



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 16, 2018**

**12 noon – 2:00 p.m.**

**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**

**777 North Capitol Street, N.E.**

**Third Floor, COG Board Room**

**Chairperson: Janiece Timmons, WMATA**

**Vice Chairperson: George Clark, Southern Maryland**

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

**Item #1 Introductions**

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

**Item #2 Minutes of November 21, 2017 Meeting**

*Approval was sought for the November 21, 2017 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.*

Janiece Timmons, WMATA requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

A motion was made by George Clark, Southern Maryland and his motion was seconded by Kari Snyder, MDOT.

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the November 21, 2017 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

**Item #3 2017 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report**

*Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the substantive changes to the draft 2017 Commuter Connections Bike to Work Day Report. The draft report was presented to the Subcommittee on November 21st. A December 15th deadline for comments was established. The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the final draft report.*

Mr. Hersey began in thanking those who contributed to the event report particularly those who provided their jurisdiction's event proclamation information. He continued in noting that he will provide a few brief highlights that may not have been reported to the Subcommittee in previous meetings.

Moving to Pg. 12 of the report Mr. Hersey drew the Subcommittee's attention to the registration growth chart which displayed continued growth of the in the event's popularity having begun in 2001. He then moved on to Pg. 14 where a chart displaying details regarding sponsorship levels was provided in part due to a request by the Subcommittee at the previous meeting in November 2017. Mr. Hersey shared that substantive changes were made to pit-stop recaps along the lines of edits to format and punctuation.

He concluded in sharing that this year's event is slated for May 2018 and encouraged Bike to Work Day Steering Committee members in their efforts to put together another successful event and that he will be looking forward to the next year's report and to generating future data on the event's growth in 2018. He stated that the next step for the event report will be for the Subcommittee to endorse the report for release to the public.

A motion was made by Traci McPhail, North Bethesda TMD and was supported by Susanna Parker, Bethesda. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to endorse the 2017 Bike to Work Day Event Report for release. The final report will be published and posted to the Commuter Connections web site.

**Item #4      FY 2019 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and 2017 – 2018 Strategic Plan**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY2019 CCWP and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. Both documents were presented to the Subcommittee on November 21st for review. A comment period of December 8th was established. The Subcommittee was asked to endorse both documents for release.*

Mr. Ramfos began in reminding the Subcommittee that they were provided the highlights of the FY 2019 Draft Commuter Connections Work Program at the last Subcommittee meeting in November 2017 where the strategic plan had also been released for comment. He noted that for the record there were changes including adjustments to figures in Table 1 on pg. 11 of the CCWP based on the fact that overhead rates for MWCOG had changed and needed to be updated in the document. These adjustments ranged between four and five thousand dollars and pertained to the categories of management and administration, leave benefits, fringe benefits and indirect costs.

Additionally, as it pertains to transportation information services within the operations center section of the report, incenTrip was included as one of the system mobile app modules that the program will be supporting through the Commuter Connections mobile applications. The incenTrip mobile app was developed in collaboration with the University of Maryland and will be released in upcoming weeks. Other changes included the addition of the I-395 Express Lanes incentive program under the 'Pool Rewards section of the document on pg. 31 having received a funding commitment letter from VDOT for the project.

As it relates to the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan Mr. Ramfos noted that the only major changes made were in the Monitoring and Evaluation section of the document regarding the evaluation project that is conducted for Commuter Connections, where the language Transportation Emissions Reductions Measure report was replaced with the new title of the report being now the TDM Evaluation Report.

Mr. Ramfos then opened the floor for questions pertaining to the two documents. Being that there were no questions, Janiece Timmons/WMATA requested a motion by the Subcommittee to endorse both documents for release.

A motion was made by George Clark, Tri-County Council of Southern MD and was seconded by Holly Morello, PRTC. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to endorse the FY 2019 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and 2017 – 2018 Strategic Plan for release.

Subsequently, Mr. Ramfos noted that as for next steps for the FY2019 CCWP, he will be presenting it to the TPB's Technical Committee and to the TPB in February. It will then be released for public comment and then he will return to the aforementioned committees for a final review and an approval by the TPB. Subcommittee members will be kept abreast of any further developments pertaining to the FY2019 CCWP. The long version of the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan will be updated and posted to the web for review.

