



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES**

**Tuesday, June 21, 2022**

**1. Introductions**

The meeting was brought to order by Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA. Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, asked attendees to introduce themselves when their jurisdiction was announced.

**2. Minutes of the March 15, 2022 Meeting**

Approval was sought for the March 15, 2022 Ridematching Committee Meeting minutes. An initial motion to approve was made by Mark Sofman, Montgomery County Commuter Services, and a second motion was made by Chris Kingery, Loudoun County Commuter Services. The minutes were approved as written. All were in favor.

**3. Upcoming Fairs and Promotions**

COG/TPB staff and clients provided information on recent and upcoming transportation fairs and promotions.

Fort Belvoir Commuter Fair

The Commissary at Fort Belvoir hosted a transportation fair for employees who would soon be returning to work. Several Ridematching Committee members were in attendance, including representatives from Prince William County, Vanpool Alliance, the City of Alexandria, and COG/TPB. Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, noted that transportation fairs at military installations may be resuming in more frequency and that anyone attending such fairs needs to bring a Real ID (drivers license or official government IDP) in order to be able to get onto the base. Lakeisha Lewis, OmniRide, emphasized the success of the event.

CarpoolNow Accokeek and Horner Road Park and Ride Lot events

COG/TPB staff are in the process of hosting CarpoolNow pop-up events at the Accokeek Park and Ride Lot in Prince George's County and the Horner Road Park and Ride Lot in Prince William County. RideSmart and OmniRide will also be attending in their respective jurisdictions. The purpose of the events are to educate carpoolers about the CarpoolNow option along with local transit options.

Walk and Ride Challenge (Early October)

Montgomery County will host a Walk and Ride Challenge in early October. Mark Sofman, Montgomery County Commuter Services, will provide more information at a later date. The event is still in the preparation stages.

DOD Pentagon Events

Bryan Lambert, DOD/WHS, shared that the DOD has brought in vendors to help encourage employees to utilize mass transit and to form non-SOV commuting habits as commuters prepare to come back to work. Annette Lam, DOD/WHS, echoed the great attendance for these events that are held on a monthly basis.

### Bowie Baysox Game

Stacey King, Prince George's County, shared that the County attended a Bowie Baysox game to talk to commuters about commute options as they return to the office. They also targeted individuals who have recently located to the area to discuss their commute plan to. Ms. King also discussed the County is hoping to host an event at the National Harbor later this year. She also discussed some other community events like bike rodeos and online events.

### Farmer's Market Event

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, held an event at a Farmer's Market. The event appeared to be well-received by attendees.

## **4. Vanpool Functionality Updates**

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, presented vanpool functionality updates in the TDM System. The enhancements are contained in the new Vanpool Administration Module, which is independent of the TDM System. All current administrators will have access to the module as part of their subscription to the TDM System. Vanpool providers will also have access for Flexible Vanpool administrative purposes. New vanpool management features include the capability to add vanpool stops along a route, assign seat costs for flexible vanpool, and conduct ridematching for multiple vanpools using one administrative login credential.

Mr. Finafrock shared screenshots from the beta version of the module. He demonstrated how assigning a cost for a single ride could be programmed as an administrator and displayed to the public. Vanpools will sit at the top of matchlists generated by the TDM System upon release of the enhancements; they are a priority of the program. If a commuter is matched to a vanpool, they will be shown the vanpool coordinator's contact information, the cost for a flexible ride, work hours for the vanpool, a starting location and terminating destination. He also explained how the module will perform matching for vanpools through a backend connection to the TDM System. This "seat finder" functionality also accommodates matches that could be found at different stops along the same vanpool route.

Real-Time Flexible Vanpool will be possible if a vanpool coordinator or passenger (not the driver) starts the vanpool trip in CarpoolNow, just like a carpool. CarpoolNow will automatically identify the coordinator's account as it should be associated with a vanpool upon login and present the user with single button to start their vanpool trip. Potential riders can request the vanpool stop to pick them up in real-time. Contact information of the vanpool and potential rider will be shared.

In summary, vanpool functionality updates will improve the commuter experience by elevating vanpools in their matchlists, clearly identifying what is a vanpool vs. carpool in commuter matchlists, updating vanpool symbology on maps, introducing the flexible vanpool concept, and new real-time vanpool ridematching in the CarpoolNow mobile app.

