



**REGIONAL TDM MARKETING GROUP
MEETING NOTES
JUNE 18, 2024**

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members, guests, and other attendees introduced themselves by name and affiliation.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the March 19, 2024 meeting were approved as written.

3. COMMUTER CONNECTIONS MARKETING ACTIVITY

Dan Odonnell and Mark Wirth from Odonnell Company provided a review of regional TDM marketing activity for the second half of FY24. The focus of the presentation were marketing campaigns for Bike to Work Day and Flextime Rewards, and planning for fall projects surrounding the 50th anniversary event. COG/TPB staff reviewed updates made to the FY24 2nd Half Regional TDM Marketing Campaign Summary draft report.

The Bike to Work Day 2024 media budget was \$65,000 and included traditional radio, radio talent endorsements, social media, digital ads, and a YouTube video. The earned media component included calendar listings, press releases, a social media toolkit for sponsors and another for organizations to help promote the event. A total of 13,972 registered for the Bike to Work Day 2024. For Flextime Rewards, Commuter Connections conducted a small \$15,000 digital banner campaign during the month of June.

The annual Employer Recognition Awards ceremony will be held in the fall and the event will also encompass Commuter Connections 50th anniversary celebration and the launch of CommuterCash, a re-branding of the incenTrip app. Deliverables will include a video, brochure, podium signage, and a premium branded giveaway item to mark the special occasion.

4. FREDERICK COUNTY MARKETING

Jaime McKay and Mary Dennis, Transit Services of Frederick County, gave an overview of Transit Services' marketing endeavors. Marketing and outreach efforts aim to promote ridership, educate residents about available options, and build awareness of services. The main components include its website and social media platforms, advertising campaigns, outreach and education programs, and community partnerships. Various media placement includes radio, digital, print advertising, and social. Marketing approaches are crafted based on the audience, whether existing riders or potential new riders, and are designed to be creative, easy to understand, and informative about Transit's offerings. Marketing is used to increase ridership on Transit's fare-free buses for both commuting and lifestyle purposes, promote commute alternatives in general, and the various support services Commuter Connections offers. Digital banner advertising has netted 105,433 impressions with 180 clicks, and a click thru rate of 0.17% which is 2.44 times that of the national average of 0.07%.

Social media provides a platform that allows Transit to directly interact with a significant portion of its rider base. Targeted social advertising has become an important component for promoting new services and boosting ridership. It is commonly used for engaging with Frederick County residents about using buses/shuttles to get to community events, and to generate awareness of Transit's presence when participating at upcoming events. Social media is also used to welcome comments, answer questions, and gather feedback for future improvements. Social media is also used to inform the public about service changes, delays, and detours due to real-time road closures. The platforms can also showcase facility improvements and the people behind the brand, such as drivers. Since FY22, Transit's social media activity within the community has risen each quarter, doubling from 600 to over 1,200 engagements.

Print materials include brochures, flyers, posters, bus schedules, interior and exterior bus signage, and bus stop signage. These materials are distributed thoughtfully at local businesses, the Transit Center, tourist destinations, and other high-traffic areas. Transit continues to focus on updating its website landing pages with easy-to-read text by moving away from formal "government-style" writing. This plain talking approach helps riders navigate the system more clearly.

5. INTERNAL TDM MARKETING

The agenda item focused on outreach from the perspective of how as TDM professionals, we promote commute alternatives within our own organizations. Stacey King, Maryland Department of Transportation, presented on her recent introspective journey that challenged MDOT to inspire employees of the State of Maryland to use commute alternatives. Commuter benefits for employees can be viewed publicly on the MDOT website. Permanent MDOT employees may ride on the wide variety of all MTA transit services for free, even on weekends. As of July 1st, the MARC commuter train was the last piece of the puzzle which completed the free transit portfolio for MDOT employees. Of note, use of transit is free for MDOT owned and operated transit properties and does not cover (WMATA, Amtrak). The website also mentions

ridematching, Guaranteed Ride Home, and incenTrip. There is also an extranet site for employees with onboarding materials that cover telework specific policies. Many MDOT agencies offer employees flexible work schedules, and there's a telework structure in which eligible employees may have arrangements with their supervisor to work from home, at a satellite office, or telework center on selected workdays.

Among one of MDOT's aspirations is to lead as an example for other state agencies in Maryland and to do so externally for private-sector and non-profit employers within the state. Bolstering the incentives and providing support for the state's other agencies will help achieve the governor's administrative goals related to greenhouse gas emissions, public transportation access, and air quality.

MDOT's embarked on its mission in July 2023 with an email to all MDOT employees from Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld. In-office signage on electronic message boards throughout MDOT headquarters visually promoted the free employee transit benefits, including the new MARC offering. Another email from the Secretary asked MDOT employees to take a survey regarding their commuting habits and interest in the choices available to them. Response was received by more than 1,900 employees and found that 71 percent drove alone to work and only three percent took transit. The promising news is that through this initiative, the availability of free transit for employees was of high awareness. Most employees, however, expressed their greatest interest in compressed work schedules and telework opportunities.

