

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



COMMUTER OPERATIONS CENTER SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

777 North Capitol Street, N.E.

First Floor, Training Center

Chairperson: Darlene Nader, North Bethesda

Vice Chairperson: Chris Kingery, Loudoun County

COG Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos, (202) 962-3313

Items addressed and issues discussed were as follows:

- 1. Introductions** (see attached attendance sheet).
- 2. Minutes of the December 13, 2005 Meeting**

Mr. Arabia stated that corrections were needed regarding the December 13th minutes on items 6 and 8. Mr. Arabia said that item 6 should have more emphasis on comments made regarding looking for off the shelf software packages. Mr. Arabia also stated that item 8 should have comments regarding COG staff alerting committee members, by e-mail, when problems arise and are resolved. The corrections were noted and the minutes of the December 13, 2005 meeting were approved.

- 3. Upcoming Fairs and Promotions**

Ms. Johnson asked the committee members to send upcoming fairs and promotional events to her via e-mail.

Ms. Johnson stated that COG staff will attend a benefits fair on March 29th at the USDA Graduate School.

Ms. Nader stated that the following are employers in which North Bethesda staff recently worked with; James G. Davis, Jewish Foundation, SRA, Nordstrom's, Sytel, Ej Krause, Liberty Mutual and Silver Diner.

Ms. Briscoe stated that Tri County staff will participate in Bike to Work day on May 19th and also a Job Fair being held on April 6th.

Ms. Bunton stated that Baltimore County will participate in Bike to Work day on May 19th as well as bike clinics.

Ms. Affinito stated that Loudoun county staff will participate in Clean Commute day on May 5th and is also participating and is a sponsor for the NuRide 5 million mile challenges.

Mr. Arabia explained that NuRide, The Chevron 5,000,000 Mile Rideshare Challenge, is designed to match riders with drivers in the regional area. NuRide has web matching technology which matches individuals to help find individuals who are interested in sharing rides to work or non-work activities. NuRide offers its members rewards each time they use the ridesharing program. As rides are accumulated members earn enough points to acquire gift cards and gift certificates from a variety of corporate sponsors. Loudoun County and Fairfax County are both sponsors for NuRide.

4. Commuter Connections Helpline

Ms. Hinton briefed the committee regarding updates to the Commuter Connections Help Line. Ms. Hinton stated the help line has an added CallPilot feature which sends an e-mail notification to COG staff when a message is left on the help line. In addition, clients can e-mail COG staff regarding technical or other issues on a new e-mail support feature at commutersupport@mwcog.org. Mr. Ramfos stated that COG staff will send blast e-mails to clients when system-wide software issues occur and also when they are resolved.

5. New Client Member Billing Schedule

Mr. Ramfos stated that the billing schedule has been revised to only bill clients twice a year to help streamline the billing process. A handout was distributed that showed that the 1st and 2nd quarter invoices will be billed in January and the 3rd and 4th quarter invoices will be billed in July. Mr. Ramfos stated that third quarter invoices billed in April will only include clients who have charges for two hundred or more dollars. All other clients will be billed remaining charges in July. Annual invoices will be billed in August. Ms. Hinton will send the new billing schedule to jurisdictional members via e-mail for those who were unable to attend the meeting.

6. TDM Resource Directory Update

Ms. Johnson stated that the resource directory has been updated. The appendix portion of the directory has been added. A PDF version of the resource directory will be e-mailed to all client members. Hard copies of the directory will be made will be made available to those who cannot receive the PDF version.

7. Commuter Connections Telephone Package Upgrade

Ms. Hinton stated that the Toll Free 800 Commuter Connections number has been enhanced to provide better assistance directing commuters to proper options. The new menu clearly directs commuters to the Spanish line as well as GRH, carpool and vanpool information. Additional improvements to the number include an option for telework information which is routed to Mr. Ramfos. Options were also added for air quality information and the Mobile Commuter Store. A call pilot feature which sends an e-mail notification to COG staff when a message is left is also an added feature. Commuters who are on hold will hear messages that will direct them to the commuter connections web site before placing them into voicemail.

Ms. Biscoe asked if logs are in place to see how many Spanish calls are being received and from which jurisdictions. Ms. Hinton stated that a log can be added so that jurisdictions can see how many Spanish calls may come from their particular area, however the volume of Spanish calls is few.

Ms. Affinito asked how many commuters are leaving voicemails and is that information being recorded. Ms. Hinton stated that Ms. Carino retrieves voicemails daily and that information is recorded for reports.

