

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Commuter Connections Subcommittee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

CHAIR: Robin Briscoe, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

VICE CHAIR: Sharon Affinito, Loudoun County

STAFF CONTACT: Nicholas Ramfos (202) 962-3313

Item #1 Introductions (see attached attendance sheet)

Ms. Robin Briscoe, Chair of the Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and each attendee made introductions.

Item #2 Minutes of October 21, 2003 Meeting

The Subcommittee approved the minutes as written.

Item #3 Wilson Bridge Project Update

Mr. John Undeland, Potomac Crossing Consultant/Wilson Bridge Project, presented to the Subcommittee the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project's Congestion Management Plan.

Mr. Undeland began his presentation by stating that the logo and slogan for the campaign encourages commuters to use alternative modes of commuting and it is called "Mission Possible." Sheila Lewin was the consultant hired to create the logo. The goal is to keep people moving through the construction over the next half-decade. Mr. Undeland then proceeded to give a quick overview of the Wilson Bridge project. The Wilson Bridge Project is 7 ½ miles long and represents 12 percent of the 64-mile capital beltway and it is being rebuilt. The bridge portion of the project is just a hair over a mile long and it involves replacing the 6 lane bridge with a 12 lane facility that includes two of the lanes to assist in the capacity for transit options for bus, rail or HOV. The project also involves improving 4 interchanges, 2 in Virginia and 2 in Maryland, and providing new access into Eisenhower Valley that is a big growth area.

Mr. Undeland then presented to the Subcommittee members a quick view of the construction underway on the bridge, including the footprints of the new bridge. The footprints are the bridge foundations that were finished in July of this year. The construction began in 2000. In the next couple of years, arches will be constructed on top of the bridge foundation.

Mr. Undeland then proceeded to brief the Subcommittee on the elements of the congestion management program with the first being a program called "Bridge Bucks." This program will be putting money in commuters' pockets that take different transit options, whether it is Fairfax Connector, or WMATA, or vanpools. This is the cornerstone project of the TDM element in the program. The program incentives will also be promoting Commuter Connections. Public Outreach is the second element that will be accomplished through a sizable advertising campaign. Incident Management will include clearing incidents as a key priority. The Wilson Bridge is plagued with twice the accident rates of other comparable Interstates in Maryland and Virginia.

Bridge Bucks is a one-year pilot program that will be offered to one thousand participants, five hundred in Virginia, and five hundred in Maryland; \$50 dollars per month in vanpool, rail or bus fare media. To qualify you have to be in the Wilson Bridge corridor, not just commuters who are crossing the bridge, but commuters who are using the 7-½ mile corridor. The program will be piloted for one year. An experienced third party vendor that has done this type of project before in terms of fulfillment has been brought on board. Basically, ads are going to feature adding \$50 dollars to commuters' pockets to take a better way to work and directing commuters to the Wilson Bridge web site. The web page "keeping you moving" enlists commuters to the program. A toll free number will also be available.

Bridge Bucks commuters will be contacted every three months to ask them if they are using the program and whether the combination of passes fit their personal needs, and what they think about the program. The effort is to promote greater awareness of transit solutions, Commuter Connections park and ride lots, and Telework.

All of these outreach activities will be conducted over the next five years when construction is the heaviest. The construction started over three years ago, but it really has not affected traffic to a great degree. The anticipation is that there will be some greater impacts once construction begins at the interchanges such as Route 1 in Virginia.

The key message is to promote Bridge Bucks, promote bus and rail transit options, vanpools and Telework. We are funneling commuters to our web site and the toll free number is 877-INFO-WWB. Mr. Undeland then illustrated to Subcommittee members a prototype of the website and went over what commuters would see and how easy it is to use.

The first phase of the advertising will be launched in January 2004. Radio will be the primary driver of advertising. Four radio spots and a Hispanic spot will be produced and traffic tags will be used. Cable television will be used to hit commuters during early morning when they are getting ready for work and are in a commuting frame of mind. Print ads will be used in "*The Washington Post's*" Thursday's extra sections in Alexandria, Fairfax and Prince George's county as well as the Gazette in Virginia and Maryland. Ads will be bought in El Tiempo Latino and the Washington Business Journal. The Washington Business Journal ads will have more of a teleworking focus and the message will be tailored to employers rather than to the general public and an ad will be placed on washingtonpost.com.

