

**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**

**Commuter Connections Subcommittee**

**MEETING MINUTES**

*Tuesday, September 13, 2005*

**Chairperson: Sharon Affinito, Loudoun County**

**Vice Chairperson: Leann Landry, WMATA**

**Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos (202)-962-3313**

**1. Introductions**

Ms. Affinito began the meeting by introducing herself and asked all who were in attendance to do the same. Ms. Affinito asked everyone in attendance to sign the attendance sheet (*attached*).

**2. Minutes of the July 19, 2005 Meeting**

*Approval was sought for the July 17<sup>th</sup> Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting notes.*

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting as written.

**3. Announcement of New Vice Chair**

Sharon Affinito stated that the Commuter Connections Subcommittee Nominating Committee nominated Linda Stewart-Byrd from MDOT as the new Vice Chair. The recommendation was approved by the Subcommittee.

**4. Change of Chairpersons**

Leann Landry presented a plaque to Sharon for her dedication as chair of the Subcommittee over the past year. Ms. Landry then took over as the Subcommittee Chair.

**5. FY 2005 Employer Satisfaction Survey Draft Results**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the draft results of the 2005 Employer Customer Satisfaction survey.*

Mark Hersey gave a PowerPoint presentation on the FY 2005 Employer Satisfaction Draft survey report. He reported that there was a significant increase in responses to

the survey from last year. The response rate this year was 19% compared to 13% last year. He then covered the survey distribution and response rate percentages by jurisdiction. Mr. Hersey then covered the response rates over the past six years. The average response rate has been 12% and has steadily been increasing each fiscal year.

He then covered the length of involvement for Employee Transportation Coordinators at each work site. Mr. Hersey then covered the number of times the employers were contacted by Employer Services sales representatives. Mr. Hersey stated that question five covered the responsiveness of local employer sales representatives. 56% said that the representatives were responsive. It was a slight increase from the 52% last year.

Next, Mr. Hersey covered the level of satisfaction of the employers and overall there were very high marks for Commuter Connections and products. This is a very positive result. Results from “How useful Commuter Connections materials are” were then covered. Respondents were also asked if they participated in the Commuter Connections employer survey. Mr. Hersey stated that those employers who conduct surveys will more than likely implement a commuter benefit and this holds true with survey results from all years and not just the past year.

Mr. Hersey then covered the responses of specific topics survey respondents are interested in and generally the interest is in Metrochek and GRH.

The overall effectiveness response was that 39% of the sales representatives were very effective in helping survey respondents to develop and implement a TDM program at their worksite(s). Mr. Hersey stated that this year the results showed high results for sales representatives being effective.

The majority of survey respondents had between 100 and 200 employees. Lastly, Mr. Hersey covered the breakdown for each jurisdiction on worksite locations. He also stated that there was about a 5% rate of returned mail from surveys sent.

Q. What recommendations do you have that we should be doing different to raise low numbers?

A. Keeping the data clean is very important at least on a quarterly basis. The cleaner the data, the easier it is to obtain responses.

Q. What is the data telling us and how we do Employer Outreach in the region?

A. There should be more encouragement to have employers conduct the commuter survey because it allows the employer to get a grasp on what is happening at the site and track program results. Consistent contacts are also important such as phone calls and e-mails (i.e. Montgomery County has an electronic e-mail going out to their employers).

Gus Robey stated that we may want to think of re-visiting the overall sales goals and whether they are appropriate given that we may need to start addressing

congestion. Sharon Affinito asked about Questions 3 and 4 in the survey and why employers are not being contacted in person. Can the employers who get the face- to-face meetings being cross-tabbed with those who have active contacts in Participation Levels? She also asked if the individual jurisdictions could request results from their areas. Leann Landry wanted to know if we knew what the program participation rates were from the respondents. Mark Hersey stated that the average was from 13 – 21%.

**6. FY 2005 Employer Telework Seminars Draft Evaluation Report**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the draft 2005 Employer Telework Seminar report that was enclosed in the agenda packet.*

Danette Campbell stated that the draft FY 2005 Employer Telework Seminars report was in the mailout packet. Ms. Campbell gave a short description of each of the workshops and stated that there were 157 attendees and that some of the attendees did attend more than one workshop.

