

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Commuter Connections Subcommittee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

Chairperson: Leann Landry, WMATA
Vice Chairperson: Linda Stewart - Byrd
Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos (202) 962-3313

Item #1 Introductions

The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves and to sign the attendance sheet

Chairperson Landry called the meeting to order by introducing herself and asking the rest of the attendees to do so (*See attached attendance sheet*).

Mr. Ramfos made introductions of new COG Staff members Ross Edgar and Towanna Hinton. Mr. Edgar has been employed in the position of GIS Analyst/Programmer and Ms. Hinton in the position of Commuter Operations Specialist II, overseeing the Commuter Connections Operations Center.

Item #2 Minutes of November 15, 2005

Approval was sought for the November 15th Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting minutes.

There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes of the November 15th meeting as written.

Item #3 FY 2005 Employer Outreach Customer Satisfaction Survey Draft Report

The Subcommittee was briefed on the suggested changes made to the FY 2005 Employer Outreach Customer Satisfaction Survey Draft Report

Mr. Ramfos reviewed the recommended changes that were made to the report. A comment period was established at the November 15, 2005 Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting. All comments were due to Mr. Hersey by December 12, 2005. A summarization of the changes follows.

Suggested and implemented changes to the FY 2005 Employer Outreach Customer Satisfaction Survey Draft Report

- Page 9 - (Q. 3 & 4 – Clarifications on Results.)
- Page 10 - (Q. 5 – Percentages in narrative now match the Percentages in the graph.)
- Pages 11 & 12 – The narrative now matches the bar graphs in terms of highest percentages in level of satisfaction.
- Page 13 – The narrative now matches the percentages shown in the Q & A responses.
- Page 19 – The number of times the questions were answered was added.
- Page 20 – Some of the conclusions were changed to reflect the adjustments made on Pages 10-13.

The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the version presented as the final report. The motion was presented and seconded, thereby adopted as the final report.

Item #4 Expanded Telecommuting TERM Project Draft Report

The Subcommittee was briefed on suggested changes made to the Expanded Telecommuting TERM Project Draft Report

Mr. Ramfos reviewed the recommended changes that were made to the report. The Subcommittee was initially briefed on the results at the May 17, 2005 meeting and again at the November 15, 2005 meeting. The Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group was briefed on the results as well. All call for final changes/edits was made and a deadline of December 16, 2005 established.

A summarization of the changes follows.

Suggested and implemented changes to the Expanded Telecommuting TERM Project Draft Report

- Evaluation sections were updated to reflect the TERM Analysis results for transportation and emissions impacts.
- Cosmetic changes, such as typographical errors were corrected.

The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the version presented as the final report. The motion was presented and seconded, thereby adopted as the final report.

Item #5 2005 Bike To Work Day Event Draft Report

The Subcommittee was briefed on suggested changes made to the 2005 Bike To Work Day Event Draft Report and approval was sought by Mr. Ramfos for adoption

Mr. Ramfos reviewed the recommended changes that were made to the report. The report was presented to the Bike To Work Day Steering Committee on November 9, 2005 and then to the Commuter Connections Subcommittee on November 15, 2005. Final edits and comments were called for with a deadline of December 2, 2005. A summarization of the changes follows.

Suggested and implemented changes to the 2005 Bike To Work Day Draft Report

- Collateral Material quantities reviewed and updated (Page 6)
- Sponsorship information adjusted to reflect shortfalls and changes made to the package
- Cosmetic changes – Typographical errors/formatting

The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the version presented as the final report. The motion was presented and seconded, thereby adopted as the final report.

Item #6 2004 Bike To Work Day Analysis Draft Report

The Subcommittee was briefed on suggested changes made to the 2004 Bike To Work Day Analysis Draft Report.

Mr. Ramfos remarked that the only changes made to this report were merely for cosmetic purposes only.

The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the version presented as the final report. The motion was presented and seconded, thereby adopted as the final report.

Item #7 FY 2005 TERM Analysis Draft Report

The Subcommittee was briefed on the changes made to the FY 2005 TERM Analysis Draft Report

Mr. Ramfos reviewed the recommended changes that were made to the report. The Subcommittee was briefed on the results from the report at the July 19, 2005 and November 15, 2005 Subcommittee meetings. In addition, the state funding agencies were briefed on the findings at a meeting on September 13, 2005. The changes included in this version of the report were called for at the November 15, 2005 meeting and were to be submitted no later than December 16, 2005.

