



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

12 noon – 2:00 p.m.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

777 North Capitol Street, N.E.

Third Floor, COG Board Room

Chairperson: Anna McLaughlin, District of Columbia DOT

Vice Chairperson: Willie Epps, Jr., Prince George's County DPW&T

Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos 202/962-3313

1. Introductions

2. Minutes of January 27, 2008 Meeting

The meeting minutes of the January 27, 2008 were adopted and approved.

3. Bicycle Routing Module on TDM Software

Ross Edgar, COG/TPB staff, demonstrated the Bike Routing System and both the safest path and shortest path routing options. The system appears to be working correctly though speed is still an issue. COG/TPB staff will continue to make improvements to the system and data. The routes Mr. Edgar selected were from 3110 Lancer Drive, Hyattsville, MD to 777 N Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC; 777 N Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC to 710 Independence Ave, SW, Washington, DC; 710 Jefferson Drive, SW, Washington, DC to 1000 Constitution Ave, NW, Washington, DC; 1000 Constitution Ave, NW, Washington, DC to 3110 Lancer Drive, Hyattsville, MD. Mr. Edgar then demonstrated the use of a bike path from Sibley Hospital, Washington, DC to 4798 Bethesda Ave, Bethesda, MD via the Capitol Crescent Trail.

4. FY 2008 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey

Doug Franklin, COG/TPB staff, discussed the draft FY 2008 GRH Customer Satisfaction survey. 2,994 surveys were distributed in FY 2008 and 1,008 surveys were returned, indicating 33% return rate. This is the second highest return rate in the history of the Commuter Connections program. Typical survey results were very good. 78% of trip respondents rated the reservations staff as "Excellent" and 17% rated the staff as "Good." Satisfaction with cab providers was also high with 71% rating their responsiveness as "Excellent" and 22% rated it as "Good." GRH users felt that Commuter Connections response time was "Excellent" according to 74% of those surveyed while 17% viewed it as "Good." The wait time for most commuters was less than 15 minutes according to 74% of those surveyed. 18% reported having to wait 16 to 30 minutes. Only 8% reported having to wait longer than 30 minutes. The largest contributing factor for using GRH was personal illness/family emergency with 57% of those who took trips citing this cause. The Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home Program received and overall "Excellent" from 77% of respondents.

Anna McLaughlin asked that comments on the draft FY 2008 GRH Satisfaction Survey Report be posted to the Extranet by March 31st. The Subcommittee will be asked to endorse the report for release at its May meeting.

5. Regional TDM Evaluation Project Update

Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, presented the results of the FY 2009 Placement Rate Survey. The primary purpose of the survey is to measure the placement rate of those applicants contacting Commuter Connections for alternative commute information and to document suggested improvements that may be needed the Commuter Operations Center. Four items are measured in this survey: Placement Rate, which include the percentage of applicants who make a mode shift; VTR Factor – Vehicle trip reduction, reduction in trips due to applicant mode shift; travel distance, and rideshare access mode.

The survey data showed that the temporary behavior change was reduced from 6.5 weeks of use to 3 weeks. One-third of commuters shifted from drive alone to an alternate mode. Most commuters indicated that their reasons for change were due to a job change or relocation of out the area. Respondents typically heard of Commuter Connections through: word of mouth, Internet, Radio, or employer surveys. 77% of respondents contacted Commuter Connections through the Internet. Respondents tended to use the information they collected to reach someone, calling someone, and to identify other interested parties for ridesharing. 30% of respondents claimed the information they received affected their commutes. When asked about changes they would like to see, commuters indicated a desire for more current information, better matches, internet suggestions, and more match names. Nicholas Ramfos asked that all comments be submitted to the Commuter Connections Extranet by April 10, 2009.

