



**REGIONAL TDM MARKETING GROUP
MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
SEPTEMBER 17, 2024**

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members, guests, and other attendees introduced themselves by name and affiliation.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the June 18, 2024 meeting were approved as written.

3. CHANGE OF CHAIRPERSONS

Kala Leggett Berry, Fairfax County, was presented with a plaque to recognize her service as Chair of the FY 2024 Regional TDM Marketing Group. Antoinette Rucker, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) was announced as the new Chair for FY 2025, and George Clark, Tri-County for Southern Maryland was announced as the new Vice Chair for FY 2025.

4. COMMUTER CONNECTIONS MARKETING ACTIVITY

Dan Odonnell and Mark Wirth from Odonnell Company provided a review of Commuter Connections regional TDM marketing activity for fall FY25. The focus of the presentation was about the Car Free Day, Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH), and Rideshare fall marketing campaigns. Other activities included the 50th anniversary materials, and new templates for the Commuter Connections website.

The Car Free Day media budget was \$45,000 and included radio, digital advertising, paid social media, YouTube and text messaging. The fall FY25 Rideshare, and GRH media buys are \$312,000 each and will run October to December using a continuation of the creative launched in spring 2024. Media buy assets are under development. The GRH Baltimore fall media budget is \$25,000. New creative concepts to be used for the spring 2025 umbrella campaign are being developed. Various concepts for GRH and Rideshare will be presented to workgroups for feedback and refined throughout the fall.

The annual Employer Recognition Awards ceremony will be incorporated within the Commuter Connections 50th anniversary celebration on October 2nd. Also included will be an announcement of the re-branding of the incenTrip app to CommuterCash. Deliverables include a video, brochure, podium signage, and branded giveaway items.

COG/TPB staff reviewed updates made to the FY24 2nd Half Regional TDM Marketing Campaign Summary final report, reflecting marketing activity occurring between January and June 2024.

5. METRO UPDATE

Antoinette Rucker, WMATA, provided an update on SmartBenefits. SmartBenefits is a free web-based program where employers can conveniently autoload the dollar value of an employee's transit/parking benefits directly onto an employee's SmarTrip card. This offers employees an incentive to use mass transportation to commute on a pre-tax basis. Currently there are 200,000 participants in the IRS Qualified Transportation Fringe benefits program. Pre-tax expenses may be used to purchase transit, vanpool, and Metro parking, up to \$315.00 per employee on a monthly basis. WMATA's website is being updated in October 2024 for better SmartBenefits navigation.

Recent safety initiatives include bus courtesy stops between the hours of 9pm and 5am, new faregates, stepped up Metro Transit Police Department presence, and better lighting/slip resistant tiles. Wayfinding Improvements have been developed to better orient riders within the Metro system. Directional characteristics were created along with easy-to-understand icons, modified pylons, and updated neighborhood maps. New fareboxes and separate SmarTrip card readers on buses process coins and bills faster, and are more reliable, and scalable with technology upgrades.

During the summer 2024 redline shutdown, construction began on a new mezzanine at the Silver Spring Station to provide access between Metro and the future Purple Line, which will be owned and operated by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The Purple Line is a 16-mile light rail to run between Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County.

6. FY25 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN AND SCHEDULE

COG/TPB staff reviewed the FY25 Final Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule. The document outlines Commuter Connections' planned regional marketing strategy for FY 2025 to promote Ridesharing, GRH, incentives programs, and special events. The Marketing Communications Plan and Schedule was emailed in draft form on August 15th for an open comment period through August 28th. Edits and comments received were worked into the final document and presented at the meeting. Each FY 2025 Work Program component listed an objective, target market, tactics, and media budget allocation. The document also includes timeline schedules for FY 2025 creative development, and media campaigns.

7. FY25 STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN

The Regional TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan report (SMP) is a guide that serves as a resource for current and planned marketing strategies and activities conducted within the Washington, DC metropolitan region by Commuter Connections and its network members. Committee members will be sent sections pertaining to their organizations and asked to provide updates by November 1st.

8. MARKETING ROUNDTABLE

Tonya McCreary, Fairfax County, announced that a new Fairfax Connector bus service launched in September between Tysons and Bethesda, via the brand new Springfield Commuter Parking Garage and the Beltway. The state-of-the-art facility offers 1,050 parking spaces. Ribbon cutting ceremonies were held for both events.

Traci McPhail, North Bethesda Transportation Center stated that staff was at the Grosvenor-Strathmore Metrorail station on Car Free Day. Registration for the Walk & Ride will be coming soon, and outreach has been taking place for the new Fairfax Connector from Tyson's to Bethesda. The bus makes a stop at the Westfield Montgomery Mall in North Bethesda.

Lakeshia Lewis, OmniRide, noted that Car Free Day was promoted at the Manassas Farmer's market and at TODO's Supermarket's anniversary event. A Car Free Day Proclamation was made by the City of Manassas at their September Town Hall meeting.

Sabrina Arce, City of Alexandria, noted that Go Alex is continuing its DASH Fare Free campaign through the end of the year with an additional bus wrap and ad buys. Promotion for Car Free Day included street team outreach, digital boards on Metro stations, and social media. Future digital boards will promote GRH and VDRPT's Connects Communities. The City of Alexandria is adding four award candidates to the Best Workplaces for Commuters program.

Kim Mitchell, George Washington Regional Commission, spoke about recent marketing efforts to promote Car Free Day and VDRPT's Connects Communities campaign. GWRideConnect participated in the following outreach events: FAAR Realtor Expo with VRE, Farmers Markets, National Night Out Stafford, Fall Fests, Career and Internship Fair UMW, and Germanna Community College Community Resource Fair. In addition, an open house is being planned for GWRideConnect's 50th anniversary in December.

Kendall Tiffany, Loudoun County, noted the following upcoming events taking place: Car Free Day Pop Up at Ashburn Metrorail, NOVA Day at NVCC Loudoun Campus, Bramtoberfest at the Brambleton Town Center in September, and Sterling Fest in October. Starting January 1st, local bus service and paratransit service will be fare free.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

The next Regional TDM Marketing Group meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024.

10. ADJOURN