



COMMUTER CONNECTIONS RIDEMATCHING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

Tuesday, June 15, 2021
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Webex

Chairperson: Hugh McGloin, WHS/DOD
Vice Chairperson: Andrew Dempster, HHS/FDA

COG Staff Contact: Stephen Finafrock, 202/962-3385 or sfinafrock@mwcog.org

1. Introductions

The meeting was brought to order by Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves as their jurisdiction was announced. The meeting took place virtually via Webex.

2. Minutes of the March 16, 2021 meeting

Approval was sought for the March 16, 2021 Ridematching Committee Meeting minutes. An initial motion to approve was made by George Clark of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland and a second motion to approve was made by Mark Sofman of the Montgomery County DOT. The minutes were approved as written. All were in favor.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, called attention to an error regarding the agenda presented during this meeting. Agenda item two read, "Minutes of the December 15th, 2020 Meeting" and was corrected to "Minutes of the March 16th, 2021 Meeting." The minutes were then re-approved with the correction noted.

3. Upcoming Fairs and Promotions

North Bethesda TMD

- Virtual CID
- Participated in virtual health expo

Montgomery County

- Back to the office day
- In-person planning meetings taking place
- Mobile Commuter Store will be making its rounds around the county

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

- Started local marketing campaign
- Running ads in local papers and locally online

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD, 777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, N.E., SUITE 300, WASHINGTON, DC 20002-4239

THE COMMUTER INFORMATION SOURCE FOR MARYLAND, VIRGINIA AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WWW.COMMUTERCONNECTIONS.ORG 1-800-745-RIDE

- First fair at the Charles County Chamber
- Attended meeting at the Indian Head Naval Warfare Center.

Frederick County

- Digital marketing and radio campaigns
- Phased-in approach starting July
- Urbana park and ride event

4. TDM Technology Update

Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, updated the Committee on the upcoming changes to the aesthetics to the TDM system.

Mr. Sheehan began by displaying a mock-up of homepage for the TDM system. Mr. Sheehan reminded those in attendance that this is not a final product and some small details still need to be worked out.

Mr. Sheehan then called attention to several areas on the presented screenshot. A new feature being looked into is the quick match option, displayed under the login/sign up options. Underneath that, several icons will display information regarding the various programs Commuter Connections offer. These icons will also hyperlink to more information about the program services.

Mr. Sheehan then continued to show the page as it appears “below the fold.” Several apps are on display including Commuter Connections and CarpoolNow. Data will also be displayed above these icons with updated information from our quarterly reports.

Mr. Sheehan then displayed a slide elaborating on the new quick match feature. An example was presented where a user has entered their origin and destination into the feature. A map will display showing their route and let the user know how many matches they have received. The user running the match will not be provided any information as to where their ridematches are located or how to contact them. If an individual received a low number of matches, COG staff may decide to present a message encouraging the user to register and check back at a later date.

Mr. Sheehan then displayed the redesign of the commuter dashboard. This is the page that will display when a user logs into their account. The top left will display a listing of commuter programs, the right will display a listing of different programs and tools available to the user.

The last screenshot regarding webpage redesign was then displayed by Mr. Sheehan. This showed an update to the commute log and its graphs. There will be some new information that clearly communicates the savings summary that is available to users. Other items and pages within the website will be remaining the same. The look feel and branding will be consistent throughout the website.

Mr. Sheehan then continued to present the new geocode alert update to those in attendance. Mr. Sheehan explained the TDM system will now alert users if they have provided an inaccurate geocode to their account. If the GIS system cannot assign a geocode to the user, they will see a red banner at the top of the screen alerting them to that fact. The alert will be able to hyperlink them to where they can update their inaccurate information.

Mr. Sheehan then concluded his presentation to mention that COG/TPB staff are creating specifications for a new flexible vanpooling option and a Commuter Connections mobile app refresh.

George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, asked if it would be possible for commuters to receive an alert about 30 days in advance of their program expiration. Mr. Sheehan mentions that COG is committed to keeping users engaged in the program and we will consider any correspondence with our users.

Mr. Clark then asked if we want to add an option for new users to ask or disclose that they have received a COVID-19 vaccination. Nick Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, stated that Commuter Connections will probably not be able to do this due to legal concerns.

Stacey King, Prince George's County, asked if an administrator will be able to see if a user's profile has been flagged due to invalid geocodes. Mr. Sheehan said that COG/TPB staff will be able to see the flag. Ms. King then asked about the commuter dashboard page and if the "learn more" option is affected if a user is already registered for that program. Mr. Sheehan stated that this is a good idea and COG can explore additional options for that feature.

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, then reminded those in attendance about use of the commuter support email inbox for and support concerns or questions. Emails can be sent to commutersupport@mwkog.org

Ms. King then asked if a report is available to see users that have registered through a mobile app. Mr. Sheehan then responds by saying there is way in the system to see if a user has come in through a mobile app but there is currently no report for that.

5. TDM Best Practices

Holly Morello, PRTC, introduced herself and began by presenting a brief history and some background information on OmniRide.

Ms. Morello then continued to display information on PRTC's commuter bus services, access to regional transpiration, and local bus services.

