

**Commuter Connections Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

**Chairperson: Linda Stewart-Byrd, MDOT
Vice Chairperson: Christopher Hamilton, Arlington County
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, Linda Stewart-Byrd called the meeting to order by introducing herself and asking the rest of the attendees to do so (*See attached attendance sheet*).

Item #2 Minutes of March 20, 2007

Approval was sought for the March 20, 2007 Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting minutes.

There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes of the March 20th meeting as written.

Item #3 TDM Evaluation Project

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos discussed substantive changes to the 2005-2008 TERM Evaluation Framework Methodology Document. The Subcommittee was asked to approve the document. Mr. Daivamani Sivasailam reviewed changes to the FY 2005-2008 TERM Goals. The Goals distributed and approved at the March 20, 2007 Subcommittee meeting contained minor errors which have been corrected.

Nicholas Ramfos reviewed changes that were made to the TERM Revised Evaluation Framework for the 2005-2008 evaluation period. Semantic changes made included changing the Telework Program name to reflect the new title: "Maryland and Virginia Telework Program." Goals were changed to coincide with emissions and transportation impacts that were produced and approved by the Subcommittee. Mr. Ramfos asked that the group re-approve a new set of goals because the previous set was found to have errors. Other minor and other non-substantive changes were made such as typographical and grammatical errors. This document serves as a blueprint for the data collection activities over a three year time cycle. Results from the TERM Analysis Report are added to the regional TERM Tracking Sheet. It is especially important because it helps illustrate the regions' achievements versus the goals. Due to a software error the goals have been adjusted. The Subcommittee approved of the Revised Goals and the final draft of the TERM Revised Framework Methodology Document.

Item #4 Congestion Management Process

Mr. Andrew Meese, COG/TPB Staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the development of the Congestion Management Process, one of number of steps being taken to address federal certification recommendations and to ensure compliance with SAFETEA-LU. The enhanced CMP is to be included in the Constrained Long-Range Plan, scheduled for approval by the TPB in the fall.

Andrew Meese outlined the Congestion Management Process (CMP) as it is a requirement of metropolitan transportation planning as required by SAFETEA-LU and the March 2006 federal certification of the TPB Process as defined in the Federal Register released on February 14, 2007. All metropolitan long-range plans developed after July 1, 2007 must contain a CMP and must be included in the Constrained Long-Range Plan update, for approval by the TPB in fall 2007. As defined by the Federal Register, February 14, 2007, a congestion management process is a systematic approach in TMAs which provide effective management and operation of new and existing transportation facilities eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. It requires the development of operational management strategies, based on a cooperatively developed and implemented metropolitan-wide strategy.

A congestion management process must be a part of the regional transportation plan and include methods to monitor and evaluate system performance; objectives and performance measures; data collection and identification and evaluation of the anticipated performance and expected benefits of Congestion Management strategies including demand management, traffic operational improvements, ITS technologies and additional system capacity. Finally, the plan must be able to assess the effectiveness of previously implemented strategies. Any project which could increase the number of single occupancy vehicles on the road must be included the CMP and the metropolitan transportation plan must consider the results of the CMP.

Mr. Meese then discussed the committees of the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and their roles in the implementation CMP Activities. The TPB Technical Committee will shoulder the lead and coordinate with the Travel Management Subcommittee (Air quality), Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (Monitoring and forecasting of future congestion), Commuter Connections Subcommittee (implementation and assessment of demand management alternatives), MOITS (Non-recurring congestion, TMS and ITS technologies) and the Joint Technical Working Group (Performance measures and future transportation alternatives).

Mr. Meese reiterated the importance of Commuter Connections and its associated programs as vital components of a regional CMP strategy and therefore should look forward to frequent involvement in activities associated with our regional CMP. Mr. Meese added that the comment period could be extended to allow for additional comments from the Subcommittee.

Item #5 Enhanced Arterial Highway Monitoring Program Status Report

Mr. Daivamani Sivasailam updated the Subcommittee on the status of the project using volunteer drivers to enhance the monitoring of congestion on arterial highways.

Mr. Sivasailam briefed the Subcommittee on the current state of the Congestion Monitoring Pilot Program. The current congestion monitoring program monitors congestion on arterial highways in the National Highway System (NHS) during the afternoon peak and off-peak hours using paid temporary drivers. The proposed program seeks to use volunteer drivers which could expand the monitoring capabilities though the use of GPS devices in use during drivers' typical driving pattern. This could also expand the number of highway miles monitored and expand the collection time to include the AM peak period.

In order to select the routes to be monitored, the Commuter Connections ridesharing database and the Regional Travel Demand Model were among the resources analyzed. The recommended approach for route selection is to select top destinations (Regional Activity Centers

and Transportation Analysis Districts) based on land-use forecasts, identify the origins of those trips using the Regional Travel Demand Model, and identify potential arterial routes between origin-destination pairs.

