

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



COMMUTER OPERATIONS CENTER SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

12:00- 2:00 p.m.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

777 North Capitol Street, N.E.

First Floor, Training Center

Chairperson: Shauna Brown, City of Alexandria

Vice-Chairperson: Nicole Huntington, National Institutes of Health

COG Staff Contact: Christopher Arabia, (202) 962-3385

Items addressed and issues discussed were as follows:

1. Introductions (see attached attendance sheet).

2. Minutes of the September 23, 2003 Meeting

The minutes of the September 23, 2003 meeting were approved as written.

3. Meeting Schedule

Mr. Arabia stated this fiscal year a few of the monthly subcommittee meetings were cancelled due to lack of agenda items. Mr. Arabia proposed that the FY05 meetings be held quarterly, every three months. The meetings would be held on the third Tuesday of the month along with the Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting, to accommodate committee members who attend several meetings at COG. The meeting time of the Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee would change to 10 a.m. Mr. Ramfos stated that the option for having special meetings for both the Operations Center Subcommittee and the Commuter Connections Subcommittee can be arranged. The new meeting schedule was proposed for consideration and will be finalized at the next meeting.

4. Upcoming Fairs and Promotions

Ms. Johnson stated that COG staff participated in the Patent Trademark Office Transit Fair in Alexandria, Virginia on March 3rd. Ms. Johnson stated that COG staff will participate in the Neuroscience Center Transit Fair on the NIH campus on March 24th. COG staff is also requested to speak at the Mission Impossible Event in Charles County on March 20th. Ms. Johnson stated that COG staff will participate in the USDA Graduate School Transit Fair on April 1st.

Ms. Norris stated that TransIT staff will participate in the promotion of the new Express shuttle bus, which will shuttle commuters between downtown Frederick City and a park-and-ride lot just outside the city. TransIT staff will participate in Women's Day held on March 28th at Thomas Johnson High School, and Earth Day on April 8th at Fort Detrick. Ms. Norris stated that TransIT staff will participate in a Sports Expo at Key Stadium on May 1st and Bike to Work day on May 7th. TransIT staff will also participate at Safety Day at Fort Detrick on May 13th as well as, the "Stuff-a-Bus" event held at Key Stadium on June 1st.

Ms. Hefner stated that Fairfax County staff will participate in the Fairfax County Day fair. The date for the event is pending.

Ms. Affinito stated that Loudoun County staff will participate in the Dulles Town Center Job Fair on March 4th. Loudoun County staff will participate in the 40th Anniversary celebration for the North Virginia Transportation Commission. Loudoun County staff will also participate in the kick off event to celebrate the new fleet of Motor Coach buses on July 1st.

Ms. Nadar stated that North Bethesda Transportation Solutions will be participating in several transit fairs in the upcoming months: Kaiser Permanente on March 16th, Hines on March 17th; NIH on March 24th and April 21st; Boston Properties on March 30th; Earth Day at USNRC on April 20th; and Bike to Work Day on May 7th.

Ms. Robertson stated that Baltimore City staff will participate in Bike to Work Day on May 7th. Staff will participate in the Annual Flower Mart on May 12th and Rideshare Appreciation day on May 19th.

Mr. Egu stated that Prince George's County will participate in Bike to Work Day on May 7th. Prince George's County staff will also participate in the Alternative Transportation Fair at the University of Maryland on April 7th.

5. Web-Based Ridematching Project Update

Mr. Balsamo began by summarizing the project and its objectives, which are to migrate the current Commuter Connections ridematching and GRH systems to an intranet based application. The goal is to move away from the remote configuration and bring it over to a Web configuration so, requests and updates happen in real time for client members. This will eliminate the need for client uploads and downloads. This project will integrate the rideshare database and the GRH database into one database. This project will use the latest in GIS database and Web technology to process the applications and perform geographic matching, and will be in a scaleable format for future updates. Clients will use their Web browser to log on to the ridematching system, thus, eliminating the need to install software on the client's computer.

Ten tasks were identified in order to complete the project. The first task, which has been completed, is to put together the system design by defining hardware, software and some data requirements. Task 2, which is in progress, is to investigate the current CCRS and GRH systems and collect documentation. An analysis and inventory of current database

models and functional specifications will be performed. Client members and COG staff will be interviewed to obtain input on functional specifications and design. Mr. Balsamo has interviewed some of the COG operations staff to review their daily processes. Task 3 consists of defining the functional specifications in the data model for the new application. What is discovered in task 2 will define the functional requirement specifications for the new application. Tasks 4 and 5 will require COG staff to configure hardware and software, and configure a database server along with the necessary software for the testing environment the application. Some installation and configuration of software was completed for the mapping Web site.

Once the testing environment is put together, Mr. Balsamo and other COG staff will begin the migrating and conflating of the current databases into one database. After the database work is complete, in Task 6 COG staff will develop the ridematching portion of the application. COG staff will create Web forms based on specifications of the functional requirements gathered in Task 3. Task 7 will involve developing the GRH functions of the application. After everything is built, Task 8 will consist of the debugging phase. The system needs to be tested before its deployed, so a testing plan will be defined to test the system for errors. Security checks will be run once the debugging phase is complete. This is to ensure that system can't be hacked. Task 9 involves configuring the live production environment. A separate database server will be configured with a separate Web server, in addition to installing all the necessary software. Task 10 will develop a backup system utilizing the testing system as the backup system in the future. Once the equipment is built and running smoothly a disaster recovery plan will be defined.

6. Customer Service Training Follow-Up

The subcommittee members watched a 30 minute video on Customer Service Training. Mr. Arabia briefed the members on the Customer Service Training COG provided on January 28th. Fred Prior/Career Track was hired to provide the training. The training was customized to staff needs with emphasis on phone skills. Mr. Arabia explained that customer service materials are available to committee members who would like to review them. Mr. Arabia asked committee members who attended the meeting to share their thoughts on the training. Mr. Steigerwald stated he thought the training was useful and covered topics, such as, personal care in relation to reducing stress and tension. Ms. Hefner stated she was enlightened on a portion of the training that covered the way the customer wants to receive the information. Ms. Norris suggested reviewing another customer service video, FISH, a short documentary on a small business that improved its business and employee moral by focusing on customer service. Mr. Ramfos stated that any videos on customer service training are welcome and could be added as an agenda item for future meetings.

7. Client Site Status

Mr. Arabia asked the subcommittee members to discuss any issues related to the CCRS software. Mr. Hall stated that COG staff sent an e-mail several weeks ago regarding problems with the server and asked clients not to perform up and downloads until contacted by COG. Mr. Hall stated that Montgomery County was not contacted when

service was restored. Mr. Arabia stated that some member clients were contacted by phone, including Montgomery County.

8. Other Business/Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Mr. Arabia implored meeting attendees to come up with agenda topics. Mr. Arabia stated that part three of the Customer Service video focuses on how to deal with angry customers, and could be an agenda item for the next meeting. Ms Norris suggested that the FISH video could also be an agenda item.

A subcommittee member asked if the new Resource Directory would be available. Mr. Arabia stated that the Resource Directory should be completed by the end of the month.

The next meeting of the Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, 2004 at 12:00 p.m.