



Commuter Connections Subcommittee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

Chairperson: Leann Landry, WMATA

Vice Chairperson: Linda Stewart - Byrd

Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos (202) 962-3313

Item #1 Introductions

The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves and to sign the attendance sheet

Chair, Leann Landry called the meeting to order by introducing herself and asking the rest of the attendees to do so (*See attached attendance sheet*).

Item #2 Minutes of March 14, 2006

Approval was sought for the March 14th Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting minutes.

There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes of the March 14th meeting as written.

Item #3 FY 2005 GRH Customer Satisfaction Draft Survey Report

Douglas Franklin presented the results and discussed substantive changes to the FY 2005 Guaranteed Ride Home Draft Survey Report.

Douglas Franklin explained the substantive changes and edits to the document since it was presented to the Subcommittee during the March. Mr. Franklin noted were data highlights throughout the report. For instance, the GRH Program experienced its second-highest returns rates for the survey since the implementation of the program in FY 1997. 2,294 GRH survey cards were distributed and 1,050 or 35.9% were returned. Of those respondents, 96% reported an "excellent" or "good" experience. Beyond the subjective answers, objective written responses were provided by 434 of the 1,050 responses or 41% of survey participants during FY 2005. Of those written responses, 60% were complimentary. While the overall response to the program has been very positive, 110 of the respondents did note negative comments. 73% of those dissatisfied still believed the program was excellent or good overall. In order to address the negative comments, Subcommittee members suggested adding a complaint tracking option into the Survey Report.

The Subcommittee approved the FY 2005 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey report for release. Mr. Ramfos stated that the report would be available electronically on the Commuter Connections web site.

Item #4 FY 2006 Placement Rate Study

The Subcommittee was briefed on the substantive changes made to the Placement Rate Study Report by Nicholas Ramfos. This report was released for public comment at the March 14th Subcommittee meeting.

Nicholas Ramfos discussed the changes to the document. On page 34, there was an issue with narrative language matching up with Table 31. For clarification purposes, language was added for mode-split percentages for those who had transit subsidies and those who did not. Mr. Ramfos explained that beginning July 1, 2007 the new placement rate will be used in the monthly reports in Table 1 as well as during FY 2008. There were no questions on the FY 2006 Placement Rate Study report and the Subcommittee approved the document for release. Mr. Ramfos explained that the document would be turned into a formal publication and would be available on the COG website as well as in hardcopy for anyone interested in purchasing the document.

Item #5 Virtual Vanpool Formation Meetings

The Subcommittee was briefed by Mr. Corey Krejcik of VPSI, Inc. on his company's web-based vanpool origination tool.

Mr. Krejcik briefed the Subcommittee on the establishment of the WebEx conferencing tool. The integration of this tool has led to the ability to handle more vanpool formation meetings region-wide. It allows riders to sign-up and "meet" fellow vanpoolers in their area from their homes or offices. All that is needed is a PC and internet connection in order to participate. This tool is meant to help encourage those people who have considered joining a vanpool but have yet to do so. While this method simplifies the process, there are some personality issues with compatibility of riders that still remain. Some of these arise when establishing the pool electronically rather than in person. Overall, the tool is a great addition and help to the establishment of the vanpools, though it should be considered a complimentary tool to vanpool establishment and not the primary mode.

Some questions presented to Mr. Krejcik follow:

Q- Are you offering any incentives for people to attend your meetings?

A- No incentives are currently offered, but it would be an option worth checking out.

Q- What is your anticipated market in this region (Gainesville/Haymarket)? For such a populous area, the turnout was considerably low.

A- Mr. Krejcik responded that the turnout was expected to be better, but defended VPSI, Inc style of marketing to one single employer instead of to individual people with common origins and destinations from multiple companies. The philosophy behind this technique is that people are more like to share rides with people they know from work rather than complete strangers.

Q- Since your vanpool meeting system is a WebEx base tool, would you be better served populating your database first and then holding the meetings?

A- That would be an interesting alternate to the current mode setup.

Q- What affect, if any, has the rise in gas prices affected the establishment of vanpools?

A- The rise in gas prices has had no direct impact on the establishment of vanpools in the Washington, DC region. However, in many cases it has had an influence on those few “fence riders” to make the commitment to the vanpools they were considering. In essence, it has not created new vanpools but it has definitely aided in the completion of existing vanpools.

