

# METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



## Commuter Connections Subcommittee

### MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 15, 2003

**CHAIR: Ronald Mitchell, District of Columbia**  
**VICE CHAIR: Robin Briscoe, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland**  
**STAFF CONTACT: Nicholas Ramfos (202) 962-3313**

#### **Item #1      Introductions (see attached attendance sheet)**

Mr. Ronald Mitchell, Chair of the Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 10:10 am and each attendee made introductions.

#### **Item #2      Minutes of June 17, 2003 Meeting**

The Subcommittee approved the minutes as written.

#### **Item #3      Vice Chair Nominating Committee**

*Mr. Ronald Mitchell, District of Columbia, appointed the Nominating Committee that will select the new Vice Chairperson for the Subcommittee.*

Mr. Mitchell appointed Ms. Dottie Cousineau with Fairfax County, Ms. Robin Briscoe with Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland and himself to the Nominating Committee. The Subcommittee approved the appointment of the Vice Chair Nominating Committee. A conference call was scheduled for Friday, July 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm to nominate the new Vice Chair.

#### **Item #4      Northern Virginia Vanpool Incentive TERM Update**

*Ms. Valerie Pardo, VDOT, briefed the Subcommittee on the implementation of the Northern Virginia Vanpool Incentive TERM.*

Ms. Pardo briefly stated that the final contract for the program was approved and is in circulation to be signed. Spot checks and verifications for the vans in the program will be performed by COG. The program will probably begin in the fall.

Mr. Ramfos reported that Fox 5 Channel News did a story on van safety which has been an issue lately. When COG conducted the regional vanpool survey vanpool drivers were asked whether or not they had concerns with van rollovers. The Federal DOT has been working on a ruling on van safety and previously vanpools did receive an exemption from the rules. That ruling was

never released and there are many advocacy groups that are pushing for a rulemaking release that would include vanpools, which may drastically change the vanpool industry. VPSI has been fighting for a vanpool exemption. COG has also issued statements on the original rule to the DOT regarding the impact this could have on vanpools in the region. The most successful vanpool programs are in congested areas and they play a large role in the travel demand management programs. Comments have been submitted to the FTA regarding this issue. One of the concerns with vans is those being used by colleges, local school systems for sports activities, and other events are the associated high rollover incidents.

**Item #5 Regional TERMS Briefing**

***Mr. Daivamani Sivasailam, COG/TPB, briefed the Subcommittee group on the Commuter Connections TERMS relevance to the Regional Air Quality Conformity Process.***

Mr. Sivasailam updated the Subcommittee on the status of the Air Quality planning (*see enclosed handout*). The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments designated Washington, DC as a non-attainment area for ozone standards. COG's target date for attainment is 2005. The blueprint that basically outlines how COG is going meet attainment goals is called the State Implementation Plan (SIP). It is prepared by COG's Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee. Each state adopts it and then it is sent to EPA for approval. The SIP includes all pollution sources and provides the regional transportation emissions budget.

Every year, the region adopts a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the financial program that the states put together and includes the Long-Range plan, or CLRP. Both documents are adopted by the Transportation Planning Board. Once the states submit their plan in the program, COG runs the information through a Travel Demand model. The emissions that come from the transportation sector are then calculated. The two pollutants COG is concern with are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx). These two are the prerequisites for ozone formation. On an annual basis COG completes a conformity test with the TIP & CLRP and the emissions that come out of the test are documented and then compared to the NOx and VOC budgets set by the SIP.

If we are under the SIP budget, then the TIP and CLRP are in conformity and then they get approved. If we don't meet the budgets then we will not be in compliance and then TERMS need to be adopted by the TPB. TERMS are Transportation Emission Reductions Measures and they are similar to Transportation Control Measures. TERMS are programmed by the states and local governments and it is TPB's responsibility to make sure that all the TERMS are implemented on time and that the goals set for them are met. The TPB has a TERM Tracking Sheet that is updated on an annual basis. Every year COG asks the implementing agencies to submit reports and then the reports are reviewed and the TERMS are tracked through time. On an annual basis COG reports on the effectiveness of the TERMS during the conformity analysis period.

