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MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

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Prince George's County Rockville Takoma Park Alexandria

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Falls Church

Loudoun County
Manassas

Manassas Park

Prince William County 1.

Tuesday, May 18, 2004 10:00 a.m. - Noon

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

First Floor, Training Center

Chairperson: Robin Briscoe, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland Vice Chairperson: Sharon Affinito, Loudoun County

Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos 202/962-3313

Note: If you cannot attend this meeting, please call 202/962-3327.

<u>ITEM #</u>

2. Minutes of April 20, 2004 Meeting

Introductions

APPROVE

3. Commuter Connections Meeting Schedule For FY05

(5 min)

APPROVE

The Subcommittee will be asked to endorse the enclosed FY05 meeting schedule for Commuter Connections. The draft schedule was presented at the April 20th Subcommittee meeting.

4. FY03 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey Report

(5 min)

APPROVE

The Subcommittee will be asked to endorse the FY03 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey report that was presented to the Subcommittee at the April meeting.

5. Bike To Work Day 2004 Event Results

(15 min)

INFORMATION

Staff will update the Subcommittee on the Results from the 2004 regional Bike To Work Day event.

6.	Clean Air Partners and Ozone Action Days Update	(25 min)	INFORMATION
	Jenifer Desimone will update the Subcommittee on the new eight hour standard and its impact on Ozone Action Days in the region. Additional information will be shared on Clean Air Partners activities.		
7.	Regional Air Quality Conformity Update	(10 min)	INFORMATION
	Diavamani Sivasailam will review current activities regarding regional air quality conformity.		
8.	Regional TDM Marketing Update	(15 min)	INFORMATION
	Douglas Franklin will update the Subcommittee on recent regional TDM marketing activities.		
9.	Telework Resource Center Update	(10 min)	INFORMATION
	Danette Campbell will provide a status report on the recently completed Employer Telework Workshops for FY04 and an update on the Expanded Telework TERM.		
10.	Employer Outreach Update	(10 min)	INFORMATION
	Mark Hersey will give an update on recent Employer Outreach activities including results from the 2 nd and 3 rd quarter conformity verification statements.		
11.	2004 Employer Recognition Awards Program	(10 min)	INFORMATION
	Douglas Franklin will update the Subcommittee on the progress of the regional Employer Recognition Awards program for 2004.		
12.	Operations Center Update	(10 min)	INFORMATION
	Christopher Arabia will give an update On recent Operations Center activities.		

13. Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

(5 min)

This is an opportunity for Commuter Connections Subcommittee members to bring up other business and to request agenda items for the next meeting.

NOTE: The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, June 15, 2004 at 10:00 a.m.

Upcoming Meetings	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Commuter Operations Subcommittee	May 18	12 noon
Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group	May 18	2 p.m.
TDM Evaluation Group	May 19	10 a.m.
Regional TDM Marketing Group	June 1	10 a.m.
TMA Advisory Group	June 15	12 noon

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Commuter Connections Subcommittee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

CHAIR: Robin Briscoe, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland VICE CHAIR: Sharon Affinito, Loudoun County STAFF CONTACT: Nicholas Ramfos (202) 962-3313

Item #1 Introductions

Ms. Briscoe began the meeting by introducing herself and affiliation and all who were in attendance did the same. Ms. Briscoe asked that everyone in attendance sign the attendance sheet. (*See attached attendance sheet*).

Item #2 Minutes of March 16, 2004 Meeting

Ms. Briscoe proceeded, asking those in attendance if they had reviewed last months meetings minutes dated February 17, 2004 and if there were changes or information additions to the minutes and there were none. The Subcommittee approved the minutes as written.

Item #3 FY05 CCWP Update

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY05 CCWP.

Mr. Ramfos started by announcing the approval of the FYO5 Commuter Connections Work Program by the TPB at their March 17th meeting and that the report has been mailed to Subcommittee members. The report will also be available electronically, on-line through COG's website. Mr. Ramfos finished with detailing the next steps in the Work Program process, which is to work with the state funders to get the funding commitments in place. Funding commitment letters will be sent to MDOT, VDOT, and DDOT within the next 45 days.

ITEM #4 Commuter Connections Meeting Schedule

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos presented the recommended FY05 meeting schedule changes to the Subcommittee for the Commuter Connections Subcommittee, Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group, and the Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee meetings.

Mr. Ramfos began by highlighting the proposed meeting schedule changes for the Commuter Connections groups for the next fiscal year.

The plan for the Commuter Connections Subcommittee is to meet 6 times out of the year instead of 11 as in the past. The Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee and Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc groups discussed their meeting schedule changes in their last month's meetings. Those groups proposed to meet on a quarterly basis rather than every other month. Action on those groups proposed meeting schedule change will take place in the group's May meetings.