Lori Diggins then discussed the FY 2009 Employer Satisfaction Survey. She indicated that the employers will be pulled from the ACT! Database which contains approximately 1,400 employers. Commuter Connections set a target quota is 400 completed surveys. The survey will take place as a two – step process which will involve contact via email or postal mail and then a Telephone call to follow-up to non-respondents in order to meet the sample. Survey topics will include: company background, worksite commute program, ratings for commuter connections representatives, communication level, and knowledge responsiveness. Preliminary results from the survey will be presented at the Employer Outreach Committee meeting on April 21st and a draft report will be available for review by this Subcommittee for the May 19th meeting.

6. Employer Recognition Awards

Doug Franklin, COG/TPB Staff, discussed the upcoming Employer Recognition Awards. Most respondents felt that it was important to keep the regional awards ceremony, thereby honoring employers who put forth innovative and impressive commuter benefits for their staff. Also, most were in favor of keeping the awards ceremony in the District of Columbia at the National Press Club. Some suggestions were made to move the awards to lunchtime which would increase the costs by a sizeable margin. 66% (2/3rds) of

respondents rated invitations, video, program booklet, give away item and print ad as good or better. Some suggestions made were: Do not completely eliminate and award category, consider lunch instead of breakfast and eliminate reminder phone calls. Mr. Franklin stated that additional feedback would be needed by the Employer Outreach sales representatives and that the information presented would be shared with the Employer Outreach Committee on April 21st for additional feedback.

7. Commuter Connections Strategic Plan

Keith Bounds of the Maryland Department of Transportation and Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, discussed the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. Mr. Bounds suggested updating language regarding the automation of online applications for both the Commuter Connections and Guaranteed Ride Home Program because this has now been accomplished through the new on-line web based TDM System. Mr. Bounds suggested changing language in Employer Outreach to participating/involved jurisdictions to reflect the change in Virginia's Employer Outreach protocol in which they will no longer receive administrative support from COG and will be passing the funds thru directly to their local jurisdictions. Mr. Bounds suggested changing language to reflect the Commuter Operations Center which would include: ridematching coordination, training and technical support to local jurisdictions, support to commuters, maintenance of the commuter database and program evaluation services, Mr. Ramfos asked that additional comments be posted to the Commuter Connections Extranet and a new comment period deadline of April 30th was established for the current document and he suggested that a timetable for a new plan to be adopted by November 2009.

8. 2009 Bike To Work Day Event

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, discussed Bike to Work day which is set for Friday, May 15, 2009. There will be 26 Pit-stops this year and 35 sponsors which are up from 30 last year. A new Nationals Park pit stop is planned for this year. Mr. Franklin indicated that posters and rack cards are available. Commuter Connections printed 20,000 posters and 50,000 rack cards. Commuter Connections is planning to target employers within the pit stop areas and will be working with DC Circulator buses which will carry banners and advertisers.

9. FY 2010 Commuter Connections Work Program

Mr. Ramfos distributed a series of letters from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). He explained that VDOT removed funding for the Telework TERM from the FY 2010 CCWP to use for advertising and marketing for the Telework!VA program, which COG/TPB staff supported. A second letter from VDOT requested that COG remove the administrative and pass-thru dollars component of the FY 2010 Commuter Connections Work Program, for Employer Outreach Administration. COG/TPB staff was not in agreement of this request as they felt it would undermine the regionalism that the program promotes. COG/TPB staff briefed the Transportation Planning Board and the Transportation Planning Board's Technical Committee of the proposed changes which would affect administrative support from COG/TPB staff and also changes in committee structure. Mr. Ramfos will be issuing a letter which will outline the changes in business for the Virginia jurisdictions and this will be presented to the Employer Outreach

Committee at their April 21st meeting. The Citizens Advisory Committee is also on record as opposing VDOT's request via resolution.

10. 2nd Quarter Budget Report

Mr. Ramfos discussed the 2nd Quarter Budget Report and asked that any questions be directed to him. He also asked that any outstanding Employer Outreach invoices be submitted to COG as soon as possible. All other budget items are on track at this time.

11. Other Business/Set Agenda for Next meeting

Anna McLaughlin called for other business suggestions and none were presented for the May 19, 2009 meeting.

Any agenda items for the May 19th Commuter Connections meeting should be sent to Mr. Ramfos.