



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 16, 2021
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.
VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING
Chairperson: Kari Snyder, MDOT
Vice Chairperson: Judy Galen, Loudoun County
Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos 202/962-3313

Item #1 **Introductions**

The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves based on their jurisdictional location in order to be marked as present on the attendance sheet.

Item #2 **Minutes of September 21, 2021 Meeting**

Approval was sought for the September 21, 2021 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.

Kari Snyder, MDOT, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

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

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the September 21, 2021 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

Item #3 **2021 Bike to Work Day Draft Event Report**

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented the draft 2021 Bike To Work Day event report.

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented the draft 2021 Bike to Work Day event report. An Event Report is compiled after every Bike to Work Day event and summarizes activities and participation that occurred during the event. The 2021 event report includes information on sponsorships, employer participation, regional and local proclamations, a repository of marketing materials including graphics, social media, and media coverage, and highlights from pit stops that participated in the event. COG/TPB staff compiles most of the information in the report but relies on pit stop managers to provide highlights specific for their pit stop.

The draft 2021 report was first presented to the Bike to Work Day Steering Committee in September, where feedback and pit stop highlights were requested. Edits and contributions from the Committee were incorporated into the current draft version of the report. Mr. Hersey asked Commuter Connections Subcommittee members to review the draft report, which will be posted to the Commuter Connections SharePoint document repository, and offer comments by December 30, 2021 to the docomments@mwkog.org email address. Mr. Hersey intends to update the report with comments from the Subcommittee and present a final version of the event report to the Subcommittee in January for endorsement.

Item #4 **Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guidelines**

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on proposed changes to the regional Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guidelines.

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on proposed changes to the regional Guaranteed Ride Home Participation Guidelines. Two changes were proposed to the guidelines. The first proposed change includes adding Juneteenth National Independence Day as a federal holiday for which the program will be

closed. The second proposed change is to increase the number of annual trips a registered member may take from four to six. A member's annual clock begins on the date that they were registered into the GRH program. The proposed changes would be applicable to both the Washington, DC and Baltimore regions. Mr. Finafrock requested Subcommittee members submit any comments on the proposed changes to the doccomments@mwkog.org email address by Thursday, December 16, 2021. Subcommittee members will be able to view the proposed changes by accessing the document at the Commuter Connections SharePoint document repository. Mr. Finafrock intends to update the guidelines based upon comments received from Subcommittee members and present a final version of the guidelines for the Subcommittee to endorse at the January meeting.

Traci McPhail, North Bethesda TMD, asked if the Columbus Day federal holiday would be changed to reflect Indigenous Peoples Day, as observed in Montgomery County and elsewhere in the region. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, replied that the GRH program follows the General Service Administration's calendar of holidays, which currently lists Columbus Day as the official federal holiday.

Item #5 2021 Car Free Day Event

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the results from the regional Car Free Day event held on September 22nd.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the results from the regional Car Free Day event held on September 22nd. Mr. Sheehan referred the Subcommittee to an infographic that was created to summarize pledge data from the event. There was a total of 2,993 pledges for the 2021 event. Maryland residents accounted for 1,189 pledges; Virginia residents 1,016; Washington, DC residents 729; and 59 pledges from residents of other states. The total pledge count was relatively consistent with the last four years of the event, albeit lower than the 4,756 pledges that occurred in 2019.

Similar to the 2020 event, Telework was once again the most common pledge mode with 1,867 pledges. Walk/run wasn't far behind with 1,824 pledges. Next came bike/scooter at 978; rail at 445; bus at 361; and carpool/vanpool at 231. Pledgers could choose more than one mode, hence the reason the pledges by transportation mode exceeded the total amount of unique pledgers. The modal count breakdown by state was mostly proportional across Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. The primary exception was carpool/vanpool pledgers, which mostly occurred in Maryland and Virginia.

Just over a quarter of pledgers reported *not* being normally car free but decided to go car free for the event. Eighty-six percent of pledgers reported forgoing a work trip on Car Free Day; nearly half reported taking a car free trip to exercise. There were 1,745 pledgers who worked from home during Car Free Day and 1,037 who commuted to an office location.