Mr. Ramfos then explained that the primary purpose for proposing the meeting schedule changes is that all of the TERMs adopted by the TPB are now in place so it is not necessary to meet as frequently. The plan is to eliminate 14 to 15 meetings from this year's schedule to better accommodate the schedules of Subcommittee members. Mr. Ramfos also stated that if additional meetings are necessary, the Chairperson for the group would coordinate the date with committee members. Ms. Sharon Affinto commented that there is only one meeting scheduled in November 2005 and suggested that the meeting be grouped with other meetings. Mr. Ramfos said that as in the past, if there are few agenda items for a particular meeting it can be cancelled. Mr. Ramfos encouraged the Subcommittee to submit comments or suggestions to him on the proposed meeting schedule prior to the next Subcommittee meeting.

- **Q:** Why were the September 2005 meetings moved to an earlier date?
- **A:** The meeting date would be the 21st of September and the ACT conference, which many committee members attend, would still be taking place. Therefore, the meetings were scheduled to take place on September 14th.

The ACT conference dates are September 19-22, 2005 in New Orleans. The FY05 meeting schedule will be presented in next month's meeting for final approval.

Item #5 Clean Air Partners and Ozone Action Days Update

Ms. Sharon Affinito updated the Subcommittee on the recent Clean Air Partners and Ozone Action Days activities.

Ms. Affinto began updating the committee about the Clean Air Partners Board of Directors meeting in Baltimore that took place Thursday, April 15. This seasons Ozone Action Days Kick Off dates as well as the new marketing messages for this year were some of the items discussed. The Ozone Action Days kickoffs for this year are May 3rd for the Baltimore region and May 5th for DC. The kickoff times are 8:30am to 11:00am. The DC kickoff will be held at COG.

Clean Air Partners board members also discussed different ways to raise more money for the program. Currently it costs \$250 for businesses and corporations to join Clean Air Partners but they are now asking for \$1,000. Clean Air Partners is offering free Blockbuster movie cards and popcorn to boost interest.

One of the new marking messages for this year is to incorporate "Code Purple" into the program. Local meteorologists and TV stations will be given multi-colored jelly beans in a jar to simulate the different air quality index color codes for a particular day. In addition they talked about changing the Ozone Action Day program name to a name better related to the Clean Air concept. The plan is to use a focus group to assist in finding a more publicly recognizable name to "Clean Air" rather than "Ozone.

There are two significant changes to the "Ozone Action Days" this year. The forecasting time frame will be changed from last year's 1 hour air quality forecasting period to an eight hour period. The forecasting time period change this year is a trial and will officially be incorporated into next year's forecasting of the "Ozone Action Days." There is a PowerPoint display on COG's website under the MWAQC's meeting materials that took place April 8th that further explains the forecasting period time change in detail. The other change is the forecast will track the different multi-pollutants in the air during that forecasting period. This will give metropolitan area residents an idea of what particles are in the air and their effects on the air quality.

Ms. Affinto then spoke about the MDOT "gas can conversion" for residents slated to take place on June 5, 2004. Twelve Home Depot stores will participate in changing county resident's old gas cans for new ones. Prince William County, Fairfax County and Arlington will be doing a "Gas Can Change" within their county governments. These governments are also looking into doing resident gas can changes as well.

- **Q:** How many companies are signed up to Clean Air Partners, and how many companies paid the \$250?
- A: The companies are listed on the Clean Air Partners website.

Ms. Affinto said that there was some concern about whether distinction would be made between the companies that contributed the \$250 fee in the past and are "founding contributing companies" since the contributing amount increased to \$1,000. There was talk about acknowledging those "contributing founders" by holding some type of dinner or event to do so.

Mr. Ramfos added that Commuter Connections contributed \$25,000 to the Clean Air Partners radio ad campaign and that there will be a specific message for Telecommuting because some of the money came from the Telecommuting budget. The national radio ad will be directed at getting commuters to consider Telecommuting during "Code Red" days. VDOT has budgeted eight localities to offer free rides home on "Code Red" days.

- **Q:** What is Code Purple?
- A: Code Purple is a very unhealthy air and corresponds to an AQI of 201-300. We could see Code Purple days because we will now be reporting ozone based on the 8-hour ozone standard. The 8-hour standard is based on health studies and is more restrictive than the 1-hour standard. We do not expect to see many Code Purple days. Last year we saw two.

Item #6 Prince George's County Commuter Connections Vanpool Marketing Mr. Chris Napolitano from Joint Venture updated the Subcommittee on Employer Outreach activities in Prince George's County and showed the recently completed Vanpool CD presentation.