One of the responsibilities of the implementing agencies is to make sure that they implement TERMS on time and make a good faith to deliver the services. The region has more than two-dozen TERMS that were specifically adopted for emissions reductions. We have close to two hundred projects that TPB is taking emissions credit for. About a dozen of them produce eighty

percent of the emissions reductions. The Commuter Connections TERMS are Employer Outreach, Regional Guaranteed Ride Home, Commuter Operations Center which was not adopted as a TERM but COG does take emissions credit for it; the Telework Resource Center, Integrated Rideshare which includes the kiosk project, Employer Outreach for Bicycling, and Consumer Mass Marketing. The Mass Marketing TERM was recently implemented but the rest of the Commuter Connections TERMS have been in place for three to four years.

Commuter Connections does have a TERM evaluation program that is on a three-year cycle. The last cycle was completed in 2002. The results for the six programs were (some of them did very well, others did not meet their targets) as follows: the total goal in terms of trips reduced was about seventy thousand trips, and based on the evaluation, Commuter Connections got close to ninety-one thousand trips reduced which is about twenty-one thousand more trips reduced and half a million more VMTs reduced. With Employer Outreach and Telecommuting, Commuter Connections TERMS were above target, but with GRH and a few other TERMS Commuter Connections was below target. There is an eight-year build out for the GRH program.

**Q.** Do these goals have to be in the State Implementation Plan?

**A.** No, there are in the conformity analysis report.

The conformity report is comprised of the emissions budgets and then the TERMS are adopted to meet the budget. TERMS are very similar to TCMs in all respects except that if you don't meet the goal TERMS can be adjusted, whereas with TCM's changes need to go out for public comment. The final chart presented to the Subcommittee was a table that came out of last year's conformity report. The SIP attainment year is 2005, and the table shows the travel demand portion of the network analysis including all the highways in the region, transit, and everything that is modeled. Vehicles that are on the road produce about one hundred and five tons of VOC on a daily basis and one hundred and eighty-six tons of daily NOx. This is what is generated by all the cars, SUVs, trucks, buses, etc. Next, the Tier 2/Low Sulfur credit is subtracted from both the VOC and NOx network analysis. This is something that the EPA has mandated which is between now and 2005 so it will reduce the emissions in the region. The conformity report was approved last year. TPB is in the process of performing the test for this year with a new budget which will come out in a new SIP currently being prepared. It is important to note that the emission impacts that the Commuter Connections TERMS contribute are about 2.5 tons of daily NOx reductions and this is out of a total of 5 tons of daily NOx being reduced by all regional TERMS.

**Q.** If we don't come under budget, what new TERMS would be adopted?

**A.** The Travel Management Subcommittee has a list of TERMS with the majority of them being technology based. There are some travel demand management programs too. There are about two dozen TERMS on the list. If anyone is interested, the Travel Management Subcommittee is meeting on July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9:00 am at COG. If any Subcommittee member wants to make a proposal, they are more than welcome to come to the meeting.

**Item #6      TPB's Value Pricing Conference**

***Ms. Wendy Klancher, COG/TPB, briefed the Subcommittee on the TPB Value Pricing Conference held in June.***

Ms. Klancher stated that the TPB sponsored a conference in June on Value Pricing for Transportation. The conference was sponsored along with FHWA, DDOT, MDOT and VDOT. The conference featured speakers from across the country that spoke about value pricing applications. Approximately 185 to 200 people attended the conference. The conference also received good media coverage. There was a front-page article in the Metro section of *The Washington Post* region.

Mr. Martin Wachs talked about Value Pricing in his keynote address and gave a very good definition. The definition focuses on the use of Value Pricing involving charges, prices and fees which need to do two things: 1) produce revenue 2) influence travel behavior to use the transportation system more efficiently. The types of Value Pricing that were reviewed included HOT lanes implemented in SR91 in Orange County, I-15 in San Diego, and the I-10 Katy Freeway in Houston. A HOT lane allows SOVs to buy into HOV lanes and use variable pricing to keep things free flowing. The conference also looked at higher peak period tolls on bridges in New Jersey, and parking cash-out programs. The cordon-pricing scheme in London was discussed, as was pay as you go insurance, which has not been implemented yet but is under review.

