



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, March 20, 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 March 20, 2018 Meeting**

*Approval was sought for the March 20, 2018 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 Mark Sofman, Montgomery County and his motion was seconded by George Clark, Southern Maryland.

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the March 20, 2018 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

**Item #3 FY 2017 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Customer Satisfaction Survey Reports**

*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the substantive changes to the draft FY2017 Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Customer Satisfaction Survey reports for the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions. The draft reports were presented to the Subcommittee on January 16th. A February 16th deadline for comments was established. The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the final draft reports.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff began in reminding the Subcommittee that the reports associated with his presentation were presented on January 16<sup>th</sup> and that minor changes were made during the open comment period which ended on February 16<sup>th</sup>. He did address a minor statistical change in the Baltimore region's Customer Satisfaction Survey report on pages 4 and 20 where the response rate of survey participants was adjusted to 16% having previously been reported as 14%. No additional changes were reported.

Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, asked a question related to the survey process and why between the years 2012 – 2017 rides provided by the GRH program has decreased. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff shared that in 2012 the program experienced a scenario where the

number of rides began to exceed the amount of resources needed to ensure rides and thus the program began a Metro to taxi policy that offered reimbursement to program participants for their connecting transit ride to GRH taxi service. Mr. Ramfos believed that this policy change may be correlated with the historic decline in program participation. However, since the WMATA SafeTrack initiatives the program has returned to providing direct rides.

A motion to endorse both the Washington and Baltimore region's FY 2017 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Customer Satisfaction Survey Reports was made by George Clark, Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (TCSM) and Seconded by Nancy Huggins/MTA.

The Subcommittee unanimously endorsed the reports for release. Both reports will be published and posted to the Commuter Connections website for downloading.

**Item #4**      **FY 2018 Placement Rate Survey**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff briefed the Subcommittee on the draft FY2017 Commuter Connections Placement Rate Survey Report. Highlights from the report were presented To the Subcommittee during the January 16th meeting. A comment period was established.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB reminded the Subcommittee that highlights from FY 2018 Placement Rate Survey were presented on January 16<sup>th</sup> and the survey was conducted in November and December of 2017.

He noted that the program is up to nearly a 50% placement rate which is an increase and briefly summarized the contents of the document. He also shared that the report is an important component of overall Regional TDM Program Evaluation and much of the results of the survey are used in the larger evaluation methodology and illustrate the overall benefits of the program.

Mr. Ramfos encouraged Subcommittee members to read though and report and provide specific questions or comments by April 20<sup>th</sup> at noon.

George Clark/(TCSM) asked where in the report is there regional ethnic breakdowns as to aid in his program marketing efforts. Mr. Ramfos noted that the State of the Commute Report is a better resource for that type of information. He then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #5**      **MDOT TDM Program Update**

*Gladys Hurwitz, MDOT, briefed the Subcommittee on recent activities and steps taken to update MDOT's TDM program*

Gladys Hurwitz, MDOT prefaced her presentation in noting that she will be sharing an overview of MDOT's effort over the past months to assess their TDM programs policies and incentives. She also stated that a consultant firm developed an assessment to produce recommendations to further advance TDM in Maryland.

Commuters throughout Maryland were surveyed with the goal of identifying awareness and usage levels of TDM strategies and barriers to carpooling in both urban and rural areas.

Additionally, a comprehensive inventory of current strategies was performed. Marketing efforts were also assessed in addition to performance evaluation and monitoring processes.

Beginning in the fall of 2017 MDOT began gathering data from residents and employers. 2,138 surveys were received and organized into four categories; the Baltimore region, the DC region, and other urban and rural regions. Some key findings were that nearly 80% of commuter respondents regularly commute alone. In the DC region the SOV rate was nearly 70%. Public transit was also more popular in the DC region. Carpooling was found to be most popular in the Baltimore region at 5%, while work from home represented 3.5% of responses.

