



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 21, 2020
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Third Floor, COG Board Room
Chairperson: Marcus Moore, Fairfax County
Vice Chairperson: Marina Budimir, DDOT
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 November 19, 2019 Meeting**

Approval was sought for the November 19, 2019 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.

Marcus Moore, Fairfax County, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

A motion was made by George Clark, TCCSMD, and seconded by Mark Sofman, Montgomery County.

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the November 19, 2019 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

Item #3 **2019 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report**

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the substantive changes to the draft 2019 Commuter Connections Bike To Work Day Report.

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the substantive changes to the draft 2019 Commuter Connections Bike To Work Day Event Report. The comment period for this report opened November 19, 2019 and closed on December 20, 2019. The 2019 event consisted of more than 17,900 bicyclists registered which is a 3.6 increase over the previous year. There were 115 local pit stops which was a major increase from when the event started in 2002 with 11 pit stops. Mr. Hersey asked the Subcommittee for a motion to endorse the document for release. A motion was made by George Clark, TCCSMD, and seconded by Traci McPhail, NBTMD. The report was endorsed for release and will be published and posted for distribution to the publications section on the Commuter Connections website.

Item #4 **Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Updated Participation Guidelines**

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes to the regional GRH program participation guidelines.

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes to the regional GRH program participation guidelines. In November, changes to the guidelines were reviewed and discussed regarding some communication method on requesting a trip. The updated guidelines show that commuters can submit their GRH request online through their Commuter Connections account. Language was also added to include transportation network companies (TNCs) as options for the GRH trip service. The comment period

for this report opened November 19, 2019 and closed on December 20, 2019. Mr. Finafrock asked the Subcommittee for a motion to endorse the updated GRH Participation Guidelines. A motion was made by Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, and seconded by Holly Morello, PRTC. The new GRH Participation Guidelines will be uploaded to the Commuter Connections website and will also be reflected in the registration and re-registration GRH letters during the next round of printing.

Item #5 **FY 2021 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and 2019 – 2020 Strategic Plan**
Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY2021 CCWP and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the FY2021 CCWP and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. Comments were provided by the Subcommittee in November and some typographical changes were made to the document. Following the November Subcommittee meeting, overhead rates for the agency were updated to reflect the approved COG's Indirect Cost Rate approved by the USDOT/FTA, which is COG's cognizant Federal agency. Changes to these rates are reflected on page 11 of the document. Only minor adjustments were made to some of the direct labor expenses, including salaries and fringe benefits. The overall budget remained the same. Mr. Ramfos continued with the Strategic Plan changes, which included the GRH Guidelines changes regarding the addition of TNCs providing GRH trips. The larger version of the Strategic Plan will be published on the Commuter Connections website once finalized and after the TPB approves the FY2021 CCWP. Marcus Moore, Fairfax County, asked the Subcommittee for a motion to endorse both documents for release. A motion was made by Judy Galen, Loudoun County, and seconded by George Clark, TCCSMD. The draft FY2021 CCWP will be presented to both the TPB Technical Committee and to the TPB in February and a public comment period will be established. In March, the final draft document will be presented again and the TPB will vote to approve the document. COG/TPB staff will work with the state funding agencies on any necessary changes to the TIP and program funding commitments will be requested and submitted. The program is slated to begin on July 1st.

Item #6 **Metro Platform Work for 2020 Briefing**
Nicholas Perfili and David Proctor, WMATA, briefed the Subcommittee on Metro's Platform work that will affect the Orange line this summer.

Nicholas Perfili and David Proctor, WMATA, briefed the Subcommittee on Metro's Platform work that will affect the Orange line this summer. Mr. Proctor stated that the WMATA platform shutdowns are necessary for making platforms safer and more accessible for Metrorail riders. The first phase was completed in 2019 when six stations were successfully reconstructed on the blue and yellow lines south of the Reagan National Airport station. The "Braddock hump" was removed by lifting the entire station, which weighs approximately 1.6 million pounds, and is heavier than nine Discovery space shuttles. This is an example of how much work was completed during the first phase of the shutdowns. Mr. Perfili continued with phase two of the Platform Improvement Project in which plans were announced on December 11, 2019. Four stations on the Orange and Silver lines will undergo platform reconstruction. Proposed work on the Yellow and Green lines in Maryland will be rescheduled to a later phase of the project. Between May 23 through September 7, 2020, Vienna, Dunn Loring and East Falls Church stations will be closed for the summer. The West Falls Church station will remain open during the project because it is equipped with two platforms that can be reconstructed one at a time. Silver line stations from McLean to Wiehle-Reston East will remain open as well, but with reduced service.