The expected release date for the Vanpool Administration Module is in late June 2022. Real-time Flexible Vanpool should be available in CarpoolNow sometime in July. COG/TPB staff intends to distribute documentation on the new feature to Rideshare Coordinators in late July upon request. A voluntary training scheduled for Rideshare Coordinators via Microsoft Teams is scheduled for July 21, 2022 @ 10:00am. Committee members are welcome to email [commutersupport@mwcog.org](mailto:commutersupport@mwcog.org) for questions or assistance regarding the enhancements, or to RSVP to the voluntary training. One-on-one training is also an option for system administrators.

Bryan Lambert, DOD/WHS, asked how commuters would pay for the flexible vanpool rides. Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, said that the vanpool operator is responsible for collecting the fees for a flexible vanpool seat. COG/TPB could consider adding some type of link to a payment portal designated by the operator (e.g., PayPal/Venmo) if requested.

Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, applauded the “love” given to the obsolete workings of the Vanpool part of the TDM system. She discussed the need to address having transportation for those commuters who are working on a part-time basis like coming in to the office 2-3 days a week vs. a traditional 5-day schedule. Ms. Anderson suggested sorting riders upfront in a vanpool based on their schedule so riders wouldn’t be left in a lurch if seats weren’t available.

Emily Anderson, USDOT, is very interested in a schedule or possible hotel option for vanpoolers. She also expressed her concern with the benefits vs. adhoc form of payment. She said they are putting in limits to vanpool riders who aren’t commuting enough to their worksites.

## **5. Roundtable**

Allison Calkins introduced Shirlene Rogers, who has joined Howard County Commuter Services. She has a transportation background and has worked with Metro Access.

Mark Sofman, Montgomery County Commuter Services, has been active with commuters regarding weather issues and traffic issues (such as the I-270 sinkhole) to aid them in their commute.

Gladys Hurwitz, MDOT, shared information about the new Maryland State Commuter Tax Credit Expansion.

## **6. Third Quarter Progress Report**

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, provided the Quarterly Progress Report for the Ridematching Committee. He discussed some key data points from the report. The GRH program registered 130 new applicants to the program; 333 commuters were re-registered. The program now has 1,748 total registrants. 54 GRH trips were provided. Trips are tracking at about 10% of pre-pandemic levels. GRH Baltimore has a total of 89 registrants. Five trips were provided.

Mr. Finafrock noted that each agency has their own table/chart that summarizes common program metrics for their jurisdiction. He also highlighted and explained the data found in Table 2. Mr. Finafrock saluted GWRideConnect and North Bethesda with their large responsiveness and efficiency for their programs, as shown in Table 2.

In general, program data for the third quarter was gathered at a time when full-time telework was still prevalent. Since spring 2022, program data has gradually been creeping back up from pandemic-era lows.

Kendall Tiffany, Frederick County, shared that a possible reason numbers for the GRH program may be low is because commuters may not qualify if they are only coming in once a week. As currently implemented, the GRH Program would disqualify hybrid workers because they do not commute the minimum two days per week.

Bryan Lambert, DOD/WHS, speculated that low numbers are likely due in large part to the quality of service from transit providers, particularly WMATA at this point in time.

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, implored the Committee to think of ways to resonate with the public in the current commuting environment. Mr. Sheehan encouraged Committee members to pass along messaging or operations tips that appear to resonate will with the commuting public.

**7. TDM Resource Directory**

Jetaune Randall-Slaughter, COG/TPB staff, introduced Ethan Izuogu as the Commuter Connections Intern who will be assisting with the compilation of the TDM Resource Directory. He (in conjunction with Ms. Randall-Slaughter) will be sending out email requests for any changes, additions etc. to the Directory. The expected date to receive any changes, additions is July 15. Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPG staff, and Mrs. Randall-Slaughter asked the group to please pass along updated information for any colleagues who may work on TDM-related content.

**8. Other Business/Upcoming Agenda Items**

Mr. Finafrock asked Chris Arabia, VDRPT, when HOV-3 lanes would be fully operational on I-66. Mr. Arabia shared the full conversion is currently planned for December 2022.

Mr. Finafrock encouraged all Committee Members to submit best practices that could be shared with the Committee for the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee will be held on September 20, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.