COMMUTER CONNECTIONS RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES
DECEMBER 19, 2023

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was brought to order by Maritza De La Vega, Montgomery County Department of Transportation. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked attendees participating virtually to introduce themselves when their jurisdiction was announced and meeting attendees that were attending the meeting in-person introduced themselves afterwards.

2. MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 MEETING

Approval was sought for the September 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 Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect. All were in favor and the minutes were approved as written.

3. UPCOMING FAIRS AND PROMOTIONS

Tri-County Council
George Clark stated that the Charles County (Jessie Richards) held a gift-wrapping event and also, "Bounty of the County", which was hosted by the Charles County Chamber. TCCSMD is currently running some TV ads, Commuter Choice ads, partnership and all three county newspapers, along with the County Times and internet feeds. An upcoming event would be the Southern Maryland Delegation, which will be held in Annapolis, with a table and booth there in February.

Northern Bethesda TMD
Peggy Schwartz indicated that they would be doing some follow-up with Montgomery Mall. NBTMD did a presentation to the Holiday Retailer's Meeting in the beginning of November. One-on-one meetings were scheduled for after the first of the year.

Harford County
Ryan Kivinski shared the Harford Transit Link is going through the beginning phases of its' Transit Development Plan. Harford Transit Link is currently consulting with the KH&F Group, which they've worked with in the past on their Transportation Development Plans.

Loudoun County
Kendall Tiffany indicated that two outreach events commemorating the 1-year anniversary of the Silver Line for the Ashburn Metro Station were held in November. Another outreach event occurred at INOVA Loudoun Hospital. The "Lets Go" campaign advertising commuter options (social media ads, Google ads and display ads) is currently running. In January, the transit marketing program should be finalized. A refresh to the Lets Go ads is underway, as are plans for the Best Workplaces for Commuters for 2024.

<u>RideSmart</u>
Becky Sandretsky stated while there were no upcoming events, she indicated that she attended the Festival Leaves at the end October in Front Royal and in November attended the Grilled Cheese and Tomato Soup Event in Charlottenburg.

<u>OmniRide</u>
Lakeisha Lewis stated that while there are no current events planned, there were events held earlier in the fall. OmniRide promoted 3 southern routes going through the Spotsylvania areas. One at the Spotsylvania Mall, December 11 and free fares through January 12. OmniRide also had a "Welcome Aboard" event at Quantico and a transportation fair at the Pentagon.

<u>GWRideConnect</u>
Leigh Anderson stated GWRideConnect worked with OmniRide to promote the new Southern Connector bus routes that goes into Southern Stafford and Spotsylvania at the Spotsylvania mall. Kerry McKenney spoke to bus riders on the last bus at Route 17 and received great responses from the commuters. "Vanuary" is a success with 15 vanpools companies that are participating. Kim Mitchell has developed social media posts that GWRideConnect will be sharing throughout the month of January. In November, GWRideConnect participated in 1st Fridays Germana Community College Fair, a Treelighting event, and the Pentagon Transportation Fair.

<u>Montgomery County</u>
Most activities since Car Free Day were Mobile Commuter Stores, which were present at a number of schools and community street fairs and other celebrations.

<u>DOD</u>
DOD worked in partnership with GWRideConnect and OmniRide to promote the new rides and extensions on the HOV lanes. DOD will be doing a Save the Date upcoming transportation fairs to other agencies in May

4. INCENTRIP ATCMTD ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TRANSITION PLAN

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, presented accomplishments related to the ATCMTD project. The purpose of the project was to expand and enhance the incenTrip mobile application. incenTrip gamifies commutes by awarding points to end-users if they log their commutes using the app. Points can then be redeemed for cash rewards.

The $5.95 million ATCMTD project commenced in November 2020. Goals of the project were to maximize the cost effectiveness of a megaregion TDM program, integrate and expand existing dynamic TDM programs, provide personalized traveler information and incenti0ves to end-users, and to enhance multimodal transportation access and system performance with rewards and gamification.

The project was divided into seven technical tasks. The first task was to expand incenTrip's service area to include the entire state of Maryland. The existing sub-program within incenTrip, the Commuter Connections Rewards Program, was duplicated and deployed for all Maryland jurisdictions. The project team also integrated real-time GTFS feeds for WMATA and MTA. Local fixed route transit routes were also integrated. While developing solutions for the task, the project team worked in tandem to expand the network model of incenTrip to include the Baltimore – Washington,

DC – Richmond megaregion to include real-time traffic data. The network model expansion permitted trip planning from southern Pennsylvania to central Virginia. Both enhancements were deployed in November 2021.

