



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

12 noon – 2:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

Chairperson: Marcus Moore, Fairfax County

Vice Chairperson: Marina Budimir, DDOT

Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos 202/962-3313

**Item #1**      **Introductions**

*The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves based on their jurisdictional location in order to be marked as present on the attendance sheet.*

**Item #2**      **Minutes of January 21, 2020 Meeting**

*Approval was sought for the January 21, 2020 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.*

Marcus Moore, Fairfax County, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

A motion was made by Kari Snyder, MDOT, and seconded by George Clark, TCCSMD.

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the January 21, 2020 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

**Item #3**      **FY 2019 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Customer Satisfaction Surveys**

*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the substantive changes made to the FY 2019 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey reports for both the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the substantive changes made to the FY 2019 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey reports for both the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions. Draft versions of the reports were presented at the January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 Subcommittee meeting. The draft versions were then posted to SharePoint with a comment period ending on February 27<sup>th</sup>. There were only minor changes made to the GRH Customer Satisfaction survey report for the Washington, DC region. No changes were made to the Baltimore report. One change was made to the survey response number, changing it from 2,303 to 2,304. Language was also added to explain how the numbers of compliments, suggestions, and/or complaints may be higher than number of responses. Many respondents did not check the boxes to identify what type of comment they were making. The percentage of compliments given was also changed, from 67% to 78%, to reflect comments found without a box checked. The new Commuter Connections logo was added to survey cards and envelopes. A motion to endorse the release of the GRH Customer Satisfaction survey report for the Washington, DC region was made by Nancy Huggins, MDOT and seconded by Holly Morello, PRTC. A motion to endorse the release of the GRH Customer Satisfaction survey report for the Baltimore region was made by George Clark, TCCSMD and seconded by Kari Snyder, MDOT. Abstracts will be added to both reports and then they will be posted to the Commuter Connections website's publications section.

**Item #4**      **FY 2019 Bike to Work Day Event Survey**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY 2019 Bike to Work Day event survey draft report.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY 2019 Bike to Work Day event survey draft report. The draft report was presented to the Subcommittee on January 21, 2020 with a comment period set up through February 28<sup>th</sup>. Minor language changes and typo revisions were made to the report. A motion to endorse the release of the FY 2019 Bike to Work Day Event Survey was made by Judy Galen, Loudoun County and seconded by Mark Sofman, Montgomery County. The report will be finalized, an abstract will be added, and then the report will be published to the Commuter Connections website in the publications section. Results from this report will also be used in the TDM Analysis report for the Mass Marketing program.

**Item #5            NextGen TDM in Montgomery County**

*Sandra Brecher, Montgomery County, briefed the Subcommittee on the county's NextGen Transportation Demand Management program.*

Sandra Brecher, Montgomery County, briefed the Subcommittee on the county's NextGen Transportation Demand Management program. The program's mission is to promote use of alternative modes to single occupant vehicles (SOVs) to address congestion, air quality, sustainability, and climate change. The program is primarily work-trip focused and partners with the business/employed community. The backbone of TDM is transit and the program promotes all forms of transit including Metrorail, Metrobus, Ride On, MTA buses and MARC rail. The program also promotes all other non-SOV travel modes such as car/vanpooling, telework, alternative work schedules, biking, personal mobility devices and walking. The NextGen TDM program operates Transportation Management Districts (TMDs) and 2 TRiPs Commuter Stores, one in Silver Spring and one mobile store.

Ms. Brecher explained how the NextGen TDM program facilitates and promotes amenities and adjuncts to make it easier, more sensible and greener to use commute options. Examples of amenities used are the regional Guaranteed Ride Home program, SmarTrip/SmartBenefits, parking management, bikesharing/carsharing, bike paths, pedestrian safety, bus shelters, EV charging, as well as clear, easy to use information. Transportation Management Districts (TMDs) in the county include Silver Spring, Friendship Heights, Greater Shady Grove, Bethesda, North Bethesda, and White Oak. Additional focus areas include NIH, Rockville, and Wheaton in the future. Mode share goals for each TMD range from 18% to 55% for Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS). Advisory committees for each TMD provide input from diverse perspectives such as employers, residents, developers, owners/managers, and public agencies. Over 4,000 employers with about 200,000 employees participate in these programs in some way. Key goals of the effort (Bill 36-18) include streamlining the process, providing flexibility, ensure fairness, and increased effectiveness. The process used to implement these goals included the White Flint Sector Plan TDM Analysis.

