



## COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 19, 2016

**Chairperson: Kendall Tiffany, Frederick County TransIT**

**Vice Chairperson: Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT**

**Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos 202/962-3313**

### **Item #1 Introductions**

*The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves and to sign the attendance sheet*

Kendall Tiffany, Frederick County TransIT, called the meeting to order by introducing herself and asking the rest of the attendees to do so.

### **Item #2 Minutes of September 15 2015**

*Approval was sought for the September, 2015 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.*

Approval of the September 15, 2015 minutes was put forth on a motion by George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern MD and supported by Tracy McPhail, North Bethesda TMD, to approve the minutes of the meeting as written.

### **Item #3 2015 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report**

*Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the draft 2015 Bike to Work Day event report.*

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, provided updates for Bike to Work Day pit-stop recaps in the draft FY 2015 Bike to Work Day draft event report including those in Glover Park and the Naval Support Activity. Mr. Hersey then discussed social media updates including analytics from Facebook and Twitter.

Mr. Hersey then noted that updates to employers represented had been made to the event draft report including companies listed.

Mr. Hersey concluded by mentioning that information on radio advertising edits had also been made

A request to endorse the report for release was requested by chair, Kendall Tiffany and moved by Judy Galen, Loudoun County, which was 2<sup>nd</sup>ed by Mark Sofman, Montgomery County. The final draft was unanimously approved for release.

### **Item #4 FY 2017 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and 2015-2016 Strategic Plan**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY 2017 draft CCWP and to the 2015-2016 Commuter Connections Strategic Plan*

Mr. Ramfos began by reminding Subcommittee members of the former presentation of these documents in November and discussed changes that have been made. Mr. Ramfos clarified

language added on the bottom of page two to clarify that each of the project areas in the work program also show overall cost estimates as well as associated consultant costs and any substantive direct costs. Overall costs by line item found in Table 1 on page ten. He explained that major costs were pulled out of the overall costs for each project area and that costs shown in the narratives of the project areas are for more substantive expenses.

Mr. Ramfos mentioned that in Table 1, overhead rates have changed, based on COG's federally approved indirect cost allocation plan, but that the bottom line number has not changed and the overall overhead rate actually decreased.

Mr. Ramfos also mentioned that there were some minor language changes in that need to be made on page seven on annual cost impacts to show 'cost per ton' for PM2.5, PM2.5 Precursor NOx, and CO2 to clearly how impacts are being measured for greenhouse gas emissions given the recent regional conversation on these impacts. .

A request to endorse the FY 2017 draft CCWP was made by Chairperson Kendall Tiffany which was moved by Mr. George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, and seconded by Kelly Woodward, DATA. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to endorse the FY 2017 Commuter Connections Work Program for release.

Next, Mr. Ramfos pointed out that there were minor changes in language in the draft Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. On page six on the 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point, the word "annual" was added and on page seven the words 'to be associated' and "forgoing" were added to tone down language and that the word 'breakdowns' was added. Also, on page 11 a new bullet point was created with the language "participation in partnership in various transportation projects" in order to promote the potential for future partnerships on various infrastructure and/or construction projects in the region with Commuter Connections.

A request to endorse the 2015-2016 Commuter Connections Strategic Plan was made by Chairperson Kendall Tiffany which was moved Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, and seconded by Ms. Kelly Woodward, DATA. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to endorse the 2015-2016 Commuter Connections Strategic Plan for release.

Mr. Ramfos then informed the Subcommittee that the next steps on these items will be to present the work program to the TPB Technical Committee in February and then to the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee where there will be a thirty day public comment period. He concluded in explaining that the final draft CCWP will be presented to the TPB Technical Committee in March to brief them on the changes and then on the TPB in March for final approval. Finally, Mr. Ramfos reminded the Subcommittee that the Strategic Plan changes will be incorporated into the full version of the Strategic Plan which will be posted on the Commuter Connections website.

