



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 18, 2022  
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.  
VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING  
Chairperson: Kari Snyder, MDOT  
Vice Chairperson: Judy Galen, Loudoun 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.*

**Item #2**      **Minutes of November 16, 2021 Meeting**

*Approval was sought for the November 16, 2021 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.*

Kari Snyder, MDOT, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

A motion was made by George Clark, TCCSMD, to approve the minutes, and seconded by Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT.

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the November 16, 2021 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

**Item #3**      **2021 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report**

*Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented substantive changes made to the draft 2021 Bike To Work Day event report.*

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented substantive changes made to the draft 2021 Bike To Work Day event report. Some formatting changes were made to the Acknowledgments section of the report. The Ivy City pit stop was added to the pit stop review. The Employer Challenge was removed as there was no challenge held in 2021. Sponsorship totals were updated to reflect in-kind contributions as well as the support from the sponsors for the event. The social media section was updated as well. Kari Snyder, MDOT, made a motion to endorse the document for release, and it was seconded by George Clark, TCCSMD. The draft report will be published and posted to the publications page on the Commuter Connections website and Subcommittee members will be notified once it's ready.

**Item #4**      **Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guidelines**

*Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on proposed changes to the regional Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guidelines.*

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on proposed changes to the regional Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guidelines. Following the November 16<sup>th</sup> Subcommittee meeting, a comment period was established from November 16<sup>th</sup> to December 16<sup>th</sup>. The maximum allowed rides per year were increased from four to six. Juneteenth National Independence Day was added as a program holiday in which GRH service will not be available. The last change that was made was the addition of Queen Anne's County in Maryland as a GRH service commuting area based on a comment received. George Clark, TCCSMD, made a motion to endorse the updated GRH Participation Guidelines for release, and it was seconded by Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect. The new guidelines will be posted to the Commuter Connections website and collateral materials will be updated as they are replenished.

**Item #5**                    **FY2023 Work Program (CCWP) and 2021 – 2022 Strategic Plan**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY2023 CCWP and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY2023 CCWP and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. The main change to the CCWP document was on Page 11, in Table 1, regarding the reduction of COG’s overhead rates which had a slight effect on the overall budget line items. A component was added to the ‘Pool Rewards program to include the 495NEXT project. Information was also added to regarding the I-66 Express Lanes project as well. Changes made to the Strategic Plan include the removal of the Northern Neck Planning District Commission and Rappahannock Area Development Commission, as GWRideConnect represents that area and was already included on the list. The Program Objective to “Foster cooperative program planning and operations with network members and funding agencies” was added. The Operating Objective to “provide COG/National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) staff support for the Commuter Connections Subcommittee” was added as well. Language was also added to include the maintenance of the Commuter Connections TDM system website as well as the update of GRH rules and guidelines as needed under the Commuter Operations Center. Under Marketing, language was added to reflect use of “the umbrella marketing materials and advertisements in a co-branded manner.” The provision of monthly, quarterly, and annual progress reports and analysis of Commuter Connections TDM program element measures were also added under Monitoring and Evaluation. Mr. Ramfos stated that any evaluation language from the program elements was consolidated and added in to this section.

A motion was made to endorse both of the documents for release by Judy Galen, Loudoun County, and was seconded by Kari Snyder, MDOT. The documents will be presented to the TPB’s Technical Committee and TPB for review in February with a comment period and again in March for approval.

**Item #6**                    **495NEXT Project Briefing**

*Susan Shaw, Megaprojects Director of the Northern Virginia District at VDOT, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the 495NEXT project.*

Susan Shaw, Megaprojects Director of the Northern Virginia District at VDOT, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the 495NEXT project. The project includes a three-mile northern extension of the 495 Express Lanes from the I-495 and Dulles Toll Road interchange to the George Washington Memorial Parkway in the vicinity of the American Legion Bridge. The project consists of a public-private partnership between the Commonwealth and Transurban through 2087. The design-build contractor Lane Construction has been procured. The project goals are to reduce congestion, provide additional travel choices, improve travel reliability, enhance safety, and move more people. The system includes two dynamically tolled lanes in each direction on I-495 and free use for HOV-3+ vehicles as well as transit vehicles. Some other project benefits include taking cars off local roads, addition of bike/pedestrian trails, replacement of existing noise walls, and provision of stream restoration and stabilization. Bike/pedestrian trails will be added along the I-495 corridor behind the noise walls as well as improved bike/pedestrian facilities on bridges that are reconstructed during the project. Maryland and Virginia are working together to coordinate Maryland’s Phase 1 South project and Virginia’s 495NEXT project. The VDOT 495NEXT project is farther along in planning than MDOT’s Phase 1 South project and hopes to be open to traffic by 2025. More information on the 495NEXT project can be found at [www.495northernextension.org](http://www.495northernextension.org).

