



**Visualize 2050
Planning and
Programming Process**

**Transportation Demand
Management**

Part 22 of 27



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OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

The TPB observes Transportation Demand Management (TDM) as programs and strategies that encourage efficient use of existing transportation infrastructure by reducing the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle trips (VT) on the system. As the name implies, TDM aims to reduce the demand side of congestion (i.e., reducing the number of people commuting alone in single occupant vehicles) rather than expanding the supply side. Reducing the number of people commuting alone can produce benefits such as reduced roadway congestion, reduced commuting and travel costs, reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, and improved public health.

The TPB's primary strategy for implementing TDM strategies is the regional Commuter Connections program, which in 2024 celebrated 50 years of serving the National Capital Region. Commuter Connections is a network of nearly 30 transportation organizations that work together to promote carpooling, vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling, scootering, or walking. Work products and services affiliated with the program are developed by TPB staff in concert with the program funders, which include the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia Departments of Transportation (DOTs). These elements are documented within the Commuter Connections Work Program,¹ which is reviewed and endorsed each year by the TPB.

TPB'S ROLE AND KEY STAFF

The TPB relies on the Commuter Connections regional TDM program to serve as the "cornerstone" demand management solution for regional congestion identified by the Congestion Management Process. Staff periodically report notable advancements of key program elements to the TPB and provide data to inform policy decision-making at the local and regional levels.

The TPB annually reviews program elements contained within the Commuter Connections Work Program. TPB elected officials provide comment and direction for the program based on regional needs and data procured by the program. The work program is approved by the TPB via resolution. Key staff overseeing the region's Commuter Connection transportation demand management work are listed in Table 22.1.

¹ The most recent CCWP is available at: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (March 21, 2024). *FY 2025 Work Program for the Commuter Connections Programs for the Greater Washington Metropolitan Region*. <https://www.commuterconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/FY2025-Commuter-Connections-Work-Program.pdf>

TABLE 22.1: KEY STAFF

TPB Staff	Title	Role
Kanti Srikanth	Executive Director	Director for the Transportation Planning Board (TPB)
Dan Sheehan	Program Director	Program Lead
Vacant (Previous: Dan Sheehan)	TDM Program Manager	Contributor
Douglas Franklin	TDM Marketing Manager	Contributor
Ross Edgar	Principal GIS Analyst	Contributor

Roles of the TPB Technical Committee and Steering Committee

The final Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) is reviewed by the TPB Technical Committee and approved by the TPB. Program developments and/or significant changes to the CCWP made by the STDM Work Group, described below, are reviewed with the TPB’s Technical Committee and in some cases the TPB’s Steering Committee in the event the items or information will be presented to the TPB.

Role of the State TDM Work Group

The STDM Work Group consists of representatives of the state transportation funding agencies in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. The STDM Work Group helps to define the program content and budget for each fiscal year and helps to develop a detailed annual Work Program in collaboration with TPB staff and the Commuter Connections Subcommittee. The draft work program is reviewed by program stakeholders and the Commuter Connections Subcommittee.

Role of Commuter Connections Subcommittee

The Commuter Connections Subcommittee comprises of Commuter Connections network members from local jurisdictions throughout the National Capital Region, representatives from the state departments of transportation, and WMATA. The Subcommittee convenes every other month to provide overall technical review of the regional program elements outlined in the CCWP. Relevant guest presentations and discussions and best practices are also frequently held. The Subcommittee will also review, provide comments, and endorse reports and other products for release.

Several subcommittees and work groups of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee are convened to guide Commuter Connections program implementation. This includes the Ride-matching Committee, Regional TDM Marketing Group, Employer Outreach Committee, Bike to Work Day Steering Committee, and the TDM Evaluation Group. Membership of these subcommittees comprise of subject matter experts who provide feedback and guidance on items related to their respective TDM program elements.

ROLE OF KEY PLANNING AGENCIES

The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia each play a vital role in the composition of the Commuter Connections regional TDM program. Commuter Connections serves as a blend of various approaches to TDM implantation that suits the needs of each state. Subject matter experts from each state collaborate and compromise within the State TDM Work Group to enact TDM strategies that are most beneficial to the region.

