



## Commuter Connections Subcommittee

### MEETING MINUTES

*Tuesday, March 14, 2006*

**Chairperson: Leann Landry, WMATA**

**Vice Chairperson: Linda Stewart - Byrd**

**Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos (202) 962-3313**

**Item #1      Introductions**

*The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves and to sign the attendance sheet*

Chair, Leann Landry called the meeting to order by introducing herself and asking the rest of the attendees to do so (*See attached attendance sheet*).

Jim Sebastian of the District Department of Transportation asked to have a few moments to introduce a new TDM position open at DDOT. This will be a new position, focused on the Commuter Connections program.

**Item #2      Minutes of January 17, 2006**

*Approval was sought for the January 17<sup>th</sup> Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting minutes.*

There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes of the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting as written.

*(Due to a late lunch delivery, shorter agenda items were moved up in order to make up time.)*

**Item #6      2006 Bike To Work Day**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the progress of the Bike To Work Day Steering Committee by Douglas Franklin.*

Mr. Franklin briefed the Subcommittee on the upcoming plans for Bike To Work Day, scheduled to occur on May 19, 2006. Pit stops are scheduled in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The current list of pit stops include: Alexandria, Arlington, Bethesda, Bowie, College Park, District of Columbia, Dulles, Fairfax, Fairfax City, Frederick, La Plata, Leesburg, North Bethesda, Reston, Rockville, Silver Spring, Sterling, and Vienna. The event is scheduled during National Bike To Work Week. Other Cities across the country are participating such as San Francisco.

The registration has officially opened for Bike To Work Day. Participants may visit [www.waba.org](http://www.waba.org) to register. The event is free and participants will receive a free tee shirt as well as in entrance to win a free bicycle. Breakfast items, as well as other items are

included. Major sponsors are Preferred Offices and [www.godcgo.com](http://www.godcgo.com), as a traveler information program of DDOT. Larger in-kind sponsors include: Caribou Coffee, Whole Foods, and City Bikes. Promotion materials for the event include: 8.5" x 11" posters, rack cards, 60 second radio-spots, and an HTML email. To date, 200 people have already registered. Nicholas Ramfos will be recording a public service announcement to be played on Clear Channel Radio stations. Circulator Buses in partnership with the DC BID are providing signage on six buses and are going to include rack cards as well. Robin Briscoe updated the Subcommittee that her pit stop was being moved from La Plata, Maryland to Waldorf, Maryland. The update was acknowledged and all materials going forward will reflect that update.

The official proclamation for Bike to Work Day will be made at the next meeting of the TPB in April. Mr. Ramfos urged members to work local council member and city officials to issue similar proclamations in their jurisdictions in order to spread the word about the event.

**Item #3            FY 2007 Work Program**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the Draft FY 2007 by Nicholas Ramfos including any substantive changes that will be made base on comments received from the state funding agencies, the Webcast presentation to the Subcommittee on February 28<sup>th</sup> and the presentation given to the TPB Technical Committee on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

Mr. Ramfos discussed the Draft FY 2007 Work Program and also presented a PowerPoint that was to be presented to the TPB the following day. The PowerPoint presentation was the same one that was reviewed during the web-cast, hosted by Commuter Connections on February 28, 2006. Once released to the board, a 30 day public comment period will be established.

The deadline of March 10, 2006 was established and most comments were received prior to the deadline. However, some comments received after the deadline will have to be given special consideration and will be addressed verbally today.

During the presentation to the TPB, Mr. Ramfos intends to map out the Commuter Connections program, beginning with the mission so as to ensure all board members have some background of the program. What is the mission of Commuter Connections? The mission of Commuter Connections is to establish and encourage transportation usage other than single occupant vehicles. What is Commuter Connections? A network of public and private transportation organizations including COG, state funding agencies, and local organizations that work together to achieve the mission of the program.

After the background information is presented, benefits of the program will be reviewed. The jurisdiction will benefit from a reduction in management of traffic congestion. Reduced congestion will result in ease of movement for goods delivery and allow for an uninterrupted flow of tourism through the region, therefore helping to foster a stronger economy. The reduction of emissions and support of local efforts to attract and retain employers is another function of Commuter Connections. Recruitment and retention will be increased due to different,

viable forms of transportation which will reduce both time and money invested in commuting, leading to a higher quality of life.