Collateral materials that will be produced include brochures for commuters and employers. The goal is to give commuters a quick package of information that they can use and apply to their lives to improve their quality of life and their commutes. The employer brochure will focus on Teleworking as a solution. A mailer will be sent out to 300,000 homes. The postcard will promote Bridge Bucks. A giveaway promotional item for employers will be used along with employers' kits to help market Bridge Bucks and other commute alternatives to their employees. The kit may include posters for cafeterias, etc., and a newsletter. The marketing campaign is being launched in January. WWB staff will be briefing the Regional TDM Marketing Group on December 2nd. Elected officials in Virginia and Maryland will be briefed in December. There will be a kickoff breakfast for media, elected officials, community and business leaders on January 8, 2004, which is the same week the advertising will begin.

Mr. Undeland then moved on to discuss incident management. He stated that there are some 6,000 incidents of different variety in the Wilson Bridge corridor a year. The key goals are to keep traffic moving, to maintain safety, and reduce the impact of incidents during peak and non-peak travel. A lane closure policy has been put in place and was developed with Virginia and Maryland and coordinated with the contractors. Weekly lane closure communications occurs with a 110 plus agencies, chart Smart Traffic, and the media. When there is a big incident an alert is sent out. The program has expanded safety patrol and police presence both in Maryland and Virginia. The 16 hours, five days a week coverage is being supplemented with additional resources. The increased safety patrol presence started in July of 2003 and the increased State police presence started in November and is coordinated with the Springfield Interchange project closely in terms of shared resources and information. A Hazmat clearing vehicle is shared as well as a Unified Command vehicle. The Springfield Interchange has not had an impact on any of the Wilson's project work zones based on the ongoing coordinated efforts between the two projects.

- Q.** Will there be any information centers put in place like the ones that were set up for Springfield where people can walk in and see what the progress, is or any hubs for education reasons?
- A.** It was not a good fit because there wasn't a big mega mall where we would get a lot of foot traffic like you get at Springfield Mall. We do have our project offices in Oxon Hill and in Alexandria in which there are public hours every week. Every Friday from 10am till 4pm in the Alexandria office and every Wednesday from 11am till 5pm people can come down to Oxon Hill and look at plans and videos to get more information on the project. A lot of outreach is done by speaking engagements.
- Q.** Who is your third party vendor for Bridge Bucks?
- A.** Strategic Transportation Initiatives is the firm that has been engaged.
- Q.** For the Bridge Bucks program how are the people who receive the subsidy selected? How do you know if they are already using some type of public transportation or does it matter?

- A. The first thing that is done is when commuters go to the web site they are asked to put in their origin and then their destination so if they cross our bridge or cross our corridor they are eligible. The first 500 who sign up in Virginia and the first 500 hundred who sign up in Maryland is how commuters will be selected. In regards to eligibility, they have to be already using transit alternatives. The marketing materials and the advertising are going to be to “try transit.” The message is going to be steered towards new transit users.
- Q. What is the total cost of the construction project and what percentage of that is going to TDM?
- A. The total project estimate is \$2.56 billion dollars and that estimate will be coming down when the next financial plan comes out next month because 23 out of 27 contracts are coming under budget. The entire TDM incentive management budget is \$28 million dollars, which is about 1 percent of the total cost. This is the second largest public agency transportation project in the country.
- Q. Is HOV absolute for certain lanes or is it still up for grabs?
- A. The corridor is being rebuilt to have a local and express system which will have a lane that will be dedicated for future multiple passengers transportation options, HOV, rail transit, bus transit, potential of BRT. The record of decision when the project was identified specified that two of those lanes would be reserved for future options. During the planning phase there was a very close look at HOV, rail and bus transit across the bridge and the numbers did not justify the immediate implementation of it. The bridge is being engineered to handle the heavy weight of rail. The interchanges are very complicated and have to be built around the existing interchange ramps, but there is an envelope that would provide a pass-thru for rail transit that has an acceptable grade.
- Q. How many lanes will the bridge have and will the new bridge open as the current one does?
- A. It will be a total of 12 lanes. It is actually 8 lanes to match the 8-lane beltway; 2 lanes for assisting in merging and existing off the interchanges, and then 2 lanes for transit options, bus, or HOV lanes. The existing bridge is 52 feet over the river; the new bridge will be 78 feet, which makes a huge difference.
- Q. What is the date of completion?
- A. The overall project estimated completion is 2011. The bridge and the inner interchanges estimated completion date is 2008.