Suggested and implemented changes to the FY 2005 TERM Analysis Draft Report

- Additional language was added on the goals and why some of the shortfalls occurred (Executive Summary and Section 2)
 - How emissions goals were initially set (Mobile 5 model)
 - Mobile 5 allowed for much great reduction in emissions compared to that of the more recent Mobile 6 model
 - Goals were also based on stated preference surveys, conducted in the early 90's, and were heavily based upon anecdotal observations of other TDM programs in other parts of the country
 - Recommendation made that transportation and emissions goals for Commuter Connections TERMS be

reviewed and revised in light of cleaner vehicles, changes to vehicle technology, changes to the Mobile emissions model, and updated travel behavior information

- Results shown in the TERM tracking sheet may not be consistent with the results in the report due to the fact that the regional travel demand model was calibrated and validated against the year 2000 traffic counts and regional emission credits are only taken for TERM benefits that occurred after the year 2000
- Participation Goals and Impacts added to Table A
- Table C added to compare results from 2002 to 2005
- Mass marketing impacts were corrected and updated
- Appendix 10 – page 67 – Adjustments/corrections made to the MSA calculation

The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the version presented as the final report. The motion was presented and seconded, thereby adopted as the final report.

Item #8 GRH Participation Guideline Updates

The Subcommittee was briefed on the recommended changes to the GRH Guidelines as set forth by the GRH Ad-Hoc Group

Mr. Ramfos discussed the changes made to the document and highlighted new areas to be added to the Guaranteed Ride Home program in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Suggested and implemented changes to the GRH Participation Guidelines include:

- Language of Employee Transportation Coordinators removed due to lack of materialization
- COG versus Commuter Connections nomenclature defined
 - Commuter Connections named to be used throughout the document, while mentioning that program is administrated by COG
- Additional service areas added:
 - West Virginia
 - Hampshire County
 - Berkley County
 - Pennsylvania
 - Franklin County

Robin Briscoe questioned whether Pax River of St. Mary's County could be included in MSA, because employers there participate in the MetroChek program. Mr. Ramfos responded that no portion of St. Mary's County is included in the MSA.

The Subcommittee was asked to endorse the version presented as the final guidelines. The motion was presented and seconded, thereby adopted as the amended version of the GRH Program Participation Guidelines.

Item #9 FY 2007 Work Program Development

The Subcommittee was briefed on the FY 2007 Work Program Development

Mr. Ramfos mentioned that a draft bullet point outline was in the works as the dialogue continues between the state funding agencies and COG. Input garnered from the Strategic Planning Sessions held in October is still being reviewed. The goal is to supply the Subcommittee with a rough draft of the FY2007 CCWP during the March meeting.

Item #10 Regional TDM Marketing Update

The Subcommittee was briefed by Mr. Franklin on recent TDM Marketing activities via his First-Half FY2006 Marketing Campaign Summary

Mr. Franklin briefed the Subcommittee on recent and upcoming Commuter Connections marketing activities. The focus of the FY2006 marketing campaign will continue to drive awareness via the high reach and frequency broadcast marketing – radio, focusing on ridematching services, continues to co-promote the GRH program and, leveraging partnerships with area employers. The findings of the State of the Commute follow:

State of the Commute Findings

- 69% of respondents who had taken some action said the advertising they saw or heard encouraged action*
- 70% of respondents who took an action* were driving alone at the same time
- 61% of respondents who sought information but had not made a commute mode change were likely to try using an alternate method within the next year
- 47% of area workers did not carpool because they did not know anyone with whom to carpool
- Only 16% of respondents knew Commuter Connections offered help finding a carpool or vanpool partner

The findings also reveal that from September 2004 to September 2005, average monthly prices rose by 62%. During this time, visits to www.commuterconnections.org increased by 44% in September 2005 compared to September 2004. Mr. Franklin stated that a direct mail piece will be mailed in January. Mr. Franklin stated there were 60 second radio spots that aired on thirteen different mainstream radio stations. He then played the three radio spots for the Subcommittee titled: “Men, Women, and Sharing” which will receive a 50% rotation; “Super Commuter” which will receive a 25% rotation; and “Satisfaction Guaranteed” which will receive the remaining 25% share in rotation.