**Item #5 Long Range Plan TPB Endorsed Initiatives**

*Kanathur Srikanth, COG/TPB staff, discussed the recent TPB endorsement of five initiatives that the Long-Range Plan Task Force recommended on December 20th.*

Kanathur Srikanth, COG/TPB, acknowledged that this is his first briefing to the Subcommittee as DTP staff Director on this subject matter and shared that the two goals for his presentation were to acknowledge the work of the TDM community via the Commuter Connections Subcommittee and to discuss the most effective ways of addressing the regions congestion and mobility needs and what more can be done. Mr. Srikanth continued in noting that the TPB believes there can be greater success in addressing TDM problems.

Providing a brief background on the process, Mr. Srikanth shared that the TPB issued a call for action to help improve the region's transportation system now and in the future with the expectation of 30% more jobs and 28% more people in the Washington region by the year 2040. The goal in addressing the question is how do we accommodate this surge in population and mitigate the travel congestion that is anticipated to be associated with it? In effort to answer this question the TPB set forth the strategy of developing projects, programs and/or policies that advance five initiatives which were endorsed in December 2017. He noted that this call for action was based on the responsibility of the TPB to put together the regions Long-Range Transportation Plan that includes all highway and transportation improvement projects intended to be implemented between now and the year 2040.

As to why the call for action was initiated, Mr. Srikanth noted that without strategic investment and based on population growth the majority of the region's population will not be close to high capacity transit (64%), congested lane miles will increase by 66%, single occupancy vehicle travel (SOV) will be the predominate mode of work trips (76%), daily transit trips will constitute the lowest proportion in the inner and outer suburbs, total vehicle hours of delay will increase by 74%, and average delay per vehicle trip will increase by 47%. Mr. Srikanth clarified that of the \$40 billion in cost for all proposed projects the TPB found that given their projections that the current plans in place will not be adequate or effective in eliminating/reducing congestion.

With that, the question posed by the TPB is how to change the anticipated outcomes? Hence, five action ideas that should be pursued more proactively, consistently and vigorously were generated. These five general initiatives include balancing and optimizing land use in the region as it relates to jobs and housing, implementing enhanced TDM strategies consistently throughout the region, providing more intra-regional transit options operating throughout the system at

various locations, enhancing Metrorail capacity and providing a regional network of tolled express lanes that exempt busses and HOV drivers.

Mr. Srikanth noted that the focus of his is on TDM and what the TPB is seeking more of from all jurisdictions in the national capital region.

Mr. Srikanth then shared that the TPB convened a task force of elected officials, senior technical representatives and citizen representatives. Together, this group evaluated transportation goals for the region and what needed to be achieved while considering potential challenges to be faced in achieving these goals in addition to reviewing past scenarios and through brainstorming new ideas. The task force concluded that projects, policies and programs need to be combined and actively working together towards common purposes. From this process 10 initiatives were generated and then evaluated in terms of their potential impact on congestion reduction, increased mobility and transit options. Of the ten, five initiatives were deemed best and one of those five initiatives was enhancing TDM strategies.

The performance measures used for the analysis included travel time, traditional congestion, accessibility by transit and vehicle, mode share, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), reliable travel, transit options for households and employment and mobile source emissions. Each of these quantitative measures were associated with their respective qualitative challenges including, Road congestion, transit crowding, inadequate bus service, access to bike and pedestrian options, development around Metrorail, housing and job location, Metrorail and roadway repair needs, incidents and safety, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, environmental quality, open space development, bottlenecks and reliable access to intercity hubs.

The TDM strategy that was endorsed by the TPB is composed of three broad components being with tested assumptions, increased regional teleworking, expanded employer based transit benefits, and increase priced parking in major activity centers. From the assumptions tested in correlation with the three components, research found that daily vehicle hours of delay can be reduced by 24%. Also, the number jobs that will be accessible within a 45 minutes automobile commute can be increased by 10%, nearly 80,000 jobs, daily vehicle miles traveled can also be reduced by 6%. Additional outcomes included decreased single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel by 8%, a 24% increase in HOV utility, a 6% increase in transit use and a 16% increase in bicycle and pedestrian activity.