Six themes or issue areas or issues areas emerged from the conference. The first was equity. In California, research shows that in the SR91 HOT facility as well as I-15 people of all backgrounds in terms of race and income use the lanes and support the idea of having that Option Pricing second theme is options that expand choices are the most popular. Strategies which add choices rather than taking away another choice that people previously perceived as free have been successful in areas around the country. Also, two points came up during the conference in reference to the importance of maintaining the free flow of the HOV lanes in making a HOT lane program successful and the use of high quality Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The San Diego area is looking at expanding the I-15 facility about thirteen miles and one of the key elements of that expansion is going to be a very comprehensive BRT system. The BRT system right now is planned to have it's own ramp so commuters can get off the lanes and back on, and will also allow for the pickup of people in more of a suburban setting.

Third, transportation revenues and pricing, all across the country the lack of funding is a critical issue. Declining fuel tax revenue is contributing to that (fuel tax rates are not keeping up with inflation). Vehicles are becoming more efficient so there is declining revenue, and alternative fuel are on the horizon. All the speakers at the conference agreed that the revenue from the pricing program should be use in the corridor that it was raised. In San Diego, I-15 raises 2.2 million annually and half of that is used for transit.

Technology, the fourth theme, is certainly working in the favor of pricing. When the Interstate system was being built the preferred method to fund was with tolls, but since there was no good

way to collect tolls they went to the gas tax the program technology makes toll collection much easier now.

Sixth, a wide range of support for pricing was demonstrated by a panel of interest groups: AAA, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Coalition of Smarter Growth, and Environmental Defense who spoke in support of using pricing in the region. Also, the Administration's SAFE-TEA Bill does have an allowance to toll Interstates and Congress is also looking at this. Finally, public education and political support are keys to success. None of the projects that were implemented would have happened without a political champion and political support. Related to that is a strong public education component.

In conclusion, if Subcommittee members are interested in the Value Pricing presentation or the report, information is available on COG's website. There is a Pricing Conference page. The page has the conference attendee roster, a summary of the conference and all of the speakers PowerPoint presentations.

The TPB is expected to appoint a Value Tasking Task Force at its July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Chair of the TPB, Peter Shapiro, is very interested and excited on this topic and he wants the TPB to look at pricing more in-depth and see how it can benefit the region. One of the things that the Task Force will be looking at is the TPB's Regional Mobility and Accessibility study HOV/HOT scenario.

#### **Item #7      Operations Center Update**

***Mr. Christopher Arabia, COG/DTP, updated the Subcommittee on recent Operations Center activities including the implementation of the E-communicator project.***

Mr. Arabia stated that the Operations Center completed the updates of the street file data, the park and ride lot data and the Telework Center data. This information is going to be updated on client member computers. Starting the week of July 14<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Arabia will be making calls to client members and scheduling appointments to update their computers. COG's GIS staff members were working with VDOT to update street file data for all of Northern Virginia, and unfortunately this did not happen in time for the most recent update. Staff has now asked the local jurisdictions in Northern Virginia to supply them with that data and is still waiting to receive the data. As soon as the data is received staff will make another update.

The park and ride information is now on COG's Web site in map form. Now you will be able to access park and ride lot locations around the region from the Commuter Connections Web site. Mr. Arabia encouraged Subcommittee members who have park and ride lots in their jurisdictions to the Web site and review the maps and get back to him with any revisions. The good news is there will not be a six month waiting period to update information.

Mr. Arabia passed out a memo on the new E-communicator system web application (*see enclosed*). In the past, the Commuter Connections web site had two separate applications, one for GRH and the other for Ridesharing. The memo that was handed out to Subcommittee members explained the new application form and included the Web link to the new form. Mr. Arabia reported that the E-communicator system was implemented at the end of June.

Mr. Arabia handed out a fact sheet on the E-communicator system (*see enclosed*). The fact sheet explains what E-communicator is and what it means to our local client members and how applications will be processed through E-communicator. E-communicator is a new system used by staff to process GRH and rideshare applications received through the Commuter Connections Web site. This process will eliminate manual data entry work performed by Commuter Connections client members. There will not be any changes to the software on local client computers or upgrades.

