



## COMMUTER CONNECTIONS RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

Tuesday, December 21, 2021  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
COG Board Room

Chairperson: Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA  
Vice Chairperson: Kristin Lam Peraza, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission

COG Staff Contact: Stephen Finafrock, 202/962-3385 or sfinafrock@mwcog.org

### 1. Introductions

The meeting was brought to order by Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves when their jurisdiction was announced. The meeting took place virtually via Webex.

### 2. Minutes of the September 21, 2021 meeting

Approval was sought for the September 21, 2021 Ridematching Committee Meeting minutes. An initial motion to approve was made by Darlene Nader of the North Bethesda TMD and a second motion to approve was made by Mark Sofman of Montgomery County DOT. The minutes were approved as written. All were in favor.

### 3. Upcoming Fairs and Promotions

#### Prince George's County

- Virtual promotions to encourage Commuter Connections registration

#### PRTC

- Chamber events
- Morning business event through the economic development committee

#### Montgomery County Commuter Services

- Local Chamber events
- Survey Planning

#### Transit of Frederick County

- Travel training with local students
- Holiday bus promotions

### Loudoun County

- Hoping to have a new marketing employee on staff soon
- Reaching out to community about new routes being finalized

### Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

- Charles County Chamber business after hours
- Transportation Association of Maryland in Annapolis

## 4. TDM System Geocoding and GIS

Ross Edgar, COG/TPB staff, began his presentation by providing a definition of what geocoding is and providing an example of what an address input and output typically look like. Mr. Edgar then explained the importance of geocoding and location-based services, mentioning that every object in the system has a stored location.

Mr. Edgar then presented a statistic stating that up to 10% of the commuters in the database, who have signed up for location-based services at any given time, have inaccurate or missing geocodes. Mr. Edgar then presented that there were 2,615 records that either lacked or had unusable geocodes left over from when Commuter Connections used Google for geocoding. Using the Grand Unified Address Locator hosted at [ccgis.commuterconnections.org](http://ccgis.commuterconnections.org), Mr. Edgar was able to compute a geocode for 83% of those records. The remaining 17% (449 records) were mostly able to be manually analyzed, except for eight records.

Mr. Edgar then presented several common reasons for missing or incorrect geocodes:

1. Malformed input for a street address.
2. Incorrect, misspelled or missing city.
3. User does not commute in the Commuter Connections area.
4. Outdated reference data.

Mr. Edgar continued his presentation by offering resources for troubleshooting erroneous address input data. Mr. Edgar's first example included screenshots of a seemingly correct address that the Commuter Connections database could not geocode. Mr. Edgar then displayed the resources an individual can use to try to figure out why an address cannot be geocoded. The resource list was then displayed and included the USPS zip code lookup, Commuter Connection's ArcGIS server, the TDM System's suggest as you type function, Google Maps, and finally, the [commutersupport@mwcog.org](mailto:commutersupport@mwcog.org) inbox.

Mr. Edgar then transitioned to the next slide and played an embedded video of the USPS zip code lookup process. The process revealed that the address in question had an erroneous city and zip code listed.

Mr. Edgar then transitioned to the next suggested troubleshooting tool, the Commuter Connection's ArcGIS server. ([https://ccgis.commuterconnections.org/arcgis/rest/services/address\\_locators/GRU\\_AL/GeocodeServer/findAddressCandidates](https://ccgis.commuterconnections.org/arcgis/rest/services/address_locators/GRU_AL/GeocodeServer/findAddressCandidates)). Mr. Edgar played another embedded video on how to access the server and search for an address. The server will match your searched address with results and provide an accuracy/confidence score. Mr. Edgar then noted that the easiest way to use the ArcGIS server is by using the SingleLine widget. The example provided was "1824 Edgewood Rd ,Towson, MD." Mr. Edgar then mentioned that the spaces in between elements of the address are not significant, noting the spacing between commas. Mr. Edgar then noted that the individual address component widgets can also be used, it just requires more mouse clicks.

The next slide covered scenarios in which the correct results aren't as easily found. Mr. Edgar noted that if an address cannot be found, you may need to contact the commuter. This scenario is more likely if the commuter has moved to a newly constructed home or community. An alternative is to just geocode the commuter to a less specific address, e.g., Loudoun County, and notify [commutersupport@mwcog.org](mailto:commutersupport@mwcog.org).

Mr. Edgar then transitioned to the TDM system and displayed the suggest as you type feature while correcting a user's data within the TDM.

Mr. Edgar continued to his final slide, outlining how an individual can get help if they are stuck on a geocoding problem. Mr. Edgar's suggestion is to send an email to [commutersupport@mwcog.org](mailto:commutersupport@mwcog.org) with the subject line "Geocoding Problem." This email should also include the commuter's ID number and a brief description of what has been done so far to resolve the problem.

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, mentioned that this presentation is available on COG's website with the rest of the agenda materials.

## **5. Flexible Vanpool**

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, began his presentation by briefing the Committee about the concept of flexible vanpooling. Mr. Finafrock reminded those in attendance of the project goal, which is to introduce technology that aids in finding vanpool riders who may be interested in a flexible arrangement, perhaps riding infrequently or one-time riders.

Mr. Finafrock then mentioned that traditional and real-time ticketing were discussed, and a work group has been formed to advise on product development.

Mr. Finafrock then transitioned to display an example of results from the TDM system's quick match function. Mr. Finafrock showed a mockup of new results, this time including a vanpool option among them. This was indicated by a purple icon with van information on the map. Close attention was paid to the inclusion of the vanpool and the "Vanpools Found" display of information.