**Item #5      Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Participation Guidelines**

*Steven Osborn, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the changes to the Guaranteed Ride Home participation guidelines.*

Steven Osborn opened by thanking the Subcommittee members for their comments which were submitted on the proposed changes to the GRH Participation Guidelines. Mr. Osborn then

addressed each modification that was made to the document including minor wording changes while addressing questions for clarification from Subcommittee members.

Mr. Osborn addressed specific changes to the guidelines including changes to Rule 1, where there was a minor shifting of language to ensure a better flow additions, Rule 2 which clarified that there is only one authorization number, Rule 4 regarding the ability for commuters to re-register via the Commuter Connections website, Rule 5 where there were additions to clarify what does not qualify as an eligible trip, Rule 8 where added language clarified the physical work areas, Rule 10 where clarification was made regarding 'registered' work location and to Rule 11 to clarify the voucher process.

Vice Chairperson Fatimah Allahdoust shared that rules have been strategically designed for the on-set of the program.

A question was asked as to how many 1 time exceptions are given to GRH participants in a year.

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos responded that it's a very low number and averages about 30-40. An additional question was asked by the Subcommittee regarding re-registration notifications and how they are handled. Mr. Ramfos replied that participants are given ample notification of re-registration and reminders.

A request to endorse was made by Chairperson Kendall Tiffany then moved by Mr. Mark Sofman, Montgomery County and seconded by Mr. George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland.

The Subcommittee voted to endorse the recommended changes to the Guaranteed Ride Home participation guidelines. Mr. Osborn reported that the guidelines would immediately be updated on the Commuter Connections website and would also be reflected in updated registration and re-registration materials.

**Item #6      FY 2015 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Customer Satisfaction Draft Survey Results**

*Douglas Franklin COG/TPB Staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY 2015 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results and draft reports for both the Washington DC and Baltimore Metropolitan regions.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, began by identifying the presentations and formal draft reports included in the Subcommittee agenda packet. Mr. Franklin talked about the categorical structure of the surveys represented in the data presented. Mr. Franklin continued in discussing the number of surveys distributed for FY15, being with 2,280 in the Washington DC metropolitan region, which was identical to the number of GRH trips taken during the fiscal year. 384 survey responses were received which reflected a response rate of 17%, being a percentage greater than the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Franklin then went through each survey question and provided statistics on the responses comparatively between this and last year, primarily pertaining to service quality and response time.

A question was asked by a Subcommittee member regarding the percentage of rental car trips utilized during the duration in question, to which less than 5% was the answer. Another question was asked by the Subcommittee regarding Metro reimbursement to which the answer was that the GRH does reimburse for Metro usage.

Mr. Franklin then discussed the quantity of excellent and good survey responses combined, of which there were 360, illustrating overwhelmingly positive results. Mr. Franklin continued in sharing statistics including reason for trips requested. He shared that personal illness was the primary motivator at 35% followed by sick child and other at 25% and overtime was the least used reason at 13%.

Mr. Franklin then discussed the ten year comparison statistics for the region. He shared that reservation staff maintained a 95% approval rating the same for taxi and rental car rating which stayed at 95% and that the response time rating experienced a long decline over several years and was currently at 91%. The overall approval rating was 94%. In regards to written responses to surveys, Mr. Franklin noted that 70% of survey participants provided written comments. Of those responses 74% were positive which was described comparatively as a 4:1 margin of positive to negative comments.

A question was asked by the Subcommittee regarding an example of the type of survey comments received that were both positive and negative to which Mr. Franklin replied that the negative portion of those types of comments were mostly related to waiting duration. He then displayed the survey written feedback categories in Overall Service, Transportation Service, Reservation Staff and Response Time and then shared compliments from survey participants. Mr. Franklin provided a recap of the information he presented regarding the GRH program and the Washington metropolitan region additionally informing Subcommittee Members that despite the response rate, every user of GRH has the opportunity to complete the program user satisfaction survey.