Mr. Perfili shared the proposed bus shuttle routes to serve as alternative travel between the operating stations. There will be two shuttles continuously transporting customers from Vienna and Dunn Loring to West Fall Church and one shuttle transporting customers from East Falls Church to Ballston. A fourth shuttle will operate between Vienna, Ballston, Court House, and Rosslyn inbound from 5:00am to 9am, and outbound from 3:00pm to 7:00pm. There will also be shuttles operating on-demand as needed for the areas with less demand. There will also be Metrobuses as well as other bus services helping to provide alternative routes in

the affected areas. Mr. Proctor then discussed WMATA's communications approach to ensure customers are aware of the platform project as well as these alternative travel options. The approach will expand upon lessons learned from previous shutdowns and will be provided to customers through multiple channels. A communications timeline was shown to the Subcommittee explaining what types of communications are to be released as well as when they will be released. A press release, bus maps, open houses, paid media, and press conferences are examples of the communication methods to be used. Community outreach coordination opportunities will take place 1-3 months before the closures as well including pop-ups, fairs, and festivals. Fatemah Allahdoust, VDOT, asked about plan development for communications to jurisdictions and discussed the impact of single tracking in Virginia. Mr. Proctor answered saying plans are still in early development stages and will be shared once finalized. WMATA has a meeting with VDOT on Thursday and will try to involve as many agencies as possible to provide expertise. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, informed the Subcommittee that the Metro Platform Shutdown TDM Work Group will be meeting again in February.

Item #7 **FY 2019 Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)**

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the draft FY 2019 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results for both the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions.

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY 2019 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey results for both the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions. Mr. Franklin started with the FY2019 GRH Washington, DC customer satisfaction survey. Most questions on the online survey asked of commuters had response ratings of poor, fair, good, or excellent. Some online questions were open-ended where comments could be provided. The survey card which was mailed had a similar approach with the same types of ratings and comment section. 2,302 surveys were sent to GRH Washington, DC respondents and 300 responses were returned, which is a 13% return rate (1% down from FY2018). GRH trip reservations staff received 86% "excellent" survey response. Transportation services received a 74% "excellent" survey response and a 21% "good" response. Response time for the service was given an 82% "excellent" rating with 83% of users saying they waited less than 15 minutes for their GRH ride. Overall service was given an 82% "excellent" rating. All ratings below "good" were between 1-4% for all questions in the survey. The responses for "Reason for Trip" were overtime (16%), sick child (20%), personal illness (37%), and other emergencies (27%). 208 of the 300 respondents (69%) provided written responses. 139 were compliments, 22 were general comments, 18 were suggestions, and 25 were complaints.

Mr. Franklin continued with sharing results from the draft FY2019 GRH Baltimore customer satisfaction survey report. Respondents received the same survey questions. 118 surveys were sent to GRH Baltimore respondents and 16 were returned, which is a 14% return rate (5% higher than FY2018). GRH trip reservations staff received 62% "excellent", 25% "good", and 13% "fair" survey response ratings. Transportation services received 69% "excellent", 25% "good", and 6% "fair" ratings. The response time for the service was given a 56% "excellent" rating, 31% "good", and 13% "fair". 50% of respondents said they waited 16-30 minutes for a GRH ride, while 25% said they waited less than 15 minutes. 19% of respondents claimed to have waited more than 46 minutes or more. Overall service received ratings of 73% "excellent", 20% "good", and 7% "fair". The responses for "Reason for Trip" were overtime (50%), sick child (6%), personal illness (31%), and other emergencies (13%). Response times have gone up about 5% than in FY2018. George Clark, TCCSMD, questioned the response time going up in the past year. Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, responded saying the reason Uber was brought on board as a ride provider for the GRH program was to try to lessen the wait time for commuters working in the Baltimore/St. Mary's County region. Mr. Franklin cautioned that the Baltimore survey only had 16 respondents and these responses will reflect the experiences of only those 16 people. Overall service is higher than all previous years. Nancy Huggins, MTA, questioned if maybe some respondents answered poorly due to lack of GRH trips taken. Mr. Franklin clarified that only those who took GRH trips received the survey. Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, speculated that there may be some confusion between this survey and the triennial survey which includes all registrants for the program. 12 out of 16 respondents (75%)

provided written responses. There were zero complaints logged, however, one complaint was made and seems to have been logged incorrectly.

