



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

12 noon – 2:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

Chairperson: Marina Budimir, DDOT

Vice Chairperson: Kari Snyder, MDOT

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. Anna McLaughlin, DDOT, led the meeting as Chairman due to the absence of Marina Budimir.

Item #2 Minutes of September 15, 2020 Meeting

Approval was sought for the September 15, 2020 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.

Anna McLaughlin, DDOT, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

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

The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the September 15, 2020 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

Item #3 FY2018 – FY2020 Regional TDM Evaluation Analysis Draft Report

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, reviewed the substantive changes made to the draft Regional TDM Evaluation Analysis Report.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, reviewed the substantive changes made to the draft Regional TDM Evaluation Analysis Report. The societal benefits calculation applies some benefit unit conversion factors from the TRIMMS model to estimate the unit benefits from the TDM program elements. Most remained at or near the values used in 2017. One conversion factor changed markedly, however, due to a change in methodology TRIMMS uses to calculate this benefit. The conversion factor for the congestion benefit, defined as hours of travel delay reduced, dropped from 62.16 hours of delay per 1000 Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) to 15.9 hours of delay per VMT. This resulted in an approximate 74% drop in the value of the congestion benefit, compared with what the benefit would have been under the 2017 calculation. Mr. Ramfos added that recalculated starting mode splits are to be used as defaults for employers that had not conducted a baseline survey in Employer Outreach. The update added 102 employer cases to the default calculations, resulting in changes to both the default drive alone rate and the distributions of alternative modes. The impact for Employer Outreach declined slightly as a result of this change. There was also a slight change to the count of employers due to duplicate records that were found with Fairfax County.

Mr. Ramfos continued with a small change also made to the impacts for Maryland Telework. In past TDM analyses, the evaluation included a small impact for increased telecommuting at Maryland worksites assisted by Commuter Connections. These impacts were calculated by surveying telework coordinators at those worksites about increases in telecommuting following the assistance. The survey also was attempted in 2020, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, none of the assisted employers participated in the survey. Thus, the program impacts could not be calculated for 2020. Regarding Telework!VA, the September report presented

outdated goals for the program. The goals were updated in this final draft report version. Also, there were some minor changes to GRH where some additional credits were added due to calculation issues. When the Commuter Operations Center (COC) results are added to the impacts of the four program elements impacts, as presented in Table B, the combined impact came within 2.7% of the VMT reduction goal. They fell 7% short of the goal for vehicle trips reduced. The combined program element-COC program impact fell 55% short of the NOx goal and was 40% below the VOC goal. Again, the change in the emission factors affected the emission results. Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT, asked if the numbers generated in Table B on page IV for Telework/VA were coordinated with DRPT. Mr. Ramfos responded that the numbers were from the initial framework generated two years ago in which the methodology was updated and are now reflected in the report accurately.

All other changes to the September report were to fix typographic errors, make minor adjustments in numbers to account for rounding, and to incorporate additional text, footnotes, or appendices references to document and explain the results and/or calculation methodologies. George Clark, TCCSMD, made a motion to release and endorse the report and was seconded by Nancy Huggins, MDOT/MTA. Mr. Ramfos stated the report will be published on the Commuter Connections Publications page in December with hard copies available by request.

Item #4 Monitoring Effects of COVID-19 on the Region's Transportation System

Andrew Meese, COG/TPB staff, presented transportation information from a variety of sources to provide snapshots of the magnitude and trends on the impacts of COVID-19.

Andrew Meese, COG/TPB staff, presented transportation information from a variety of sources to provide snapshots of the magnitude and trends on the impacts of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on transportation since March 2020. Regional traffic volumes, which in April 2020 had dipped below 50% of 2019 volumes, by July had recovered to over 80% of 2019 volumes and remained at that level through August. Regional vehicle miles of travel (VMT) dipped most dramatically in April and recovered significantly by July. The regional VMT was lower but similar to the median of those in 26 other major metro areas. Persons staying home on a given day regionally went from about 25% pre-pandemic to about 45%, and recently dropped to about 35%. Nationally and regionally, truck travel never declined as much as passenger travel. Metrorail and Metrobus ridership at available capacity has been significant, particularly on the bus system, which remains a lifeline for critical workers. There has been a complex interaction of demand and supply in this area. Local and commuter transit impacts varied among long-distance, local, and tourist routes. There has been a larger drop in long-distance transit services than those of local or shorter distance services. This is likely due to employees who are able to telework staying home and those that are essential workers traveling shorter distances using local commuting services.