Pledge trends over the past three years have shifted dramatically. In 2019, telework was the least common pledge mode, whereas it was the most popular in 2020 and 2021. Public transit (rail and bus) was very popular in 2019 but fell behind telework and active transit in 2020 and 2021.

There was an estimated 52,626 pledged Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) reduced during Car Free Day as a result of the event, which was nearly double the total VMT of the 2020 event. COG/TPB staff calculated that 0.012 tons of NOx were reduced; 0.014 tons of VOC were reduced; and 21.04 tons of GHG were reduced.

Item #6 Regional TDM System Update

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on recent updates made to the Commuter Connections TDM system.

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on recent updates made to the Commuter Connections TDM system. The TDM System website has undergone a refresh that includes a look and feel in continuity with the Commuter Connections website. The login page includes a streetscape of a familiar street in

Washington, DC to give a sense of familiarity to those using the website in the region. The landing page includes statistics to inform users of the benefits produced by the Commuter Connections program. The statistics come from the quarterly reports. The Commuter Connections and CarpoolNow Mobile Apps are also advertised on the landing page with links to those mobile apps for easy access. Everyone who registers for an account will receive a Welcome Message via email. Quick Match is a new functionality that promotes ridematch possibilities for a user before an account is created; a user must create an account to see the contract information of ridematches. The Commuter Dashboard includes all of the programs available to the user on one screen for easy access and information. The Commute Log includes all of the commuting activity by the user by calendar date, including incenTrip trip logs. Geocode alerts help users to be notified when home or work geocodes are malfunctioning. A link is given which takes the user to their profile to perform updates. Additional updates coming in FY2022 include vanpool enhancements and a Commuter Connections mobile app refresh. Kendall Tiffany, Frederick County, asked if something was changed in the database where users do not have to include a phone number or an email address because it has been difficult to contact some of the users. Mr. Finafrock responded that those could be test accounts made by the Operations Center and will check once those usernames are received. George Clark, TCCSMD, asked if users who register and do not select a program will still receive a welcome letter. Mr. Finafrock responded that he will check on that and get back to him. Traci McPhail, North Bethesda, asked if registered users' information is revealed when using Quick Match. Mr. Finafrock responded that registered users' information is not revealed until the Quick Match user creates an account.

Item #7 FY2022 Regional TDM Evaluation Project Update

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on recent activities related to the regional TDM Evaluation project.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on recent activities related to the regional TDM Evaluation project. Updates to the Framework Methodology are underway, which is the blueprint for how data for the Commuter Connections TDM program elements is collected and analyzed. A draft of that document will be presented during the TDM Evaluation Work Group meeting in December and will be reviewed by the Subcommittee in January for comments. The methodology for the State of the Commute survey was presented to the TDM Evaluation Work Group in October and will be a major data collection effort in the coming months. A comment period was established for the questionnaire presented to the TDM Evaluation Work Group. The survey will be administered through email and post cards and that will be sent to about 400,000 households in the region.

The final collection effort of the fiscal year includes two GRH surveys that will be sent to workers in the Washington, DC region as well as the Baltimore/St. Mary's County region. Both of the surveys have been put out for comment and will be finalized by the end of this calendar year. Programming will begin in January with the surveys being administered in March and April 2022. Draft reports from the survey results will be available in July 2022.