Item #4 Commuter Connections TERM Evaluation Project Update
Lori Diggins, LDA Consultants, briefed the Subcommittee on the progress of the TERM Evaluation project and upcoming surveys that will be conducted.

Ms. Diggins began her presentation by introducing herself to the Subcommittee and stated that she would be giving the Subcommittee an overview of the next triennial TERM Evaluation. Over the last six years LDA Consulting and a few other firms have been doing triennial evaluations meaning once every three years, or over a three-year period, evaluations are conducted of various TERMS. LDA started out by evaluating four TERMS, Employer for Bicycling was added during the last three-year cycle and this year the Mass Marketing TERM will be added.

Ms. Diggins briefed the Subcommittee over some of the activities that are going to be coming up during the fiscal year, which is through June of 2004. Ms. Diggins started with explaining that the evaluation period covers 2003-2005. A large number of surveys are conducted to develop multiplier factors that are applied to counts that are made throughout the three-year period. The number of applicants that apply to Commuter Connections, the number of GRH applicants and other information that is tracked throughout the course of the evaluation period are also used in the overall methodology.

Six TERMS that will be evaluated, including the Telework Resource Center; GRH; Integrated Rideshare, which has two components with software upgrades and the kiosks; Employer Outreach, which also has two components, the jurisdictions sales representatives and the Metrochek piece which is not officially part of the TERM but is evaluated as part of the project; Employer Outreach for Bicycling; and the new TERM added this year which is Mass Marketing. The overall project for this year and next year is to conduct four different tasks. The first is to refine the evaluation methodology. The evaluation methodology was updated three years ago to add in new TERMS and new surveys to refine the methodology, and we will be doing that again this year for the new evaluation period.

Next, data will be collected for the new evaluation period. Some of the data is already being collected by Commuter Connections. Some of it will be collected by targeted surveys of either users or the general population and then transportation and air quality impacts will be estimated. Commuter trends and attitudes both for individual programs that are part of Commuter Connections as well as the general commuting population will also be tracked. These surveys help track what is happening with program user populations and the general population as a whole. It provides evaluation data and some trend analysis data.

There are five project activities that are included in the current fiscal year and there are other activities that will be in the following year. The five activities are the methodology update, the placement rate survey, the GRH program survey, the State of the Commute survey and the Telecenter survey. The last four surveys include specific data collection for the program. The first is refining the methodology by which the data is collected and use of the data for the overall evaluation.

Generally, the methodology that was used for the 00-02 evaluation will be replicated. Many of the surveys that will be proposed have already been done. The Placement Rate survey, for example, is done on an annual basis, but it actually had been done nine times already. Modifications have been made along the way when it was necessary to improve the quality and completeness of the data. In general, the consulting team has a fairly good methodology for each one of these surveys. The survey questions are defined. Some minor adjustments will be made in the event it would improve the quality of the data.

The big change for the evaluation methodology this time is adding in the new Mass Marketing TERM and this will be significant in a couple of the surveys. The major place we will see this change is in the State of the Commute because as we are looking at the Mass Marketing TERM this is not marketing of a particular program but marketing TDM options in general to the general population. The only survey to give a good picture of the Mass Marketing TERM is the State of the Commute survey. However, there may be an effect on GRH, and there may be an effect on Commuter Connections placement rates. We will be looking at every opportunity that we have to see if people are remembering the ads, and if the ads are persuading them in some way to contact Commuter Connections to use new alternative modes.

Four particular things that will be reviewed with Mass Marketing, include documenting commuters awareness of the ads, do they remember them? Did they hear the ads? Can they name them for us? A second level is tracking the increased interest in alternative modes as a result of these ads. The third level is to look at mode shifts; are they changing their behavior? The last is going to be the most difficult area because we have to allocate the impacts that go to the Mass Marketing TERM and compare the impacts to the impacts that go to various other TERMS such as GRH, the TRC and Employer Outreach. All of these programs work together, as they should, but it does make it difficult to separate how much do we credit different activities. This will be a part of the evaluation process itself.

