



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 21, 2023
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.

Chairperson: Janiece Timmons, WMATA
Vice Chairperson: Christian Bacon, Prince George's County
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.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, announced his impending retirement following the Subcommittee's meeting on January 16, 2024. Mr. Ramfos expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Commuter Connections program and the Subcommittee for 27 plus years.

Item #2 **Minutes of September 19, 2023 Meeting**

Approval was sought for the September 19, 2023 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.

Janiece Timmons, WMATA, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting. Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, made a motion to approve the minutes; Kari Snyder, MDOT, seconded the motion. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the September 19, 2023 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

Item #3 **FY2021 – FY2023 Draft TDM Analysis Report**

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, presented substantive changes to the draft FY2021 – FY2023 TDM Analysis Report to the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the report for release.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, provided background on the past drafts of the FY2021 – FY2023 Draft TDM Analysis Report. The initial draft report was presented to the Subcommittee on July 18, 2023. The report was subsequently updated based on new survey data and Subcommittee comments. A new version of the draft report was presented to the Subcommittee on September 19, 2023. A comment period was established with a deadline of October 25, 2023. Comments were gathered and several substantive changes were made to the report, including impacts of the 'Pool Rewards program and impacts reported as part of the overall societal benefits of the program.

Mr. Ramfos summarized that goals and impacts for the program, which were developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, were not met. Even still, all benefits associated with the program totaled to over \$500,000 in daily cost savings for commuters throughout the region.

Mark Sofman, MCDOT, pointed out that the three-year evaluation period for this evaluation cycle began in July 2020, during the heart of the pandemic. As such, it should be expected that program impacts would be less robust than in past evaluation cycles.

Janiece Timmons, WMATA, requested a motion to approve and endorse the report for release. Mark Sofman, MCDOT, made the motion; Traci McPhail, NBTMD, seconded the motion. The Subcommittee unanimously voted

to approve and endorse the report for release. Mr. Ramfos explained that the report would be posted to the Commuter Connections website and that hard copies of the report would be made available to Subcommittee members upon request. The report results will also be shared with modeling and planning staff at COG/TPB.

Item #4 2023 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented the draft 2023 Bike to Work Day Event Report and established a comment period.

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, provided an overview of the 2023 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report. Mr. Hersey noted the continuous registration growth since the program was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report also contains components such as pit stop summaries, which are provided by pit stop managers, employer participation summaries, media coverage listings, local proclamations, a marketing material compilation, and other promotional items.

The report has been presented to the Bike to Work Day Steering Committee on two occasions; September 13th and November 8th. Steering Committee members were given an opportunity to comment and contribute to the report. The document is open for comment and contributions from Commuter Connections Subcommittee members through December 22, 2023 at noon.

Item #5 2023 Car Free Day Event Results

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on results from the regional Car Free Day event held on September 22nd.

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on results from the regional Car Free Day event held on Friday, September 22, 2023. Mr. Sheehan referred the Subcommittee to an infographic that was created to summarize pledge data from the event. There was a total of 5,105 pledges for the 2023 event. Maryland residents accounted for 1,705 pledges; Virginia residents 2,186; Washington, DC residents 1,130; and 84 pledges from residents of other states. The total pledge count was largest amount since the 2018 event.

The largest number of pledges for a single mode was 3,064 for walk/run, which is consistent with results from the prior event. Next came telework with 2,590 pledges; bike/scooter at 2,039; rail at 1,764; bus at 1,241; and carpool/vanpool at 650. Pledgers could choose more than one mode, hence the reason the pledges by transportation mode exceeded the total amount of unique pledgers. The modal count breakdown by state was mostly proportional across Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. The primary exception was carpool/vanpool pledgers, which mostly occurred in Maryland and Virginia.

Just over a quarter of pledgers reported *not* being normally car free but decided to go car free for the event. Eighty-one percent of pledgers reported forgoing a work trip on Car Free Day; just under half reported taking a car free trip to exercise. There were 2,433 pledgers who worked from home during Car Free Day and 1,868 who commuted to an office location.

There was an estimated 52,651 pledged Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) reduced during Car Free Day as a result of the event. COG/TPB staff calculated that 0.011 tons of NOx were reduced; 0.013 tons of VOC were reduced; and 20.208 tons of GHG were reduced.

Item #6 Regional TDM Evaluation Project

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the data collection activities and schedule associated with the regional TDM Evaluation for FY2024.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on current activities currently underway for the Regional TDM Evaluation Project. The FY2021 – FY2023 TDM Analysis Report, the culmination of three years of data collection and analysis, was just finalized and endorsed for release earlier in the meeting (Item 3). Currently, data collection is ongoing as part of the Applicant Placement Rate Survey, which is conducted every three years. Findings from this survey are used as the baseline methodology for many of the impacts determined in the TDM Analysis Report. Highlights from the survey results will be presented to the Subcommittee in January.