Mr. Chris Napolitano presented a CD-ROM presentation produced by Joint Venture for Prince George's County to promote increased vanpooling in the county. He presented the CD-ROM for the Subcommittee.

The presentation detailed information about The Vanpool Subsidy Program which is a subsidy offered as an incentive by DPW&T to defray the associated costs with starting a vanpool. The subsidies are for vanpools that either start or end in Prince George's County. The subsidy amounts; \$1,255 for a 15 passenger vanpool and \$850 for a 9 passenger vanpool are dispensed over a three month period.

The presentation of the CD-ROM covered information on "Why Share the Ride?" Topics covered included: Washington has the third highest congestion rate in the nation, vanpools can be employer owned or leased, commuters can use a personal vehicle, and leased vans include maintenance, insurance and a back-up vehicle. The next topic covered was "How to form a vanpool?" and includes; organizing your group using the ridematching services, selecting a vanpool operator; and selecting a primary driver and 2 or 3 alternative drivers. The requirements in Prince George's County for vanpool drivers was also covered and includes the following: Drivers must be at least 25 years or older, and the driver must possess a Class C drivers license in addition to having a relatively clean driving record. The CD-ROM also includes information on determining a start date, choosing a pick-up and drop off location, and how to use designated park and ride lots. There is also a Q & A section of frequently asked questions, a listing of the private vanpool companies, and Employer Services in the area. The "How do they function section?" includes information how to obtain assistance and outlines the services offered through the program.

- Q: How are the vehicles insured, what happens if there is an accident?
- **A:** The private vanpool companies offer a comprehensive insurance package including automotive liability, uninsured motorist, and comprehensive collision, which is wrapped in the leasing agreement fee for the vanpool operators.

Mr. Napolitano further explained that the individual fee covers all the individual drivers for a particular vanpool. Commuters who wish to start a vanpool can contact their Human Resources representative. Copies of the informational CD are available to those individuals who are interested in the information.

- **Q:** What if I want to buy a van and start a vanpool?
- A: Those types of vanpools would qualify for the subsidy and individuals are not discouraged from purchasing their own van and starting a vanpool, but it is easier and less of a hassle to lease the van from a vanpool company, because the vanpool participants just pay a fee of about \$100 and that covers all operating costs of the vanpool except gas. Non-leased vans require more individual management.

He talked about his meeting later at the Census Bureau and the issue that will be discussed is whether vanpool participants can use their Metrochecks to pay the monthly vanpool fee. Mr. Dick Siskind answered yes, but the vanpool has to be registered with Metro as a certified commuter highway vehicle, and can not be a carpool and it needs to meet the tax code section 132 requirements.

- **Q:** How is the subsidy money distributed, does the money go directly to the vanpoolers or through their companies HR group?
- A: The subsidy amount is based on the size of the vanpool and set aside and funded through Prince George's County. The money goes to the vanpool operator and towards the operating costs of the vanpool for the month not to the vanpoolers. The subsidy is broken down over a three month period.

A committee member commented that they had a problem in Northern Virginia with vanpool operators having to fill out a 1099 for tax purposes. Mr. Napolitano stated that this is part of the reason that commuters are encouraged to lease the van from a vanpool company. The check goes to the vanpool company rather than an individual.

Item #7 SmarTrip on Metrobus Farebox Project Update

Mr. Dick Siskind with WMATA briefed the Subcommittee on the status of recent activities of the SmarTrip Metrobus Fairbox Project.

Mr. Dick Siskind presented information on the Metrobus SmarTrip Farebox project. Currently 75 fareboxes are being tested on buses that operate from the Arlington garage. The new fareboxes enable Metrobus riders to pay their fares using their SmarTrip cards. The test has been expanded to an additional 100 buses that operate out of the Southern Avenue garage on routes that operate primarily in Prince George's County and Washington DC.

Metro has been in the test mode of the farebox project since November 2002. This has been a long test, but we are now at the decision stage of whether to they should start putting these fareboxes on the rest of the Metrobus fleet. The ultimate plan is to install 2 garages per month so the other 8 garages can be installed within a 3-4 month period. The installations will take place over a weekend. The question is when the installations will begin.

There is a message on the Metrobus website that says that we are testing fareboxes on 75 buses. Mr. Siskind distributed a brochure that gave information about the installations. There will be press release about the installations once they begin.