Program funding is exclusively obtained through grants from the three state departments of transportation. Budgets are updated and reviewed annually to ensure proper regional TDM priorities are included in the annual work program. Table 22.2 lists the key planning agencies and their role.

TABLE 22.2: KEY PLANNING AGENCIES

Planning Agency	Role
District Department of Transportation	Program Funder and Advisor
Maryland Department of Transportation	Program Funder and Advisor
Virginia Department of Transportation	Program Funder and Advisor
Maryland Transit Administration	Program Funder and Advisor
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation	Program Advisor

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The predominant method for public engagement on behalf of the Commuter Connections regional TDM program is through mass marketing. Commuter Connections regularly places paid advertisements on mediums such as radio, digital, social media, and print media. Messaging is directly related to the TDM mission of encouraging people to carpool, vanpool, and/or to participate in the regional Guaranteed Ride Home program. Paid marketing for other program elements, such as Bike to Work Day and various commuter incentive programs, occasionally complement the program’s mass marketing efforts.

National Capital Region commuters are invited to create Commuter Connections accounts to take advantage of the many free benefits and services provided by the program. These include free ride-matching, free commute “insurance” through Guaranteed Ride Home, cash incentives for non-SOV commuting, and other tools and resources to help optimize commutes. Customer service representatives are available throughout the region to provide helpful, personalized guidance over the phone or through email to Commuter Connections accountholders.

In addition to mass marketing, the Commuter Connections Employer Outreach program engages with employers throughout the region to help introduce them to commuter benefits or expand existing commuter benefits. These efforts include on-site events at employer sites to engage with employees, among other tactics.

HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF TDM PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

This section will provide more details on the history and context of TDM planning and programming in the National Capital Region and describe the current strategies and programs, recent advancements, a general overview of where the program has proven to be effective, and ongoing challenges.

History and Context

Commuter Connections was originally created in 1974 as the Commuter Club, providing one of the first computerized carpool matching systems in the nation. The Commuter Club network consisted of TPB, the General Services Administration (GSA), and the Greater Washington Board of Trade. The TPB provided direct ride-matching services to the public, a free service which is still in operation today. In the 1980s, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Montgomery County, Prince William County, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission joined the network. Commuter Club network members used TPB's ride-matching software and shared one regional database.

In the mid-1980s the network changed its name to the RideFinders Network. By 1994, the network had grown in membership to include all Washington DC area local governments, a few federal agencies, several Transportation Management Associations, local governments from the Baltimore area, and southern Maryland.

In the mid-1990s the TPB began adopting transportation emissions reduction measures to reduce the emission of certain pollutants by vehicles on the roadway system. Many of these measures were strategies to reduce travel demand and change travel modes. These regional measures were funded by the three state DOTs. The DOTs approached the TPB to help administer some of these TDM strategies across the region. TPB agreed to expand the service offerings of the RideFinders Network, and in 1996, the RideFinders Network changed its name to Commuter Connections with the three state DOTs funding all activities of Commuter Connections. Starting in 1997, new services began to be implemented, annually or biennially, including internet-based services beyond just carpool/vanpool matching: transit route and schedule information, a regional Guaranteed Ride Home program, bicycling to work information, park-and-ride lot and HOV lane information, telecommute/telework program assistance, InfoExpress commuter information kiosks, and employer services.

Current Strategies and Programs

Commuter Connections operates several free commute-oriented programs. The proprietary ridematching system² pairs individuals that have similar commutes together for potential carpool and vanpool opportunities. The regional Guaranteed Ride Home program provides commuters with a free ride home in the event of a personal emergency, illness, or unscheduled overtime.

Several programs provide incentives, such as cash rewards or transportation credits, to encourage commuters to try new modes of commuting, such as carpool, vanpool, transit, or walk/bike,

² The ridematching system can be found at <https://tdm.commuterconnections.org/mwcog/>

instead of driving alone. These reward programs include incenTrip, ‘Pool Rewards and Flextime Rewards. Commuter Connections also produces resources such as the regional Commute Options Map that includes Park and Ride locations across three states, and a Commute Cost Calculator to determine the true hidden costs of one’s commute.

Regional events such as Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day are organized and facilitated by Commuter Connections to help generate excitement about alternative forms of transportation. These regional events, along with the many programs and services listed in the prior paragraph, are marketed to the public through Commuter Connections’ robust mass marketing efforts.

