



September 9, 2010

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
327 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Connolly:

Thank you for your letter dated July 29, 2010 regarding the recent results of the Commuter Connections 2010 State of the Commute (SOC) Survey. You raised questions about the validity of the results in the SOC survey concerning the percentage of bicycle commuters in the Washington Region and the percentage of federal workers who telework. I have looked into each of these results, and prepared the following additional information concerning each one.

The Percentage of Bicycle Commuters in the Washington Region.

You note that the percentage of bicycle commuters in Washington DC increased between 2000 and 2008 according to the Census and the American Community Survey while the SOC results show bicycle/walk trips for the Washington Region as essentially flat between 2001 and 2010. These data do not reflect a drop in suburban/exurban bicycling or walking. The difference is likely the result of several factors related to survey methodology.

First, bike use is a very small percentage of total mode use in the region, thus it is particularly difficult to measure changes over time. The 6,600-respondent sample for the SOC survey is robust, with a regional confidence level of 95% \pm 1.2%. But the percentages of commuters region-wide who primarily use bike to commute have ranged from 0.2% to 0.5% in the four SOC surveys conducted to date, so even a doubling of the observed bike share would be within the \pm 1.2% range and would not be statistically reliable. Additionally, the District of Columbia represents only 12% of the regional worker population, so a large change could occur in bike use in this jurisdiction without a measurable effect on the regional percentage. The 2000-2008 increase in the bike share for DC shown in the Census data is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, but it is not statistically significant for the other jurisdictions outside of DC.

Second, it is difficult to compare mode use data from the SOC, ACS, and decennial census, because those surveys count mode use differently and have different survey methodologies. The sample size of workers in the 2000 and 2008 Census Surveys were larger than the SOC, thus enabling the Census survey data to more accurately reflect the walk/bike share.



Third, part of the difference also could be due to the data collection period of the SOC, which is late January to mid-April. This time period, which is less attractive for bicycling, likely attracts the most committed riders. If new riders are occasional riders, the winter bike share measured in the SOC might not reflect new ridership. Additionally, the SOC survey only includes workers living in "households". Workers living in "group quarters" are more likely to commute to their jobs by walking or bicycling.

The Percentage of Federal Workers Who Telework.

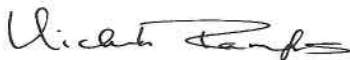
The telework data shown for federal government workers in the Washington Region in the 2010 SOC did show a 27% rate of teleworking. In accordance with the definition that has been used in all four SOC surveys to date, this includes workers who telework either regularly or occasionally. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) found that 10% of all federal workers telework regularly (meaning one or more days per week). This was very close to the SOC's result that 11% of federal employees in the Washington DC region telework one or more days per week.

OPM's survey also found that 12% of federal workers telework less than one day per week on average which would bring the total federal telework rate to 22%. This is compared to the SOC's overall rate for of 27% for the Washington DC region. The Washington DC region's federal telework rate is likely to be higher than the national average, due to the predominance of office positions in the headquarters locations. I would also note that, as with any sampled survey, the 27% figure is subject to some statistical variation. The sample size of federal employees in the SOC survey is 1,605, with a confidence level of 95% \pm 2.4%. Thus, the regional federal telework percentage could fall between 25% and 29%.

An additional significant result from the SOC survey is that 35% of the federal work force in the Washington DC metropolitan region stated that they "could and would" telework because they felt that their job responsibilities would allow them to work at a location other than their main workplace at least occasionally, and would telework if they were given the opportunity. This represents an opportunity to achieve even greater teleworking for federal government employees in the future.

We greatly appreciate your work on expanding telework participation in the region, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality in the region through transportation demand management strategies.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Ramfos
Director, Commuter Connections
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

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July 29, 2010

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos
Director, Commuter Connections
MWCOG
777 N. Capitol St
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Ramfos,

Thank you for sending results of your 2010 State of the Commute Survey. I was pleased to see that single occupant trips in the region are declining as a percentage of trips while transit and telework utilization is increasing. Your efforts, in partnership with local jurisdictions, are undoubtedly responsible for some of the growth in telework and decline in single occupant vehicle trips. Over the long term, these trends should continue if we are successful in focusing regional growth in activity centers identified by COG, and if jurisdictions continue implementing growth strategies consistent with COG climate change objectives.

I am curious, however, about the validity of a couple data points in the study. According to the Census' American Community Survey, the percentage of bicycle commuters in Washington, D.C. doubled between 2000 and 2008. Yet the 2010 Survey states that bike/walk trips are only 2% of trips, the same as in 2001 Survey, implying either that walking trips are declining or that walking/biking declines in exurban COG jurisdictions are offsetting dramatic increases in bike ridership in the core. Based on my experience in Fairfax, including our investment in bike lanes, bus bike racks, and a bike map, I do not think bike ridership is declining in the suburbs, so I wonder if the 2010 Survey may have understated the growth in bicycle mode share.

The 2010 Survey also found that 27% of federal employees telework. In contrast, the Office of Personnel Management found that only 10% of federal employees telework regularly, and a Partnership for Public Service survey estimated that only 6% of federal employees telework regularly. The Patent and Trade Office and

General Services Administration seem to have the highest rates of regular telework, at approximately 85% and 30%. Given these percentages, and the fact that many agencies have telework rates close to zero, it seems improbable that 27% of federal employees telework in the region. For that to be true, many other agencies would have telework rates close to GSA's; we have not seen or heard about such robust telework programs on the Oversight and Reform Committee. While the regional federal telework rate would logically be somewhat higher than the national rate of 10%, since we have a disproportionate share of federal white collar jobs, the 27% rate could be overcounting infrequent telework as regular telework or overestimating federal telework participation in some other manner.

Thank you again for sending me the 2010 Survey. One of the reasons I have been an enthusiastic supporter of the Telework Improvements Act is that we need comprehensive information on commuting patterns in our region. COG's Commuter Surveys are an important part of the information collection system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerald E. Connolly', written in a cursive style.

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
11th District, Virginia

GC/ZF