As our region continues to grow, the coverage area of Commuter Connections continues to grow, adding counties in both Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Approximately 14% of the work population in the MSA is carpooling, placing the region in third place nationally behind Los Angeles and Chicago. When comparing the effectiveness of Commuter Connections Program in 2002 in Vehicle Trips (VT), Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), NOx, and VOC to that same program in 2005, VT and VMT have seen continued reduction while NOx and VOC have waned. The lack of reduction in this area is attributed to continued improvements of emissions reductions by auto manufacturers and changes to the Mobile Emissions Model. However, a reduction of up to 3 tons per day in NOx and VOC is quite substantial.

The program costs approximately \$.15 for every vehicle trip that is reduced daily and \$.01 for every VMT reduction daily. NOx reduction cost approximately \$10,000 for every ton that is reduced while VOC costs approximately \$20,000 for every ton that is reduced.

### **What's New and Substantive Changes to the FY 2007 CCWP**

Generally speaking, the State TDM Group will help define the program content and budget each fiscal year in conjunction with the TPB and the Subcommittee. More specifically, with regard to committee structure, those who are no longer necessary or do not warrant a separate meeting will be folded into the committee which supersedes them. The Regional TDM Marketing Group would be consolidated into the Subcommittee. The Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group is set to become an aspect of the Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group; The High-Tech Ad-Hoc Group has been completely dissolved as is the GRH Ad-Hoc Group, while the TMA Advisory Group will become part of the Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group.

A state by state table of the local jurisdictions charged with providing the services of Commuter Connections has been added to page 10. Item C on page 13 includes the cost for the new TDM Software System

Concern over the merger of some of the committees and groups was expressed by some members. The common fear was the meeting would run on to long. The desired outcome is to reduce meeting frequencies and redundancy of marketing presentations. Support was offered for both sides and the decision will ultimately lie in the hands of the working groups.

A Guaranteed Ride Home Incentives and Loyalty Program is currently under consideration to be added to the program. The goal of this program will be to retain members, therefore continuing the promotion of alternate modes of transportation. As far as research dictates Commuter Connections would be a pioneer in our field for offering such a benefit. One Big Planet is the company currently under consideration to help launch this program. The rewards typically provide incentives and cost savings for the commuter in which ever category they elect. In time, Commuter Connections would be the beneficiary a percentage of the revenue generated through

membership. There is an annual membership fee, the first year to be paid for by COG and thereafter renewed by the commuter. Membership will be optional and therefore participation will be voluntary. Some members expressed concern over commitment and funding. Mr. Ramfos stated that funding would be minimal and pre-existing funds will be tapped to get the program off the ground. Only a few members of the Subcommittee were familiar with the programs, though Chair, Leann Landry mentioned she had had discussions with One Big Planet about several similar programs for WMATA.

Data Collection used for Monitoring and Evaluation will be streamlined. Reports will shift from monthly to quarterly, though data collection will still take place monthly. The Employee Commute Survey will also be updated at worksites in order to ensure it confirms to other newly developed surveys in the field.

An Employer Outreach participant table was added to page 25 as well as a new section, entitled "Live Near Where You Work." Current programs in the District, allowing for tax incentives for first-time homebuyers was cited as a touch point to investigate this issue further, region-wide. Similar programs have been reported in Maryland and Prince William County, Virginia. Mr. Ramfos mentioned he would gladly be accepting volunteers to help work with this new group. The forecasted housing crisis of 2030 is cited as a prime reason to begin investigations into this theory in an expedited manner.

A re-design of the Employer Outreach Sales Portfolio is scheduled in order to update the materials. Not every jurisdiction uses the portfolio supplied by COG; however for those who do, an update is needed. Jurisdictions are welcomed to continue using their individualized portfolios if they desire.

As Telework shifts into Employer Outreach and the Telework Resource Center is dissolved, the question of how to continue service at the same level arises. Mr. Ramfos has suggested the retention of on-call technical and sales representatives to assist jurisdictions when situations occur. Telework Case Studies are currently in the works to be used in the field as a selling technique.