Mr. Srikanth then displayed a chart which compared the outcomes of all strategies relative to the proposed TDM strategy and highlighted the outstanding impact of the strategy comparatively. Mr. Srikanth concluded his prestatation in asking the Subcommittee what strategies can the region pursue to realize the potential? What policy actions would aid in the realization of these goals? What commuter concerns would need to be addressed? What specific actions can a regional program like Commuter Connections do and are additional resources needed? What specific actions can jurisdictions take to assist in this effort? And is there anything that has been missed? Mr. Srikanth asked Subcommittee members to take the questions into careful consideration and proposed that the Subcommittee brief the TPB with substantive suggestions and recommended actions. He then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #6 Purple Line Briefing**

*William Parks, MTA, will provided a briefing to the Subcommittee on the Purple Line rail project.*

William Parks, MTA, began his presentation by introducing a brief history of the Purple Line noting that it has been a concept in work since the 1990s and that construction finally began in the summer of 2017.

Providing a geographic overview Mr. Parks demonstrated how the line operates in Montgomery and Prince George's county with 16-miles of double track light rail line running east to west joining 21 stations that are mostly elevated or at ground level with 2 underground stations and 2 maintenance facilities. Continuing, he noted that the Purple Line connects with 4 Metrorail stations, 3 of which are served by MARC rail and an Amtrak option at the New Carrollton station. All facilities are coordinated with local buses.

Benefits of the system range from travel, economic, social and environmental. In terms of environmental impacts, studies were conducted over 6 years that identified savings and included accident elimination. Additional statistics pertaining to the Purple Line include an anticipation of 69,000 riders by 2030 and 74,000 daily riders by 2040.

Regarding service, operating hours will match Metrorail hours however the schedule is being finalized now. Trains are anticipated to run every 7.5 mins during peak periods and every 10-12 mins on the off-peak hours. An estimated 30% of riders will interchange with Metrorail on a total line trip duration of 63 mins, however the majority of riders are anticipated to take shorter trips.

Regarding the project status, Mr. Parks noted that the Maryland Department of Public Works approved Purple Line Transit Partners (PLTP) in April 2016 once the concessionaire was announced the month prior and construction began in August of 2017 with service targeted to begin in 2022.

Mr. Parks described the extent of the public-private partnership consisting of a 6-year design and construction and 30-year operation and maintenance period designed with accountability and strong incentives around construction, operation, maintenance and financing. He then drew the Subcommittee's attention to a chart that illustrated the transit partnership which included all firms involved and provided more background on the (PLTP) who offered more innovative ideas and alternative technical concepts than any other proposer.

Regarding the vehicles, they will be CAF light Rail vehicles with a total length of 140 ft. with 80 seats that are designed to meet ADA requirements. He then discussed additional alternative technical concepts at Bethesda Station, the Silver Spring Transit Center Station and the New Carrollton Station.

Mr. Parks then explained the Community Advisory Teams that launched in the fall of 2017 which are composed of representatives of the community, civic associations, business organizations and at-large groups and were structured according to geographic location.

Concluding, Mr. Parks shared the project schedule which began in the winter of 2017 consisting of utility relocation, wall installation, grading, track installation, train communication, and

testing/commissioning with operations to begin in spring of 2022. He then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #7      FY 2017 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)**

*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY 2017 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results for both the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions. A comment period for the draft reports was established.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB Staff began his presentation by drawing the Subcommittee's attention to the four documents associated with his briefing including two formal reports and two presentations, noting that both reports are in draft form pending finalization.

Regarding the Washington region's GRH satisfaction surveys, 95% were delivered via email and the remainder were delivered via postal mail. He noted that the surveys provided participants the opportunity to rate the GRH service and provide comments as feedback.

A total of 2,405 surveys were distributed in the Washington region, of which there were 336 responses received representing a 14% return rate, which is the lowest return rate yet on this survey.

In response, Kelly Woodward, DATA inquired as to why the response rate is so low. Mr. Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, stated that recent survey efforts may be affected by 'survey fatigue' whereas potential respondents are discouraged by the amount of surveys they encounter regularly. He acknowledged that this is a phenomenon that has trended over the duration of the program given the overall increase in customer service satisfaction survey efforts.

Regarding the draft results of the survey, Reservation Staff was rated 84% excellent and 12% good, Transportation Service was rated 77% excellent and 16% good, Response Time in rating was 81% excellent and 13% good, while in wait duration 78% waited for 15 minutes or less and 94% waited 30 minutes or less. Overall service was rated 80% excellent and 15% good. Concerning trip reasons, 41% of trips taken were for personal illness while unexpected overtime was the least cited reason. In comparison over the previous decade all survey categories showed increases since the previous year. As it relates to FY17 customer feedback and the types of responses, 169 respondents provided compliments while 23 respondents provided complaints which representing a 7:1 ratio. Mr. Franklin then discussed examples of written responses received and concluded with a recap of the Washington region survey results.