Reward options were greatly expanded as a result of the project. Prior to ATCMTD, incenTrip only offered cash incentives at $10, $25, or $50 thresholds by form of checks mailed via US Postal Service. New rewards added to incenTrip over the course of the ATCMTD project include PayPal, gift cards, Nift Gift, SmarTrip credits, E-ZPass credits, and Capital Bikeshare credits.

Several new TDM sub-programs of the Commuter Connections Rewards Program were added to incenTrip. The Flextime Rewards Program was adapted and integrated into incenTrip. The program seeks to tackle non-recurrent congestion along select, highly congested corridors. Flextime Rewards offers points to individuals who flex their drive-alone trips along highly congested routes when congestion levels are excessive. End-users may also sign up to receive real-time traffic alerts, which are supplemental to Flextime Rewards. Traffic alerts anticipate excess levels of congestion and encourage commuters to avoid certain corridors if excessive traffic is predicted; no points are associated with the alerts. These features were released in December 2022.

Corridor-level TDM was incorporated into incenTrip by way of "Corridor Challenges," a Commuter Connections sub-program launched in December 2022. Upon launch, two interstates in the region were selected for Corridor Challenge deployment. The focus of the challenges are to improve commuters' awareness of multimodal choices and park-and-ride options along selected corridors. For instance, commuters may earn bonus points if they take commuter bus options or use Park and Ride facilities along these routes.

The final program added to incenTrip as part of ATCMTD is the "incenTrip for Employers" program. This feature, launched in May 2023, allows employers to create their own customizable commuter challenges for their employes. Employers can reward employees for choosing non-SOV travel modes by awarding points for completed non-SOV trips. Similar to the public Commuter Connections program, an employer stocks their rewards store with incentives that can be requested by employees as they accumulate points part participating in challenges.

The final overall enhancement associated with ATCMTD was the integration of specialized transportation referrals. incenTrip was connected to an existing clearinghouse of specialized transportation providers, a COG program called "Reach a Ride," which provided contact information for transportation service providers throughout the region. These providers specialize in services for older adults and persons with disabilities who may not have the ability to participate in standard multimodal travel options already present in incenTrip.

Mr. Sheehan shared several stats about incenTrip usage and impacts over the course of the project. From November 2020 – September 2023, there were 599 Commuter Connections accounts created, 41,140 trips logged, and 1,011 incentives requested. Impacts associated with incenTrip over the same timeframe include an estimated 10,260 vehicle hours travelled reduced, cost savings of $317,526, greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 34.378kg, vehicle miles travelled reduced by 377,294, and gasoline consumption reduced by 4,738 gallons.

The project team is now focused on closing out the project and transferring incenTrip from UMD ownership to COG ownership. The server infrastructure has been created in the cloud on COG servers; a licensing agreement has been completed and the transfer of source code is scheduled to

commence soon. Once transferred to COG, the app will be re-launched and re-branded as "Commuter Cash." The transfer is likely to be completed in spring 2024.

5. TDM SYSTEM GEOCODING AND GIS

Ross Edgar, COG/TPB staff, provided a tutorial on TDM System geocoding. It was entitled "What You Need to Know About Geocoding for Ridematching." He began by defining geocoding, which is a procedure to derive location-based data from text. He further explained why geocoding is important. It's the starting point for Location-Based Services. While the database is pretty good, there are commuters who have geocodes are inaccurate. Mr. Edgar performed a study of the TDM database in April 2021 of all the records. The following are reasons that geocodes are missing: 1) The geocode is malformed input for street address; 2) The geocode contains an incorrect, misspelled, or missing city; 3) The user does not commute in the Commuter Connections area; 4) The commuter information is outdated reference data.

Mr. Edgar provided troubleshooting screenshots to assist the commuter in performing a ridematch search. He began by providing resources to help us find and fix the problem. First, try the USPS website, click on Quick Tools, "Look up a Zip Code," enter the address and sometimes the problem just dissolves. Another optional step is "Confirm result using the ArcGIS Server." Mr. Edgar recommends using the address geocodes that have more than 80% to confirm validity. He also provided tips for entering addresses to get candidates and geocodes from the Commuter Connections ArcGIS Server. Mr. Edgar plans to get a new and revised troubleshooting guide for geocoding soon. Other steps include making changes to the commuter's data. This will now make it easier to perform a ridematch search.

