



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 21, 2023
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.

Chairperson: Judy Galen, Loudoun County
Vice Chairperson: Janiece Timmons, WMATA
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 January 17, 2023 Meeting**

Approval was sought for the January 17, 2023 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.

Judy Galen, Loudoun County, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting. George Clark, TCCSMD, made a motion to approve the minutes; Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, seconded the motion. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the January 17, 2023 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

Item #3 **FY2022 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Customer Satisfaction Survey Memorandums for the Washington DC and Baltimore/St. Mary's County Regions**

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes to the FY2022 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results memorandums. The Subcommittee was asked to endorse both finalized documents for release.

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes to the FY2022 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results memorandums for both the Washington DC and Baltimore/St. Mary's County regions. Mr. Franklin provided some context for the memorandums, noting that they were presented to the Subcommittee at the January 17, 2023 meeting; a comment period was established through February 21st. Additionally, highlights from the surveys were presented to the Regional TDM Marketing Group on December 20, 2022.

Following Mr. Franklin's briefing, the Chair asked for a motion to endorse the memorandums for release. Nancy Huggins, MDOT/MTA, made a motion to finalize and endorse the memorandums for release. Halie Mitchell, VDOT, seconded the motion. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to finalize and endorse the memorandums for release. Mr. Franklin noted that the memorandums will be posted to the Commuter Connections SharePoint site for stakeholder access and reference.

Item #4 **Regional Twelve-Year Bottleneck Analysis**

Andrew Meese, COG/TPB staff, presented results and observations on a recent analysis of roadway bottlenecks.

Andrew Meese, COG/TPB staff, presented results and related observations to the Subcommittee on an analysis specifically focusing on roadway bottlenecks over a twelve-year period (2010-2021) for which data are now available. Mr. Meese prefaced his presentation by noting the bottleneck analysis is part of the regional

Congestion Management Process (CMP), which was most recently updated in September 2022. Commuter Connections is a key piece for congestion management strategies identified by the CMP.

The CMP measures peak period congestion by Travel Time Index (TTI). The index takes into account impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on congestion measures. Congestion on-the-whole dramatically decreased in the region beginning in 2020 but began rising in 2021. The Washington, DC region typically ranks high in national rankings for time spent stuck in traffic by motorists.

The top ten bottlenecks in 2021 were located throughout the region. The top two bottlenecks are located at I-95 S @ VA-123 and I-95 N @ VA-123; #3 at DC-295 S @ E Capitol St; #4 B/W Pkwy N @ Powder Mill Rd; #5 I-95 N @ VA-617; #6 US-301 S @ McKendree Rd; #7 I-495 IL @ I-270 Spur; #8 I-66 W @ VA-234; #9 I-270 S @ MD-109; and #10 I-270 N @ MD-109. The rankings are ordered by “impact factor,” which is the sum of queue lengths over the duration of the analysis. The top bottleneck, I-95 S @ VA-123, is particularly noticeable in that its delay is 37% greater than the second-ranked bottleneck.

Bottlenecks are measured by a tool furnished and maintained by the University of Maryland’s Probe Data Analytics (PDA) Suite, which is the source of the data used to conduct the analysis. Advantages of the tool include its efficient means for analysis, its commonality with other CMP analyses, and ability to conduct multi-year analyses. However, the tool does not allow for peak period analyses as the timeframe spans 24-hours, which is a methodological break with past CMP reports. The PDA tool uses vehicle speeds provided for a set of network links as data for the analysis. Rankings can be assembled by congestion (queue length and speed drop), total delay (speed drop weighted by traffic volume), or base impact (queue length and duration).

Mr. Meese concluded his presentation by sharing reasons why bottlenecks may change over time, including both temporary and long-term impacts of construction, population growth, still-evolving long-term travel demand impacts of the pandemic, etc. Real-world examples of these changes in the Washington, DC region include the building of I-495 Express lanes, Silver Line Metro to Wiehle – Reston East, etc.

George Clark, TTCSMD, shared that a reason for congestion on MD 301 S @ McKendree Rd. is the road narrowing at the Prince George’s County and Charles County border.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, shared that the recent analysis has caused a change for the eligible corridors within the Commuter Connections Flextime Rewards Program. Beginning July 1, 2023, the eligible corridors will be I-95 S & N @ VA-123, Baltimore-Washington Parkway N @ Powder Mill Rd, US-301 S @ McKendree Rd, I-495 IL @ I-270 Spur, which includes the American Legion Bridge, and DC-295 S @ E Capitol St.