Mr. Meese continued with roadway speeds on interstate highways throughout the region. Free-flow traffic conditions became more prevalent during the pandemic due to less cars being on the roads. Traffic conditions will likely become slower as the pandemic ceases and more decide to commute. Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC)-tracked major incidents were disproportionately high in April due to the free-flow traffic conditions and speeds being higher. Though serious crash numbers have been lower than 2019, fatal crashes have remained at about the same level as 2019 even with reduced traffic volumes since March. Air travel has recovered somewhat at the region's three major airports since April but remains much lower than 2019. Next steps include a deeper dive into more data, examining interrelationships of data from multiple sectors to discern impacts and inform long-range planning and programming, as well as sectors of analysis including roadway travel, public transportation, economy, environment, and health. Staff from COG Departments of Transportation Planning, Environment Programs, and Community Planning & Services will collaborate on this multi-sectoral assessment of COVID-19 impacts on the region. Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT, asked if the information presented is able to be shared. Mr. Meese explained that the data presented is not final and that it would be better to wait to share once a formal report of the data is derived and presented to the TPB in December. Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, asked if a more detailed data on speed data is on the way. Mr. Meese replied that speed and crash data are compiled from multiple sources and that the team will research more trends and patterns regarding speeds and crashes in the future.

Item #5 **2020 Bike to Work Day Memo**

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented a memorandum prepared to summarize the 2020 Bike to Work Day event which was canceled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Mark Hersey, COG/TPB staff, presented a memorandum prepared to summarize the 2020 Bike to Work Day event which was canceled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. This was the first time in 19 years that the BTWD event did not take place. There were over 100 pit stops prepared to participate in the event. The decision to cancel the event was made on March 30, 2020 for the entirety of the calendar year. Event participants were encouraged to participate in Car Free Day which was held on September 22, 2020. Posters and t-shirts for the 2020 event had already been decided on and will likely be used in the 2021 event. George Clark, TCCSMD, confirmed as the chair of the BTWD Committee, that the t-shirt color and logo for the 2020 event will not be changed for the 2021 BTWD event.

Item #6 **FY2021 Regional TDM Evaluation Project Update**

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on Regional TDM Evaluation data collection efforts for FY2021.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on Regional TDM Evaluation data collection efforts for FY2021. The Placement Rate survey is currently underway, and a notice was sent last week to those who have contacted Commuter Connections between July and September 2020. A separate sample of account holders who registered for incenTrip, CarpoolNow, and Flextime Rewards was also included. The results from the survey are used in the framework methodology of the TDM Analysis report. The number of survey respondents will be lower this year due to the pandemic which has caused a lack of commuters using alternative modes. The data from this survey will be collected through December and highlights from the survey will likely be presented in January. A draft survey report should be available in March 2020 with a comment period and endorsement to occur in May. A separate impact report will be conducted on incentive programs such as incenTrip, Flextime Rewards, and CarpoolNow. The Retention Rate survey, which takes place every five years, will begin once the Placement Rate survey is completed around late January or early February. The Retention Rate survey is conducted to analyze whether users who no longer are formally registered for Commuter Connections programs are continuing to use alternative modes of travel to and from work. Results from the survey are used in the TDM Analysis report.

Item #7 **2020 Car Free Day Event**

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

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the results from Car Free Day held on September 22nd. There were 3,834 pledges that occurred throughout the duration of the event. About half of the pledges came from Virginia residents while Maryland and Washington, DC each comprised a quarter of the total. There were about 900 fewer pledges in 2020 than in 2019 which is likely due to the pandemic. More of those pledging in Washington, DC chose to bike and walk than in Maryland and Virginia. Many in Maryland had a higher proportion of bus-pledges than the other jurisdictions. Almost two-thirds of individuals who chose to rideshare were Virginia residents. A majority of residents in all three states decided to telework as this is what is being encouraged most during the pandemic. About 25% of pledges said that they would have driven a car had it not been Car Free Day, while the other 75% said that they would normally have been car free. Over 85% of pledges pledged to go car free for their commute to work and also may have included an activity outside of work to travel car free to as well. This led to about 50% of those pledging to take a car free trip outside of commuting to work. Over 3,000 pledges reported telework from home as their work location. The top three pledges by jurisdiction were Washington, DC, Fairfax County, VA, and Montgomery County, MD. The emissions

rate analysis for the event showed much lower amount of emissions reduced attributed to the Car Free Day event. This is likely due to a combination of factors, notably a change in the emissions factors for the analysis and the fact that most pledges would have been car-free regardless of the event, due to the pandemic.