Item #8 Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) Project Update

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the COG ATCMTD project.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the COG ATCMTD project. The project began with a \$5.95 million FHWA grant application that was awarded in November 2020 and scheduled to conclude in November 2023. The project goals are to leverage the best available technology to maximize the cost effectiveness of a megaregion TDM program, integrate and expand existing dynamic TDM programs with a shared technology platform, provide personalized, timely, and accurate traveler information, and enhance multimodal transportation access and system performance for all user groups with rewards and gamification. Task A accomplishments include integration of WMATA and MTA real-time GTFS feeds as well as all fixed-route local transit services in the megaregion. The TDM System was adapted to administer multiple

incentTrip programs and MDOT also initiated their incentTrip incentive program, which was launched on Tuesday, November 9th. Eligibility is based upon work location. Task B accomplishments include a newly created network model with data elements such as a megaregion street network, real-time traffic data, and fixed-route transit. Users are now able to plan a trip within an expanded region extending throughout the entire state of Maryland and south to Richmond, VA. The megaregion expansion for trip planning also includes Delaware and select counties in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The network model enhancement was released on Tuesday, November 9th. Task C accomplishments include identification of incentives to pursue for integration into the incentTrip rewards store such as PayPal, Venmo, eGift cards, WMATA SmarTrip and E-Z Pass. A new payment module was created in the TDM System as well as five new APIs that permit communication between incentTrip, PayPal, and the TDM system. This enables users to link their PayPal accounts to their incentTrip accounts so that digital payments can be received. PayPal and gift card payments are expected to be deployed in Q4 2021. Nift Gifts and WMATA SmarTrip incentives are expected to be deployed in Q1 2022, while MTA CharmPass and E-Z Pass incentives are currently undetermined.

Mr. Sheehan continued with the Task D overview which includes TDM Deployment for Non-Recurrent Congestion Mitigation. The task is to develop and deploy personalized and dynamic incentives and traveler information to mitigate non-recurrent congestion in the region. Examples of non-recurrent congestion are major accidents, dangerous weather, work zones, holidays, and special events. The Task E overview explores corridor-level TDM deployment for multimodal integrated corridor management (ICM) and transportation systems management & operations (TSM&O). This task will include monetary and non-monetary incentives, focus on improving commuters' awareness of multimodal choices and park-and-ride options along selected corridors, and the ability to react to projected congestion levels along corridor and allocate incentives accordingly. Flextime Rewards award points (\$8 per flexed trip) for route change or delayed departure. Other potential incentivization tactics include increased rideshare occupancy, customized corridor challenges, and boosted points for all non-SOV trips within certain distance of eligible corridors. Examples of potential real-time corridors include the Transform 66 major construction project, I-270 corridor project, Bay Bridge holiday travel, and heavy traffic days for special events. Task F seeks to integrate employer-funded TDM for shared-platform development. This includes developing an Employer Module that allows employers to create and deploy customized TDM programs and rewarding employees for choosing non-SOV modes and/or flexible work schedules. Employers may be asked to offer cash match or fully fund customized rewards. The schedule for year 2 consists of three phases to begin November 2021 and end October 2022.

Item #9 **FY 2023 Work Program Development and Commuter Connections Strategic Plan**
Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the timeline development of the FY2023 Commuter Connections Work program (CCWP) and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the timeline development of the FY2023 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. The definition of the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan is the network of public and private transportation organizations, including COG, state funding agencies, and local organizations, that work together to assist and encourage people in the Washington DC metropolitan region to use alternatives to the single-occupant automobile. The benefits of Commuter Connections include helping to reduce and manage commuter congestion, that in turn will assist with improving goods movement and tourist travel and reduce emissions. The program also supports local efforts to attract and retain employers. The daily impacts of the program show a reduction of 156,000 vehicle trips, 3,009,000 vehicle miles of travel, and 0.7 tons of nitrogen oxides (NOx). Commuter Connections constitutes the major demand management component of the region's congestion management process. The program also supports regional air quality goals and is part of the annual update of the region's Long Rang Transportation Plan (Visualize 2045) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Results from the program may also help to contribute to performance measures and goals set by the region under FAST Act requirements. The proposed FY2023 CCWP budget shows similar figures to FY2022 with less funds towards Program Evaluation and more funds towards Mass Marketing. A new program element for FY2023 is the MDOT incentTrip Program, and new projects include the 2022 State of the Commute Survey Report, 2022 GRH

Applicant Survey Report, 2022 BTWD Participant Survey Report, as well as many other data collection efforts. State funding agencies have provided initial comments and edits on draft FY2023 CCWP.

