

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



COMMUTER OPERATIONS CENTER SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 13, 2005

10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

777 North Capitol Street, N.E.

First Floor, Training Center

Chairperson: Nicole Huntington, National Institutes of Health

Vice Chairperson: Darlene Nader, North Bethesda

COG Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos, (202) 962-3313

Items addressed and issues discussed were as follows:

- 1. Introductions** (see attached attendance sheet).
- 2. Minutes of the June 21, 2005 Meeting**

Mr. Ramfos stated that a correction is needed regarding the June 21st meeting on item 3. The word material, in the phrase "Commuter Connection material" should be plural. The correction was noted and the minutes of the June 21, 2005 meeting were approved.

- 3. Change of Chairperson and Selection of New Vice Chairperson**

Mr. Ramfos stated that Ms. Nicole Huntington with the National Institute of Health had served this past year as Chairperson. Mr. Ramfos stated that a plaque of recognition, signed by the TPB Technical Committee Chairman will be sent to Ms. Huntington for her work as Chairperson. Ms. Nader will be the new Chairperson. Mr. Ramfos stated that it is a Virginia member's turn to occupy the position. Mr. Ramfos stated that he spoke with Ms. Christine Kingery from Loudoun County regarding the Vice Chairperson position. Ms. Kingery is interested in the position, however, she was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Ramfos asked the Subcommittee members for other nominations. There were no other nominations for the Vice Chairperson position. Ms. Kingery was approved as the new Vice Chairperson.

4. Upcoming/ Recent Fairs and Promotions

Ms. Vega stated that Alexandria staff recruited 5 companies to participate in Telework City of Alexandria incentive. The program lasts for 18 months with reimbursement for first six. City of Alexandria staff received submissions to an RFP we put out last month to conduct a market study in the City of Alexandria, in hopes to measure various forms of marketing a mass and individualized scale. Alexandria staff coordinated a 3 day fair at INOVA Alexandria Hospital with a goal of moving more employees to transit and rideshare.

Ms. McColl of ARTMA stated that she is currently training her temporary staff person for her position while she is on maternity leave.

Mr. Freeman stated that NIH is currently promoting Transhare program, which encourages employees to rideshare. Currently the program has 5,900 participants.

Mr. Sightler stated that Howard County staff participated in an event at John Hopkins University on December 20th to promote carpooling.

Ms. Nader stated that North Bethesda staff promoted the Super FareShare program with a mass mailing for the months of November and December.

5. Regional Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guideline Changes

Mr. Ramfos briefed the subcommittee on the Guaranteed Ride Home participation guideline changes. Mr. Ramfos stated that the Guaranteed Ride Home Ad-Hoc group recommended changes to some of the participation verbiage. The Ad-Hoc group wanted to streamline the language and suggested changes for the following paragraphs;

1. **Commuters must call Commuter Connections and receive authorization from Commuter Connections prior to using the GRH service.** Commuter Connections will issue an authorization number(s) to the commuter to approve a GRH trip. **Commuters will not be reimbursed for trips not authorized by Commuter Connections.** After approval, Commuter Connections will make the GRH trip arrangements for the commuter and, if necessary, provide instructions on how and where the GRH transportation provider will pick up the commuter.

8. **To be eligible, a commuter must be physically working in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget.**

9. Eligible commuters can live anywhere inside the MSA or in any of the following areas: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Harford, Howard, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, or Washington counties, the City of Baltimore, and any point along the Upper Eastern Shore in Maryland; and Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Warren, or Westmoreland counties, the City of Fredericksburg, or the City of Winchester in Virginia; and **Berkley, Hampshire**, or Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Adams, **Franklin**, or York counties in Pennsylvania. Any **residence** outside of the above-mentioned areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
10. All GRH trips must originate from the commuter's work location. Depending on the nature of the emergency, and home and work locations, a commuter using the GRH service may be required to use a taxi, car rental, transit, or any combination of these services to reach their destination point. **Commuter Connections will determine the type of service used and will issue a valid GRH authorization number at that time.**
11. Commuter Connections will pay for one vendor service and/or one transit service per request. If the GRH trip is made by a taxi, Commuter Connections will pay for all charges, excluding gratuity, to the destination. **The commuter is responsible only for tipping the taxi driver.** Cancellation on the part of the commuter of a GRH trip may count as one of the four annual trips.
12. GRH is a free service provided by Commuter Connections at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). COG will use its best efforts to provide the Guaranteed Ride Home in accordance with the guidelines shown above. By requesting assistance from the Guaranteed Ride Home program, the participant in the program explicitly acknowledges that COG assumes no liability for the timeliness of the GRH participating vendor(s) or any accidents that may occur on the conveyance.