Metrobus riders may start seeing buses on their routes with the SmartTrip fareboxes, but for the three month installation period, riders should be prepared to pay cash and use their paper transfers in case a farebox on their bus route has not been upgraded. These fareboxes do take cash but no pennies. You can even your use your SmarTrip card to pay the transfer fee because the SmarTrip card knows a rider just left the Metrorail. The new fareboxes will also allow riders to do a triple negative transaction. For example, a rider can exit the metro station without having the exact exit fare, transfer to a Metrobus, and also pay their Metro parking fee all while creating a negative balance on their cards. The catch is that when the rider adds money to their SmarTrip card the system will deduct the negative balance from the amount they pay when they add money to their card.

- **Q:** Will Metro be adding more access farecard machines at the rail stations so riders can increase the money on their SmartTrip cards?
- A: Not at this time. Naturally the number of commuters who use a SmarTrip will increase, but SmarTrip card holders will be able to increase their SmarTrip amount at every Metro station and on the Metrobuses that have the SmarTrip Fareboxes. The machines cost a quarter of a million dollars each.

Mr. Siskind added that possibly by this time next year Metro riders will be able to set up an Autoload feature that will allow the riders to setup an online account to "Demand" value add, or a "Threshold" value add, or "Direct" value add money to their SmarTrip cards using their credit card. A commuter using the "Autoload" feature can either call to have money added to their card, go online and add money or have it automatically added on a monthly interval. All a rider has to do once they complete the transaction using one of those methods, is to simply touch their card to a SmarTrip farebox and the money is automatically added to their card.

- **Q:** How is the program working right now with respect to long lines at the bus stops with people trying to add money to their cards?
- A: Metro knows that if a commuter is using a SmarTrip card to ride one of the 75 test buses in operation, that rider is a rail rider as well and they can add to their SmarTrip card at the rail station or if the SmarTrip card is employer sponsored, the rider merely has to touch the farebox and money is added to their card. Also, if the rider knows how to use the SmarTrip card it only takes a few seconds to add fare.
- **Q:** Will a rider be able to simply touch their SmarTrip card to the new farebox and add money to their card?
- A: Not at this time, but once the "Autoload" function is in place the commuters will be able to do so.

Mr. Siskind concluded by explaining the Autoload feature in detail and stating that Metro will be the first regional transit authority to use the SmarTrip fareboxes throughout their bus system. He remarked that, in the near future Metro's regional transit partners will add the SmarTrip fareboxes to their public transportation vehicles too. These agencies upgrade experience should be less problematic than Metro's because they can follow Metro's example.

Item #8 FY03 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey Briefing

Mr. Christopher Arabia and Mr. Ryan Marshall presented the results of the FY03 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey. Mr. Ryan Marshall displayed a PowerPoint presentation of the survey results. A copy of the FY03 GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey report was provided with the agenda materials.

Mr. Christopher Arabia began with a correction to the agenda. Item #8 should read FY03 (not FY04) Customer Satisfaction Survey Briefing. Mr. Arabia asked committee members to review the draft GRH Customer Satisfaction Survey Results document and provide comments or suggestions to him by Friday, April 30th. The plan is to present this document to the subcommittee for final approval in May's meeting. Mr. Arabia introduced Mr. Ryan Marshall to the Subcommittee, who presented the results of the survey.

Mr. Marshall stated that the survey design has not changed over the past 4 years. For FY03, 2,906 surveys were sent out and 781 responded, which is a 26% response rate.

Mr. Marshall then detailed the responses for each of the 4 survey questions. The questions were as follows: How would you rate the service you received from our GRH trip reservations staff? How would you rate the taxi or rental car service? How would you rate our response time? Overall, how would you rate our GRH service? Each question received high satisfaction ratings. Mr. Marshall said that taxi service was the area of the survey that received some negative feedback. Program participants complained that taxi drivers did not fully understand the GRH program; drivers did not understand that the fare would not be paid by the commuter; the driver's attitude was bad; or their taxi was dirty. Some complained about long waits for cabs. A few respondents also complained about the difficulties in finding the correct taxi in the correct location. This seems to be a problem at Metro stations and large office buildings with multiple entrances. Mr. Marshall said that the majority of the written responses were complements and praise for the GRH program. A small number of suggestions were provided most of them were regarding increasing the number of trips available and making the registration and reregistration process easier. Mr. Marshall said the online registration helped to improve this process. Mr. Marshall provided a comparison of the FY03 survey responses with previous surveys. The satisfaction level was the highest in FY03. Mr. Marshall concluded by saying that 94 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the program.

- **Q:** Are some of the questions in the Customer Satisfaction Survey the same as the GRH Applicant Survey?
- **A:** The GRH Applicant Survey is in the field now and is geared more towards finding out if the GRH Program influenced commuters' commute mode choice, but it does capture some satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the overall program.