A question was asked by the Subcommittee regarding wait time and whether or not 30 minutes was reasonable wait? Mr. Franklin replied that most people are picked up from their office. To which the Subcommittee asked if the same applies for participants taking the Metro to a taxi. The response provided was that most Metro stations have taxis parked in front which typically reduces the wait time. Regarding the average wait time, a subsequent question was asked of the Subcommittee inquiring as to why the average wait time was recorded as 30 minutes. Mr. Franklin replied that, It's the average wait and not reflective of all waits and that it depends on where they are located for example in Frederick vs. DC. Mr. Franklin then clarified that about 70% of respondents had less than a 15 minute wait and that there could be a bias in the data collected due to self-reporting.

Mr. Franklin then began to discuss the Baltimore region GRH customer satisfaction survey results and gave some background history including that the program began compiling customer satisfaction data in October 2011. Mr. Franklin stated that there were 662 participants in the Baltimore GRH program, that the survey method is the same as for the Washington Region, that online and card surveys were also used. 95% of survey respondents received the online survey, 146 surveys were sent between July 2014 and June 2015, 29 individuals completed the survey which was reflected as a 20% response rate. Regarding the service rating of reservation staff 90% of responses were good or excellent and that there were no poor responses and that transportation service received 82% good or excellent rating by respondents.

The Subcommittee then asked the question as to why Baltimore statistics were so different than the Washington DC region to which Mr. Franklin replied that the sample size is much smaller and that the numbers are generally lower because of the small pool to work with, but the return rate is better that Subcommittee members may see some stark differences between regions for example the response time for a trip was very poor when compared to the Washington Region which was rated at 38% fair or poor and 62% good or excellent. Mr. Franklin suggested that perhaps there is a different ratio of taxi availability to the population.

The Subcommittee than asked whether or not the GRH program has considered making an agreement with Uber to which the answer was provide that the GRH program is looking into Uber as a possible provider; particularly for areas thin the region not serviced well by taxi cabs. Travis Johnston replied that there may be some obstacles to implementing a partnership with shared mobility providers such as Uber, but COG/TPB staff is looking into incorporating these types of services as an option.

Mr. Franklin than continued his presentation sharing that in the Baltimore Region 11% of GRH participants waited 15 minutes or less, 73% waited 30 mins or less and that the average wait time to be picked up was 32 minutes. This was compared to the Washington Region of 70% that waited 15 mins or less acknowledging this as a huge difference. Mr. Franklin then stated that in terms of overall service the GRH program received 90% approval rating of good or excellent in the Baltimore metropolitan region, and that there were a higher percentage of people who provided written responses where 41% of the written responses were positive, 23% provided points of improvement, but compliments remain the largest category or responses. The ratio of positive to negative comments was related as a 2:1 comparison in favor of positive remarks. Personal illness was identified as the major reason for use of GRH service. In conclusion Mr. Franklin asked the question as to how ultimately wait times can be improved through additional services like Uber. He also requested that Subcommittee members submit comments regarding the two survey reports he presented to Commuter Connections. A comment period was established with a due date for February 17, 2016 by close of business (5 p.m.) on these items. Both of the draft reports will be posted on the Subcommittee's SharePoint site and comments can be submitted to [docomments@mwcog.org](mailto:docomments@mwcog.org).

**Item #7 TDM Software System Update**

*Travis Johnston, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on upcoming updates to the TDM software system*

Travis Johnston, COG/TPB staff, provided a summary of the current TDM 4.0 Working Group. He explained that the working group was comprised of representatives of all three states. The initial meeting of the group was held on January 5<sup>th</sup> during which a comment period was established for the system look and feel concepts.

Mr. Johnston also stated that the Ridematching Committee was asked to provide comments on the system look and feel during their December meeting, as well as the reports module and any existing problems users have been experiencing with the current system. Comments were due by January 15<sup>th</sup>. Once all the comments were received, the group would be categorizing and prioritizing any existing system issues and requests for upgrades. Mr. Johnston also stated the working group would be having their second meeting at following today's Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Johnston then provided some updates on the current TDM system build which included: 'SchoolPool' 2.0 being fully deployed and operational. This new version was updated to bring 'SchoolPool' in line with TDM regarding using the most recent JBOSS software and Oracle database. The look and feel was updated to mimic the current TDM system and optimize the software for mobile devices. Mr. Johnston also reported that new schools from DC and Arlington were added.

