



Regional TDM Marketing Group

Meeting Notes Tuesday September 18, 2007

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

COG Board Room - 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1. Introductions

2. Minutes of June 19, 2007 Meeting

The minutes were approved as written.

3. Change of Chairperson

Donna Murray from WMATA was recognized for her role as Chair of the Regional TDM Marketing Group for FY07 and was presented with a plaque commemorating her service. Dorothy Dalphon from Frederick County TransIT was installed as the new Chairperson for FY08. Glenn Hiner from Fairfax County was installed as the new Vice Chair.

4. Marketing Campaign Summary

The final draft of the Commuter Connections FY07 2nd Half Marketing Campaign Summary was issued for adoption. The summary contains a description of marketing activity from January to June 2007 and provides visuals of the associated collateral and costs for each item. This report was also posted online with the meeting announcement. The document was approved as a final.

5. Commuter Connections FY08 Proposed Marketing Activity

COG/TPB staff along with Bus Design created a proposed FY 2008 Marketing Communications Brief and posted it to the Commuter Connections Extranet on July 20, 2007 for feedback. This document was a draft outline of proposed Commuter Connections regional marketing activities for the FY 2008 integrated marketing campaign. A comment period was open through August 17, 2007. Comments were taken into consideration and Dan O'Donnell from Bus Design presented the revised Marketing Brief and associated PowerPoint presentation at the September 18, 2007 Regional TDM Marketing Group meeting. In addition, a time line for the launch and implementation of the FY08 campaign was distributed. As a follow-up to the meeting, all handouts were posted to the Commuter Connections Extranet. An email was sent to stakeholders notifying them that the materials were posted and that further comments would be taken on the revised FY08 Marketing Communications Brief through September 25th. Chris Arabia asked what research was used as the basis of the campaign. Mr. Donnell cited several current data sources including but not limited to the 2007 State of the Commute Survey, 2006 Applicant Database/Annual Placement Survey, and Guaranteed Ride Home 2007 Draft GRH Survey Report. Bob Moore questioned whether the advertising would be reaching the correct audience and Nicholas Ramfos stated that COG was working with a professional media buying service who has expertise in the field.

Highlights of the meeting included pending negotiations with ABC to run a previously produced Commuter Connections 30 second TV spot on the new ABC "Carpoolers" sitcom. Discounted prime time advertising space was being offered in exchange for support by Commuter Connections to promote the show through a banner on the Commuter Connections homepage. Opportunities were also available to conduct promotions with ABC radio affiliates to promote the concept of carpooling, Commuter Connections and the TV show. Mirza Donegan from the North Bethesda Transportation Center mentioned the possibility of hosting a Carpoolers Premiere Party if time permitted. Bob Moore cautioned that Commuter Connections not spend a disproportionate amount of media dollars on the television advertising. Nicholas Ramfos stated that this idea was merely on the table for discussion. He pointed out to the group that this was a fantastic opportunity and very affordable as ABC was providing a significant discount. He reassured the group that any allocated funds would be a small percentage of the overall media dollars available.

The four sixty second radio spots that were produced for the spring 2007 campaign will be reused in the fall campaign. The spots focused on four themes: saving money, saving time, Guaranteed Ride Home and ridematching. Timing would begin in October 2007 with heavier levels in the first 4-6 weeks to maximize reach early on in the campaign.

In addition to radio advertising, other proposed media for FY08 included Bus Shelters, Internet advertising Gas pump toppers and Coffee Cup Sleeves. At the meeting, Mr. O'Donnell also solicited network members for free transit advertising to promote the GRH program. Promotional activities and support of special events will also be part of the FY08 campaign.

6. Commuter Connections Web Re-design

Nita Parikh from COG presented a draft of the re-designed Commuter Connections web site. The new look and feel site will be launched by the end of the year. Meeting attendees provided feedback and suggestions on enhancing the new site. One of the new sections will include a "Commuter Spotlight" area where commuters using alternative modes of transportation will be featured. The group was asked to provide testimonials for this section. Another new area of the web site will featured a Commuter Connections Network Member. Bob Moore from VDOT felt that at times the Commuter News section did not portray his funding organization in a positive light citing an article on "Massive Congestion" and suggested that Commuter Connections only post positive stories relating to TDM. Other network members felt that this type of press serves to provide impetus for commuters to consider alternatives to such congestion problems. Chris Arabia commented that rather than dedicate prime real estate on the home page to the news of the day that we instead have a link taking the user to a different page where they can get that information. Donna Murray commented that overall the new web site looked great. Other network members concurred.

7. Stakeholder Research

Peggy Hetherington with Bus Design presented highlights from the 2007 Regional TDM Marketing stakeholder research. During the period of December 2006 through February 2007, twenty-five interviews were held with transportation organizations throughout the Washington metropolitan region,

in northern and southern Virginia, and in the greater Baltimore area. A formal report was distributed which identifies the key issues raised by the stakeholder groups.

This report offers the outcome of these interviews; identifies or suggests new ideas or improvements on existing programs, identifies new markets for TDM services and ways to reach them and also features an occasional reminder of the challenges faced as the region continues to grow. Bob Moore commented that the presentation was helpful and suggested that a list of organizations that participated in the interview be included in the report and that a disclaimer state that the contents of the report are opinion and not fact.

8. 2007 Regional TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan

Douglas Franklin presented a draft of the FY08 Regional TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan. Pertinent sections from last year's report were emailed to the corresponding committee members in mid July for edits.

Mr. Franklin thanked network members who have contributed to the initial draft report and encouraged those that have not to do so within 30 days.

The purpose of the report is to develop a consolidated document that will provide a snapshot of the Washington region; provide a balanced view of available TDM products and services; provide a summary of marketing activities taking place by each Commuter Connections Network member within the prescribed Regional Activity Centers; and provide easy to digest summaries of recent TDM research.

9. Calendar of Events / Marketing Round Table

Meeting participants shared recent advertising/marketing collateral and discussed news and upcoming events happening within their organizations.

10. Other Business / Set Agenda for December 18, 2007 meeting

COG staff thanked network members who participated in the FY07 Marketing Workgroup. Those individuals included Chris Arabia-VDRPT, Mirza Donegan-NBTMD, Dotty Dalphon-Frederick County TransIT, Robin Briscoe-Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, Donna Murray-WMATA, Donna Norfleet-Alexandria Rideshare, and Rich Solli-Maryland Transit Administration. COG staff solicited new members to volunteer for the FY08 Marketing Workgroup to represent each state. Members who stepped forward include Mark Sofman-Montgomery County Commuter Services, Glenn Hiner-Fairfax County, Anna McLaughlin-DDOT and Courtney Kulyk-Urban Trans.

A brief discussion was held regarding the Association for Commuter Transportation national conference held the previous week in Seattle. Those who attended provided commentary.