In terms of commute distance and motivations, the findings illustrate some correlation for those who have a greater than 40-mile commute who choose local public transit for cost savings, however those who feel that public transit is easy have a shorter commute of 20 miles and less. Cost was also a top motivator for those who carpool. Responses also included stress reduction and environmental concerns. Half of all carpoolers live within 10 miles of their work place. Barriers to carpooling include different work hours and the need for vehicle use. Barriers for public transit use include duration of trip or distance from home to transit facility. Financial incentives were also found to be encouraging to 31.1% of respondents in terms of prospective increased alternative mode use. 28.3% of respondents suggested that the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program would also encourage the use alternative modes. Of these respondents 78% were already eligible to participate the GRH program. Finally, 25.8% of respondents suggested that they would telework given employer permission to do so.

For MDOT, these findings indicate that there is opportunity to increase awareness of commuter programs like the MD commuter tax credit benefit, the GRH program, the Commuter Choice website and to enhance outreach to employers and employees.

An additional component of the evaluation process was business interviews to assess current approaches for implementing work site transportation programs, gain insight into motivations and barriers to implementation and how MDOT can help. Twenty businesses were interviewed from various industries representing different sizes ranging from 200-10,000 employees. As a result of the interviews, opportunities for educational outreach to human resource divisions, management and the commuter population to increase awareness of existing company programs, were identified with the addition of tailored messaging campaigns.

Ms. Hurwitz continued in noting that an inventory of existing TDM policies and programs was also conducted which counted multimodal transportation options and illustrated significant opportunities to expand TDM, especially in more rural areas and that MWCOG is a key partner in TDM delivery across Maryland.

A review of intra and extra-regional TDM programs was also performed which revealed tool sharing opportunities, service coordination, marketing support, tailored marketing strategies, incentives funding and coordinated performance monitoring.

Findings include the need to standardize TDM performance measures across the state that evaluate, assess and estimate effectiveness of TDM strategies. Programmatic recommendations for advancing TDM in Maryland included MDOT to serve as an information agent for TDM resources, the creation of a technical advisory committee in addition to making TDM a fixed aspect of Maryland transportation planning. Additional recommendations include a statewide

outreach and education campaign, collaboration with rideshare coordinators to address barriers to alternative commute modes and greater collaboration in monitoring and evaluation.

Moving on, Ms. Hurwitz further discussed the marketing and education efforts including the completion of the Commuter Choice Maryland website which includes a commute calculator and business highlights. Additionally, brochures for employers and the general public are in the final stages of being completed.

Next steps for MDOT include launching the Commuter Choice MD website, finalizing the complementary brochures and finalizing and adopting the MDOT TDM Action Plan. She then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #6 Transform 66 Project Update**

*Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the Transform 66 Inside the Beltway Express Lanes project.*

Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT began by drawing the Subcommittee's attention to the two documents associated with her presentation, one being a fact sheet and the other a January 2018 performance report on I-66 Express Lanes inside the Beltway.

Ms. Allahdoust shared that the Transformation of I-66 is taking place in three different phases. This is the inside the Beltway tolling project which began on December 4, 2017 and is finished, the widening of outside the Beltway Express Lanes which has a 5-year construction window, and inside the beltway widening which has a 2-year trajectory.

She continued in sharing that the current express toll lane is operational only during peak hours going east bound and westbound from 5:30am to 9:30am and in the afternoon from 3:00pm to 7:00pm. During these times SOV's are now allowed, but must have an Easy Pass transponder installed on their vehicle. In 2020 the current HOV-2 facility will be changed to HOV-3.

As it relates to outcomes, since the Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> initiation trips have been faster and travel time has become more reliable. Average travel speed is now 54.1 mph whereas before travel speed was 42.3 mph in the morning in in the afternoon travel average speed increased to 57 mph from the previous average of 47 mph. Additionally, parallel facilities like Rt. 50 and Rt. 7 have seen improved operation since more SOV drivers are now taking the Toll Road.

