



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES**

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

1. Introductions

The meeting was brought to order by Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked attendees to introduce themselves when their jurisdiction was announced. The meeting started with words of appreciation from some members of the Committee for Darlene Nader who is retiring. Also, Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA, announced that Maritza De la Vega, Montgomery County Commuter Services, has been appointed as the new Vice Chairperson. Kristin Lam Peraza of the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission is now the new Chairperson.

2. Minutes of the June 21, 2022 Meeting

Approval was sought for the June 21, 2022 Ridematching Committee Meeting minutes. An initial motion to approve the minutes was made by Darlene Nader, North Bethesda TMD, and a second motion was made by Holly Morello, PRTC. The minutes were approved as written. All were in favor. Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA received a plaque of recognition for his time as Chairperson of the Ridematching Committee.

3. Upcoming Fairs and Promotions

COG/TPB staff and clients provided information on recent and upcoming transportation fairs and promotions.

Council of Governments

Stephen Finafrock participated in two transportation events in-person in Alexandria, Virginia. One at John Carlyle Park and the other at Eisenhower Avenue.

North Bethesda TMD

Car Free Day event at the North Bethesda Metro station (previously named White Flint).
Walk Ride campaign.

PRTC

Hispanic Committee event in August
Economic Development Breakfast Series event in Woodbridge
Farmers Market in Manassas
Invitation event on Quantico Base for new personnel

GWRideConnect

Multiple Farmers Market during summer months
Car Free Day

Prince George's County

Promoting Car Free Day

Loudoun County

Car Free Day

Waiting for the new Silver Line Metro station to establish new routes

DOD

Promoting alternative options of commuting for employees like shuttle buses

HHS/FDA

An introduction meeting with the White Oak Transportation Management District

4. Commuter Connections Mobile Application Update

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, presented updates for the Commuter Connections Mobile Application, projected for release in late 2022 or early 2023. This includes new content as well as updated design elements. The most notable enhancements for the mobile app are program enrollment, address updates, ridematching preferences, facial recognition, and the ability to request a Guaranteed Ride Home trip. Other items will be developed as part of phase 2 of the update and released in mid-to-late 2023, including push notifications. Commuters will be able to see if a new ridematch has been found. Also, a notification will go out indicating an account has expired and needs to be reviewed. Help features will include tutorials to assist commuters in using the different programs. Program promotions will be created to remind commuters of new events like “Bike to Work Day.” Mockups showing the visual enhancements to the application were shared with the Committee.

5. Flexible Vanpool FAQ

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, explained the concept of Flexible Vanpool. Commuter Connections is working to implement “Flexible Vanpool” to help vanpools fill seats left empty due to the widespread adoption hybrid work schedules. Currently, the primary need for the program is to add operating vanpools to the database so that vacant seats can be advertised to the public. Enrolling a van in Flexible Vanpool means the public can request to join a vanpool in real-time or reserve a seat for a one-time ride on the van in advance. Details for Vanpool Operators to enroll and participate in the program are outlined in a FAQ document prepared by Commuter Connections. The FAQ was made available to Committee members as part of the agenda packet; it is also available on the Commuter Connections website.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, added that Commuter Connections would like to promote this program soon (by late fall), but in order to do that the program needs to have vanpools register into the system.

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, shared that there is a web page link for Vanpool Operators where they can get any questions answered.

6. SchoolPool Refresher

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, began his presentation reviewing the current SchoolPool module. He reminded the attendees the purpose of the program which is to create matching options for parents on behalf of their children attending schools.

This program was created 10 years ago.

SchoolPool is a partnership between Commuter Connections and local schools. SchoolPool is an interactive, on-demand utility to help parents within the same neighborhoods connect with each other to form carpools, walking groups or biking groups to and from school.

Mr. Finafrock explained how the registration process works. First, schools are required to complete an application in writing. Any application must be signed by superintendent or designee. Schools cannot be added by Commuter Connections in the database without the consent from an authority figure from the school. There are public, private and charter schools participating in the program. Mr. Finafrock went on to show the school registration form used, and the marketing flyer that explains how the program works.

Mr. Finafrock showed a slide demonstrating how to find a ridematch option including: “My School, Nearby Schools, and Do not match.”

He went to explain how COG staff are following up annually with parents to renew their accounts. Mr. Finafrock iterated that its important to implement a purge to ensure the data is relevant. The purge notification process occurs through e-mail. It starts in early June and completes in August. If the parents decide to login, they will be able to activate or remove a child from the system. They can also update the child’s information from the database.

7. TDM Resource Directory

Jetaune Randall-Slaughter, COG/TPB staff, reminded all attendees that the Resource Directory for July 2022 is complete. She thanked everybody for the updates. The Resource Directory has been revamped so is easier to work with. The Resource Directory is available on the Commuter Connections website. Hardcopies of the Directory are available upon request. Ms. Randall-Slaughter will be reaching out to the ridematching coordinators by late November to start working on the new version scheduled to be released in January2023.

8. Fourth Quarter Progress Report & Annual Report

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB, noted positive enrollment trends for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program: 106 new registrants were added during the last quarter and 6 trips were provided.

He continued with TDM services found in pages 18-46. The Regional table found on page 18 indicates that numbers are up compared with the last quarter with regards to match activity. GRH applications and the number of trips provided are also improving. He mentioned SchoolPool applicants in each jurisdiction found on page 50 and the technical assistance to local agencies found on page 49.

Mr. Finafrock went on to review the FY22 Annual Progress Report. The document’s design was updated last year. He highlighted the importance of Table 6A where all the data from local jurisdictions is collected. He noted that COG also tracks the calls that have been transferred to local jurisdictions. Table 6B refers to the applications received by the TDM System. He also showed some statistics of GRH program registrants from July 1999 through June 2022. The GRH applicants work location is broken down by state. Beginning in late FY20, GRH trips shown in figure 41 were severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. “Personal Illness” and “Family Emergency” continue to be the top reasons for a commuter to request a GRH.

9. Roundtable

Holly Morello, PRTC, shared that numbers for ridesharing continue to go up, and buses in Prince Williams County are full.

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, noticed more people are waiting in the parking lot to be picked up for slugs indicating more commuters are coming back to the office.

Traci McPhail, North Bethesda TMD, expressed her great appreciation to work with Darlene Nader who is retiring.

10. Other Business/Upcoming Agenda Items

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee will be held on December 20, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.