Mr. Sivasailam stated that the proposed hardware to be used with the volunteers is the Garmin IQue M-4 Integrated GPS handheld device.

The pilot study is currently being conducted with volunteer drivers. The volunteer selection process begins first with COG staff, then employees of state and local governments, and finally, members of the general public. Volunteers who live and work around Regional Activity Centers would be ideal and may be asked to participate in one week or two week monitoring periods. Potential volunteers should drive to and from work at least four days per week. Volunteers from the Commuter Connections Subcommittee would also be appreciated.

Item #6 WMATA Update on SmarTrip Card

Mr. Dick Siskind of WMATA updated the Subcommittee on the progress of installing SmarTrip on buses and commuter rail. He also briefed the Subcommittee on the use of SmarTrip for parking as well as the recent hearing on federal worker abuses of Metrocheks.

Mr. Siskind briefed the Subcommittee on the state of SmarTrip implementation through the region on commuter rail and bus services such as DASH, MARC, VRE and the Fairfax Connector. The Baltimore MTA has also completed installation of the new fare boxes but has not implemented them as of yet. The ultimate goal is a regional look and feel throughout the National Capitol Region while providing seamless transportation to the consumer. The rollout for MARC, VRE and Regional Commuter Buses is expected in late 2008.

Additionally, a pilot program for parking is also in the works. Currently, SmarTrip is the only form of payment accepted at many Metro stations. WMATA is in the process of implementing major credit card use as a second payment option. Software upgrades will also open new features available to SmarTrip cardholders such as a "Multi-purse" feature which will allow for dedicated parking funds. Currently, SmartBenefits are to only be used for transit. Parking fees are considered a separate entity and should not be paid using the transit subsidy.

By December 31, 2007 paper benefits (Metrochek) will no longer be available unless the commuter uses commuter rail such as MARC or VRE. The full implantation of SmartBenefits across the region should decrease the amount of commuter fraud which has been highlighted lately by several articles in the news media and has come under the scrutiny of the United States Congress. Mr Siskind assured the Subcommittee that only the on-screen prompts will change as new software is installed while the hardware will be able to remain the same.

Item #7 Strategic Planning Plan

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos discussed closure of the "Parking Lot Issues" and the final version of the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan.

Mr. Ramfos explained that there were a few minor edits to the Commuter Connections draft Strategic Plan, principally through the addition of clarification language added to section eight. In section eight, the objectives were edited to read as follows: Increase the number of employer-

based alternative transportation programs and incentives by increasing the number of participating work sites, Increase the number of alternative transportation options provided by participating employers through an increase of options provided within a particular work site and Increase the number of participating employees at existing employer programs. Section eight, Acceptable Performance Levels were edited to read as follows: Increase the number of employer-based alternative transportation programs and incentives by an appropriate percentage established by state funding agencies in conjunction with local jurisdictions within a particular year. (Note: To be determined at the start of each Commuter Connections TERM evaluation cycle), Expand existing employer-based alternative transportation programs by X percent set by the evaluation period and Survey employers contacted in each jurisdiction pursuant to goals outlined in the Employer Outreach contract Scope of Work between the local jurisdiction and COG and produce a report with the results within one month.

Parking Lot issues covered at the Subcommittee meeting included:

Where do we count participation in telework vs. employer outreach? How is credit allocated for each? Mr. Ramfos explained that initially, Employer Outreach Sales Representatives are awarded Employer Outreach credit for establishing new telework program participants. During TERM Analysis Periods (every three years), these credits are shifted into the telework Term because the credit ultimately belongs to that TERM even though the relationship was first established through Employer Outreach efforts. Additionally, under Customer Service, the following were discussed: Send broadcast e-mails or queries in instances of system outages or other problems that affect most members. This system is already in place via the email address commutersupport@mwcog.org. The suggestion was made that COG staff make onsite visits to resolve computer problems that can not be fixed over the telephone. If too expensive to provide, consider a fee schedule or make additional resources available. It was stated that Commuter Operations Center staff are currently dispatched to field locations when an issue cannot be resolved over the phone or remotely.

Parking Lot issue #14 is still currently open – the Subcommittee decided to keep this item open for discussion and discuss it again at the July 17, 2007 Subcommittee meeting.

Item #8 Bike To Work Day Event Update

Mr. Douglas Franklin briefed the Subcommittee on the Bike To Work Day Event.

Mr. Franklin played a radio spot for BTWD 2007. He also presented the BTWD T-shirt to the Subcommittee and he mentioned the large sponsorship of goDCgo and their prominence on the radio spot. This year BTWD 2007 included 25 Pit Stops including the FDA, Crystal City, Hyattsville, Springfield Metro and Tyson's Corner.

Item #9 3rd Quarter Budget Report

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos briefed the Subcommittee on the 3rd Quarter Budget Report

Mr. Ramfos distributed the 3rd Quarter Budget Report and asked that all questions be directed to him through email because of time constraints.

Item #10 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, July 17, 2007.