Ms. Allahdoust reported that the average price for a round trip in January was a little over \$12 and less 1% of all trips paid \$40.00. The average cost for the entire length of the trip was \$18. In terms of revenue utility, there is a 40-year agreement concerning surplus revenue that will go towards improvements inside the Beltway being performed by NVTC. Last year, \$10 million was accrued with the hope that this year's revenue will be even greater. The funds greatly contribute to both the expedience of phase completion and overall project solvency.

Examples of how the funds have been used include the construction of a new park and ride lot in Loudoun county, the addition of real time information screens, expanded Bikeshare capacity and employer outreach expansion. Additional improvements include the adding of a third lane from Fairfax Drive to the Dulles connector toll road and a direct ramp connection will be added for east bound 66 to West Falls Church soon.

Concerning timelines, Ms. Allahdoust noted that inside the Beltway projects will be completed in 2020 and outside the Beltway projects have recently began and will gradually develop with a projected 2022 end date. Once it is completed it will be converted to HOV.

She then drew the Subcommittee's attention to the second document associated with her presentation that includes highlights and pointed out infographics related to travel speeds and durations for I-66, Routes 50, 29, 7 and the GW Parkway that illustrate that overall the network has improved.

She noted that future phases of construction will be met with some challenges; however, all four lanes of 66 will be open during the entire time of construction, but there will be no shoulder. During this time, Commuter Connections services like the promotion of carpooling, the CarpoolNow mobile application and the incentrip mobile app currently in development, will be utilized as a TDM strategy geared toward increasing interest in HOV-3 and addressing "slugging" since it is not prevalent in the corridor and how it can be made easier for people who travel the facility to carpool. Additionally, strategies will include potential transit subsidies and the promotion of teleworking to further reduce congestion during construction. She then opened the floor for questions.

**Item #7 Long Range Plan TDM Initiative**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, discussed next steps on the recent TPB endorsement of five initiatives that the Long-Range Plan Task Force recommended which included TDM with regards to Transit Benefits, Telecommuting, and Parking Pricing.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, began by drawing the Subcommittee's attention to part of his presentation, a blog entitled, "Toward Cost-Effective Transportation," by TPB Board member and City of Gaithersburg Councilmember, Neil Harris. He noted that the article was concerning the cost of building transit versus the cost of building highways and how a focus on optimization strategies that are cost-effective is needed moving forward in the future. The article also cites the Commuter Connection mobile app's and driver incentive pilot and how this type of thinking is a viable way to avoid having to build more infrastructure.

Mr. Ramfos then reminded Subcommittee members of the presentation that was provided by DTP Director Kanti Skrikanth during the January Subcommittee meeting where he outlined the five initiatives that the Long-Range Plan Task Force recommended to the TPB. Of these initiatives TDM was identified as one of the most effective in meeting the region's transportation needs of the future.

Within TDM, specific strategies were considered. Strategies considered were employer based parking cash out, expanded employer-based transit/vanpool benefits, expanded telework and flexible schedule options and sustainable increases in priced commuter parking in major Activity Centers.

There were also assumptions made regarding roadways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian activity, pricing and land use. There were different pricing assumptions pertaining to a Transit/Vanpool subsidy averaging \$50 per month for 80% of employees and parking pricing with a charge for

90% of parking for work trips in activity centers with an average of \$6 a day. A goal of the parking pricing increase assumption is to shift trips from SOV to HOV and transit.

Land use assumptions were made via the CLRP and the cooperative land use forecast and no change was made.

Increasing telework was also a focus given the growth of technology and its uses in telework.

In terms of findings there were challenges addressed by Initiative 10 including road congestion and bottlenecks, incidents and safety, environmental quality, transit crowding, pedestrian and bicyclist safety and reliable access. Initiative 10 does not appear to result in any negative impacts to the challenges and has limited effects on a significant number of them. Also, Initiative 10 would be very compatible with all the other recommended initiatives and could result in dramatic results if paired with other initiatives that have a high impact. Other initiatives include, rail enhancements, improving core capacity of Metrorail, transit rail extensions, land use balance, and transit fare policy changes

Conclusively, Initiative 10 was very compatible with many of the other Long-Range Plan strategies. Also, it performs well on reducing VT, VMT, emissions and travel times and on increasing HOV mode share.