The Placement Rate survey is ongoing right now. It should be finished within the next week. It is the consulting team's second annual survey. There have been nine Placement Rate surveys done already. Two series of four were done over a six year period and seasonal variation was examined in the survey to see if anything was particularly seasonal in nature and from that analysis one quarter was chosen in which applicants would be surveyed in the future. The survey is being conducting with applicants to the Commuter Connections database; commuters who have contacted Commuter Connections by phone, e-mail, and kiosks for rideshare information. The quarter that was picked is the July through September quarter because this is the quarter that was most representative of the year. What we do is wait one month after the end of that quarter, which puts us at the beginning of November and then we start to survey. 700 interviews are completed by phone from that sample. Data collected from those surveyed is used primarily for two activities; one is the Commuter Operations Center, which is not officially a TERM but counted in the evaluation, and the Integrated Rideshare software upgrades. We do include a few questions on GRH and a few questions on telecommuting but we don't use those as our primary data sources for either measure.

The Placement Rate survey collects data on demographics and current and past travel patterns. In essence, what we are really trying to do is find out how are these applicants are traveling

today and did they make a change as a result of the information that they received. It is a retrospective survey looking at before and after travel patterns. We also then look at the use of Commuter Connections and Employer Services. We look at satisfaction, use of those services and the primary interest is whether people change their behavior. This information is used to calculate impacts; the travel impacts and the air quality impacts of the placements that were made.

- Q.** When you ask commuters about changing behavior, are you looking from the beginning of the quarter to the end of the quarter or from the quarter to a year ago?
- A.** We are asking about current behavior and before they received information from Commuter Connections.

We use a number of factors for the placement rate, which is the percentage of people that are surveyed who do indeed change their mode to an alternative mode. A Vehicle Trip Reduction factor, is calculated which is the average number of daily trips that someone who changes their modes reduces. For example, if a commuter is driving alone and has switched to using transit five days a week, the commuter has removed two vehicle trips per day. If the commuter switches to a two person carpool the commuter would reduce one vehicle trip per day. This is the average over all of the population of the number of daily trips reduced and we use that as a multiplier in the calculations. Travel distance is calculated to measure vehicle miles reduced per applicant and the last thing reviewed is rideshare access mode. If the commuter is using transit today or a vanpool they probably will not be walking or being picked up at their home instead they may be driving to a pick up point such as a park and ride lot, a Metro station, or a bus stop. We do have to capture the fact that the commuter did drive a portion of the trip because from an air quality standpoint that is what is called a cold start, in other words, they start at the vehicle and there is a significant portion of emissions that are produced. Even though the trip may be just three miles out of a total trip of forty miles, we discount some of the emissions benefits based on access mode.

- Q.** Is there any correlation for the Mass Marketing TERM with the ad campaign so you would know how effective and how impacted the ad campaigns are in motivating people to convert?
- A.** Yes, what we are looking at is awareness of ads, basically what they are thinking about doing and tracking the call volume. Commuter Connections already tracks referrals. We already had been tracking the State of the Commute on awareness but not in a specific sense.

Mr. Ramfos stated that there will be a mini-household survey done in the next fiscal year to capture some specific items on the Mass Marketing TERM as well.

The GRH applicant survey was last done in 2001. It will be repeated in February 2004. It is a telephone survey with 1000 respondents of randomly selected applicants from the GRH database and past and current registrants will be in the survey sample and those who we call one-time exceptions. The questions in this survey include registration status, in order to examine current

registrants versus past registrants versus one-time users. We are examining their current and pre-GRH travel patterns and we look particularly at the influence of GRH on their travel choices. We also review the rate of satisfaction of GRH and a bit of the demographics.

There were three primary research questions that were reviewed the last time. One was whether GRH encourages a shift from SOV to alternative modes. Did it encourage more frequent use of alternative modes? Did it extend the duration of alternative mode use? These were the three resulting data sets from use of GRH. The first could be tested. The second, had very few respondents who had changed the frequency of use of alternative modes from one day a week to three days a week and the last question will have some minor revisions to give us a finer gradation of the duration of mode use. The last question asks how relatively important was GRH to other factors influencing modes. What we found in past years survey is people saying it was very important to their decision to start using an alternative, but then when we asked would you have used that alternative anyway the majority of people say yes. What we want to continue to test is where does GRH fit relative to other used services.