* Action may include seeking a carpool/vanpool partner, starting an alternative mode, seeking out commuter service information via Internet or contacting a commuter organization

Mr. Arabia asked whether the “commute calculator” had been revised. Mr. Ramfos responded that it was last updated in 2003. The primary question was whether Commuter Connections was following a federal formula or a state formula. Chairperson Landry added that she believed the federal government had updated their information as of August or September. Mr. Ramfos added he thought the Commuter Connections site followed the formula instituted by USDOT, and adheres to federal expense calculation formulas.

Item #11 Changes to Freeway Peak Period Congestion

The Subcommittee was briefed on changes in Peak Period Congestion from 2002-2005 by Mr. Sivasailam

Mr. Sivasailam briefed the Subcommittee on changes in Peak Period Congestion from 2002-2005. Background included the TPB Work Program includes congestion monitoring of freeway and arterial highway systems. The program started in 1993 and has continued ever since. The monitoring is observed through flights with a pilot contractor. Density is the unit of measure used in congestion monitoring. Different vehicles equate a different level of density, i.e. trucks, buses, automobiles. Density is measured in terms of passenger cars per mile per lane or “pcpml” as hereafter referred.

Background

- 300 mile system monitored every three years since 1993
- Three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening
- Photographs are taken in multiple days
- Density (pcpml) of freeway segments used to identify congestion
- Compared with the 2002 survey and prior year surveys of 1999, 1996, and 1993

Findings

- AM Peak Congestion
 - In the AM, peak period congestion is directional (I-270 South-bound, I - 95/I – 395 North-bound, I – 66 East-bound, I – 495)
- PM Peak Congestion
 - In the PM, peak period congestion on the portion of the Capitol Beltway between VA – 267 and I – 95 in Maryland is congested in both directions
 - The other facilities are congested in the direction opposite to the AM peak direction
 - I – 270 at I – 70 is starting to experience congestion

While the population of area continues to grow, typically the congestion does as well. However, there a few areas that have seen improvements to their traffic conditions since 2002. In Maryland on US 50 at US 301 and on the Baltimore – Washington Parkway at New York Avenue (US 50) congestion has lessened. Virginia has also seen improvements in traffic conditions. The greatest improvements have been notice along the Capital Beltway Corridor at VA – 267 to I – 270 on the outer loop and also at Telegraph Road. Westbound I -66 has also demonstrated some improvement between VA – 234 and US 15.

Specific locations of morning congestion since 2002 include eastbound I – 66 where the HOV lanes experience congestion between Westmoreland and Sycamore. The density on eastbound VA – 267 has increased from 50 to 70 (pcpmpl) and the congestion now extends further west to Sully Road, while on the Capital Beltway congestion extends from VA – 7 south to Braddock Road. In Maryland, southbound I – 270 continues to building congestion as density increases between MD – 85 and the Montgomery County line during the morning rush. During the evening rush, northbound I – 270 increases from 50 pcpmpl to 65 pcpmpl. In Virginia, we find again the beltway to be congested on the inner loop from VA – 123 to US – 50, with few non-congested spots in between.

Item #12 Budget Report

The Subcommittee was briefed on the current state of the FY2006 budget by Mr. Ramfos

Mr. Ramfos reported that there was a slight change in the budgeting which might not be reflected on the distributed report. The change was due to the restructuring of the Commuter Connections program and resulted in a lower than anticipated marketing budget while the Employer Outreach budget has increased. The changes should show on the report for the third quarter, to be distributed at the May meeting. Two Employer Outreach contracts remain unsigned by jurisdictions, but all other budgets are on line financially.

Item#13 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

The Subcommittee was offered to the opportunity to present other business, none of which was mentioned and to set any agenda items for the next meeting

Mr. Ramfos stated that he will have an agenda item for the FY2006 Placement Rate Survey and that he would like to possibly call a special meeting in February in order to discuss the Work Program, possibly on February 21st in order to present it to the TPB in March.

No other items were presented and the meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Landry.

The next regularly scheduled Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006 at 12 noon.