Mr. Arabia responded to comments about the complaints regarding taxi service and a suggestion to mark the taxicabs who participate in the program with some type of GRH symbol or place card. He said the different jurisdictions have different taxicab systems, and the turnover rate for cab drivers is high. He used Prince George's County as an example, who uses a central dispatching system for several taxi companies. Taxi dispatchers often cannot provide the taxi company name and cab number to the GRH operators to provide to the GRH commuter. The large number of taxi drivers and high turnover rate would make it difficult to provide a GRH place card to all drivers and monitoring the proper displaying of the place cards would be extremely difficult. Montgomery County now has a telephone number for commuters to provide complaints and comments about taxicab service. Mr. Arabia added that many complaints were of a nature that can not be directly controlled by COG.

Q: Do the contracts with the cab companies hold the company to certain standards? Based on reading the report it seems as if COG can do nothing about the problem. Can some type reward or penalty be imposed on taxi companies and drivers whose taxis are on time and keep their cabs clean?

A: COG corresponds with the managers of the cab companies that are under contract, not the cab drivers. When there has been a pattern of poor service, COG has addressed that issue with the cab company, and in one instance spoke one of the TPB board members about a specific problem with a taxi company. Positive comments from a GRH commuter about a particular taxi driver could be provided to the taxi company's management.

Item #9 Bike To Work Day 2004 Update

Mr. Mark Hersey briefed the Subcommittee on the recent planning activities for the 2004 Regional Bike To Work Day Event.

Mr. Mark Hersey updated the Subcommittee on the Bike to Work Day Event scheduled to take place May 7^{th.} He remarked about the Employer challenge which is still in place for this year which recognizes the employer that has the largest number of registrants. Last year AOL won the challenge. This year there will be further recognition of employers who are at the top of the registrants list but do not have as many employees. Mr. Doug Franklin added that tiers were set up on the WABA website for Bike To Work Day registrants that help indicate a particular company's size and event participation. One of the questions being asked is; what company do you work for, and how many employees work for your organization. The purpose of this question is to recognize some of the mid-sized and smaller companies that have a good percentage of Bike To Work Day participants based on their company size with a certificate.

Item #10 2004 Employer Recognition Awards Program

Mr. Douglas Franklin updated the Subcommittee on the progress of the regional Employer Recognition Awards program for 2004.

Mr. Douglas Franklin briefed the Subcommittee about the 7th annual Employer Awards event scheduled to take place in 2 months. COG held a meeting last month with the Employer Awards selection committee which consisted of ten various industries from the TDM community and also included the three awards winners from last year. Last year there was a Media award that recognized an individual reporter or news organization but this year the plan is to look for a specific positive news articles about Employer Outreach of the programs and recognize those programs.

Mr. Franklin then talked about the Work Group's activities and their suggestions for selecting speakers for the event, "give away" items and their feedback on the layout of the program booklet. Ms. Robin Briscoe and TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman provided cover letters for the awards ceremony booklet. Currently there are bids out for a company to handle the video segment of the program. Two speakers have been confirmed for the event, DC council member Phil Mendelson will be the Master of Ceremonies and Gus Robey from VDRPT will give the marketing award.

He then spoke about the Best Workplaces for Commuters Coalition group and a meeting the following week to discuss how Best Workplaces will fit into the Commuter Connections awards ceremony this year.

Mr. Franklin concluded noting the progress of the completing the event invitations and thanking the Selection Committee and Work Group members who assisted with the processes for formulating this event.

Item #11 Third Quarter Budget Report

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos discussed the 3rd Quarter Budget report details to the Subcommittee.

Mr. Ramfos began detailing the third quarter Budget ending on March 31st and the changes to the funding commitments from MDOT and DDOT. Originally COG requested an additional \$60,000 above the Work Program to complete the State of the Commute Report from each of the funding agencies. DDOT contributed some of the amount but no additional funding was contributed by MDOT, therefore FY04

CCWP program elements had to be re-programmed from the current budget in order to complete the State of the Commute survey which is already in the field.

A total of \$10,000 dollars will be re-programmed from the Employer Outreach budget, \$53,000 from the Telework Resource Center, and \$53,000 dollars from the Mass Marketing budget to complete the State of the Commute survey.

Mr. Ramfos finished saying that all the other program budgets are on track and that if anyone had questions or needed detailed information about those budgets to see him after the meeting.

Item #12 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Mr. Timothy Mclendon from the National Science Foundation extended an invitation to the Subcommittee members to attend their 2004 Rideshare affair on Thursday May 13th. They are located a block from the Ballston Metrostation.

There were no other business or agenda item requested. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.

The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, May 18, 2004.