He then moved on to the results of the Baltimore region's GRH program survey where 128 surveys were distributed, 21 were returned representing a 16% response rate.

Concerning service ratings, reservation staff were rated 62% excellent and 24% good. Transportation service was rated 50% good and 30% excellent. Response time was rated 29% excellent and 43% good with 19% waiting 15 mins. or less and 47% percent having waited 30 minutes or less which overall equates to 66% waiting 30 minutes or less. The average wait time was 46 minutes. Overall the program rating was 57% excellent and 29% good.

Regarding the reason for trips taken, 52% used the service for personal illness which represents a 2:1 ratio. Overtime, which was the least likely trip reason in the DC region, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most

popular reason in the Baltimore region for trips taken. In the year to year comparison Reservation Staff decreased from 90% to 86% good or excellent, Taxi or Rental Car Service decreased by one percentage point to 80% good or excellent, Response Time grew from 50% to 72% good or excellent from FY16 and the Overall Service rating increased by six points to 86% good or excellent.

Overall, 16 of the 21 respondents or 76% provided customer feedback in the form of written responses of which the majority (69%) were positive in nature. Mr. Franklin concluded by providing a recap of his presentation and opening the floor for questions.

A comment period of February 16<sup>th</sup> was then established. Both documents will be posted to the Commuter Connections SharePoint site. Both reports will be presented for final review and endorsement for release at the March 20<sup>th</sup> Subcommittee meeting.

**Item #8      FY 2018 Placement Rate Survey**

*Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, briefed the Subcommittee on the highlights of the FY2018 Placement Rate Survey.*

Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting began by noting that she will share preliminary results from the FY 2018 Placement Rate Survey and that the full draft report will be completed in mid-March. Ms. Diggins noted that the survey is conducted every 3 years in November and covers program participants who received assistance from July – September. Data collected is used for the TERM analysis and for program enhancements with a focus on travel patterns and mode changes, motivations for change and services received. Continuing Ms. Diggins shared that the goal of the evaluation is to gauge the use of Commuter Connections services including ride matching, GRH, transit info, telework info, park and ride lot info, bike info and new this year, the CarpoolNow (CPN) mobile application.

Regarding current commute patterns, applicants were found to have used alternative modes for 88% of weekly commute trips. Train and bus were the most popular alternative modes, Vanpool use was well above the regional average. Other modes included were: Drive Alone at 12%, Train at 24%, Bus at 21%, Vanpool at 13%, Telework at 15% and Walk/bike at 1.3%. Ms. Diggins then drew the Subcommittee's attention to a sub-chart which illustrated weekly mode distribution from the 2016 State of the Commute Report compared with the 2017 Placement Rate Survey and pointed out the differences in drive alone rates; 12% versus 61% in the region collectively, indicating that people who are using Commuter Connections services use alternative modes much more than those in the region as a whole.

Ms. Diggins then displayed a graph illustrating weekly trips by mode from 2008 to 2017. She noted that transit use increased substantially from 2008 to 2011 but has dropped since 2011 and remains above 2008, suggesting a shift in service users and services sought. Additionally, Ms. Diggins pointed out that single occupancy driving decreased substantially since 2008 from 25% to 12% in 2017.

She then displayed a similar chart illustrating data ranging from 2008-2017 with data pertaining to travel distance, time, average Carpool and Vanpool occupancy, percent with coworker, percent drive alone to alternative mode and drive alone access distance. From this she highlighted that vanpool occupancy continues to fall from 10.3 riders in 2008 to 7.9 riders in 2017, but other

travel characteristics in 2017 were generally like previous years' results. Coworker carpooling has grown from 40 to 51% in the same time frame.

As it relates to commute travel changes, information is collected on commute changes since receiving or accessing Commuter Connections services. Users are asked specific questions about modes that they either used, tried, started or are already using. Examples included: Have you increased number of days using alternative modes? Have you tried another mode type? Did you add or replace person in existing carpool and if change made how long did it last? Responses were then categorized by frequency of mode use of Continued, Temporary, Occasional, One time or No change. Findings indicated that half of all respondents made a commute change after receiving services. Changes to transit and Carpool/Vanpool were most significant at 19.3% and 21.8% respectively, while nearly 8% made a change to telework. Also, fewer respondents made a transit change in 2011 than in 2014, but more shifted to telework which increased from 5% of change in 2014 to 7.8% change in 2017. Transit decreased from 20.9% in 2014 to 19.3% in 2017.