Ms. Morello mentioned the Vanpool Alliance and that it was originally created by PRTC, NVTC, and GWRC. Vanpool Alliance is located at the OmniRide center in Woodbridge. The Wheels to Wellness program operates and acts as an assistance program for senior citizens and those with disabilities. OmniRide also has two programs that operate in coordination with public schools. This program educates students about public transportation and helps them develop a positive attitude toward transit.

Ms. Morello then continued to mention that OmniRide is expanding with a Western Maintenance facility. This facility will ultimately provide more service for residence on the Western side of the county.

Ms. Morello then explained the OmniRide Rideshare program and how it leverages the Commuter Connections TDM System. OmniRide provides applicants with a personalized itinerary for their commute, including carpool, vanpool, and transit options. Pre COVID, OmniRide was seeing 40-60 applications per month.

Ms. Morello concluded her presentation by showing information on OmniRide's vanpool support programs. VanStart/Save can provide an incentive to vans that either start or end in Prince William County. There is also a personal property tax relieve program for vanpools that are "overnight" in the county. The Vanpool Council program also exists to help support vanpools in Northern Virginia.

6. Recovery Ridematching Roundtable Discussion

Stephen Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, began his presentation by displaying data evaluation pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Finafrock displayed Commuter Connections new applications and reapplications. The effect was an 85% decrease in new applications. Data showed that a large number of applicants did choose to reregister or maintain their registration. Data gathered also showed that follow up and matchlist data have changed. There has been a minimal drop-off in follow up averages but a drastic drop in matchlists distributed.

Mr. Finafrock then continued to display the drastic change in GRH new registrations and reregistrations. The pandemic has made it difficult to maintain and attract new registrants. Marketing campaigns were halted through the pandemic.

The next slide presented topics for discussion.

Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, suggested that a series of social media posts of drivers and riders indicating what they do to maintain vehicle cleanliness could reassure participants.

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, mentioned that COG has been working with state funding agencies on a recovery marketing plan, which was soft launched right after Bike to Work Day. So far this has included digital marketing and social media postings. The idea is to encourage folks to look again at their transportation options as the recovery is underway. Mr. Ramfos also mentioned that survey and study results are pointing to COVID having a residual effect on commuting patterns during the recovery.

Kendall Tiffany, Frederick County, asked if there is a way to have a pop-up notification to notify more easily those that are "on the go" and not always tied to a computer. Mr. Ramfos noted that Commuter Connections is currently exploring methods

for using notifications and alerts as part of the TDM System; the program's suite of mobile apps may also complement this effort.

Nicole Huntington, NIH, asked if Commuter Connections has looked at making changes to program guidelines based off the recent changes in commuting patterns. Mr. Ramfos said that COG has relaxed a lot of guidelines on the vanpool 'Pool Rewards program.

Holly Morello, PRTC, asked if COG has brochures on the ridesharing program and/or other Commuter Connections programs, and if so, how to order them. Mr. Ramfos assured Ms. Morello that there are numerous pieces of literature available for free to local jurisdictions. Dan Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, provide the "Order Brochures" link to the Committee: <https://www.commuterconnections.org/order-brochures/>. Mr. Ramfos also noted that part of the recovery marketing campaign will include additional outreach and described it as a full-force marketing campaign.

Darlene Nader, North Bethesda TMD, asked if COG has been in touch with Enterprise regarding vanpooling. Mr. Ramfos stated that COG has indeed been in communication with Enterprise and that two new vanpools have been created through the 'Pool Rewards program in the past couple months.

George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, had posted in the meetings chat feature that the Committee may want to consider having Enterprise or another vanpool provider attend the next meeting and maybe have an agenda item.

7. Quarterly Progress Report

Steve Finafrock, COG/TPB staff, directed Committee members to view Item 7 – *CCWP FY21 3rd Quarter Progress Report*. As he has already reviewed notable data in Item 6, Mr. Finafrock gave an abbreviated update on work accomplished in the past quarter. Notably, a new version of incenTrip was released for iOS and Android. Those in attendance were asked to download and test the app.

Mr. Finafrock then reminded those in attendance to continue submitting Table 6 data to COG on a monthly basis. George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, asked if his data is being received. Mr. Finafrock confirmed that it is. Mr. Finafrock also encourages those in attendance to submit employer outreach reports in a timely manner as well. Halie Mitchell, VDOT, reminded the Virginia jurisdictions that she would like to be copied in on their report submissions.

8. Other Business/Upcoming Agenda Items

George Clark, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, reiterated the request he had earlier written in the chat regarding extending an invite a vanpool operator to speak at the next Committee meeting. Mr. Clark mentioned that it doesn't have to just be Enterprise and would like to get a picture of the providers that are still in business.

Mr. Ramfos mentioned that the Vanpool Alliance has a good handle on who is still in business. It seems there has been an increase in the number of vans that are on the road. Holly Morello, PRTC, confirms that she has seen a recent increase in applications.

Mr. Ramfos mentioned that COG will be reverting back to in-person meetings starting September and will continue to have the Webex option available.

Mr. Clark also provided an invitation for the Maryland rideshare quarterly meeting, hosted in Southern Maryland on July 8th. Mr. Clark requested potential attendees to notify him if planning to attend for a proper head count.

The Next meeting of the Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee will be held on September 21st, 2021 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.