Subcommittee members were asked to review the proposal changes and provide any input by the end of the month.

6. **TDM Web-Based Software System Update**

Mr. Ramfos discussed the status and next steps for the TDM Web-Based software system project. Mr. Ramfos said that state funders and jurisdiction members met for an input session on October 28th to review the status and issues regarding the web – based

software and other operation center issues. Mr. Ramfos stated that COG staff is meeting with state funders and jurisdictions to put the RFP together in hopes of getting a contractor on board for next year. COG staff is also working with the jurisdictions to gather input and technical assistance regarding the software system. A volunteer group of jurisdiction members will help point out pertinent issues and offer suggestions for improving the current software. Mr. Sightler asked if the way reports generated from the CCRS database will remain the same. Mr. Ramfos stated that the report function will be reviewed and revised to make accessing reports easier and user friendly. Ms. Nader asked if the software system will be managed in-house by COG staff. Mr. Ramfos stated that COG staff and the contractor will manage the system. Ms. McColl asked if COG staff looked into off the shelf software packages that offer similar capabilities. Mr. Ramfos stated that COG staff is looking more at customized software because it will give COG staff the ability to make software changes and/or updates if problems or various issues take place. Mr. Ramfos asked the members to send him e-mails regarding feedback on software issues.

7. Regional Marketing Update

Mr. Franklin briefed the Subcommittee on recent and upcoming Commuter Connections marketing activities. Mr. Franklin presented a PowerPoint presentation on the FY2006 marketing summary campaign/state of the commute findings. The focus of the FY2006 campaign will continue to drive awareness via the high reach & frequency broadcast marketing – radio, focusing on ridematching services, continue to co-promote the GRH program and leveraging partnerships with area employers. The State of the Commute Survey Reports pertaining to marketing findings is as follows:

- 69% of respondents who had taken some action said the advertising they saw or heard encouraged the action
- 70% of respondents who took an action were driving alone at the time
- 61% of respondents who sought information but had not made a commute mode change were likely to try using an alternative mode within the next year
- 47% of area workers did not carpool because they did not know anyone with whom to carpool
- Only 16% of respondents knew Commuter Connections offered help finding a carpool or vanpool partner.

The findings also revealed from 2004 to Sept 2005, average monthly gasoline prices rose by 62%. During this time visits to www.commuterconnections.org increased by 44% in Sept 2005 compared to Sept 2004. Mr. Franklin stated that a direct mail piece to promote the Guaranteed Ride Home Program will be mailed in January. Mr. Franklin stated there were three new 60 second radio spots that aired on thirteen mainstream radio stations. Mr. Franklin played the three radio spots for the Subcommittee members.

8. Client Site Status/Roundtable

Mr. Ramfos explained that COG staff has been deleting duplicate records in the CCRS and GRH database. Mr. Ramfos stated that deleting duplicate records is necessary to avoid system wide problems. Mr. Ramfos stated that the system has been known to shut down because of duplicate records. Mr. Ramfos stated that in the future, COG staff will notify jurisdictions when duplicates are deleted in the database. Ms. Nader asked COG staff send a blast e-mail when problems arise with the software or server. Mr. Ramfos stated that e-mails will be sent to jurisdictions regarding any future software problems. Mr. Ramfos stated that the next set of purges will be for April expiration dates.

9. Other Business/Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Ms. Nader encouraged members to come up with agenda topics for future meetings.

The next meeting of the Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee is scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, 2006.