Work has just begun on the Impact Analysis Report for the GRH Baltimore program. Work is scheduled to begin soon on the Employer Outreach Customer Satisfaction Survey, which gives the program a snapshot of employers' thoughts and how they rate the customer service of Employer Outreach representatives. This survey is conducted every five years.

Item #7 Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) Project Update

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the ATCMTD project and next steps for incenTrip.

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, presented accomplishments related to the ATCMTD project. The purpose of the project was to expand and enhance the incenTrip mobile application. incenTrip gamifies commutes by awarding points to end-users if they log their commutes using the app. Points can then be redeemed for cash rewards.

The \$5.95 million ATCMTD project commenced in November 2020. Goals of the project were to maximize the cost effectiveness of a megaregion TDM program, integrate and expand existing dynamic TDM programs, provide personalized traveler information and incentives to end-users, and to enhance multimodal transportation access and system performance with rewards and gamification.

The project was divided into seven technical tasks. The first task was to expand incenTrip's service area to include the entire state of Maryland. The existing sub-program within incenTrip, the Commuter Connections Rewards Program, was duplicated and deployed for all Maryland jurisdictions. The project team also integrated real-time GTFS feeds for WMATA and MTA. Local fixed route transit routes were also integrated. While developing solutions for the task, the project team worked in tandem to expand the network model of incenTrip to include the Baltimore – Washington, DC – Richmond megaregion to include real-time traffic data. The network model expansion permitted trip planning from southern Pennsylvania to central Virginia. Both enhancements were deployed in November 2021.

Reward options were greatly expanded as a result of the project. Prior to ATCMTD, incenTrip only offered cash incentives at \$10, \$25, or \$50 thresholds by form of checks mailed via US Postal Service. New rewards added to incenTrip over the course of the ATCMTD project include PayPal, gift cards, Nift Gift, SmarTrip credits, E-ZPass credits, and Capital Bikeshare credits.

Several new TDM sub-programs of the Commuter Connections Rewards Program were added to incenTrip. The Flextime Rewards Program was adapted and integrated into incenTrip. The program seeks to tackle non-recurrent congestion along select, highly congested corridors. Flextime Rewards offers points to individuals who flex their drive-alone trips along highly congested routes when congestion levels are excessive. End-users may also sign up to receive real-time traffic alerts, which are supplemental to Flextime Rewards. Traffic alerts anticipate excess levels of congestion and encourage commuters to avoid certain corridors if excessive traffic is predicted; no points are associated with the alerts. These features were released in December 2022.

Corridor-level TDM was incorporated into incenTrip by way of "Corridor Challenges," a Commuter Connections sub-program launched in December 2022. Upon launch, two interstates in the region were selected for

Corridor Challenge deployment. The focus of the challenges are to improve commuters' awareness of multimodal choices and park-and-ride options along selected corridors. For instance, commuters may earn bonus points if they take commuter bus options or use Park and Ride facilities along these routes.

The final program added to incenTrip as part of ATCMTD is the "incenTrip for Employers" program. This feature, launched in May 2023, allows employers to create their own customizable commuter challenges for their employees. Employers can reward employees for choosing non-SOV travel modes by awarding points for completed non-SOV trips. Similar to the public Commuter Connections program, an employer stocks their rewards store with incentives that can be requested by employees as they accumulate points part participating in challenges.

The final overall enhancement associated with ATCMTD was the integration of specialized transportation referrals. incenTrip was connected to an existing clearinghouse of specialized transportation providers, an MWCOG program called "Reach a Ride," which provided contact information for transportation service providers throughout the region. These providers specialize in services for older adults and persons with disabilities who may not have the ability to participate in standard multimodal travel options already present in incenTrip.

Mr. Sheehan shared several stats about incenTrip usage and impacts over the course of the project. From November 2020 – September 2023, there were 599 Commuter Connections accounts created, 41,140 trips logged, and 1,011 incentives requested. Impacts associated with incenTrip over the same timeframe include an estimated 10,260 vehicle hours travelled reduced, cost savings of \$317,526, greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 34.378kg, vehicle miles travelled reduced by 377,294, and gasoline consumption reduced by 4,738 gallons.

The project team is now focused on closing out the project and transferring incenTrip from UMD ownership to COG ownership. The server infrastructure has been created in the cloud on COG servers; a licensing agreement has been completed and the transfer of source code is scheduled to commence soon. Once transferred to COG, the app will be re-launched and re-branded as "Commuter Cash." The transfer is likely to be completed in spring 2024.

Traci McPhail, NBTMD, asked about UMD's expected involvement in Commuter Cash. Mr. Sheehan responded that UMD will be retained for the rest of the fiscal year to aid in the transition and routine operations. It is likely UMD will continue to be retained as a subcontractor in FY2025 for "as-needed" work, but UMD's involvement with incenTrip/Commuter Cash is expected to be phased out over time.