Mr. Ramfos then asked the group to think both short and long term about the Initiative. One of the current goals is to have an informed dialog with the TPB about the TDM Initiative and what more the region can do with demand management. Mr. Ramfos then requested volunteers for a work group that can return to board with specific actions at the regional and or local level before end of the fiscal year.

George Clark, TCSM, asked a question regarding the availability of data pertaining to Federal employees in his region who are eligible to Telework, but can't due to a lack of broad band infrastructure in the region, suggesting that this may be a good topic to discuss with the TPB.

Mr. Ramfos reminded Mr. Clark of the COG Broadband Task Force report he had shared. There may be data in that report that speaks to overall broadband coverage in the region. The expansion of Broadband infrastructure is related to the private sector's willingness to do so at their expense.

There was a subsequent group discussion about the history of telework, private sector trends in utilizing telework and some of the past federal legislation that was geared toward making it a more popular practice, changes in tax law and its impact on transit fares. Mr. Ramfos noted that from his experience he has been witness to great variation in recent corporate culture and attitudes toward teleworking.

Mr. Ramfos then referenced the SOC report and the valuable data it provides pertaining to flexible work schedules, and how there may be great opportunity to grow the Commuter Connections Flextime incentive program under the Long-Range Plan TDM initiative.

He then asked the question, what do we do to increase use of transit fare and fare benefits for vanpools for example? Can we develop strategies that can be used to entice employers in the region to participate? Are there smaller employers in surrounding regions that can benefit?

Finally, how can parking fees influence TDM goals?

Several Subcommittee members volunteered to be on the work group to examine the Initiative further.

**Item #8      2018 Bike to Work Day Event**

*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the 2018 Bike to Work Day event to be held on Friday, May 18th.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff began by announcing the date of the region's Bike to Work Day event: May 18<sup>th</sup>. This year's goal for registrations is 20,000 which is a 6.5% increase from last year's registration total. He announced that registration unofficially is open and will commence officially following the distribution of a press release soon. At the time of his presentation there were 1,100 registrants.

Regarding pit-stops, Mr. Franklin shared that there will be 18 new locations added this year making a new total of 101 around the DC region. New pits pitstops are in Southern Maryland and Montgomery County, Alexandria City, Arlington County, 5 in DC, 2 in Prince George's County, 5 in Fairfax County and 2 in Prince William County. A mixture of city government, county government, federal agencies, private sector companies and nonprofits will be voluntarily operating pit stops around the region.

Regarding the regional sponsorship drive which ended in early February, \$58,000 was raised with 4 gold, 7 silver and 10 bronze level sponsors. There were also 4 bicycles donated for the regional raffle in addition to gift cards and bicycle accessories. With additional sponsor dollars, the goal is to add more Snapchat filters for this year's event for more locations.

20,000 T-shirts are also being printed with the chosen color of gold with teal print. Pit stops will also be provided banners.

There are event posters and flyers which were recently printed and anticipated to be distributed this week. Also, there are 100,000 rack cards and flyers being sent out in both English and Spanish. Each employer in the ACT database will receive a letter and flyer with an ask to support the event. The poster is also available on the event website at [www.Biketoworkmetrodc.org](http://www.Biketoworkmetrodc.org).

Finally, the event regional Proclamation will be presented for approval on April 18<sup>th</sup> at the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board meeting and once approved will be signed by TPB Chair, Charles Allen. Mr. Franklin also stated that a radio spot is being produced in April.

**Item #9      FY 2018 2nd Quarter CCWP Progress Report**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2018 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter CCWP Progress Report.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, reviewed the FY 2018 2nd Quarter CCWP Progress Report and encouraged Subcommittee members to review the data associated with their respective jurisdictions. He specifically referenced page 16, Table 1 which contained the program's regional

impacts to date. He concluded in informing the Subcommittee that if their jurisdictional reports were not received by quarter end that they will be included in the next quarter's report.

**Item #10 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 other business was discussed.

**The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at 12 noon.**