Mr. Ramfos asked Subcommittee members to review the draft documents and a comment period will be established through December 3rd. State funding agencies will review document and submit comments in December with final review and approval occurring in January. A revised document will be available for the January Subcommittee meeting for further review and endorsement for release. The TPB Tech Committee will receive a briefing of the FY2023 CCWP in February and will be briefed again in March. TPB will receive a draft of the FY2023 CCWP in February and will be asked to approve the document in March. TIP adjustments, if any, will be made and funding commitments secured by June with the program beginning on July 1, 2022.

Mr. Ramfos continued with major changes to the document including a note that was added to the Program Overview section of the document that explains how the global COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, has had a profound impact on the use of commuter program services by the public as well as employers. The budget figures may change in January. Some language was changed in the Commuter Operations Center section to streamline the parameters of the program. The 495Next project with VDOT which will be a part of the PoolRewards program was added to the Marketing section. The draft CCWP and Strategic Plan will be posted to SharePoint and available for comment until December 3rd.

Item #10 1st Quarter CCWP FY2022 Progress and Budget Reports

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2022 CCWP Budget Report. Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the group on the FY2022 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2022 1st Quarter CCWP Budget Report. The Operations Center came in at 19%, GRH at 14%, Marketing at 19%, Monitoring/Evaluation at 7%, Employer Outreach at 5%, and GRH Baltimore at 9%. The overall expenditure was at 15%. The lack of spending continues to be due to the pandemic.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the group on the FY2022 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report. Work is moving forward on the ATCMTD project and the incenTrip mobile application. The final WMATA Platform Shutdown Work Group meeting was held in July and will reconvene in early 2022. The FY2023 CCWP draft document was developed. Enhancements had begun on the Flexible Vanpool program in the TDM System as well as a refresh to the system overall. Work continued on expanding the travel network within incenTrip and adding new incentive methods to the incenTrip rewards store, including PayPal and gift cards. Throughout the quarter, 13,672 commuters were served through the Ridematching program. A new geocoding service was produced to improved ridematching and location efforts within the TDM system. 147 new applicants were registered to the GRH program and 426 commuters re-registered. The program now has 1,743 total commuters in the GRH database. The numbers have gone up from previous quarters likely due to the Regional Recovery Marketing campaign that took place from mid to late summer. 54 GRH trips were provided throughout the quarter. The Regional Recovery campaign was implemented to help convince commuters to start using non-SOV travel modes. The campaign included social media posts, radio ads, and post cards. The Summer 2021 Newsletter was published which showcased the 2021 Employer Award winners. Car Free Day occurred on September 22nd where just under 3,000 pledges were given by participants to go car free or car-lite on that day. Just under 3,000 commuters were registered to incenTrip at the end of the quarter and 46 payment requests were processed throughout the quarter. The MDOT incenTrip Mobile App is a new section to the Quarterly Progress Report for FY2022. A soft launch of the program is expected to occur in the fall. Work was finished on the FY2021 Retention Rate Survey Report and it was published to the Commuter Connections website. The next cycle of the TDM Evaluation project was kicked off as well. The FY2021 2nd Half Regional TDM Marketing Campaign Summary report and the Car Free Day 2020 Event report were both finalized and published. Distribution of the Regional GRH Customer Satisfaction survey also occurred. Staff worked to develop a RFI for the ACT Regional Employer Database for Employer Outreach. GRH Baltimore had a total of 94

registrants and provided 6 trips throughout the quarter. There were increases in registrants throughout all of the programs due to the Regional Recovery Campaign.

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.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, reminded the Subcommittee to send comments for the Congestion Management Process (CMP) to Nicholas Ramfos or James Li by November 19th.

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, reminded the Subcommittee to send their nominations for the 2022 Employer Awards by January 31st.

Kari Snyder, MDOT, reminded the Subcommittee that the Phase One South of the land study for the 495 and I-270 projects have an extended comment period to November 30th.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 12 noon.