

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES MARCH 19, 2024

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was brought to order by Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, who chaired the meeting. Dan Sheehan, Transportation Operations Program Director, COG/TPB staff, asked attendees participating virtually to introduce themselves and those attending in person introduced themselves afterwards.

2. MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2023 MEETING

Approval was sought for the December 19, 2023 Ridematching Committee Meeting minutes. An initial motion to approve was made by George Clark, Tri County Council of Southern Maryland, and a second motion was made by Ryan Kivinski, Harford County. All were in favor and the minutes were approved as written.

3. INCENTRIP, RIDE FOR THE REGION CHALLENGE, AND COMMUTER CASH

Dan Sheehan, Transportation Operations Program Director COG/TPB, briefed the Committee on an update on the incenTrip mobile app and the timeline for its transition to the new name CommuterCash. Also, incenTrip has created a challenge campaign named, "Ride for the Region Challenge".

WMATA came to Commuter Connections back in January with the intention to run a regional transit ridership challenge. The WMATA group recommended using incenTrip as a potential vehicle for that challenge.

Mr. Sheehan shared the current status of the incenTrip app with the Committee. The ATCMTD project concluded in November 2023, but all primary and sub-programs are still fully operational. Mr. Sheehan went on to discuss the "Ride for the Region Challenge." The main purpose of this initiative is to get people excited about transit post-pandemic and to increase ridership.

The "Ride for the Region Challenge" will start on April 1st and intends to spark increased use of public transit through gamification and friendly rivalry – riding the wave of the March Madness basketball tournament as we head into Earth Month. The idea is to adapt the basketball tournament model with bracket to eight employers who are accepting the challenge. The winner will be declared on Earth Day.

The "Ride for the Region Challenge" has been featured in the Greater Greater Washington publication. Employees who agree to participate on behalf of those employers will be placed on teams. Trips logs will be generated by those employees and counted towards this particular challenge including non-commuting trips. COG/TPB staff will be involved in gathering metrics and customer support.

When this challenge concludes in April, Commuter Connections will start to formally work on the new mobile app CommuterCash with a developed marketing plan by summer 2024. The new app will be launched to the public and employees in September of this year.

Thomas Hamed, WHS/DOD, asked if the “Ride for the Region Challenge” could be a pilot to be possibly continued in future years. Mr. Sheehan responded that the main goal of the challenge orchestrated by WMATA is to motivate people to get back to using transit.

4. TDM SYSTEM BULLETIN

Ross Edgar, Principal GIS analyst COG/TPB staff, began a discussion on the potential release of a new TDM System Bulletin which could help ridematching coordinators stay aware of current TDM System issues, recent upgrades, etc. Mr. Edgar discussed four ideas for implementation. The first one is a simple e-mail distribution list. For example, once a problem is found, COG will disseminate the information by e-mailing everyone.

Another idea would be to create a private group on one of the social networking sites like Facebook. This comes with some advantages and downsides, most notably the fact that participants need to have an account with Facebook. The third idea would be an RSS feed protocol like Podcasts use, but Mr. Edgar thought that this was too complex for what we need to do. It requires users to have an RSS feed program installed on their computers and, moreover, users need to subscribe to these feeds or podcasts.

The last idea mentioned by Mr. Edgar was the listserv which provides some level of interaction, as well as self-help. The downside of the listserv is that you get more e-mail than you want. In the end, Mr. Edgar suggested a simpler solution which he thinks would be the distribution list.

Peggy Schwartz, North Bethesda TMD, agreed that the distribution list is the quickest and easiest way to get information out to everybody.

5. RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, introduced another discussion on how to make the best use of our time together, which items are the most pertinent, and valuable to the Committee. He was open to the idea of adjusting the agenda if necessary, and he thinks there is room for technical training, or at least demos on certain standard features in the TDM System during our meetings. He also thinks it is important to devote time to learning what other peers are doing with their local programs.

George Clark, Tri County Council for Southern Maryland, welcomed the new leadership under Dan Sheehan.

