

Employer Outreach Ad hoc Group Meeting Notes
April 19th, 2005

Item#1 Introductions

Those present introduced themselves (please refer to the attached attendance list).

Item#2 Review of 1/18/05 Meeting Notes

The meeting notes were approved as written.

Item#3 Third Quarter FY05 Conformity Verification Statement

Staff distributed and the group discussed the conformity verification statement for the third quarter of FY05. Only Frederick County had not reached its sales goal of 4 employers of 100 or more employees that have implemented at least a level 3 program of alternative commuting for their worksite.

Item#4 BMI Survey Application

Staff, along with Mr. Ramanujan Jagannathan from BMISG, presented the survey archival web application to the group. The site had several updates and the group was able to see how to manipulate the data and what data fields can be focused on. The group had several suggestions which Mr. Jagannathan included on the project's "to do" list. Overall, the group found the application to be useful and had great potential.

Item #5 Best Workplaces for Commuters

The group discussed six central areas in regards to the Employer Outreach effort and the Best Workplaces for Commuters Campaign. The discussion areas included the following:

1. Overall perception and satisfaction of the BWC program as it relates to your jurisdiction's employers and your outreach activities.
2. BWC program advantages and disadvantages
3. How the program should be presented to employers and the media on a regional and local level
4. The connection between the BWC levels of program eligibility and the Commuter Connections employer levels of participation (Silver, Gold, and Platinum)
5. The role Commuter Connections should have in this program
6. Assistance to the EPA has that the jurisdiction provided for this program

Under the first item the majority of the group felt the BWC program was a good program, in that it helps in getting interest in alternative commutes for employees. Some of the group felt that due to their geographic location that their local employers were

automatically ineligible. Others mentioned that there was a distinct lack of coordination on the EPA's part in pulling all the information and groups together in getting the word out on the program.

Under the second discussion item the advantages were as follows:

- Recognition as "Best" for an employer has a positive effect on interest by employers
- Helpful in sales pitch to employers and helps in achieving goals and retention of current client employers.
- Having a national recognition of excellence goes very far in generating interest and prospects

The disadvantages were as follows:

- There needs to be more promotion by the EPA on a national level to get the word out on this idea of Best Workplaces for Commuters
- How employers are tracked in regards to retention and the follow-up procedures leave much to be desired in regards to actual verification
- Skepticism at the actual effect of the program on the "ground level" of those employers who have minimal or no alternative commuting options offered to their employees.
- The group questioned whether they wanted to "own" the program even though it is a EPA initiative.

Under the third area the group felt that the EPA needed to step up its efforts on a national promotion of BWC and to have outreach to local business associations beyond an annual awards event.

Under the fourth area the group discussed at length the difficulties of matching criteria for excellence for the BWC program and Commuter Connections levels of participation. An example was given of a large employer who has employee shuttles, a company run vanpool fleet, and offers pre-tax Metrochek. Under the BWC benchmarks, this employer would not be eligible though it has high participation in all three areas. Further, the benchmarks almost automatically disqualify a majority of employers who do not have rapid transit access. The group felt that the criteria needed to be re-evaluated in light of the wealth of information that the group has on employers in the region. In light of the fact that over 40% of the region's employers who offer Metrochek offer it as a pre-tax benefit and have no subsidy at all. The stringency of demanding an employer to front cash for all of their employees who use transit is counterproductive in attracting those employers into BWC who have good employee participation in a transit benefit program using the pre-tax method.

Under the fifth area the group felt that continuing on with the BWC program would be beneficial but that it would be best to wait a year so that there would be a better opportunity in combining the Commuter Connections Employer Awards Recognition Ceremony with the BWC event.

Under the final area those jurisdictions that had done significant work on promoting the BWC program and recognition events stated that they dedicated a fair amount of staff time and dollars for the previous two events. Both saw the effort as positive, though there was a distinct lack of assistance from the EPA in regards to time and money for the campaign.

Item#6 FY05 Employer Recognition Ceremony Update

Mr. Douglas Franklin of COG gave the group an update on the June 29th, 2005 Employer Recognition Awards Ceremony. The event will be held at the National Press Club with breakfast starting at 8:30 a.m. The ceremony itself will commence at 9 a.m. and conclude at 10 a.m. The emcee for the event will be Montgomery County Council Member Mike Knapp.

Item#7 Database Sweep Update

Staff updated the group on the progress of a data sweep of all existing records in the regional database. The group was informed that they will be getting a compressed zip file for their respective jurisdiction's databases. The group was encouraged to actively update their information and conduct their own data sweeps.

Item#8 Employer Outreach Roundtable Discussion

Due to a lack of time the discussion was tabled and the meeting adjourned.

Item#9 Other Business

The next meeting will be held on July 19th, 2005 at COG.