The kiosk project is currently being placed under review and a kiosk Work Group may be established. The project may be expanded to include the Dulles Rail Project and expanded kiosks in the Tyson's Corner area. In the District, new kiosks may be established at the Reagan Building and the Commerce Department. The aging structures maybe redesigned physically and operationally. A more aesthetically pleasing kiosk, with software and information specifically tailored to the employer's building or neighborhood is being considered.

During the next steps, the State TDM Work Group is in possession of the DRAFT FY 2007 CCWP. Additionally, Tech Committee was briefed on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the TPB will be briefed tomorrow and asked to approve the document on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Item #5            FY 2006 Placement Rate Study**

*The Subcommittee was briefed by Nicholas Ramfos on the results of the FY 2006 Placement Rate Survey Draft Report*

Mr. Ramfos remarked that this was an annual survey that is conducted by our contractor in November of 700 random commuters in the program. The current confidence rate in the Commuter Connections Placement Rate Study is 95%. Travel pattern data, travel changes made, previous travel patterns, assistance received and how it was implemented, desired improvements are all factors in the survey. GRH and Telework participation as well as demographics are all recorded. Travel impacts consider VT and VMT as well as the placement rate (how many are utilizing the information they receive). Vehicle Trip Reduction factor (VTR) helps estimate the impacts of travel behavior. Travel Distance and access mode are all considered as well.

The highest participating demographic were white females, age 45+ who worked for federal agency with 1,000+ employees. They tended to earn over \$100,000 annually. 55.5% of participants made no change. 27% made a continued change while 18% made a temporary change. Approximately 15.6% started using or tried using Transit/Bike/Walk while 14% joined, tried or created a new car pool. 7.4% joined, tried, or created a new van pool while 4.4% began teleworking or working under a compressed work week schedule. 3.1% added riders to their car/van pools. The majority of Commuter Connections members discovered the program through word of mouth and most time they keep in touch with the program through the internet. 82% of respondents requested ridesharing information while 63% requested GRH information. The most common transit benefit given by employers was Metrochek and in those situations employers tended to have a reduced “drive alone” percentage. The perception of the Commuter Connections program is quite good; with 42% believing the program needed no improvements. However, some suggested areas of improvement are: more current information, matches fit better travel, more advertising, internet enhancements, more follow-up, quicker response, and GRH Changes/VP assistance.

Mr. Ramfos asked the Subcommittee members to review the draft FY 2006 Placement Rate study report and to provide any edits or comments to him by April 4<sup>th</sup>. The Subcommittee will be asked to endorse the report at the May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Item #9            2006 Employer Recognition Awards**

*Douglas Franklin updated the Subcommittee on the 2006 Employer Recognition Awards*

Mr. Franklin updated the Subcommittee on the progress of the Employer Recognition Awards Selection Committee. He stated that he had received all the nominations and that the Selection Committee would be meeting next week to review the nominees. The awards event will be held June 28 at the National Press Club

**Item #7            Commuter Connections Extranet**

*The Subcommittee was briefed by staff and NDW Communications about the Commuter Connections Extranet and its uses. Additional features will also be discussed which can improve the functionality of the system*

Mr. Franklin, Donna Maguire, and Sue Lipinski from NDW Communications reviewed the extranet tool, primarily used for the marketing workgroups and the state funding agencies. It

serves as brainstorming device to gather various opinions of documents and allows users to collaborate easily. Continuing with the goal of streamlining communications, this tool is being re-introduced to allow Subcommittee members a back and forth flow of ideas and comments between both COG and the jurisdictions in addition to the state funding agencies. Suggestions and comments as to how to make the extranet more "user friendly" were solicited by COG/TPB staff.

**Item #4      FY 2005 GRH Customer Satisfaction Draft Survey Report**

*The Subcommittee was asked to review the report and submit their comments on the report by April 4<sup>th</sup>. A presentation will follow during the next Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting*

**Item #8      TDM Software System Update**

*The Subcommittee was briefed on the timeline on the development of a new Regional TDM software system by Chair, Christopher Arabia*

Mr. Arabia announced that the committee met for the first time on March 6, 2006. He discussed the software selection criteria and the need to expedite this process. Mr. Arabia hopes to have the RFP ready by the end of this month.

**Item#10      Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting**

*The Subcommittee was offered to the opportunity to present other business, none*

No other items were presented and the meeting was adjourned by Chair, Leann Landry.

**The next regularly scheduled Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2006 at 12 noon.**