Ms. Brecher explained that a county working group was formed comprising of staff from multiple executive branch departments, the Montgomery County Council, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Outreach consisted of open houses, presentations with the Planning Board, department heads, as well as multiple other stakeholders/interested groups. Bill 36-18 was introduced under the Leggett Administration and a public hearing was held by Council in Fall 2018. MCDOT reviewed the bill and revisions to the proposed bill were recommended by County Executive Elrich. The revised version of the bill was adopted by Council in December 2019 and is effective this month.

Ms. Brecher then showed a map of all the TMDs with labels indicating the number of employers in each district. TMDs with 25 or more employees are required to submit commute data in order to remain covered. The revised code under NextGen includes Employer TDM Plans that will have similar requirements as the former code. Employers in regional locations with a certain number of employees must file TDM Plans/Reports (please see map in presentation for more information). Each location's project based TDM Plan will be broken down into 3 levels; basic, action, and results. The levels depend on the size and location of the project and how much funding they will need. Level 1 is the basic program which is the bare minimum. Level 2 is the action

program, which is a mid-range commitment, and requires contribution to achievement of the TMD goal. Level 3 is the results program which is the highest-level commitment and requires achievement of the TMD goal.

Ms. Brecher then explained how Bill 36-18 is important for Montgomery County's continued economic vitality. The bill is expected to help mitigate additional traffic, pollution & GHG emissions that typically occur as a result of growth. Programs and services are available to help employers attract and retain employees as well as reduce costs for commuting benefits, office space, and parking. Requirements for businesses and developers, programs, services, and outreach have been focused on six TMDs, but traffic is generated throughout the county. Next steps include executive regulation, creating new TMDs, establishing NADMS goals for all policy areas, and determining funding sources.

Kelly Woodward, DATA, asked how goals are enforced. Ms. Brecher responded saying that the TMD is required to show that they are contributing to the goal and if it seen that they are not, more resources will be required from them in order to achieve that goal. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked what the timing on the regulations are. Ms. Brecher answered that they are working on them now and look to have them completed within a few weeks.

**Item #6                      Regional Bus Transformation Study**

*Lora Byala, Foursquare ITP, briefed the Subcommittee on the highlights of the Regional Bus Transformation Study recently conducted.*

Lora Byala, Foursquare ITP, briefed the Subcommittee on the highlights of the Regional Bus Transformation Study recently conducted on behalf of WMATA. The Bus Transformation Project kicked off with a summit held by Foursquare in 2018. The bus is a major part of the region's transportation system, carrying 600,000 daily trips. The study involves all the local bus services in the region such as MetroBus, RideOn, The Bus, Fairfax Connector, DASH, as well as other services within the WMATA compact area plus Loudoun County once the Metrorail Silver Line opens. Congestion, affordability, and mobility are major problems in the DC region that will only continue to grow. Much of the region's population depends on bus as their only way to travel, therefore rapid, effective bus service is fundamental to our region's prosperity. Ms. Byala mentioned the core challenges bus services face include meeting customer needs, keeping up with changing technology, coordinating across the region, as well as maintaining a sustainable cost structure. The study was comprised of more than a year of public and stakeholder input, including 140 participants in the September 2018 Kickoff Summit, more than 8,800 public survey responses, 13 Metrobus operator listening sessions, 4 focus groups, and 23 Executive Steering Committee meetings.

Ms. Byala continued with the four strategy recommendations that were derived from public and stakeholder input. The four strategy recommendations were frequent and convenient bus service, bus priority on roadways, customer experience, and the establishment of a task force to implement the strategy. Providing frequent and convenient bus service will result in increased responsiveness to customer demand for service, increased access to transit and increased bus ridership. Giving buses priority on roadways will result in reduced journey time for bus riders, increased on-time performance, increased ridership, and improved corridor traffic conditions for all vehicles. Creating an excellent customer experience will result in increased customer satisfaction, more affordable transportation for residents, less congestion, and reduced safety incident rates at bus stops and on buses. Empowering a publicly appointed task force will result in the public experiencing a unified bus system that is customer-responsive, customer representation, integrated decision making and efficient use of public resources, as well as better coordination of operations and facilities. Ms. Byala showcased an action plan and the key outcomes of implementing the Bus Transformation Strategy for the customers as well as the region's transit system. Next steps to transform bus services are to present strategy and seek endorsements from local and regional councils/boards on strategy and to empower Metro, bus providers, and jurisdictions to lead on actions within their control and partner to implement regional actions.

Ms. Byala concluded with actions where Commuter Connections can lead and support the Bus Transformation study, such as leading in the expansion of marketing efforts to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits as

well as incentivizing more employers to offer transit benefits. Commuter Connections can support regional congestion mitigation efforts, make bus service easy to understand with legible maps and route names, and support in creation of a mobile solution to plan/pay for trips in one place.

