

EMPLOYER OUTREACH COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Notes from the April 20, 2021 meeting

AGENDA ITEM 1 - INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting began with self-introductions of those in attendance. (See attached list)

AGENDA ITEM 2 – REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING (01/19/21) NOTES

The Committee reviewed and approved the meeting notes as presented.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – FINAL SECOND QUARTER OF FY 2021 AND DRAFT THIRD QUARTER 2021 CONFORMITY VERIFICATION STATEMENTS

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, distributed and reviewed the final second Quarter FY 2021 and the draft third Quarter FY 2021 conformity verification statements.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – COMMUTER SURVEY APPLICATION UPDATE

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, updated the Committee on recent improvements to the commuter survey application. A new feature, “Express Export,” has been created. The export is a simplified version of the traditional user interface that exports a survey count for a given date range. The count is categorized by jurisdiction and employer. Mr. Sheehan demonstrated a beta version of the report via screenshare. The report will be ready for Committee access in the coming weeks; it will be linked from the application homepage.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – TRANSITSCREEN UPDATE

Tony Hudgins, TransitScreen, briefed the Committee on TransitScreen's *return to office* (RTO) efforts. For context, Mr. Hudgins explained the current landscape of RTO trends. He noted how many CEOs were considering permanent telework in late 2020, spurred forth by the coronavirus pandemic. However, in spring 2021, several big-brand CEOs changed the tune on full-time telework, leading others to follow suite. Companies such as Microsoft, Google, Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo, and Amazon shared concerns that full time telework may not be best for their respective businesses or employees. However, nearly all CEOs have indicated that improving workplace flexibility, which includes a balance of in-office and telework days, will be incorporated as part of RTO plans. Mr. Hudgins quoted a CNBC article, stating “In a survey of more than 350 CEOs and human resources and finance leaders, 70% said they plan to have employees back in the office by the fall of this year, according to a report by staffing firm LaSalle Network. ‘I think Every office will have a re-entry done by Labor Day,’ said LaSalle Network’s founder and CEO,

Tom Gimbel.” Hybrid workplace models, flexible work hours, and “work from anywhere” policies are being considered in many companies as part of their RTO plans.

Mr. Hudgins then transitioned the presentation into a focus on how flexible workplace policies relate to employees’ commutes. Mr. Hudgins projects that employees won’t have regular commutes anymore and that typical rush hour commute times will be harder to predict. Additionally, workplaces/worksites for employees will be numerous. Companies will begin to view office space as an amenity as opposed to a necessity, meaning employees will go to the office when needed, such as for meetings and collaboration opportunities. This could lead to sporadic and unplanned commutes. Since employees may not be required to be in the office as frequently, many may move to the suburbs. This could lead to longer commutes and the need to offer more long-distance and flexible commute options. Finally, employers are expected to place a higher emphasis on employee well-being post-pandemic. Since bad commutes are known to lead to employee unhappiness and turnover, it may become more of a priority for employers to ease the commute burden of their employees.

TransitScreen has adapted their offerings to accommodate these projected trends. *CommuteWise*, a product developed by TransitScreen, surveys a commuter and offers suggested commute modes/routes based on the commuter’s preferences. *CityMotion*, another TransitScreen product, helps commuters plan their trip in real time by suggesting the most optimal transportation modes/routes. TransitScreen’s traditional product also remains a viable service for at-a-glance information regarding current transit availability for any given area.

In concluding the presentation, Mr. Hudgins encouraged TDM professionals in the region to adapt with new commuting trends as commuters and workplaces begin to adapt to a post-pandemic world. Similarly, TransitScreen’s many offerings may help employers and employees better adapt to these changes.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – VRE UPDATE

Cindy King, VRE, provided information related to the VRE’s efforts in helping riders return to the office. Service updates, especially as they relate to COVID-19, are posted to the VRE website. Articles on best practices, good hygiene, and pandemic related VRE policies are also included on the website. Brochures have been created to aid riders as well; they are intended for distribution at commuter fairs, HR offices, etc. TDM professionals may request a brochure by emailing cking@vre.org. Employers will be able to order VRE related brochures from free the VRE website.

VRE is also undergoing improvement unrelated to COVID-19. Ms. King noted that system improvement projects, which include Crystal City station improvements, Broad Run expansion, and a rail maintenance facility upgrade, all have detailed information contained in the “Transforming Rail in Virginia” webpage on the VRE website.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – WMATA RETURN TO WORK ASSISTANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

Antoinette Rucker, WMATA, informed the Committee of WMATA’s SmartBenefits Return to Work Plan. Ms. Rucker began her presentation by providing some background on SmartBenefits and WMATA’s current operating conditions. One third of the authority revenue prior to COVID-19 was generated by the SmartBenefits program. Employers may offer SmartBenefits as a direct

employee benefit, a pretax payroll deduction, or a combination of both. The 2021 IRS Monthly commuter benefit maximums are \$270 for both parking and transit. WMATA is developing a marketing campaign that will help riders return to Metro busses and trains safely. The campaign has just begun and will continue to evolve as the state of ridership and SmartBenefits businesses evolves. To help businesses reacclimate to SmartBenefits, marketing materials will be sent to employers who have closed or dormant accounts via email by May 30th, 2021.

Metro system updates include new rail faregates and ticket vending machines at some locations. Rail faregates and parking gates will now display remaining eligible balance(s). Balances and transaction details are also available in the rider's Apple Wallet, the SmarTrip App and the SmarTrip website account page. Additional card updates include Go Card replacement. Customers who have original SmarTrip cards will be required to replace their card to use the new faregates. A new alternative is the Apple Wallet SmarTrip card, and coming in later 2021, the Android version.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – EMPLOYER OUTREACH SALES TRAINING STATUS

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, led the group in a discussion on possible sales training topics for June and for the next fiscal year. The group elected to proceed with a sales training in June. COG will distribute a survey with potential training topics for FY22 in the coming months.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – EMPLOYER OUTREACH ROUNDTABLE

Members of the Committee shared about upcoming outreach events and in particular about plans to hold Bike to Work Day.

Rebecca Johnson of goDCgo relayed information about the ambassador awards program and the incenTrip initiative. The ambassador awards are scheduled for June 10.

George Clark of Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland told the Committee about upcoming Bike to Work Day preparations and ongoing Commute with Confidence outreach as well.

Kendall Tiffany of Frederick County informed the Committee about an effort to survey employers and Bike to Work Day preparations.

Mark Sofman of Montgomery County Commuter Services related that the new Fareshare rollout is happening in June and Bike to Work Day outreach is ongoing.

Brandan Stucky of Bethesda Transportation Solutions informed the Committee about the Walk to Work initiative combined with Earth Week activities in Bethesda.

Traci McPhail of North Bethesda TMD related that their group is working on Earth Day and Bike to Work Day preparations and outreach.

Stacey King of Prince George's County informed the Committee on the preparations for Bike to Work Day.

Christie Holland of the City of Alexandria updated the Committee on the “How to” videos on commute modes during the pandemic and promoting Bike to Work Day.

Marie Cox of Arlington Transportation Partners announced the upcoming Champions campaign for employer recognition in the County as well as event planning for a National Walking Day event.

Judy Galen of Loudoun County informed the Committee of recent efforts with promoting TeleworkVA! and Bike to Work Day preparations.

Holly Morello of PRTC updated the Committee on their new Bike to Work Day flyer. PRTC is also working with the Transform 66 program.

James Davenport of Transform 66 told the Committee of upcoming employer events centered around the I-66 corridor set for the summer.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – OTHER BUSINESS

There was no discussion for this item.

The next Employer Outreach Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.