with AARP to reach its members and collaborate on events that will draw our shared audience.

We would also like to conduct focus groups of our older members to dive deeper into the the barriers and motivations for reducing vehicle ownership and embracing shared mobility later in life.

Finally, we understand that making the transition away from depending solely on a privately owned vehicle takes time, regardless of age. We've found through extensive research of our members that the decision to join CarShare Vermont is often brought on by a meaningful life change—such as a move, shift in household size, career change, or retirement. We have laid the groundwork to continue to conducted targeted outreach to people in this target demographic, recognizing that as Burlington

continues to add housing and attract new residents, it will become increasingly important to provide a range of convenient mobility options that can effectively reduce the number of vehicles in our community.