Item #5 Regional TDM Evaluation Project

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of data collection activities with the regional TDM Evaluation project for FY2023.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of data collection activities with the regional TDM Evaluation project for FY2023. Nearly all data collection for the fiscal year has been completed, apart from a few minor surveys including the ‘Pool Rewards participant survey. The Maryland Telework survey was recently completed.

Work has started on the draft TDM Analysis Report, which is scheduled to be presented to the Subcommittee in July. The analysis will include data from various surveys, the Operations Center, the Guaranteed Ride Home program, regional TDM marketing efforts, and the Employer Outreach program. The final TDM Analysis report is expected to be presented to the Subcommittee in September and adopted in November, which will conclude the three-year analysis cycle.

Work continues on the general public report for the State of the Commute. The report is expected to be finalized and published over the summer. Local jurisdiction data is available upon request to Mr. Ramfos at nramfos@mwcog.org.

Item #6 **Brief or Lasting: Changes to Bike and Pedestrian Volumes During and After the Pandemic**
Yu Gao, COG/TPB staff, reported on the volume of bicycles and pedestrians recorded by continuous count stations before, during, and after the pandemic.

Yu Gao, COG/TPB staff, reported on the volume of bicycles and pedestrians recorded by continuous count stations before, during, and after the pandemic. The report focused on data gathered in Arlington County, where there were 31 automatic bicycle and pedestrian counting stations that produced data from 2020 through the present. The data was collected, cleansed, and published. Supplemental counters in other parts of the region were used to verify regional trends.

The analysis produced many interesting findings. Peak Group usage on weekdays saw a reduction in trips during the peak period during the stay-at-home order in 2020 and has largely remained lower than pre-2020 levels. Weekend use spiked in 2020 but has largely reverted back to pre-pandemic levels after 2020. Off-peak volume grew significantly in 2020 but has since fallen slightly below pre-pandemic levels. Weekday hourly volume during peak commute times dropped significantly from pre-pandemic levels in 2020 and has remained much below pre-pandemic levels; however off-peak trips, such as trips in the middle of the day, have grown. Many additional findings were shared and are documented in a memo to the TPB. Similar findings were documented when comparing the trends from counters in Arlington County to other parts of the region.

Mr. Gao concluded his presentation by sharing key takeaways. On the whole, peak weekday travel declined in 2020 and remains well below pre-pandemic levels, which is reinforced by the finding that weekday hourly volume is more evenly distributed since 2020, likely meaning less bike commutes are occurring. Recreational biking during weekends peaked in 2020 but has largely increased to pre-pandemic levels.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, observed that telework and hybrid work schedules have likely impacted peak bike and pedestrian travel. He asked if there will be future analyses to compare current findings. Mr. Gao responded that this is a long-term analysis and future review of data is expected to occur, however, the availability of data is a major challenge.

Item #7 **FY2023 Bike to Work Day Draft Survey Report**
Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the draft FY2023 Bike to Work Day Survey Report.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the draft FY2023 Bike to Work Day Survey Report. The draft report was included in the meeting agenda packet for attendees to review. The report documents findings from the Bike To Work Day survey, which was concluded in January. Mr. Ramfos advised reading through pages one and two of the report, which presents highlights of the survey findings.

The survey response rate was 21.2%, which is an abnormally large rate. The survey also yielded over 2,000 open-ended comments about the state of bicycling in the region in general. COG/TPB staff will provide the comments for review to jurisdictions upon request.

Mr. Ramfos asked Subcommittee members to review the draft report and submit comments to docomments@mwcog.org by April 14th. The report will be posted to the Commuter Connections SharePoint site for access by Subcommittee members. Comments will be integrated into the report and a final version will be presented to the Subcommittee in May for endorsement.

Katy Lang, DDOT, asked if anything was done to incentivize survey responses. Mr. Ramfos responded that there were no strategies deployed beyond sending the survey through COG's office directly to past event participants.

Item #8 **2023 Bike to Work Day Event**

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2023 Bike to Work Day event to be held on Friday, May 19, 2023.