Mr. Johnston also provided an update on the Commute Log calendar and reported that testing is underway and any changes would be discussed this week with the design team.

**Item #8      FY 2015 – FY 2017 Draft Commuter Connections Draft Transportation Emission Reduction Measures (TERMs) Evaluation Framework**  
*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff briefed the Subcommittee on the draft FY 2015-2017 draft Commuter Connections TERMS Draft Evaluation Framework Document*

Mr. Ramfos began a PowerPoint presentation to compliment the draft FY2015-2017 TERMS Evaluation Framework Methodology report. Mr. Ramfos stated that the report is updated every three years and that it is essentially a blue print on how data is collected and evaluated for the Commuter Connections TERMS. He then identified LDA consulting as responsible for helping putting the report together and that the initial report was discussed in the fall with the TDM Evaluation Group and that the draft report was presented to TDM Evaluation Group in December. Today's goal is to brief the Subcommittee on the report and to set up a comment period.

Mr. Ramfos then described his presentation as an overall glimpse of the work being done and that the Commuter Connections TERMS were adopted to allow the region to meet air quality conformity goals and the research conducted contributes to the annual assessment of Air Quality Conformity and communicates impacts to stakeholder groups such as state funders and network members.

Mr. Ramfos identified the TERMS evaluated as Maryland Telework, GRH, Employer Outreach, Mass Marketing, and the Commuter Connections Operations Center. He then shared that the analysis approach and specific calculation methodology used to compile the report requires data for each TERM with specific data sources as well as how the data is collected, reported and analyzed .

Mr. Ramfos stated that there have been challenges and opportunities along the way which have helped shape the report. There is also an Evaluation schedule. He stated that over time through each evaluation cycle there was a learning process to help determine that perhaps initial impact estimates from each measure were either too high or low and the team then went back to evaluate how those impacts were determined and apply results from the data collected to strengthen the analysis for each of the measures. He also stated said that the evaluation team also looked to methodologies used in other parts of the country and world to ensure the resulting analysis for each of the measures are defensible.

Mr. Ramfos added that there are several different stakeholder groups interested in the measures, including policymakers, program funding agencies, network members, employers, commuters,

and the general public. The effectiveness of the measures need to be communicated from many different angles in an effective manner.

Mr. Ramfos continued with his presentation and explained the performance continuum and the awareness that there is a trigger point where the commuter/participant gets engaged and then buys the product. Awareness of services is considered and whether respondents to data collection activities are aware of programs, modes, and willingness to try those modes as well as how satisfied they are using the modes. A great deal of commuters contact Commuter Connections, and there is a need to find out if they actually use the information provided for alternative modes such as a carpool, Metro and whether they actually used the information to join a carpool or ride the Metro and the motivation for the change. The motivational influences assist as a feedback circle that helps improve how to communicate many of these messages. Actual impact of that change is considered along with mode splits, actual placements, the VMT reduced, and energy and emissions reductions.

There are several surveys that are conducted during the three year evaluation cycle and results are shared with the Subcommittee. The TDM Evaluation Group is briefed and feedback is sought on how to conduct the data collection and analysis for each of the surveys. Employee surveys at employer sites are helpful for the Employer Outreach TERM and a training session was held in September on how to conduct those surveys with the hope that this will spur interest at the jurisdictional level to conducting surveys and share the data with COG for this analysis. Mr. Ramfos thanked Montgomery County for sending data that is going to help tremendously and asked for others who have surveys to please share them with COG.