MDOT meet with Human Resources teams from other state agencies to explain the initiative to drive awareness of Commuter Choice Maryland for all state employees to help the Governor reach his broader objectives. Part of the outreach with the Human Resources teams was to better understand obstacles to getting their state employees to use transportation alternatives and to offer support to help overcome them. MDOT ran into barriers in its attempt to introduce free employee transit benefits into other state agency's benefits portfolios. The challenge was deemed too difficult to overcome in the short-term. This new understanding caused a shift in MDOT's approach and a refocus of energies on the five MDOT-related administrations. They include the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), State Highway Administration (SHA), Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA), Maryland Port Administration (MPA), and Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA). Testimonials of MDOT employees using transportation alternatives were profiled within employee newsletters and commuter benefits virtual lunch and learns were conducted. New MDOT employee-focused collateral materials were developed, and the extranet was updated to explain the upgraded MDOT specific benefits. Another virtual employee lunch and learn was held, which was bike specific.

The Key Bridge collapse was monumental and provided MDOT with a new opportunity to reengage with all state agencies and MDOT found them to be more receptive to the idea. With this reinvigoration, MDOT was tasked with creating workplans for each state agency and created a full suite of materials. A Commuter Choice Maryland Commuter Benefits Toolkit was developed for all employers within the state of Maryland to help them understand the tax options available and for creating a commuter benefits program for their employees.

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, shared COG's employee benefits package and usage of commuting alternatives among staff. Of the approximate 125 COG employees, 105 (84%) use either the transit benefit or the bike subsidy. Most employees at COG work for either the Transportation or Environmental departments, and greener alternatives to driving alone to work are woven into its core values. The transit benefit is well-utilized due to many other factors, one being the office's location; a two-block walk from Union Station, with Metrorail and commuter rail options, and with many biking options. Secondly, the monthly commuter transit/vanpool benefit is subsidized up to \$315. The monthly bike benefit is \$25 and COG offers semi-secure bike parking, located within a well-lit area of the building's parking garage, directly in front of the parking attendant booth. Other employee benefits include telework (two days per week) and flexible work hours.

COG's webpage has a bulleted list of benefits and a brochure PDF that explains the various employee benefits, both of which state the commuter benefits. Due to space limitations, COG's Human Resources department does not mention the transit/bike benefits in job recruitment ads. During interviews, if there is time and interest, the benefits are discussed. During onboarding the commuter benefits are covered in detail. Communicating commuter benefits to COG employees comes in the form of a monthly email reminder to claim said transit and bike subsidies for the upcoming month.

6. MARKETING ROUNDTABLE / UPCOMING EVENTS

George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD), discussed how in the past, television commercials were placed on traditional live cable channels, and a recent change in approach was made to begin running them on streaming television services. The target audience were military workers and veterans and white-collar workers. Total impressions netted were 213,000, and the campaign elicited 1,700 responses with 95 percent of videos watched in full. Ads ran on streaming services such as Paramount, Pluto, and Roku and TCCSMD renewed the package for another year. Other outreach included monthly Chamber of Commerce events and ads on social media.

Bobbi Greenberg, Arlington County Commuter Services, stated that there was a Bike Month Proclamation made at the County Board meeting in May, and that Bike to Work Day promotions netted 2,159 registered participants. A Vision Zero walk was held in April at National Landing, under the name of "Walk & Learn Engineering Safer Streets", and in June there was a Juneteenth Black Heritage Walk. Also in June, a Summer Joy Ride was held in Ballston. The upcoming new ART 56 route was promoted at the Columbia Pike Blues Festival; it was also an opportunity to communicate about a fare increase.

Cate Longino, goDCgo, shared that their 2024 Commuter Challenge wrapped up with a total of 1,628 active participants. There were 91,236 trips logged, 708,508 miles travelled, equaling 231.7 tons of CO2 saved. A spring/summer bike campaign was launched, which included the "Pledge to Go by Bike" with over 1,000 people signing the pledge, to date. goDCgo is also hosting Travel Trainings at residential locations and libraries. Lastly, two social media campaigns were launched, Travel Like You Live Here,

geared to tourists and visitors which used travel influencers, and Be Downtown, which encourages District commuters to travel downtown using transportation alternatives.

Theresa McMullin, City of Alexandria GO Alex, noted that the City of Alexandria's DASH marketing campaign has been focused on the Fare Free and Frequent service messaging, including radio spots on WTOP and on Audacy stations. An upcoming campaign will have video and banner ads on Washington Business Journal and Washington Post websites. Banner ads will be placed on local sites, ALXnow and Zebra Press. A DASH Pride bus was wrapped with branding, and all DASH buses will have decals promoting its free fare. Lastly, a mailer was sent to all households within the City of Alexandria.

Kim Mitchell, George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC), spoke about GWRideConnect's recent marketing campaign for Dahlgren Naval Base that focused on vanpool ridership. There is also a vanpool radio spot that will run through the end of June. Outreach events have been held at the USPTO Green Fair, The Great Train Race in Fredericksburg, WHS's annual transportation fair at the Pentagon, SimVentions job fair at Dahlgren, VRE ribbon cutting for the Fredericksburg station, Stafford Farmer's Market, and First Friday Fredericksburg. GWRC collaborated with Virginia Department of Public Rail and Transportation to create a marketing rack card for Ride Home Rewards. Finally, a bi-annual vanpool/carpool/bus survey was completed.

Kendall Tiffany, Loudoun County, noted that they continued their Let's Go campaign through the fourth quarter with content regarding biking and walking. A Be Bus Savvy campaign was launched in late March and ridership and awareness of the system has increased. The campaign will continue into FY25. Starting January 2025, the Loudoun County Transit local bus system will be fare free, as well as paratransit service.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

The next Regional TDM Marketing Group meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

8. ADJOURN