



Strategic Plan

2008-2009

Background

The Commuter Connections Strategic Plan was developed through a cooperative effort by the Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Transit Administration, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Virginia Department of Transportation, and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, with the Commuter Connections network members (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Annapolis Regional Transportation Management Association, Baltimore City, Baltimore Metropolitan Council, Bethesda Transportation Solutions, City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Frederick County, Harford County, Howard County, LINK, Loudoun County, North Bethesda TMD, Northern Neck PDC, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, Potomac and Rappahannock Regional Commission, Prince George's County, Rappahannock Area Development Commission, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission, and Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland).

The Commuter Connections Strategic Plan:

- Serves as a framework for decisions and gaining support for the Commuter Connections program
- Provides the basis for more detailed planning and the development of the annual Commuter Connections Work Program
- Assists with benchmarking and performance monitoring
- Defines the roles and responsibilities of the Commuter Connections network members and stakeholders

Mission Statement

Commuter Connections assists and encourages people in the Washington region to use alternatives to the single-occupant automobile.

Definition of Commuter Connections

A network of public and private transportation organizations – including state and local transportation agencies, regional/metropolitan planning organizations and transportation management associations – that work together to achieve the mission of encouraging the use of alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle.

Network Objectives

Program Objectives

- Provide programs and information that reduce vehicle trips and trip lengths.
- Assist the region in improving air quality.
- Enhance the Commuter Connections “brand” by increasing awareness that will lead to changes in travel behavior.
- Provide excellent and reliable customer service to residents, employers, employees, and other stakeholders.

Operating Objectives

- Foster open and direct cooperation, communications, and coordination between Commuter Connections network members, including committee procedures that foster full participation.
- Ensure responsiveness and accountability to funding agencies’ direction and guidance for program focus and goals.
- Ensure that all network members (e.g., funding agencies, local jurisdictions, MWCOG, local contractors, and others) hold each other accountable for fulfilling program objectives.
- Monitor cost effectiveness for Commuter Connections individual programs to help ensure optimal use of resources.
- Provide an open forum for sharing information and status on TDM projects in the region, whether implemented through or outside of Commuter Connections, with all network members.

Ridematching Services

Objectives

- Provide ridematching services to commuters online and through a central toll free number (1-800-745-RIDE) and local numbers. Online ridematching should work automatically, but customers should also be able to send an e-mail to request matching.
- Maintain and update on a regular basis the ridematching database.
- Provide network members with 24/7 online access to database.
- Establish a committee of ridematching system users (Ridematching Committee) that will meet regularly to address software and database issues and determine new software needs.
- Maintain a help line (202-962-3333) and help e-mail (commutersupport@mwkog.org) for local stakeholders who have software and database problems and questions.

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)

Objectives

- Provide users of alternative commute modes up to four free rides home per year in a taxi, rental car, or on transit (or appropriate combination).
- Online applications for GRH and rideshare should be automated, unless COG can justify otherwise, in which case they should be processed within one business day.
- Maintain and update on a regular basis the GRH database; renewal should be automated; provide automatic reminders when people's registration expires.
- Explore possibilities for additional automation.
- Provide funding organizations a quarterly summary report of proposed GRH activities and utilization.
- Provide yearly analysis of GRH program.

Marketing of Alternative Commute Options

Objectives

- Provide and promote an umbrella branding for Commuter Connections which reflects the participation of Commuter Connections members and funders, and allows members to link to it without sacrificing their individual identify and branding.
- Develop and implement an annual regional marketing program which supports the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) alternatives and special events offered or sponsored by Commuter Connections.
- Coordinate marketing approach with regional and local marketing efforts and reflect policies of State agencies.
- Ensure marketing programs reflect the market turnover by balancing awareness and action goals to achieve conversion of single occupant vehicle trips to other modes as well as retention of existing alternative mode users.
- Ensure the promotion process includes adequate opportunity for member input, review, and approval at appropriate stages of planning, budgeting, production, and execution.
- Ensure message continuity and retention within budget parameters by scheduling promotions that are seasonally adjusted to market demand (need) to achieve the greatest return on investment, with a goal of maintaining continuous awareness of Commuter Connections programs and services.
- Provide member organizations break-out of marketing costs by individual programs and events within programs. Include estimated budgets and timelines by campaign which can be evaluated and adjusted on a quarterly basis.
- Provide member organizations quarterly summary report of expenditures versus budget.
- Provide member organizations options for periodic program area marketing adjustments.
- Determine results of marketing campaign through survey of awareness on commuter options and utilization.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Objectives

- Review and update methodology to link monitoring and reporting of program results to obtaining program goals and objectives and the development of future plans and actions.
- Collect and analyze data every three years as well as provide quarterly program tracking and monitoring reports for each program area as defined in the Evaluation Framework and Methodology.
- Provide results of State of the Commute Survey, Placement Rate and other surveys at regional, state and local jurisdiction levels.
- Provide summary of carpooling demographics.
- Incorporate funding agencies' input into development of guidance for survey.
- Establish action items as a result of surveys. Link survey results and action items to future goals and objectives for Commuter Connections program.
- Provide summary reports on results of employer database.
- Provide analysis of TERMS and program effects on transportation and emissions.

Employer Outreach

Objectives

- Increase the number of employers providing alternative transportation programs and incentives to their employees.
- Increase the number of alternative transportation options provided by participating employers.
- Increase the number of participating employees at existing employer programs.
- Increase the number of employee surveys conducted.
- Integrate local jurisdictional efforts into one umbrella program to provide quarterly reports on results of employer outreach.
- Provide support to local jurisdictions in the form of updated marketing materials. Assess marketing materials and training needs for entire program (not individual jurisdictions) and develop a plan. Provide marketing materials and training to sales representatives as described in the plan.
- Maintain and update on a regular basis the employer outreach database.
- Provide local jurisdictions and funding agencies ready accessibility to regional employer outreach database.
- Reassess and revise the goals for each jurisdiction on a regular basis.
- Assess, identify, and overcome the barriers to cooperative efforts for sales and maintenance of employer outreach programs.

Telework

Objectives

- Provide information to employers on the benefits of teleworking and assist them in setting up new telework programs, or expanding existing programs, for their employees.
- Provide services to assist employer outreach staff in local jurisdictions set up new or expand existing telework programs.
- Determine needs and provide training on telework programs.
- Increase number of teleworkers in the region.
- Increase the number of employers with a telework program.
- Provide funding organizations quarterly reports on success of telework program.

Improving Existing Programs and Exploring New Initiatives

Objectives

- Identify efficiencies in operations of existing programs.
- Identify cost savings options in operation of existing programs.
- Evaluate and develop new TDM strategies including but not limited to walking, bicycling, carsharing, “live near your work,” tourist trips, special event trips, and carpooling incentives.
- Research innovative ideas in other regions to determine their viability for the Washington, DC region.
- Evaluate the efficiency of offering assistance for non-commute trips.