Mr. Ramfos stated that the State of the Commute survey is currently being conducted. To date 500 responses have been received and the anticipated goal is 6,000. This survey helps with the telework and mass marketing measures. There are also user surveys, and results will be used from them to calculate impacts. Those surveys include the GRH survey, telework at employer sites, which will include results from the Telework Virginia program, and the Placement Rate survey which is conducted every three years.

Mr. Ramfos then explained that results from the BTWD registrant survey conducted every 3 years, and a participant survey for the 'Pool Rewards program will both be used to calculate the impacts for the Mass Marketing measure. During this cycle, a retention rate survey which looks at how program participants are retained in alternative modes through either ridesharing or GRH will be implemented. There are also many other databases and analysis tools used including the Employer ACT! Database, which is used to analyze the Employer Outreach TERMS and is paired that up with results from employer surveys that are done at the work site. The EPA's COMMUTER model is then used to calculate benefits. The ACT! Database is also used to delineate employers that have used telework assistance. Website volume and calls to the Commuter Operations Call Center are analyzed for the Mass Marketing measure to keep track of general public inquiries during regional TDM Marketing campaigns.

Mr. Ramfos stated that marketing activities are documented through campaign summary documents as well as special events like BTWD and Car Free Day. We know how many people are participating in those as well as participants in 'Pool Rewards.

As was mentioned earlier, EPA's COMMUTER model is used to calculate impacts from Employer Outreach. Therefore, it is important to keep all of that data in the ACT! Database up to speed because it is pulled during the evaluation cycle and loaded into the EPA's model which helps to

determine the impacts are at those particular sites. Much of the calculation is based on location as well as the level of participation at the work site. As many of you know, only the higher levels of participation, levels 3 and 4, are being counted for that particular analysis.

Mr. Ramfos then stated that there is an impact calculation for each of the measures. There is overall user population which funnels down to placements and a placement rate is calculated for each of the measures along with a VTR factor which are vehicle trips that are reduced based on mode changes. Mode changes from single occupant drivers to HOV types of situations are considered, but there are also changes that happen between the HOV modes that include those that switch from carpools to vanpools, from vanpools to transit, from transit to carpools, etc. Vehicle miles traveled reduced are considered as well as emissions reductions. Additionally, there are factors that COG has as part of its air quality planning process used to determine the overall calculations for each of the measures.

Mr. Ramfos concluded in discussing the background of the current update of the TERMS Evaluation Framework Methodology document and reviewed the updates to the report which build on the 2012-2014 evaluation cycle. The methodology for the retention rate survey needed to be determined in order to find out whether or not past program users are still using an alternative mode in their daily work commute. This will allow for a definitive way of evaluating retention in alternative modes for use in the methodology calculation for the Operations Center and GRH measures.

In the past there has been an assumed retention rate that was not readily verifiable, but rather inferred through various data points whether through the State of the Commute or the Applicant Placement Rate Survey. The Retention Rate Survey will allow the region to take the credit beyond the typical evaluation cycle. The survey target population for the survey will reach as far back as 2008 to determine that these participants may have registered for Commuter Connections services in 2008 but are still participating in an alternative mode.

Mr. Ramfos then explained that the framework also addressed the collection of data as it relates to livability, sustainability performance criteria through the TERMS. They will need to be organized to communicate the information in a way that is going to make sense to regional and local decision makers.

The impact goals for VT and VMT are updated and there is a region wide conformity tracking sheet that will need to be updated with the impacts from the evaluation impact results. For employer locations in Maryland that have conducted surveys for teleworking, the impacts will need to be captured along with anyone assisted outside of Maryland and how it contributes to the overall Telework measure. Although these impacts are not counted under Telework because those requests come through the Operations Center. This was the method used in the 2012-2014 cycle which is now documented in the framework.

All of the level three program Employer Outreach employer sites needed verification that they did meet minimum thresholds through proper documentation. In the Mass Marketing Measure there is a Vanpooling component to Pool Rewards which will require data collection for reporting purposes.

There is also an updated methodology for the Car Free Day component where data needed to be defined to assess not only Car Free Day but any other special events that will be forthcoming.



