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# **LOCAL JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> SOBERRIDE** **PROGRAM IN FUNDING JEOPARDY**

## ***RECENT 60% RIDERSHIP INCREASE THREATENS POPULAR DC-AREA FREE CAB SERVICE***

Washington, DC, June 16 – A double-digit percentage increase in ridership combined with a double-digit decrease in corporate underwriting is threatening Greater Washington's free cab ride service to prevent drunk driving and, more immediately, putting in jeopardy the upcoming Independence Day SoberRide effort.

The nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program's (WRAP) SoberRide program, a nearly two-decade old and nationally heralded free cab ride service offered during various holiday periods throughout the year, recorded a more than 60-percent (60.39%) increase in ridership between 2008 and last year whilst also recording a nearly 35-percent (34.47%) decrease in corporate support for the same.

The dramatic increase in ridership paired with a drop in funding has left the charitable organization with a \$ 31,000 gulf in current year funding.

***“WRAP’s SoberRide program removed from Greater Washington’s roadways nearly 1,200 more would-be drunk drivers in 2009 than the previous year,”*** said Kurt Gregory Erickson, the group’s President. ***“In 2009 alone, 4,427 persons in the Washington-metropolitan area whom may have otherwise driven home drunk were afforded no-cost transportation home courtesy of SoberRide.”***

While the 800 number (800-200-TAXI) to call SoberRide is free as is the service itself (up to a \$ 50 fare), many Washingtonians may be surprised to know that behind SoberRide’s scenes and its efforts to remove 48,228 would-be drunk drivers to-date from area roadways is a three-person charitable organization, WRAP, paying, this year, a projected \$ 73,000 in cab fares, alone, for this program. WRAP relies on corporate sponsorship to off-set these costs.

The recent economic downturn has undoubtedly contributed to WRAP’s own recent downturn in sponsorship for its SoberRide program.

What’s at immediate risk relative to the region’s SoberRide program is the upcoming Independence Day holiday and when WRAP’s SoberRide is next scheduled to be operated. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration\*, 43-percent of all U.S. highway deaths occurring during the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday are caused by drunk drivers.

Last Independence Day, 331 persons in the Washington-metropolitan area used the area’s SoberRide program as opposed to possibly driving home drunk.

***“Can Greater Washington afford over 300 drunk drivers on its streets this July 4<sup>th</sup>,”*** inquired Erickson.

WRAP is actively seeking contributors to bridge SoberRide’s \$ 31,000 divide and to ensure the continuation of the nonprofit’s Independence Day anti-drunk driving offering next month.

**Since 1993, WRAP’s SoberRide program has provided 48,338 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.**

Founded in 1982, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program is an award-winning public-private partnership working to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking in the Washington-metropolitan area. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with keeping the metro-Washington area’s alcohol-related traffic deaths consistently lower than the national average. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents via the organization’s popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, *SoberRide*.

For more information, visit WRAP’s web site at [www.wrap.org](http://www.wrap.org).

\* Source: NHTSA (see: <http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org/planners/July4th10/em/FactSheet-enf.docx>)