Kendall Tiffany, Loudoun County Commuter Services, suggested that because the daily commute has changed, some members of the Ridematching Committee should attend the TDM Marketing group to share feedback they might have for Odonnell Company, the Commuter Connections marketing consultant, when they are developing campaigns in the area. She also emphasized the need that the TDM System trigger applicants to finish their applications for database purposes. Mr. Clark, Tri County Council for Southern Maryland, reiterated the need for commuters to pick a program when they sign up, as well as provide an e-mail address.

Thomas Hamed, WHS/DOD, encouraged people to keep presenting best practices from other jurisdictions in our region, and to be aware of commuting trends that are happening from other regions throughout the country.

Victoria Bailey, Transit IT Services of Frederick County, insisted on the need to implement required fields in the application process to ensure that the information is entered properly.

Finally, it was agreed that training sessions are still helpful for new staff joining this Committee. For the Resource Directory it was also agreed that the actual process is adequate when updated twice a year, but with the potential improvement of sending a form instead of e-mail when new information or changes occur in the jurisdiction.

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, suggested that the new website enhancement could potentially incorporate a resource directory that could replace the document produced every 6 months, adding that it can be updated in real time.

Sani Hamzat, City of Alexandria, was in favor of a digital form on the website that is user-friendly in addition to a published document printed once a year.

6. FY2024 2ND QUARTER CCWP PROGRESS REPORT

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Committee on our quarterly progress report with some highlights from last quarter from (October to December 2023). He talked about the new geo coding which tends to work a little bit better when checking for addresses. Another highlight from last quarter was the implementation of the new Chatbot which is now compatible with Linux.

Mr. Sheehan went on to discuss Table 1 starting on page 19 which summarizes the impact and interactions of our programs throughout the quarter. Table 2 summarizes new applicants, and follow-ups for each jurisdiction. He mentioned an increase of hits to our website according to Google Analytics. This could be due in part to a possible ongoing successful marketing campaign, or because there is a new analytics platform GA4 from Google that might be counting those hits differently.

Mr. Sheehan also shared the data from local jurisdictions starting on page 22 finishing the overview of our quarterly report.

7. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

In this section Committee members were asked to share program updates, such as information on recent and upcoming transportation fairs, scheduled promotions, and technical observations with the TDM System software etc.

George Clark, Tri County Council for Southern Maryland, will be attending the USPTO fair in April, and a Veteran event in Charles County. He also expected to have his ridesharing numbers increased if federal agencies are finally back in the office.

LaKeshia Lewis, Omniride, will be attending USPTO, Pentagon Transit Fair in May, and DHHQ Fair in July.

Kendall Tiffany, Loudoun County Commuter Services, shared that her marketing campaign for ridesharing is still running including the local transit system. She will be attending some local Earth Day events.

Hamzat Sani, Citi of Alexandria, is participating in the Green Fair at USPTO, Freddy Mac on April 23rd, the Annual Transportation Fair at the Pentagon in May, and getting ready for the Bike to Work Day.

Karen Taylor, Ride Smart, discussed the upcoming Apple Glasson Festival event, and announced a new commuter bus from Frederick Clark County in May that will be traveling from Northern Virginia to DC.

Victoria Bailey, TransIT Services of Frederick County, discussed Transit Appreciation Week, and an international night at one of the schools in the County.

Peggy Schwartz, North Bethesda TMD, talked about a virtual Webex meeting with some federal agencies like HHS. She is also getting ready for the Bike to Work Day as well, and gathering TDM plans for business in Montgomery County.

Ryan Kivinski, Harford County, talked about the possibility of hosting a second pit stop in Harford County for the Bike to Work day for the first time since pre Covid. Mr. Ryan also discussed different commuter benefits workshops and a new improved mobility service transportation for seniors.

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, spoke about a vanpool workshop group interacting with E-ZPass Toll Representatives.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, congratulated Dan for his new position and his new role on the Committee.

9. ADJOURN

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee will be held on June 18, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.