Ms. Bunton asked if calls are transferred during the evenings and weekends. Ms. Hinton stated that calls are only transferred during business hours on Monday through Friday.

Ms. Johnson stated that some jurisdictions do not have a direct line for commuters to call, instead initial calls are routed to a receptionist who transfers the call. It was decided that these jurisdictions would have their calls re-routed to the rideshare coordinator who is receiving the calls.

8. New Regional TDM Software System Update

Mr. Ramfos discussed the status and next steps for the TDM Web-Based software system project. Mr. Ramfos stated that Mr. Arabia is chairing the Request for Proposals (RFP) Technical Selection Committee that was formed to help with putting together the FRP for the new software system. The committees input and technical assistance is important for the RFP. Mr. Ramfos stated that the first phase of the updates include a new ridematching and GRH software module. The RFP will determine options for additional phases. A pre bid meeting will be scheduled to allow contractors 30 days to place their bids. A time line has been set to have the contractor on board by July 1st. Mr. Ramfos asked the members to send e-mails regarding feedback on software issues. Mr. Ramfos stated that once the vendors are selected, future meetings will be scheduled to obtain feedback on the development of the new software system. Ms. Nader asked committee members to continue to contact COG staff regarding changes or improvements needed for the software system.

9. Regional Marketing Update

Ms. Hinton distributed a hand out regarding the current Regional TDM Marketing campaign. Ms. Hinton stated that two mailers were sent to targeted households to promote ridesharing. Ms. Hinton explained that a schedule was created to help organize the processing of returned mailers. The schedule will help to insure that the applications are being processed in an accurate and timely manner. After applications are processed by COG staff, they will be sent to the client by certified mail or Fed Ex. based on their jurisdiction. As of now, none of the mailers have been returned. Additional mailers regarding the GRH program will be sent out.

Mr. Arabia asked if COG will be entering the applications before they are sent to the clients. Ms. Hinton stated that COG staff will enter all applications for DC, Arlington and ARTMA. In addition a log has been created to track applications as they are received.

Ms. Forbes asked if copies of the applications can be sent twice a week instead of once a week based on the high volume of applications received in the past. Ms. Hinton stated that arrangements can be made to send applications twice a week based on the volume of the returned mailers.

Ms. Briscoe asked if COG could provide assistance if staff is unable to keep up with the volume of applications. Ms. Hinton stated that assistance can be provided if needed.

Ms. Hinton explained that COG staff is entering applications for ARTMA which serves Baltimore and Carroll counties. Original copies of the application will be mailed back to ARTMA for their records.

10. Client Site Status/Roundtable

Mr. Edgar briefed the committee on enhancements to the current rideshare software. Howard county requested that a fax option be added to their matchletter. This option was added. Bus information for the Prince George's county's matchletter was corrected. In addition, Loudoun County park and ride lot information was updated on the Commuter Connections web site. Mr. Edgar stated that changes were made to the Commuter Connections on-line application to make it more reliable. New purge letter forms were purchased. The new and improved forms are legible and produce a better print. Mr. Edgar stated that staff is working on sending some purge letters to clients via e-mail.

Ms Forbes stated that many commuters with middle initials in the rideshare database are duplicated, and are hard to retrieve when trying to delete their duplicated records. Mr. Edgar stated that he is aware of the problem and is looking into a solution.

Mr. Edgar asked the committee members to send a copy of their matchletter template when requesting changes or edits to their current information. Mr. Ramfos stated that

COG staff can send a set of instructions on how to send a copy the templates. Mr. Edgar stated that by sending the templates, he can then work on adding additional fields to the matchletter.

Ms. Adams stated that she is still using dial up for matchletters and needs the current version of the software. Mr. Ramfos stated that COG staff will set up her computer with FTP and the current version of the software.

Ms. Johnson stated that COG staff held rideshare training for Prince George's County staff on February 8th. The training was just a review of how applications are entered into the rideshare database. Ms. Johnson stated that NIH staff will participate in another training session on March 28th. Mr. Hall asked if his staff would be able to participate in that training. Ms. Johnson stated that all are welcome to participate and requested Mr. Hall to send an e-mail with a list of the participants. Ms. Dalphon stated that she would like to participate as well.

11. Other Business/Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Mr. Ramfos stated that COG staff is looking into having customer service training for those who may be interested in attending. Mr. Sightler stated that he would be interested in the training.

Ms. Nadar encouraged committee members to request and send agenda items they would like to discuss for future meetings.

The next meeting of the Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee is scheduled for Tuesday, June 20, 2006.