Item #8 Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) Program Grant

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/DTP staff, briefed the Subcommittee on an ATCMTD grant recently received by COG to expand the incenTrip program.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/DTP staff, briefed the Subcommittee on an ATCMTD grant recently received by COG to expand the incenTrip program. In August 2019, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced that \$12 million in FY2020 funds were available nationally under the ATCMTD Initiative Grant Award. COG/TPB staff submitted a \$5.95 million grant application on August 5, 2019 titled “Deployment of Personalized and Dynamic Travel Demand Management Technology in the Washington, DC – Baltimore, MD – Richmond, VA Megaregion.” On June 16, 2020, COG/TPB staff was notified that it had been one of 10 projects nationally awarded an ATCMTD program grant for the full grant dollar application amount. Partnerships with the University of Maryland, RITIS, Greater Washington Partnership, MDOT, VDOT, and DDOT were included in the proposal. The ATCMTD project vision and goals include leveraging the best available technology to maximize the cost effectiveness of a megaregion TDM program; integrating and expanding an existing dynamic TDM program with a shared technology platform for coordination among public and private-sector partners; providing personalized, timely and accurate traveler information and incentives to minimize congestion, energy use, and emissions; and enhancing multimodal transportation access and system performance for all user groups with rewards and gamification.

Mr. Ramfos included Commuter Connections existing programs and core components such as Commuter Operations Center (COC) transportation information, software, hardware, and database maintenance; Ridematching coordination, technical assistance, and administrative support; and, TDM marketing and advertising as well as incenTrip as part of the no-cost share to the grant. State DOTs in the DMV megaregion have prioritized multimodal integrated corridor management (ICM) and transportation systems management & operations (TSM&O) programs with major corridor-level ICM and TSM&O projects already in the deployment process. The proposed ATCMTD project will coordinate its corridor-level TDM deployment with selected ICM and TSM&O deployment projects funded by other sources. UMD’s Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) is the largest data sharing, dissemination, analytics, and visualization platform in the U.S., including more than 40 performance measure, dashboard, and visual analytics tools and will be used to enhance the current mobile app. The incenTrip application was launched on August 28, 2019 and jointly organized by MWCOG and the Maryland Transportation Institute (MTI). The proposed ATCMTD Technology Deployment grant project includes the following timeline: Year 1, rolling out multi-jurisdictional TDM in the current service area and expansion of incenTrip into outlying areas of the DMV Megaregion; Year 2, TDM for non-recurrent congestion across region, TDM for ICM and TSM&O, and integration of employer-funded TDM programs; and Year 3, a multimodal reward and payment integration and a customized trip planner for elderly and disable users. In Year 2, employers will be able to customize the incenTrip application specifically for their employee commutes. In Year 3, equity emphasis will be placed on the small geographic areas that have significant concentrations of elderly, low-income, and/or minority populations.

Mr. Ramfos showcased the megaregion-level system performance benefit projections including \$56.2 million in congestion reduction, \$38.3 million fuel use savings, and \$0.3 million pollution emissions reduction, just to name a few. Corridor and bottleneck-level benefit projections were also shown. The proposal includes a strong commitment to and capabilities for performance monitoring and evaluation. Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) reduction and TDM program benefits will be monitored throughout the lifetime of the grant initiative. Kelly Woodward, DATA, asked if the glitches to incenTrip have been corrected. Mr. Ramfos explained that the application is used heavily and receives major user feedback on an on-going basis, therefore problems with the

application are usually identified and fixed on a regular basis. A new version of the mobile app will be launched soon.