Hamzat Sani, GoAlex, asked if additional corridors could be added to the Corridor Challenges sub-program. Mr. Sheehan responded that new corridors could be added in consultation with the state funding agencies after Commuter Cash is up-and-running. Mr. Sani also asked if drive-alone is the only travel mode available for Flextime Rewards, to which Mr. Sheehan replied that any driver may participate in the program.

Item #8 **FY2025 Work Program Development and Commuter Connections Strategic Plan**
Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the draft FY2025 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and Commuter Connections Strategic plan. A comment period was established.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, noted the draft FY2025 CCWP was included in the meeting's agenda packet for review. Mr. Ramfos then presented on the CCWP and provided an overview of the CCWP's development, purpose, and benefits. Commuter Connections is a network of public and private transportation organizations, including COG, state funding agencies, and local organizations, that work together to assist and encourage people in the Washington, DC metropolitan region to use alternatives to the single-occupant automobile. The benefits of Commuter Connections include helping to reduce and manage commuter congestion, that in turn

will assist with improving goods movement and tourist travel and reduce emissions. The program also supports local efforts to attract and retain employers. The daily impacts of the program show a reduction of 137,000 daily vehicle trips, 2,648,000 vehicle miles of travel, and 0.5 tons of nitrogen oxides (NOx). Commuter Connections constitutes the major demand management component of the region's congestion management process. The program also supports regional air quality goals and is part of the annual update of the region's Long Rang Transportation Plan (Visualize 2045) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Results from the program may also help to contribute to performance measures and goals set by the region under IJA requirements.

The proposed FY2025 CCWP budget shows about an 11% overall increase when compared to the FY2023 program budget. New items in the FY 2025 CCWP include design and data collection activities for 2025 State of the Commute Draft Technical Report, administering the Enhancing Mobility Innovations grant project, celebrating Commuter Connections' 50th Anniversary, developing the FY2024 – FY2026 TDM Evaluation Framework Methodology Document, conducting 2025 GRH In-Depth Applicant Surveys and draft reports, and conducting the 2025 Vanpool Driver Survey and report.

State funding agencies have provided initial comments and edits on draft FY2025 CCWP. Mr. Ramfos asked Subcommittee members to review the draft documents and a comment period was established through December 8th. State funding agencies will review the document and submit comments in December with final review and approval occurring in January. A revised document will be available for the January Subcommittee meeting for further review and endorsement for release. The TPB Tech Committee will receive a briefing of the FY2025 CCWP in February and will be briefed again in March. TPB will receive a draft of the FY2025 CCWP in February and will be asked to approve the document in March. TIP adjustments, if any, will be made and funding commitments secured by June with the program beginning on July 1, 2024.

Mr. Ramfos noted the “short version” of the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan was included in the meeting packet/postings and that Subcommittee members were invited to also submit comments and feedback on the Plan through December 8th.

Item #9 1st Quarter CCWP Budget and Progress Reports

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2024 CCWP final 1st Quarter Budget Report. Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2024 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2024 CCWP 1st Quarter final Budget Report highlights. Overall expenditures are 9% of the total program budget. Most projects were just starting up and expenditures are expected to pick up as projects progress. Mr. Ramfos noted that the Employer Outreach for Maryland Jurisdictions, a new element of the CCWP, was added to the budget report.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, brief the Subcommittee on the FY2024 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report. Highlights for the 1st Quarter Progress Report include the releasing new features as part of the ATCMTD project and selecting “VanHoppr” as the public program associated with the EMI project. The traditional Ridematching program served 12,820 registered commuters throughout the quarter. incenTrip was prepared for transfer to COG servers. Research for a new chatbot solution commenced; a suitable product was identified, and programming commenced. Guaranteed Ride Home program registrations grew by 224 new program participants, 383 re-registered participants, and a grand total of just over 2,000 registrants as of September 30th for the program. 164 GRH trips were provided. Mr. Sheehan briefed the Subcommittee on several marketing campaigns, including preparations for the fall Rideshare and GRH umbrella campaigns, as well as event highlights directly associated with Employer Recognition Awards and the 2023 Car Free Day event. Regional data collection activities included integrating feedback into the FY2021 – FY2023 TDM Analysis Report and commencing work on the FY2024 Applicant Placement Rate study. A new narrative section for the

MDOT Employer Outreach work element was added to the CCWP Progress Report. Mr. Sheehan concluded the item by providing an overview of the various tables included in the report.

Item #10 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

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

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB Staff, reminded Subcommittee members that the 2024 Employer Recognition Awards nomination period was active through the end of January 2024 and encouraged nominations.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 12 noon.