Ms. Diggings then stated that nearly 4 in 10 respondents made a change to a mode they still used, but some used the new mode only occasionally. Also, cost, time and circumstances continued to be primary reasons for change. Time savings increased from 13% to 18% over the 3-year period. 22% of applicants who made a change said Commuter Connections services assisted or influenced their decision. Cost reasoning increased from 17% to 22% from 2011-2017 indicating that economic reasons continued to be important motivations for many applicants who made commute mode changes at 49% of mode change justifications.

Regarding the source of information and services received in 2017, respondents learned of Commuter Connections primarily from referrals and employers; internet and radio have declined as information sources since 2008. GRH was the most requested service in 2017 with 25% of respondents that sought a matchlist and 19% that wanted transit information.

Regarding the use of Commuter Connections services, the survey examined if and how Commuter Connections services were used by asking did they use them, did use of the services assist or influence travel change, and did they receive services from their employer or other organization that helped with commuting? 56% of matchlist recipients tried to contact a match name while 43% reached an interested person. The share of respondents who used the list and reached a commuter interested in carpooling was identical in 2014 and 2017 however 27% in 2017 found a person who was interested, but their schedules and or locations were not compatible.

Transit information continued to be used, 40% of applicants who received transit information contacted a transit agency and used the information to try transit, about the same as the 2014 results and higher than 32% of 2011 respondents. 60% of applicants who received Park and Ride info used the information, which is a lower share than 2014 or 2011. Additionally, about 3 in 10 Park and Ride information seeking recipients had not known the location of the lot before receiving the information from Commuter Connections.

Concerning the use of GRH, Telework and bike info in 2017, 76% of respondents received GRH information, of those 94% registered for the program and 10% of those were previous drive alone commuters. 5% of respondents received telework information, of those 30% used it to talk to their employer and 42% used it to start or increase telework. Finally, 6% of respondents



received biking to work information, of those 8% started biking to work, 10% began to bike to work more often and 16% began to bike more for non-work-related trips. She then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #9 Regional TDM Software Project Update**

*Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the regional TDM software system and related mobile applications.*

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, began his presentation in noting that he will be providing updates on the development with TDM system items that the program has been working on and have recently become active like Flextime Rewards notifications. Mr. Finafrock demonstrated on a mobile device how flextime accounts work. New users will need to register on the app which includes providing specific information like home address, current employer, corridors traveled daily, what days the user wants to receive notifications and the degree of time flexibility a user is able to adjust their work schedule.

An email notification is sent at this point however push notification capability is in development with the hopes that this enhanced technology will be able to reach a broader audience soon. Currently, users will be eligible to win a monthly prize, however in the future the goal is to provide incentive payments in the upcoming year.

Continuing, Mr. Finafrock noted that CarpoolNow and the Howard County driver incentive program collaboration is underway where drivers are eligible to receive \$10 per shared ride in that region. Concerning software stats, the CPN app has had 1,903 downloads and the Commuter Connections mobile app has had 2,753 downloads.

Upcoming work includes enhancements to both mobile applications including equipping the CPN app with transit and TDM options in addition to real time travel options, the bike routing system is currently being updated to include jurisdictions outside of the beltway with the expectation of completing these updates before this years' Bike to Work Day event. Additionally, TDM system software will be upgraded, there will be new notifications for CPN, the ability for system users to request a GRH trip on-line is in development along with the unification of the GIS stream for system maps and the adding a special events feed to the CPN application. He then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #10 FY 2018 2nd Quarter CCWP Budget**

*Barbara Brennan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2018 2nd Quarter Budget report.*

Barbara Brennan, COG/TPB presented primary results in her report and stated that the program is at a 33% spend rate for the second quarter and that generally spending activity increases during the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> quarters. Also, Mr. Brennan highlighted that in terms of marketing, the CPN app recently had 8% activity and the MTA GRH advertising has a 29% activity rate. She then opened the floor for questions.

**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.*

(No new business was discussed)

**The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, March 30, 2018 at 12 noon.**