She referred to page 3 of the report which showed seminar participation levels from 1998 to 2005. She also covered the satisfaction levels of the workshops. Ms. Campbell also discussed the particulars on marketing and outreach activities associated with the workshops. Page 5 in the draft report outlined the costs of the workshops. Attendees were asked to fill out workshop evaluation forms. There were 144 forms completed. Pages 9 through 19 addresses the ratings and gives each individual's seminar comments. Page 28 gives conclusion statements.

Q. Radio costs were very high and how is this evaluated?

A. We have discussed this in the past and many who are asked how they heard about the seminars may be giving ambiguous responses.

Q. How many businesses attended the seminars and are they federal or non-federal employers? Is this in the report?

A. This can be broken out of the report.

Ms. Robey asked what would be done differently this year. Ms. Campbell said that the training would not be occurring this year. Ms. Robey asked whether this activity was in the Work Program and whether this was agreed to. Mr. Ramfos stated that it was agreed to, but that the work program could always be amended to include seminars if additional funds were committed to the project to cover the costs of the workshops. Mr. Ramfos also stated that the current curriculum would be posted to the Commuter Connections web site for employers and at some point would be linked to the current on-line training that Virginia is developing.

Mike Jones stated that he thought it would be prudent to have the Federal government pay for the sessions and that there is an interest level. This is a good subject matter to discuss during the Strategic Planning session. We also need to review the effectiveness of the on-line training.

## **7. TDM Software Management System Update**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the status of the TDM software management system project.*

Mr. Ramfos briefed the group on the status of the User Specifications and Requirements Document and its completion. The next step is to conduct a collaborative session with the Commuter Connections stakeholders to decide what the system should look like in order to move forward with the build and design phase.

Carol Smith from Fairfax County stated that we need to move very quickly on this project. Mr. Ramfos stated that the user definition period will be important to determine how the system will operate. Commuter Connections stakeholders will need to participate in a facilitated discussion and Fairfax County has offered to host a session and have their IT staff involved in the project. Gus Robey stated that a decision matrix needs to be developed in terms of maintenance, outsourcing, versus COG staff and it may be an outcome of Strategic Planning. This can be a parallel track to the user definition process.

## **8. Gasoline Price opportunities Discussion**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on recent activities associated with high gasoline prices and private section telework initiatives.*

Mr. Ramfos gave a PowerPoint presentation on the recent gasoline trends and how it has affected TDM programs. He gave some background information on high gasoline prices and the start-up of TDM programs, including Commuter Connections in the 1970's. He also gave statistics on the number of inquiries on the Commuter Connections web site.

Next, Mr. Ramfos discussed recent telecommuting trends including past activities of Commuter Connections and specific impacts of the Commuter Connections Metropolitan Telework Resource Center. He also reviewed the Telework Exchange and their most recent marketing activities.

Diana Utz stated that 17 vanpools were formed in the RADCA region in August alone. Mr. Ramfos stated that there were PSA's developed and sent out by COG last week addressing the price increases. The group felt that it would be good to get on air with a high gas price message. Leann Landry reported that WMATA has developed message around the high gas prices but does not have capacity on the system and is promoting to ride the system in off-peak periods. Commuter Connections should look to advertise using HOV lanes on the fringe time periods, promote flextime and telecommuting.

**9. 2006 Employer Recognition Awards Work Group Volunteers**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the status of the 2006 Employer Recognition Awards and a call for volunteers to be on the 2006 Work Group occurred.*

Douglas Franklin briefed the Subcommittee on the 2006 Employer Recognition Awards program and asked for volunteers for the 2006 Employer Recognition Awards work group.

**10. FY 2007 Work Program Development**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the FY 2007 work program timeline.*

Mr. Ramfos stated that the FY 2007 Work Program will be based on the results from strategic planning sessions that will be held this fall. Linda Stewart-Byrd encouraged the group to participate in the sessions. October 12<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> are the dates currently reserved for all day sessions. (*Note: The actual meeting dates were changed to October 21<sup>st</sup> and November 21<sup>st</sup>.*)

**11. Budget Report and Annual Report**

*The FY 2005 annual report and last quarter draft budget were presented and distributed to the Subcommittee*

Mr. Ramfos distributed the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter draft budget report and the FY 2005 Annual report.

**12. Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m. The next Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting will be held on November 15, 2005.