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2023 Bike to Work Day event to be held on Friday, May 19, 2023. Registration for the event launched on March 1st; and bicyclists can register at biketoworkmetrodc.org. The registration launch was announced on social media. About 1,000 registrants have signed-up thus far, with many more expected throughout the next couple months. The registration goal is 14,000, which is roughly 15% above last year's 12,000 registrants. There are 108 pit stops this year, a growth from 96 pit stops from last year's event. A sponsor drive was conducted and ended on January 31st. Funds from the drive will be used to purchase event t-shirts. Some sponsors have donated bicycles, including two electric bikes. Flyers and rack cards are being delivered to pit stop managers so they can promote the event; a Spanish version of the flyer is available upon request to pit stop managers. A mailing was sent to around 5,000 employers in the region notifying them of the event. A regional proclamation declaring May 19th as "Bike to Work Day" in the National Capital region will be signed at the April Transportation Planning Board (TPB) meeting.

Nancy Huggins, MDOT/MTA, asked which jurisdiction had the most pit stops. Mr. Franklin responded that Fairfax County is the jurisdiction with the most pit stops. Judy Galen, Loudoun County, commented that the event is no longer being marketed as an event where bikers can visit the pit stop and then return home, as it was during the pandemic years. While all are welcome to bike to local pit stops, the event has returned to traditional marketing messaging for biking to a pit stop on the way to work. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, and Mr. Franklin verified that Ms. Galen's comments were correct. Mr. Ramfos noted that the air quality and congestion impacts of the event are hindered when cyclists don't continue their bike commute following their check-in at a pit stop.

Item #9 **FY2024 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and 2022-2023 Strategic Plan**

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2024 CCWP and strategic plan.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2024 CCWP and strategic plan. The Subcommittee had previously endorsed both documents at the January meeting. The CCWP document then went to the TPB Technical Committee and the TPB for review and comment. The only change to the work program since being endorsed by the Subcommittee in January was the new Flextime Rewards bottlenecks which were determined with new data and an analysis that was recently made available.

The FY2024 CCWP was adopted and approved by the TPB at their March meeting. COG/TPB staff will post both the CCWP and the Strategic Plan to the Commuter Connections website and will distribute a hard copy of the CCWP upon request.

Item #10 **FY2023 2nd Quarter CCWP Project Report**

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2023 CCWP 2nd Quarter Progress Report.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2023 CCWP 2nd Quarter Progress Report. Highlights from the Commuter Operations Center include completion of Year 2 tasks for the ATCMTD grant,

which integrated Flextime Rewards and Corridor Challenges into the application. 13,411 commuters were served in the Ridematching database. Planning and preparations for the database conversion to Postgres and migration to Amazon Web Services were undertaken. A new Park & Ride lot was added in Manassas to the digital Commuter Options Map. The regional Guaranteed Ride Home program saw 187 new registrants and 313 re-registrations; there were 1,995 total registrants for the program at the end of the quarter. 160 GRH trips were provided.

Marketing activities included the publication of a fall 2022 newsletter and the launch/operation of a fall umbrella regional rideshare and GRH marketing campaign. Planning for the spring umbrella rideshare and GRH marketing campaign commenced; marketing concepts were reviewed and vetted. The sponsorship drive for Bike to Work Day 2023 commenced and a bid for t-shirts was published. Planning and preparation activities commenced for the 2023 Employer Recognition Awards. A marketing campaign for the 'Pool Rewards program began in November and ran through the end of the quarter; the campaign was conducted in tandem with the I-66 'Pool Rewards carpool bonus funded by VDOT. Four new carpools and three new vanpools were formed throughout the quarter. The University of Maryland was announced as the Car Free Day College Campus Challenge winner as part of the 2022 Car Free Day event that occurred on September 22nd. COG/TPB staff conducted an analysis on pledge counts and emissions resulting from the Car Free Day event. Events promoting CarpoolNow were hosted in November at Park and Ride lots in Frederick County and Prince William County. New onboarding materials were created for vanpool operators pertaining to the Flexible Vanpool program. There were 3,682 active incenTrip end-users by the end of the quarter; there were 126 incentive requests throughout the quarter.

The questionnaire and recipient list for the FY2023 Bike to Work Day participant survey were finalized and released. The Car Free Day participant survey was also developed and released in mid-December.

One-on-one Act! Employer Database training sessions were conducted with local jurisdictions in conjunction with the database consultant. An Employer Outreach sales training session titled *Planning a Virtual Event: Effective Marketing and Messaging Tactics* was held on December 1st.

The Guaranteed Ride Home program Baltimore program served 96 active registrants. 15 GRH trips were provided to program registrants.

Mr. Sheehan reviewed several tables associated with the report that demonstrate program activity and impacts.

Item #11 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.

There were no topics discussed for this item.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 at 12 noon.