Janiece Timmons, WMATA, inquired about how we can get the more survey respondents in both this survey as well as the triennial survey. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, explained that overall use of the program is lower in Baltimore and issues with the providers have affected use of the program as well. George Clark, TCCSMD, questioned if transportation vendors in Baltimore are marketing the GRH program. Mr. Ramfos said that could help. Ms. Timmons continued saying that awareness of the GRH program in Baltimore is low and marketing to the local commuters in Baltimore would probably help as well. Nancy Huggins, MTA, informed the Subcommittee that there is a combined effort between all the transportation networks to market the GRH program in Baltimore, however, with less federal government employees in Baltimore, it may not be as popular. Mr. Franklin stated that comments for both reports are due February 25, 2020 and can be submitted at doccomments@mwco.org.

Item #8 Regional TDM Evaluation Project Update

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, updated The Subcommittee on recent and upcoming Regional TDM Evaluation project activities.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, updated The Subcommittee on recent and upcoming Regional TDM Evaluation project activities. Mr. Ramfos informed the Subcommittee that the Vanpool Driver Survey was sent out last week to approximately 1,100 vanpool drivers. Mr. Ramfos thanked GWRideConnect and PRTC for helping compile the list of vanpool drivers to send the survey to. Enterprise Vanpools could not legally supply a list of vanpool drivers in their network and will promote the survey to their 475 drivers/coordinators through a generic survey link. In order to avoid duplicate survey respondents because Enterprise vanpool drivers could be on both lists, Enterprise will not begin promotion until a week after Commuter Connections launches the survey to its respondent list. The Vanpool Driver Survey will be implemented through February and highlights will be presented to the Subcommittee in March. A draft report will be made available in May and a comment period will be established. Mr. Ramfos continued with the Employer Outreach ACT! database analysis which will include data from July 1, 2017 through December 31, 2019 for the initial evaluation. An update to the database in the summer of 2020 will include any new records and/or updates made after December 31st through June 30th. The Maryland Employer Telework Survey will be conducted to include employers who have received assistance from Employer Outreach representatives in Maryland from July 2017 through December 2019. Preliminary results show around 140 employers to be included in the survey which will be conducted in March. Analysis will also be conducted within the Commuter Connections Operations Center to gain knowledge about how many applicants there have been in the Rideshare and GRH programs from July 2017 through December 2019. Additional analysis will occur in the summer on any new applicants from January through June. A draft TDM Analysis report will be presented at the July 2020 Subcommittee meeting, then a second draft (including data from January through June) will be presented in September, with finalization of the report occurring in November 2020. Mr. Ramfos ended by explaining how jurisdictional analyses and data sets from the 2019 State of the Commute will be available in February or sooner. The State of the Commute general public report will be published and available in the summer.

Item #9 Bike To Work Day and Car Free Day 2019 Event Surveys

Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, briefed the Subcommittee on the highlights from the FY 2019 Bike to Work Day and 2019 Car Free Days event surveys recently conducted.

Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, briefed the Subcommittee on the highlights from the FY 2019 Bike to Work Day event survey recently conducted. The Bike to Work Day event survey was an internet survey including Bike to Work Day participants from May 2019. The survey was conducted in November 2019 with 16,063 invitations sent and 2,285 responses received, which is a 14.2% response rate. The purpose of the survey is to collect data for analysis of the BTWD event as well as to define new and increased bike commute use. The

demographics of the BTWD event show that most participants were predominantly white, older men with slightly higher incomes than the average commuter. Most participants also worked for large organizations. Ms. Diggins explained that the majority of bike riders are associated with these demographics, so the results are in line with the general bicycling population. 2019 was the first BTWD for 23% of respondents while 77% had participated in an earlier event. 30% of respondents heard about BTWD through the internet while 20% heard about the event through a personal referral. Joe Stainsby, Vanpool Alliance, inquired about how marketing for the event is appealing to demographics, specifically if marketing is catering to older white men since they comprise a majority share of participants. Ms. Diggins clarified that the age demographic shows that a higher percentage of younger participants heard about the event on social media while the older participants were mostly past participants and heard about the event through their employers and WABA. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, confirmed that the event is marketed to all demographics through different venues and that that is a consistent practice for event marketing. There has also been a specific focus on marketing the event to the African American community, women, and to the Hispanic community. Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, added that there has been an effort to expand the number of pit stops in underserved communities as well.