Kelly Woodward, DATA, asked if Ms. Byala had any recommendations for other jurisdictions in need of low-income services. Ms. Byala responded saying that there is a pilot program currently taking place in the District, but that the initiative to provide low-income products is a regional recommendation. Ms. Woodward, DATA, also asked if there were plans for a unified bus system that include all regional bus routes. Ms. Byala explained that there are no current plans to unify the bus system as the jurisdictional systems are proving to be working well. Sandra Brecher, Montgomery County, asked if marketing plans are being discussed for revamping the image of the bus system in the region, as bus services seem to have a negative image with residents. Ms. Byala answered highlighting the marketing efforts that are being done behind the scenes and how those efforts can make the bus look more attractive to customers. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked how Commuter Connections can assist with marketing efforts. Ms. Byala referred to the action plans in her presentation and stated that plans are currently being developed with more information forthcoming.

**Item #7            2020 Vanpool Driver Survey Highlights**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the 2020 Vanpool Driver survey results.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the 2020 Vanpool Driver survey results. This survey was last conducted in 2008 with the primary purpose of collecting data on current vanpool operations for COG planning purposes. The assessments included vehicle type, duration of vanpool, origin/destination, pick-up/drop-off locations, vanpool formation time, and vanpool line haul distance. 63% of respondents were primary drivers, 25% were back-up drivers, 11% were coordinators, and 1% mentioned another vanpool role. The survey was conducted in January and February 2020 through emailed invitations to individual drivers/coordinators providing a link to the survey website. The survey team compiled driver emails from existing databases including Commuter Connections, GWRC, PRTC, and Enterprise. Databases were combined and deduplicated as much as possible. Enterprise sent separate email invitations to its vanpools with instructions not to take the survey if they had already responded to COG's request. The survey excluded vanpools that were not in one of these databases and vanpools that were part of large operator fleets that did not provide contact information; therefore, results cannot be assumed to represent all Washington metropolitan region vanpools.

Mr. Ramfos stated that there were 361 responses in total with 240 vanpools responding to COG and 121 responding to Enterprise. The response rate was slightly above 20%. Vanpools surveyed had been in operation on average for about 6 years. 25% had been operating for 2 years or less and another 25% had been operating for more than 10 years. About 81% of vanpools used a leased van while 8% said the vehicle was owned by the driver/family. 63% of the leased vehicles were leased from Enterprise. 95% of respondents said vanpool insurance was paid by the owner or the leasing agency. Vanpool average capacity (including the driver) was 8.9 passengers. Three quarters of the vanpools originated in Virginia with Virginia also being the dominant destination. Top origins included Fredericksburg, Stafford, Fairfax, Prince William County, Loudoun County, and Frederick, MD. Top destinations included Fairfax, Washington, DC, Montgomery County, and Arlington.

Mr. Ramfos also stated that most vanpools traveled very early to avoid rush hour. Vanpool drivers lived an average of 48 miles from their workplaces with nearly half traveling on I-95. A large share used the Beltway in VA and/or in MD. 97% of respondents received vanpool services or benefits from their employer or other organizations including Guaranteed Ride Home and Vanpool Alliance. Financial benefits included payment from employer, discounted/free parking while at work, and AdvANTage vanpool self-insurance. Vanpool drivers' main concern was finding new riders; Commuter Connections will look to address this concern by helping to advertise vanpooling to attract new drivers to the service. Data from the vanpool survey will be included in a draft report that will be available for review and feedback at the May Subcommittee meeting, with the final draft available at the July Subcommittee meeting for review and endorsement.

**Item #8      2020 Bike to Work Day Event**

*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the 2020 regional Bike to Work Day event to be held on Friday, May 15th.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the 2020 regional Bike to Work Day (BTWD) event to be held on Friday, May 15th. The goal this year for number of participants is 18,800 which is slightly above the actual number of participants from last year which was 17,900. Registration has been open since March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 656 bicyclists have registered so far, which is a 40% drop from last year around this time. The drop is likely due to news of the spread of the coronavirus which is causing many cancellations of events around the region and world. While COG maintains the BTWD website and social media sites, the registration portion of the site is developed and managed by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA). WABA will be sending the pit stop managers weekly reports up until a couple weeks before the event when daily reports will be sent. Mr. Franklin continued saying the Regional Sponsorship drive ended January 31<sup>st</sup> with 18 cash sponsors. These sponsors which include Marriott International, Giant Food, and Spokes Bicycles generated \$56,000 which is up from last year's total of \$50,700. Three new sponsors included UrbanStems, Bilton Law Firm, and Verra. 20,000 t-shirts were ordered, and each pit stop will receive a large banner. The t-shirt colors are raspberry and green. Raffles will be held to include an electric bicycle and other various bicycles. There will be 9 new pit stops for a total of 120 pit stops this year. Posters and rack cards have been sent to the pit stops with extras housed at COG. Flyers will be available for download on the BTWD website in English and Spanish. Flyers have also been sent to employers around the region with a cover letter explaining the event. The event will be in progress until any changes are announced.