Client members will receive a notification email for each CCRS applicant living in the client's jurisdiction that is processed through E-communicator. The e-mail will detail what information the applicant is requesting (i.e., ridematching, transit information, bicycle information, etc.). The client should then do follow up with the commuter to see if the applicant called the commuters on the matchlist and was able to join a carpool or vanpool, or if they need additional information on other commuter alternatives.

Mr. Arabia then handed out to the Subcommittee a sample of the e-mail that the client would receive from COG (*enclosed*). Mr. Arabia also handed out a sample of the e-mail matchletter to the Subcommittee. (*enclosed*). He reported that client members could now add links to these messages to include the park and ride lots. He added that traditionally we have all looked at the **app (application) codes** as a measure of program success, and these codes are still going to be included in the database. We need to change the way we look at this because we are all in one big network. The Operations Center will be adding a table to the monthly report that will show you how many people live in your jurisdiction and how many people work in your jurisdiction. The table will start with the July monthly report.

**Q.** What about the radius? Is it on the matchlist going to be up to COG to set this or is it going to be up to the jurisdictions?

**A.** We will initially use the default five-mile radius on matches and the jurisdictions can follow-up with the commuter and make the appropriate adjustments.

Mr. Arabia announced that a conference call with the data technicians and the program managers would be held to get feedback on the new system. The conference calls will be set up during the week of July 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Q.** Is COG going to survey the users?

**A.** Yes.

**Item #8 Mass Marketing TERM Update**

***Mr. Douglas Franklin, COG/DTP, updated the Subcommittee on the progress of the regional Mass Marketing TERM.***

Mr. Franklin stated that at the June Subcommittee meeting the contractor presented research findings from stakeholders' research and some consumer research. Dudnyk also reviewed their deliverables and stated that Dudnyk put together a final report that is very comprehensive. (*If*

anyone would like a copy of the contents of the binder, please give your business card to **Hilda Velez** and she will make sure that you receive a copy).

Also at the June meeting, the contractor presented six radio concepts to the Subcommittee. The concepts were: Change your Day, ECT, which is short for Emergency Commuting Technicians; Testimonial, Hey You, Race, and Bookends. Feedback forms from Subcommittee and Regional TDM Marketing Group members were sent back to the contractor and the top three concepts ended up being: Change Your Day, Testimonial, and ECT. These concepts were developed into radio scripts. The Subcommittee then listened to the radios spots that were put together. These were put together with input from the State funders. The scripts were then taken to focus groups. The focus groups sessions took place in Fairfax and Gaithersburg. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, the same concepts and ads will be presented at the TPB work session.

The contractor stated that the three concepts were shown to small groups to get a personal reaction. These were men and women who were SOV users, they had varying degree of openness to using various alternative modes to set to work. The contractor spoke to participants in a range of ages from 18-35 with various commute times. The Testimonial concept was the top choice. Staff's recommendation is to proceed with the Testimonial campaign and execute an array of spots specializing in the Testimonial campaign concept.

**Q.** Is the campaign concept going to be developed for TV as well?

**A.** Radio is going to be the dominant medium because it is so effective, however, TV spots will also be produced.

Mr. Franklin also distributed to the Subcommittee a fact sheet of a brief presentation given by Mr. Ramfos to the TPB on the Mass Marketing TERM (*see enclosed*).

Two very important elements to the actual message content were options and flexibility. Mr. Franklin then distributed the Radio scripts to the Subcommittee (*see enclosed*).

**Q.** Will there be a monitoring evaluation report before June 2005?

**A.** Yes, we will use the 2004 State of the Commute and then conduct a household telephone survey in 2005.

Mr. Ramfos encouraged the Subcommittee to attend the special TPB work session on the Mass Marketing campaign being held Wednesday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 am at COG.