Ms. Diggins stated that the best part of BTWD for most participants (35%) was sharing the ride with other cyclists. 23% of respondents said the pit stops, activities, and general festivity excitement was the best part of the event and 11% said the t-shirt was the best part. Ms. Diggins included that there were some comments made about ways to improve BTWD, such as more pit stops and incentives. Other suggestions included more bike riding advocacy, education on riding safely, hosting more or longer events throughout the year, as well as expanding the event for participants to bike to more places than work. 93% of respondents used their own personal bikes while 6% used Capital Bikeshare. 97% of respondents used traditional bikes while 3% used e-bikes. 88% biked the entire trip from home to work, 5% drove to Park & Ride lots and rode from there, and 5% rode to transit station then took a bus or train. 87% of respondents biked to work at least one day per month before ever participating in the BTWD event. In Summer 2019, 91% of respondents said to have biked to work at least one day per month. 7% of non-riders started biking to work and 16% of riders increased bike frequency. In Fall 2019, riding declined to the pre-event level, likely due to the seasonal change.

Ms. Diggins elaborated on these results with data detailing the reasons for the decline. Primary barriers to continued bike use during Fall 2019 were cold weather, riding safety concerns, and the distance from home to work. On the days that respondents did not bike to work, 38% of respondents drove alone while 45% rode transit. 83% of respondents said their employers offered bike-commute assistance, which is the same percentage as recorded on the 2016 event report. 62% reported that their employers had bike storage capabilities and showers. Others reported having personal lockers, financial incentives, Capital Bikeshare memberships, as well as information on bike routes. 17% reported to have no services for bike-commuting. Ms. Diggins closed this portion of the presentation saying 22% of respondents increased use of bicycles for non-commute trips since their first BTWD. Fatemah Allahdoust, VDOT, asked if there was an error with the percentage of those who do not ride due to safety or the lack of safe biking routes. Ms. Diggins speculated that traffic or being a new rider could be the reason for the percentage being slightly high, and she will try to find if there are trends in previous reports. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked that comments on the draft report be submitted by February 28, 2020 at docomments@mwccog.org and informed the Subcommittee that the report will be available for review on Sharepoint.

Ms. Diggins then briefed the Subcommittee on the highlights from the FY2019 Car Free Day event survey recently conducted. The Car Free Day (CFD) event survey was conducted for the first time in November 2019. 4,731 invitations were delivered and 1,022 responses were received, which is a 21.6% response rate. Demographics for the CFD event included employed, mostly white, equally male and female, slightly older participants. 2019 was the first CFD for 36% of respondents. Most respondents heard of the event through digital sources such as the internet, email, and social media. 98% of respondents used car-free or car-lite options during CFD. Transit use was slightly less than pledged, but options used were generally in line with options pledged. CFD 2019 spanned over three days – Saturday through Monday. 91% of respondents used a car-free or car-lite option on Monday and about half used car-free or car-lite options on Saturday and/or Sunday. Ms. Diggins continued by explaining 84% of employed respondents usually used a car-free or car-lite

option to get to work while only 16% drove alone or ridehailed. About 11% of respondents increased their frequency of car-free or car-lite use for work trips after the event. 33% of respondents increased use of car-free or car-lite options for non-work trips after the event. Judy Galen, Loudoun County, inquired about making the CFD event more like the BTWD event where there could be pit stops and more exciting events happening during the event, as well as promoting CFD during BTWD. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, said that this could be something discussed during the next BTWD and/or CFD Steering Committee meetings. Results from both reports will be used as part of the TDM Marketing program element in the TDM Analysis Report.

Item #10 2nd Quarter CCWP FY2020 Budget Report

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2020 CCWP 2nd quarter budget report.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2020 CCWP 2nd quarter budget report. Mr. Ramfos began by informing the Subcommittee of Barbara Brennan's retirement from COG. Over the last two quarters, the Operation Center has expended about 38% of the budget, GRH 35%, and Marketing 33%. Mr. Ramfos pointed out that Car Free Day had a high expenditure rate of 87% within Marketing due to the event occurring early in the fiscal year. Monitoring and Evaluation expended 34% and Employer Outreach 14%. Commuter Connections is currently waiting for invoices to be submitted for the Employer Outreach program as all contracts were signed for FY2020 by December 2019. GRH Baltimore expended 28%. The total overall expenditure for the program is 31%.

Item #11 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

This was an opportunity for Commuter Connections Subcommittee members to bring up other business and to request agenda items for the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 12 noon.