**Item #9      Regional TDM Evaluation Project Update**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, updated The Subcommittee on recent and upcoming Regional TDM Evaluation project activities.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, updated The Subcommittee on recent and upcoming Regional TDM Evaluation project activities. The Maryland Telework survey will likely be postponed due to current events involving the coronavirus. The survey was to be emailed, however, email addresses for all surveyors were not obtained and mailing the survey while many respondents are not in their offices would not be sufficient. More information regarding the implementation of the survey will be released once a strategy is determined. The Vanpool Driver survey was briefed in an earlier item. The ACT! Regional Employer Database analysis has begun and includes information from the database from July 1, 2017 through December 31, 2019. Updated information obtained from January 2020 through June will be analyzed over the summer by LDA Consulting. The 'Pool Rewards survey will be conducted through email by the end of June and the results will be included in the Marketing analysis. Also, by the end of June, a draft TDM Analysis Report will be shared with all the applications from the Operations Center including GRH applicants and Ridematching applicants. The report will be available in July with additional analysis from Employer Outreach. The report will also include GRH and Ridematching activity from summer 2020 and will look to be endorsed in November 2020.

**Item #10      FY 2020 2nd Quarter CCWP Progress Report**

*Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2020 CCWP 2nd quarter progress report.*

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the group on highlights from the FY2020 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) Second Quarter Progress Report. The Ridematching program served around 17,802 commuters in the second quarter. The Commuter Connections mobile app continues to see modest gains in downloads; 306 downloads occurred in the second quarter, bringing total lifetime downloads to 5,248. Similarly, the CarpoolNow app saw 157 downloads throughout the quarter, bringing total lifetime downloads to 4,083. Just under 800 new applications were approved Washington, DC regional Guaranteed Ride Home

program; 1,078 existing commuters were re-registered for the program. There were 7,422 total registrants as of December 31, 2020. Six-hundred-ten (610) trips were provided throughout the quarter.

Marketing activities for the second quarter included the Fall 2019 newsletter, the launch of the Fall Umbrella marketing campaign for Rideshare (*Why Rideshare, Why Not?*) and GRH (*Don't Freak Out!*), a digital incenTrip campaign, and a Vanpool Rewards campaign. Work on FY2020 marketing creative concepts continued; the selected concept for Rideshare is *The Big Deal*, and the concept for GRH is *Why Ride Alone?*. A direct mailer was sent to 478,000 households that featured messaging on the Rideshare and GRH programs; a QR code was included on the mailer that linked recipients to the Commuter Connections registration page. Bike to Work Day activities included the development and release of a pit-stop manager questionnaire, development and finalization of the *Pit Stop and Best Practices* document and training session materials, and the selection of Deep Raspberry as the theme color for the 2020 event. Employer Recognition Awards activities included the development of a timeline for event deliverables and the selection of the National Press Club as the host for the ceremony. Staff distributed raffle prizes for the 2019 Car Free day event and arranged the 2019 Capital Area Car Free Day College Campus Challenge at Georgetown.

Monitoring and Evaluation activities included the distribution of the Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day event surveys to participants; analysis on survey responses also commenced. The Vanpool Driver survey was drafted in conjunction with regional vanpooling stakeholders. Routine activities, such as updates to the ACT! Regional Employer Database, development of the conformity verification statements, and distribution of GRH Customer Satisfaction Surveys, were completed.

Employer Outreach activities included an ACT! Regional Employer Database training held in October. A sales training titled *Pitching Products and Projects to the C-Suite* was also held. Co-branded sales portfolio folders were developed and distributed to agencies who submitted requests. The Telework Work Group was convened and held meetings to address the telework-based *Visualize 2045* aspirational initiative adopted by the TPB. New telework resources were announced last week.

Thirty-four (34) new applications were approved for the Baltimore Guaranteed Ride Home program; 49 existing commuters were re-registered for the program. There were 342 total registrants as of December 31, 2020. Twenty-one (21) trips were provided throughout the quarter.

**Item #11 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting**

*This was an opportunity for Commuter Connections Subcommittee members to bring up other business and to request agenda items for the next meeting.*

**The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 12 noon.**