For the State of the Commute survey, data is being collected primarily for three TERMS; the Telework Resource Center, Employer Outreach and Integrated Rideshare. We do use other data collection activities to support these TERMS, but this is the primary source of data for those TERMS. The survey is about 15 minutes long and a lot of information is collected in this survey. We look at current commute patterns, we look at how people travel on a daily basis over the course of a week, telecommuting experience, availability and attitudes towards commute options, do they have access to different services and do they use them and what do they feel about them. We will be adding in the Mass Marketing awareness and influence in this survey. Awareness of programs and services in the region; for example, do people know that there is an 800 number, do they know that there is a website for Commuter Connections and other services. Commute assistance offered by employers, this is one of the questions that we track to see whether people recognize that employers offer services to them and what services do they know about. What is their experience with GRH; not necessarily Commuter Connections' GRH, but GRH in general; and whether they have used the information kiosks.

Next, Ms. Diggins discussed the data collection activities for the Telework Resource Center (TRC). The Telecenter survey has two objectives, we are actually doing two different types of data collection. We are first looking at the Telecenter average occupancy, and second we want to know travel behavior of commuters who work in a Telecenter. Data collected is used for the TRC TERM analysis. Telecenter seat occupancy data collection is used to examine available seats, reserved seats, and the Telework Center manager is asked to track seat availability and how many seats were reserved and how many people actually did show up. Occupancy will be examined both as a function of the reservation in essence of saying how many were no shows as a percentage of the total that are available. A written survey of the Telecenter commuters will also be used. What we want to see from the Telecenters is the air quality impact and travel impact from the use of Telecenters. The travel on the Telecenter day will be reviewed with regards to how do they get to the Telecenter and on the days during the week when they don't work at a telecenter how they travel. The other component of travel that will be reviewed is a change in travel to the regular work place. Did the commuter make a change on what we call their regular to work travel as a result of using the Telecenter? It is a fairly short survey and the

Telecenter managers will distribute the survey and have been very responsive and very helpful in getting the surveys returned.

The schedule for all of these activities is over the course of the next seven to eight months. The methodology update completed in January and a summary of the changes will be presented to the group. The Placement rate survey is ongoing and will be finished next week and the results will be presented to the Subcommittee. The GRH program survey will be starting in February. This survey takes about three to four weeks because of the number of respondents. The State of the Commute survey will be starting in February because it is so large and takes about two and half months to complete. The State of the Commute survey will be completed in April and the results will be presented to the Subcommittee June. The Telecenter survey will be conducted in April. Survey reports will be prepared for each of the surveys.

Next fiscal year there will be a number of surveys including the Placement Rate survey and more information collected on the kiosks and the Mass Marketing household survey. Data will also be collected to supplement these surveys for the TERM analysis. The TERM Analysis Report that summarizes the data from all these surveys will be completed in FY05 and will show information being used to calculate the impacts of all the TERMS individually and collectively.

Mr. Ramfos stated that there is a TDM Evaluation Work Group and that group meets to get into the details of all the surveys and to preview the results. A meeting of this group is planned for December 16th right after the Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting. The meeting will be held from 12:00 noon till 2:00 pm. Ms. Diggins stated that at this meeting the changes that are being proposed for the methodology will be discussed.

Item #5 Park and Ride Lot Interactive Mapping

Mr. Giovanni Balsamo, COG/DTP, presented and demonstrated the Commuter Connections Park and Ride lot interactive mapping functionality currently on the Internet.

Giovanni Balsamo briefed the group on the development and implementation of the Park and Ride Lot Interactive Mapping Website located at <http://maps.mwcog.org>. He gave a brief background of the project, and stated the following as reasons for developing the website: an interactive and dynamic park and ride lot map for the public, giving the public a place on the web to view all available alternative commute options, and integrating the web site with the current and future ridematching systems.

Mr. Balsamo stated that the project was started to create interactive park and ride lot map for the public. We also wanted to give the public a place to view all alternative commute options such as Telework centers, transit information, HOV lanes, and eventually bicycling trails which is in the works. We also wanted to integrate the web map with our current ridesharing system and we have done that by providing a link on our e-mailed matchletters to the site so commuters can view the park and ride lots. In the future we also would like to provide a custom map, in the email matchletter that includes the URL to the site. The goal is to provide a custom map that will display the closest park and ride lot, rail station, and bus stop with a custom link that will take them there to view the information.

Data layers were acquired by staff through contacts with local agencies. Street data lines were obtained from COG member jurisdictions along with TIGER files for jurisdictions that we did not have data for, COG's GIS section also provided us with HOV lane information, jurisdiction boundaries, and some transit information. We also contacted WMATA and MTA and they provided us with information for their Metro rail and the commuter rail. We also contact some local agencies for park and ride information and our client members also provided us with park and ride information.