Mr. Finafrock continued by displaying flexible vanpool mockups as they relate to the Commuter Connections mobile app. This included vanpool results on both a map and list view.

Next, Mr. Finafrock displayed an example of "traditional ticketing," which vanpool riders would use to secure a seat within a vanpool for a one-time ride. This example displayed a calendar a commuter would use to reserve a seat for a specific date or date range. This calendar will also advertise the estimated cost of that trip established by the vanpool operator. This information will be able to be downloaded by a vanpool operator for invoicing purposes.

Mr. Finafrock presented information regarding real-time ticketing through the mobile application. Users must have a "Vanpool Driver" or "Vanpool Operator" status. The driver or operator would select "Start Vanpool Commute" to begin appearing as a live van on CarpoolNow. Technology mockups were then displayed. These mockups included what an active vanpool would look like on CarpoolNow and how a rider would request a ride through that vanpool.

Mr. Finafrock then transitioned to his last slide, outlining the next steps that will be taking place in this process. Commuter Connections will continue to develop with guidelines established in coordination with the Flexible Vanpool Workgroup. Production will be pushed to Spring 2022, tentatively. Training will then be available for Ridematching Coordinators and Vanpool Operators by request.

George Clark, Tri County Council for Southern Maryland, mentioned that ACT had just created the USA Vanpool Program on their website through the Vanpool Council. Mr. Clark suggested that Commuter Connections add this to their database when it is ready. Joe Stainsby, PRTC, mentioned that further discussion on the topic of Flexible Vanpool is expected to occur in the existing workgroup.

Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA, asked if there would be an establishment of COVID protocols. Mr. Finafrock mentioned that they would have to abide by all federal transit guidelines. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB, mentioned that Commuter Connections is hoping to have this launched by the spring and hoping that CDC and local guidelines are relaxed by then. Mr. Ramfos then mentioned that a large part of creating a flexible vanpool option is to help rejuvenate the vanpooling community and allow commuters to catch a ride in a van as they return to work.

Mr. Dempster and Mr. Ramfos then acknowledged a question in the chat regarding the inclusion of SmartBenefits. Mr. Ramfos noted that it will most likely not be a part of this first version, but it is being considered for further iterations.

## **6. IncenTrip Update**

Steve Osborn, COG/TPB staff, began by mentioning the expanded service area for incenTrip and the soft launch of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) program. Mr. Osborn also mentioned that auto-trip logging has been removed and that individuals working outside of the expanded area may be able to use incenTrip but cannot earn incentives.

Mr. Osborn then displayed examples of the incenTrip app for users within the MDOT program. One example noted that there can be differentiating point totals between the Commuter Connections and MDOT programs if a user has multiple work locations.

Mr. Osborn then transitioned to the introduction of PayPal as an option for disbursing rewards to users and proceeded to go through a step-by-step demo. The first steps are to ensure a user has enough points in their account for a

redemption. Next, the user selects PayPal as a payment option to link their account. Mr. Osborn then called attention to the reduction in time PayPal takes for a user to receive funds as compared to the traditional check option.

Mr. Osborn continued by going through the step by step linking process. The user must agree with incenTrip to the validity of their PayPal account and then sign into their PayPal account. From there, the user agrees to PayPal's terms and conditions. The user is then taken back to incenTrip with confirmation that the link was successful. The final steps are for the user to select the amount they wish to receive. A user can then view their transaction in their redemption history.

Mr. Osborn continued by introducing gift cards as another redemption option for users. This option will only be available for \$25 and \$50 rewards. This option is expected to be available near the end of calendar year 2021. Mr. Osborn then displayed a visual of what the card will look like and mentioned that the gift card vendor will fulfill these requests as ordered. MDOT participants will be receiving co-branded cards.

Next, Mr. Osborn reviewed planned enhancements for incenTrip including mitigating non-recurring congestion and the possible integration of the Commuter Connections Flextime incentive program into incenTrip.

## **7. First-Quarter Progress Report**

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, noted the visual change to the progress report. This now includes an active table of contents for easier navigation.

Mr. Finafrock then called attention to Table 1 on pg. 17 and the increase in rideshare applicants and matchlists compared to last quarter. Internet users and applicants are up as well. Guaranteed Ride Home applicants have increased as well.

Mr. Finafrock mentioned that data is broken down by local program and compared to prior quarters.

Mr. Finafrock thanked those in attendance for submitting data and employer outreach information on time.

George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, commented that it is in their grant agreement for rideshare program administrators to submit data.

## **8. Other Business | Upcoming Agenda Items**

Mr. Finafrock encouraged those in attendance to offer agenda items.

Kendall Tiffany, TransIt of Frederick County, asked if there is a hard deadline for data submission. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked for the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month for employer outreach information. Mr. Ramfos also mentioned that a quarterly submission is fine too.

Gladys Hurwitz, MDOT, suggested that we have an agenda item for an open discussion to hear from local jurisdiction regarding any successes they've had and/or needs for the future. Mr. Ramfos mentioned that we typically have a round-table discussion but excluded it due to lack of activity during the pandemic. Mr. Ramfos noted that we could include it again for the next meeting.

Mr. Ramfos noted that the next meeting is expected to be a hybrid meeting, and at the time of this meeting, Committee members could be welcomed back into COG's office.

**The Next meeting of the Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee will be held on March 15, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**