Q- What transit options are available for those living in the Gainesville/Haymarket area?

A- VRE from Gainesville to West Falls Church is available. There is also one park and ride lot in the area as well.

Item #6 Expanded Arterial Highway Congestion Monitoring Program

Daivamani Sivasailam briefed the Subcommittee on the pilot program, utilizing drivers from the Commuter Connections database to collect the data.

Mr. Sivasailam reviewed the methods of the congestion monitoring program utilizing aerial highway monitoring. The monitoring has been going on in some form since the early 1980's. Currently, the monitoring occurs every three years for three hours during AM peak rush and for three hours during PM peak rush. The proposed new system, utilizing the Commuter Connections applicants from the regional database, would allow for monitoring on the ground of an expanded highway area, in real time. There are several technology options available to collect the data ranging from handheld GPS tracking devices to cellular phones which also contain the same tracking capabilities. The cellular phones would be a more affordable option and possibly could be given to the volunteers as an incentive to participate. The long-term goal of this new monitoring system is to replace the current aerial method and give more accurate results in terms of congestion and travel-time.

Item #7 2006 Bike To Work Day

The Subcommittee was briefed by Douglas Franklin on the upcoming Bike To Work Day event to be held on May 19th, 2006.

Mr. Franklin briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the upcoming event. As of Tuesday, pit stop managers had begun picking up their t-shirts and giveaway items. The current marketing push of radio spots helped to double the registration from 2,500 to 5,000 participants. The DC Circulator buses also helped to spread the word, displaying large signs in supports of the event. Several other materials such as rack cards, posters, and the revised “Bike To Work Day Guide” all helped to reinforce the upcoming event. Nicholas Ramfos attended a Bike To Work Proclamation Ceremony at the Fairfax County Government Center in addition to a radio interview. The event is expected to attract over 6,000 participants this year.

Item #8 Third Quarter Budget Report

Nicholas Ramfos reviewed the Third Quarter Budget report of the FY 2006 CCWP.

Mr. Ramfos distributed and discussed the budget statement for the third quarter of FY 2006. According to current reports from the office of the CFO, the budget appears to be on track and operating with a small surplus due to a reduction in overhead rates. The only issue mentioned was a lack of invoicing from some of the jurisdictions for Employer Outreach activities. Representatives of the state funding agencies have been made aware of this issue.

Item #9 FY 2007 Work Program

Nicholas Ramfos reviewed the final changes made to the FY 2007 Commuter Connections Work Program as well as discussing the reorganization of the sub-groups and the new meeting schedules.

Mr. Ramfos reviewed the final changes to the FY 2007 CCWP as it was adopted by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) on April 19, 2006. A section on car-sharing was added for the District of Columbia and a state funding table was added to illustrate designated funds and the programs which they will be applied to by state agency. The Employer Survey Work Group will meet for the first time on May 23, 2006. Ross Edgar mentioned the ability to customize surveys by jurisdiction, allowing the survey to be produced “on-the-fly”, depending on the needs of each jurisdiction. Live Near Where You Work and the GRH Incentive Rewards Program work groups will be established in the near future. The Regional TDM Marketing Group Meetings have been shifted to a quarterly meeting. The finalized schedule will follow in July.

Item#10 2006 Employer Recognition Awards

The Subcommittee was briefed on the upcoming 2006 Employer Recognition Awards.

Mr. Franklin reviewed the preparations for the upcoming event to be held at the National Press Club on Wednesday, June 28. The invitations have been received at COG from the printer and will be going out via USPS in early June. The speakers for the awards ceremony are: MC – Fairfax County Supervisor Catherine Hudgins; Steve O’Keefe – Director, Telework Exchange; and Jim Larsen – Director, Dulles Area Transportation Association. Doug Duncan and Mike Knapp have also been extended an invitation but have yet to respond. Throughout the presentation, a series of short videos will introduce the winning organization. The giveaway item this year will be a blue and black, over-the-shoulder executive style bag and the trophies will be ordered within the next few weeks.

Item#11 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

There were no other business items presented, therefore the meeting was adjourned by Leann Landry, chair.

The next regularly scheduled Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 18, 2006 at 12 noon.