Unfortunately, some of this data was not in a spatial format so we had to assemble it, take the tabulation information and make it spatially enabled by physically locating the park and ride lots or geocoding them based on intersections. The site design was kept simple and was enhanced. A Windows 2003 server is used to act as the web server and the data server. ArcIMS (Internet Mapping Server) 4.0.1 is the mapping engine used to display the maps on the web. Servlet Exec 4.1.1 is used as the communication between the web and the ArcIMS portion and ArcView shapefiles are used to show the spatial data. Two IP addresses are on the server; an internal one and an external one to provide a link to the outside public coming into our network so there is no direct connection from the outside to our network.

The whole application resides on one physical machine and within that physical machine you have multiple components and virtual servers. Basically you have a web server that speaks to ArcIMS. ArcIMS goes to the shape files and grabs the information that the user is asking for and returns it back to the web client and displays it on the map.

Mr. Balsamo took a few minutes to demonstrate the web site. He explained the site consists of multiple frames; these include the Toolbar, Map, Layer, Legend and Data display frames. He demonstrated the ability to view all the alternative commute options, the option to search for park and ride lots by county or specific names and the ability to zoom to a geographic area.

Mr. Balsamo spoke about the future enhancements to site, these included: adding other spatial data, such as bicycle trails, bus routes and highway construction data; adding dynamic transit data by linking to specific transit sites, such as WMATA; increasing the searching capabilities, including zooming to a county; developing a geocoding\buffering utility; and researching the ability to use a Route Server extension to give directions to the closest park and ride lot.

Mr. Balsamo finally displayed and explained the future System Design, mentioning that eventually the system would utilize two physical machines. One machine would serve as the Web Server and the ArcIMS Application and Spatial Servers, while the other would be utilized as a Database Server storing spatial data within in an ArcSDE\Oracle Database. He explained that eventually the site would take advantage of Active Server Pages (ASP) to implement some of the future enhancements.

- Q.** Since you are putting in the number of spaces available is there a way to put a function to find out what the utilization on those lots are? There are many overcrowded park and ride lots and a commuter could get their choice of lots displayed that is near them and not full.

A. It is something that can be worked on in the future but honestly it would be very hard to do. We can also add another field with a comment on it or something that would communicate to the commuter that this is not a good lot to use.

Q. Is it easily loadable?

A. It is slower in a dial up the initial load is going to take about a minute but once you got the map up it goes fairly quickly. On a cable modem it loads in less than 10 seconds.

Q. Are there bus routes for some park and rides lots?

A. We don't have bus routes on the system yet and the reason is we are not sure which ones we should put on yet because it gets extremely crowded. We need to somehow eliminate or just choose commuter bus routes. This is why we haven't put it on the system because we don't want to make it too busy that they are not going to use them.

Mr. Ramfos stated that this is part of the Integrated Rideshare TERM in the Work Program and it is primarily tied in to all commuter information accessible to our ridesharing system. It was presented to the High Tech Ad-Hoc group last month. Mr. Balsamo stated that suggestions and comments are welcomed.

Item #6 Guaranteed Ride Home Program Update

Mr. Christopher Arabia, COG/DTP updated the Subcommittee on recent GRH program activities; including recommended updates from the GRH Ad-Hoc Group and staff on the current GRH participation guidelines.

Mr. Arabia stated that at the October GRH Ad-Hoc Group meeting they went over how the program operates. They also took a look at the participation guidelines that were enclosed in the mailout and took into consideration recommendations for improvements. Mr. Arabia then went over some of the recommended changes from the group on the GRH participation guidelines that were included in the mailout to the Subcommittee.

Mr. Arabia noted that the first change that was made was to guideline number 5. There is an issue that if the commuter is very ill or injured and they need to get some emergency treatment that these are trips that GRH really don't want them to use guarantee home for. If there is a liability issue and if they need medical attention, GRH is not a medical emergency response service so they might have to wait a while for a taxi service to show up and they are in need of immediate assistance, again there is a liability issue for them waiting for the cab. GRH service for these kinds of cases can't be used and language has been added to this effect.

Guideline number 6, which is in reference to unscheduled overtime, has a recommended change to convey the point that if you have unscheduled overtime you have to call before your normal work hours end and we are also going to need to verify this with a supervisor.