**Item #9      2003 Employer Recognition Awards Update**  
***Mr. Douglas Franklin, COG/DTP, updated the Subcommittee on the 2003 Employer Recognition Awards program.***

The Employer Recognition Awards were held on June 25<sup>th</sup> at the National Press Club. The program MC this year was Supervisor Catherine Hudgins from Fairfax County. 115 people were

in attendance. Pathways Communications designed the awards program booklet. There were six awards presented. The award winners were:

- **Marketing Category:** Social and Scientific Inc.
- **Incentives Category:** QED Consulting
- **Telework Category:** Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration

Mr. Dave Robertson, COG's Executive Director, presented the COG Awards and the winners were:

- **Employer Services Sales Team Achievement Award:** Tri County Council for Southern Maryland
- **Employer Services Organization Achievement Award:** The U.S. Department of Transportation
- **The Media Award:** was given to Ms. Lisa Rein of the Washington Post

The event was cover by the *Washington Post* and *The Journal* in Northern Virginia. Articles were distributed to Subcommittee members at the meeting (*see enclosed*). The media coverage focused on the Best WorkPlaces for Commuters program. Mr. Franklin distributed the Best WorkPlaces for Commuters list (*enclosed*) and stated that there are 76 companies that made the list this year. Ms. Suzanne Rudzinski with EPA and the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Bob Peck were guest speakers this year. COG staff put together a press kit which was sent out to the media with the help from the COG's Office of Public Affairs and on the Tuesday following the event COG arranged for a live telecast with FOX morning news at GEICO's headquarters. COG arranged for FOX News to do a live interview with Mr. Stephan Sylvan with the EPA to promote the list. The 5-minute interview was then shown to the Subcommittee.

Mr. Franklin then stated that each year COG forms a volunteer Workgroup that meets periodically throughout the year to provide input and helps plan the Employer Recognition Awards.

This upcoming year's Workgroup volunteers include:

- DC - Dick Siskand, WMATA
- VA – Shauna Brown, Alexandria Rideshare
- MD – Nancy Norris, Transit Services of Frederick County

Some of the responsibilities of the volunteer awards workgroup include:

- providing feedback and direction on nomination review forms,
- giveaways at the event,
- selection of speakers,
- approval of printed materials such as invitations/awards program
- other components of the process

The Awards Work group will get started in September for next year's awards ceremony.

**Q.** Can the nominating organization be made aware if one of their nominee's is selected?

**A.** It is something to consider and it depends on what you are going to do with the information. We don't want the information to be leaked out before the actual ceremony occurs.

**Item #10 Clean Air Partners Update**

***Ms. Robin Briscoe, Tri-County, updated the Subcommittee on recent Clean Air Partners activities.***

Ms. Briscoe stated that a 2004 draft work plan budget would be presented at the Board's July meeting. At this point, the region has had three Ozone Actions Days. Two have been code red and one code orange. During the month of June, Ozone Actions Day information was submitted to over twenty-five media outlets and community presentations were done to get the word out about the OAD's. Many jurisdictions have been participating in on-going educational opportunities through summer camps, senior centers, etc.

**Item #11 TMA Advisory Group Update**

***Mr. Mark Hersey, COG/DTP, updated the Subcommittee on the annual meeting held by the TMA Advisory Group.***

Mr. Hersey stated that the meeting topic was based on Ms. Wendy Klancher's presentation on the TPB's Value Pricing Conference. Prior to that, Mr. Hersey gave updates on last year's meeting. Mr. Len Foxwell, with the DC Business Improvement District, was the Chair for the annual meeting and the group plans to meet again next year.

**Item #12 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting**

Ms. Valerie Pardo stated that starting on Wednesday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, Virginia will be conducting a big crack down on the HOV lanes and it has been well publicized. There was a press conference on Monday, July 14<sup>th</sup> and it will continue until results are obtained. Violators can be reported to VDOT or by calling the state police. News Channel 4 has conducted interviews as has *The Washington Post* on the violator issue.

Mr. Ramfos then introduced the new Marketing Intern – Mr. Ryan Marshall who will be working with the Commuter Connections team on a number of projects over the next year, including the update to the Regional TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan. Mr. Marshall will be sending to the Regional TDM Marketing group and others emails to have them update their plan information. A draft of the plan will be presented at the August 5<sup>th</sup> Regional TDM Marketing group meeting.

Agenda Items for September's Subcommittee Meeting:

1. Update on the Vanpool TERM.

2. Highlights of the ACT Conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

***The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on  
Tuesday, September 23, 2003***