Documentation for the Commuter Operations Center for Telework requests received from outside of Maryland was also added.

Vice Chair Fatimah Allahdoust then asked the question why Virginia was not also included in Telework to which Mr. Ramfos replied that Virginia is performing its own analysis so we are going to import that information as a part of the Telework evaluation section.

Mr. Ramfos stated that when requests for Telework information are received in the Commuter Operations Center there is a one pager that explains all of the options for Telework sent to the requestor. In these instances the commuter contacted Commuter Connections for Telework information but not through a Maryland employer.

Regarding the Retention Rate Survey, past TERM evaluations assumed impacts did not carry-over from the previous period, but if mode shifts extend beyond three years, some credit could be carried over from one three year cycle to the next.

Program users who participated before 2015-2017 evaluation period will be surveyed as part of the Retention Rate survey, in order to define their current mode, duration of current mode, services received, and influences for current mode. Then a retention curve or lifecycle for continued alternative mode experience will be developed. A 5 year cycle for this survey is being considered, because it may not be necessary to conduct a Retention Rate Survey every three years.

There was a suggestion by a Subcommittee member to consider performing the survey when the Household Travel Survey comes out which is also every five years. And that it would be good to be able to compare our data with this data.

Regarding data to assess TERM contributions to regional goals there are many transportation decisions that are increasingly being driven by sustainability livability health/safety and system performance. Particularly with the performance requirements that are in MAP-21, so perhaps some of the TERM evaluation results can be used to demonstrate what the wider range of benefits that these particular programs are and how they contribute to the regional transportation system performance.

Consideration is also being given at expanding efforts to collect data on these benefits and that would include looking at not only the State of the Commute and the User Survey but also the travel routes and time, the role of TDM and quality of life and transportation satisfaction. Many of those survey questions are in the State of the Commute which will assist in looking at those results and how to use them as a way to estimate societal benefits, such as I accident reductions and possibly distracted driving. We also want to explore how TERM data could be analyzed with travel movement data sources for location-specific analyses.

We want to make sure that data is valuable to all of our audiences and we are looking at ways to organize that data so that it is well communicated to all stakeholders. We want to produce top findings summaries and other ways that we can package this information that we could use through social media, targeted emails, and research briefs and in our newsletter where we have used some infographics based on the data results Mr. Ramfos requested that if anyone has any ideas on how to package the data for it to be useful to contact him.

Mr. Ramfos then stated that the draft report was released to the TDM Evaluation Group last month and the goal is to finalize the report in the spring. A comment period was established through February 12<sup>th</sup> and the draft report will be posted on SharePoint site and comments can be sent to the doccomments@mwcog.org.

There was a question from Lisa Dumetz regarding the timing of the Placement rate Survey. Mr. Ramfos stated that the survey was conducted and a report was produced last fiscal year which has already been released. Currently on State of the Commute is now being conducted and the expectation is that there will be a draft Technical report by the end of the fiscal year which will brought it to the Subcommittee in July for review. The Retention Rate survey will be completed in the spring and a draft will be available by summer. The GRH survey will be completed in the spring and the Bike to Work survey will conducted next fiscal year the final TERM analysis report will be drafted next fiscal year in June and then the goal is to finalize it and release it in December of 2017.

A question was asked as to how often the placement rate survey was conducted to which the answer was every three years.

Mr. Ramfos also mentioned that we are willing to provide any data that the Subcommittee members would like to have upon request.

A comment period was established with a due date for February 12, 2016 on this item.

**Item #9      2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter CCWP Budget Report**

*Barbara Brennan, COG/TPB staff briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY 2016 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter budget report.*

Ms. Brennan presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter budget report and reviewed the spend percentages for each of the program elements in the FY 2016 CCWP. She stated that the program spend rates were on track.

**Item #10      Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting**

Subcommittee members are encouraged to contact Nicholas Ramfos with any particular agenda items they may be interested in seeing on the next agenda.

**The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 at 12 noon.**