Item #9 **FY2022 Work Program Development and Commuter Connections Strategic Plan**
Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2022 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Work Program (CCWP) and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2022 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Work Program (CCWP) and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan states that Commuter Connections is a network of public and private transportation organizations, including COG, state funding agencies, and local organizations that work together to assist and encourage commuters in the Washington, DC region to use alternatives to the single-occupant automobile. Benefits of Commuter Connections include helping to reduce and manage commuter-induced congestion, reduce emissions, which in turn helps with goods movement and tourist travel. The program also supports local efforts to attract and retain employers and improve quality of life. According to MSA rankings for carpool and transit use, about 11.1% of total workers in the Washington, DC metro region carpool and about 13.9% of total workers use transit. Commuter Connections constitutes the major demand management component of the region's congestion management process within the TPB. Commuter Connections also supports regional air quality goals and is part of the annual update of the region's Long-Range Plan (Visualize 2045) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Mr. Ramfos continued with the proposed FY2022 CCWP budget. Most budgeted line items were consistent with FY2021, except for Program Evaluation in which there was a large increase of about \$400,000. This increase is due to the massive amount of data collection taking place within the funding year. Overall, there will be a 9% increase in the budget from FY2021. The Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program (ATCMTD) FHWA project will be a new initiative in FY2022. The 2022 State of the Commute survey design, data collection activities, and draft Technical Report will take place as well. Also new in the FY2022 CCWP, GRH In-Depth Applicant Surveys and draft reports for the Washington DC and Baltimore metropolitan regions. Next steps include incorporating initial comments and edits from state funding agencies, the draft review by the Commuter Connections Subcommittee, final review of document by state funding agencies, and submittal of a revised document to Subcommittee in January for further review and endorsement for release. The TPB Tech Committee and TPB will receive a draft of the document in February and approval will be sought in March. TIP adjustments, if any, will be made and funding commitments secured by June with the program beginning on July 1, 2021. The draft FY2022 CCWP and Strategic Plan will be posted to the Subcommittee's SharePoint site with comments due by close of business on December 4th.

Item #10 **1st Quarter CCWP FY2021 Budget and Progress Reports**
Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2021 CCWP 1st Quarter Budget Report. Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the group on the FY 2021 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2021 CCWP 1st Quarter Budget Report. Commuter Operations has expended about 22% of funds for this fiscal year. GRH is at 11%, Marketing at 11%, Monitoring and Evaluation at 14%, Employer Outreach at 6%, and GRH Baltimore at 7%. Overall, the program has expended about 12% of funds which is much lower than the usual due to the pandemic. Kelly Woodward, DATA, asked what plans were for the funds not being expended and if special projects could be planned. Mr. Ramfos responded that the funds are specified for the work program and therefore can only go towards approved program project initiatives without being lost.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, briefed the group on the FY2021 CCWP 1st Quarter Progress Report. In the Commuter Operations Center, about 15,000 accounts are currently registered in the system, which is a dip from last quarter due to the pandemic. Commuter Connections continued to facilitate a Federal ETC Advisory Work Group with representation from GSA, NCPC, and COG to conduct Federal ETC handbook updates and a Federal ETC response to the coronavirus pandemic. A draft of the handbook should be available for review by January 2021. COG/TPB continued to provide updates for the Commute with Confidence TDM pandemic-response clearinghouse. Commuter Connections continued to facilitate the WMATA TDM Platform Shutdown Work Group which sought to coordinate regional TDM effort among network members to ease the commute interruptions cause by the summer Metrorail platform work that closed down several Metrorail stations in Virginia along the Orange and Silver lines. The July 2020 version of the TDM Directory was published. Administrative work kicking off the ATCMTD grant was also initiated. Work commenced on a number of incenTrip enhancements, including an Employer Application Program Interface (API) and a Trip Log API.

Mr. Sheehan continued with the GRH program stating that 46 new applicants were enrolled into the program throughout the quarter and 503 commuter accounts were re-registered, summing to a total of 549 applications received. As of September 30th, a total of 4,755 commuters were registered in the GRH database. The program provided 23 trips throughout the quarter. In Marketing, the Summer 2020 newsletter was distributed. Regular updates were made to the Commute with Confidence website. The primary effort occurring during the quarter was the Car Free Day event. Marketing efforts for the event were mostly virtual through social media and radio. About 19 Commuter Connections accounts were created in the quarter. In Monitoring and Evaluation, analysis commenced on the Regional Employer Telework Survey results with key findings identified and presented at the July 21st Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting. The report is now posted on SharePoint. The Car Free Day 2019 event report was also finalized. In Employer Outreach, a committee meeting was held in July 2020. Staff coordinated upgrades to the ACT! Database software and monitored the system. A "Return to Work" survey was conducted to help gain insight into how employers were planning to handle employees returning to work should the pandemic cease in coming months. For GRH Baltimore, the program had about 195 registered users as of September 30th. One trip was provided.

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.

There was no discussion on this item.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 12 noon.