**Item #7**                    **FY 2021 - FY 2023 Commuter Connections Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Evaluation Framework Revised Methodology Draft Document Update**

*Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, reviewed the draft regional TDM Evaluation Framework Methodology.*

Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, reviewed the draft regional TDM Evaluation Framework Methodology. The evaluation purpose is to document TDM program results, guide TDM program decision-making, and to support regional/local TDM efforts. The ongoing and annual components include tracking participation in TDM elements, tracking incentive program requests and use, measuring service use and satisfaction, and collecting data for regional and local transportation studies. The 2021-2023 TDM elements are Telework, GRH, Employer Outreach, Mass Marketing, and the Commuter Operations Center. Databases such as the ACT! Employer contact database and the Telework Assistance database are used to track program participant data while the EPA COMMUTER model and the TDM-ROI Calculator are used to analyze program participant data. Other data collection tools, such as surveys, include State of the Commute, GRH User Survey, Commuter Connections Applicant Placement Rate, and the Retention Rate surveys. These user surveys assess service use and travel changes. The survey data is also used to calculate service impacts. The 2021-2023 framework emphasis areas include exploring the impact of coronavirus pandemic on travel behavior, positioning Commuter Connections to assist with regional transportation initiatives, and expanding the understanding of the use of technology in commute travel decision-making.

Ms. Diggins continued with explaining travel analysis around the coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically affected commute patterns since spring 2020 with increases in telework, mode shifts, and for some workers, work and home location shifts. The framework collects data on pandemic-related commute behavior and potential ongoing changes related to commuting to help interpret evaluation results and support regional understanding and planning. Regional transportation plans (MWCOC Congestion Management Process, Visualize 2045 LRTP) define objectives and requirements for system performance, equity/accessibility, and other societal goals. The framework continues to collect and report data to document Commuter Connections and TDM contribution to regional transportation goals. Technology has the potential to reinvent travel patterns, through access to new travel options and for real-time information and assistance services. Commuter Connections has implemented several technology-focused programs and is likely to create others in coming years. The framework collects data on commuter attitudes and adoption of new transportation technology and services that Commuter Connections and partners can use to develop services that respond to commuters' needs and interests. The Applicant Placement Rate survey was completed in November 2020. The State of the Commute survey will take place from January through June of 2022. The Telework Assistance Employer survey will take place in Spring of 2023. The draft report will be posted to the SharePoint site and any edits or comments are due by February 4, 2022. In addition to the draft report, there is a handout that specifies the major changes made to the Framework document. Mackenzie Love, NVTA, asked if the TDM technology role only helps people with mode choice and not with emerging new modes entirely. Ms. Diggins responded that the State of the Commute explores modes currently used plus possible modes that could be used if current modes are not available.

**Item #8**                    **FY2021 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Customer Satisfaction Surveys for the Washington DC and Baltimore/St. Mary's County Regions**  
*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2021 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results for both the Washington DC and Baltimore/St. Mary's County regions.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2021 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results for both the Washington DC and Baltimore/St. Mary's County regions. Due to the pandemic, the GRH service saw very low usage. Baltimore region trips were down by 76% and Washington, DC region trips were down by 92%. The lack of trips led to a lack of survey responses. There were 12 survey responses from Washington, DC users and 0 survey responses from the Baltimore region. Therefore, instead of an official report, two memos were drafted to document the occurrence of the survey as well as the reasons for the lack of reports. All 12 survey responses expressed overall satisfaction with the GRH program. The open comment period for the two memos will end on February 15, 2022. Judy Galen, Loudoun County, asked if the number of surveys distributed was equal to the number of rides given during the year. Mr. Franklin responded that she was correct.

**Item #9            2nd Quarter CCWP FY2022 Budget Report**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2022 CCWP 2nd Quarter Budget Report.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2022 CCWP 2nd Quarter Budget Report. The Commuter Operations Center expended about 39%, GRH 30%, Marketing 34%, Monitoring and Evaluation 20%, Employer Outreach 17%, and GRH Baltimore 21%. The total overall expenditure for the entire program is currently at 30%.

**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.*

**The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 12 noon.**