Kerry McKenney, GWRideConnect, asked the question about using other addresses such as a commuter lot when ridematch searching and is the home address necessary. Mr. Edgar responded by saying that it is good for receiving Commuter Connections correspondence and notifications. Also, he stated that while it isn't necessary for performing ridematch searches, it is needed to participate in GRH and receive other Commuter Connections mailers.

Mr. Sheehan reminded the committee that they can get copies of the presentations/video via the SharePoint site. They will receive a follow-up message via email.

6. FLEXIBLE VANPOOL REFRESHER

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Committee on the history of the Flexible Vanpool Program dating back to 2022. The primary purpose of the program is to advertise empty vanpool seats to be filled on a flexible basis. It was launched as a result of COVID and the need for commuters to return to work, even if on a more fluid basis. The aim is to facilitate a convenient way for commuters to try vanpooling while on a hybrid schedule, either in real-time or by reserving a seat in advance. Vanpool Operators and Coordinators that participate in the program can potentially increase ridership to vanpools. The Supplemental Vanpool Administration Module was released in July 2022. It is tied into the TDM System. It contains new functionality for vanpool management: 1) Operators can manage multiple routes with one account; 2) vanpool route stops; 3) advertise seat cost; 4) external electronic fare collection; and 5) increased ridematching opportunities for local coordinators. It is available to all vanpools who operate in the Washington, DC region. Mr. Sheehan further moved to

the Commuter Experience with contains 1) vanpools featured with elevated prominence in ridematching; and 2) flexible vanpools seats will be advertised in CarpoolNow. The Real-Time Flexible Vanpool Workflow moves as follows: 1a) Vanpool Coordinator activates app & begins route; 1b) Rider searches for active vanpools; 2) app/coordinator searches for rider; 3a) Vanpool sends invitation to rider; 3b) Rider receives invitation (one way trip; cost of seat is displayed); 4) Rider Accepts or Rejects (if the invitation is accepted, the rider agrees to pay the fare for the seat, but if the invitation is no longer needed, the driver is notified and can continue their commute); and 5) Driver Picks up Rider – an established pick up point is displayed, along with a meet up time. If the rider is late, the driver reserves the right to leave the pickup point. Mr. Sheehan later displayed the view from the CarpoolNow driver screenshots for more information.

Mr. Sheehan stated that vanpool registrations are needed. He received an extensive list from GWRideConnect that are live so that commuter options are available. There are flyers available explaining the program and process on how to register and FAQs. There was also a dedicated flexible vanpool website providing more information. It is: https://www.commuterconnections.org/flexible-vanpool/. Mr. Sheehan also shared that there are vanpool spreadsheets available containing active vanpools that are in the TDM System.

A question was raised about ridematch lists. They are no longer listed as carpools and vanpools, but solely as vanpools. It makes things a lot easier for commuters.

7. TDM RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Jetaune Slaughter, COG/TPB staff, informed the Committee that the TDM Resource Directory is scheduled to be updated and reminded the Committee that emails will be sent out late December/early January for any changes, additions, deletions or no changes. She instructed the team to reply even if there are no changes. A tracking sheet will be utilized to ensure that the changes are made and there are no contacts that were forgotten.

The due date to make any changes is Friday, January 12, 2024.

Kendall Tiffany, Loudoun County, asked if there was an opportunity to view the Resource Directory prior to its publication. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, indicated that due to the way the Directory is set up, there is no way to view it earlier. The best way to ensure your changes are included is to submit your emails to Mrs. Slaughter as early as possible.

8. FIRST QUARTER PROGRESS REPORT

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, brief the Committee on the FY2024 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report. Highlights for the 1st Quarter Progress Report include the releasing new features as part of the ATCMTD project and selecting "VanHoppr" as the public program associated with the EMI project. The traditional Ridematching program served 12,820 registered commuters throughout the quarter. incenTrip was prepared for transfer to COG servers. Research for a new chatbot solution commenced; a suitable product was identified, and programming commenced. Guaranteed Ride Home program registrations grew by 224 new program participants, 383 re-registered participants, and a grand total of just over 2,000 registrants as of September 30th for the program. 164 GRH

trips were provided. Mr. Sheehan concluded the item by providing an overview of the various tables included in the report.

9. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, asked if anybody in the conference room or those connected virtually wanted to share a program update. Peggy Schwartz inquired if the End User Report could include the expiration date. Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB stated he would look into it.

10. OTHER BUSINESS/UPCOMING ITEMS

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, asked if anybody wanted to request an agenda item for the next meeting. Nobody responded and the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee will be held on March 19, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.