Another change made was to guideline number 7 in reference to Federal Government office closings. Some private sector commuters do have to come to work on Federal government

closings so there were questions on whether or not GRH would be in operation. Typically, COG closes when the Federal government does, therefore, GRH service should follow the Federal government closings, and therefore, if the Federal government is closed GRH would be closed as well.

Guideline number 9 was also changed to include Culpeper and Orange County on the list of eligible areas of where people can live.

The last change was made to guideline number 10 in reference to all GRH originating from the commuter's office location. This is to make sure that the commuter is having some kind of unexpected emergency from their work location. It was suggested that the wording of be changed to reflect that the GRH service could be used as long as the place where the actual emergency is occurring is work-related.

There was one other request from Tri-County Council to allow commuters working in St. Mary's county be eligible for the GRH program. MDOT and MTA were consulted on the request. This type of change is a major change to the GRH program because St. Mary's county is not in the Washington Metropolitan area statistical area or in the non-attainment region. Residents of St. Mary's County qualify as long as they work in the Washington area. This would require some additional funding for those trips but also an adoption from the TPB to approve this type of change. We will not go forward with this request at this time based on the feedback from MDOT.

Item #7 WMATA In-Service Qualification Testing (ISQT) for Metrobus Update
Mr. Dick Siskind, METRO, updated the Subcommittee on the ISQT project that involves installation of SmartTrip on the Metrobus fleet.

Mr. Siskind handed out to the Subcommittee members the ISQT brochure and stated that one year ago WMATA converted 85 Metro buses to use of a new fare box that would take Smarttrip cards as a method of payment in addition to cash, tokens and flash passes. WMATA has extended the testing of smarttrip fareboxes metrobuses to an additional 100 buses that operating Prince George's County and in the District of Columbia and these were rolled out on November 17th.

These are 100 buses that will operate out of the Southern Avenue division and again these are routes that operate in Prince George's County and in DC. These are regular buses and some express buses as well. A brochure has been developed for the customer information about the new payment option with the Smarttrip card. Evaluation will be conducted in sixty days, sometime in January they will be making a decision on whether to go on ahead and install the fareboxes on the rest of the fleet, this will probably be by mid-March. Baltimore and MTA will also be in the testing phase. By 2005 every bus should be equipped with SmartTrip.

Item #8 Employer Outreach Update

Mr. Mark Hersey, COG/DTP, discussed recent Employer Outreach activities which included results of the recent sales support telephone conference calls, recent training support provided, and ACT! Database issues. The Subcommittee will also be asked to approve the enclosed FY03 Employer Satisfaction Survey draft report that was presented at the October 21, 2003 Subcommittee Meeting.

Mr. Hersey stated that Sales training was conducted last week at COG called Time Management for Sales People. The session it was well attended and Commuter Connections received some good feedback.

Mr. Hersey then updated the Subcommittee on what has been happening over the course of the fiscal year. In September, sales supports calls were done for the jurisdictions and all participated except Prince Georges County. Everyone is pretty much comfortable with the ACT! Database software. Over the next two to three weeks Mr. Hersey will be doing some site visits for system maintenance or upgrades.

Last, the FY03 Employer Satisfaction Survey draft report was recommend for approval by the Subcommittee. Ms. Briscoe stated that the report was reviewed at the last meeting, and there were changes made to the report.

There were two comments made for revisions to the report. It was suggested that when using the “percents” to keep it consistent with either using the word itself, percent or the percent symbol throughout the report. Also, the report ends negatively and the sentence should be re-worded so that the report does not end so negatively.

The changes will be made and the report will be resubmitted for final approval at the next Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting.

Item #9 FY05 Work Program Update

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/DTP briefed the group on the status of the FY05 CCWP.

Mr. Ramfos stated that staff in the process of getting the first draft of the Work Program completed. The draft should be ready by the first week in December for review and then it will be discussed at the December 16th Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting.

Item #10 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Mr. Douglas Franklin handed out to the Subcommittee members the Employer Recognition Awards application and asked for help in getting them distributed in each jurisdiction. The application explains how the program works. The awards ceremony will be held in June next year the application deadline is February 6th.

WMATA representatives requested to add the Regional Activity Centers project to next month’s agenda. WMATA is conducting Activity Center research to enhance bus service with travel demand management and to develop supportive policies and to provide better information about

bus service. In January WMATA will have a kickoff meeting with the planning directors and transportation officials from around the region will be invited to discuss these regional partnerships and discuss how WMATA can do things to improve their service.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

*The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on
Tuesday, December 16, 2003*