Through the Employer Outreach service, Commuter Connections works with employers to help them establish commuter benefits and commute assistance programs for their employees at their workplace. For instance, telework resources are available to employers who wish to improve their policies. Commuter Connections employer outreach representatives familiar with each specific jurisdiction provide expert professional assistance to employers for commuting and telework needs.

Commuter Connections has a monitoring and evaluation activity. Feedback is gathered from program participants via surveys; data is analyzed and published into reports such as the [TDM Analysis Report](#).³ Additionally, the public is surveyed as part of the [State of the Commute](#), which helps to provide insights on regional commuting trends. Data procured from these instruments informs decision-making on how to best operate and promote Commuter Connections’ programs and services.⁴

Recent Advancements

Commuter Connections is continuously evolving to meet the needs of commuters and employers. Post-pandemic Return to Office (RTO) employer policies have led to “hybrid-friendly” programmatic adjustments. For example, the Flexible Vanpool program was established to attract riders working hybrid schedules. The program was awarded federal funding through the Enhancing Mobility Innovation (EMI) program to help improve participant usability and target implementation within TPB’s Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs).⁵ Similarly, general outreach efforts have been adjusted to target EEAs more intentionally, where essential workers may not have the option to telework and are therefore more likely to benefit from Commuter Connections programs and services.

The successful incenTrip commute gamification and incentivization mobile app was awarded nearly \$3 million in federal funding through the Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) program to enhance and expand the application throughout the greater Washington, DC megaregion.⁶ Technical work began in fall 2020 and concluded in fall 2023. Efforts are now focused on transferring the technology from the Maryland Transportation Institute at the University of Maryland to Commuter Connections. Once transferred, Commuter Connections will rebrand the incenTrip application as “CommuterCash” and operate the program under the Commuter Connections suite of programs and services. CommuterCash was launched to the public in December 2024.

³ The most recent version of the TDM Analysis Report can be found at: Commuter Connections (November 21, 2023). *Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Analysis Report*. <https://www.commuterconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/2021-2023-TDM-Analysis-Evaluation-Report-Final-Draft-112123.pdf>

⁴ The most recent State of the Commute report can be found at: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (August 14, 2023). *2022 State of the Commute Survey Report*. <https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2023/08/14/state-of-the-commute-survey-report-carsharing-state-of-the-commute-telework-travel-surveys/>

⁵ Details on the federal EMI program can be found at: Federal Transit Administration (2025). *Enhancing Mobility Innovation*. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/enhancing-mobility-innovation>

⁶ Details on the federal ATCMTD program can be found at: Federal Highway Administration (2025). *Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center Laboratories*. <https://highways.dot.gov/research/technology-innovation-deployment/grant-programs>

Program Effectiveness

TPB staff routinely collect data via surveys and participant activity in Commuter Connections programs to determine overall effectiveness. A 2024 evaluation analyzed data collected from July 2021 – June 2023 and showed that the program helps reduce daily vehicle trips and vehicle miles of travel each day which results in eliminating nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) emissions. Other notable societal benefits include reducing the number of hours commuters collectively spend stuck in traffic and saving gallons of fuel. All told, the Commuter Connections program is estimated to produce notable total daily cost savings in the region. The specifics have been included in Chapter 2 of the Visualize 2050 plan.

Ongoing Challenges

TDM faces many ongoing challenges in influencing commuters to choose other ways to get to work. Commuters may not understand the value of carpools or vanpools because they may have trouble quantifying how much time they spend commuting. As commuters seek housing that they can afford, they may not find sufficient affordable housing near high quality transit options. Employer policies may also encourage driving by offering free parking and low gas prices may encourage more people to continue to drive alone.

TDM PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The process for developing and implementing TDM strategies through the Commuter Connections program has been consistent for several decades. The below elements highlight how the program utilizes inputs from congruent TPB activities, along with self-generated programmatic data, to refine and optimize TDM implementation throughout the region.

Congestion Management Process and TDM

As noted in Part 6 of the Visualize 2050 Process Documentation, the TPB maintains a robust Congestion Management Process (CMP) to address traffic congestion in the National Capital Region. This process aligns with federal transportation requirements outlined in Titles 23 and 49 of the U.S. Code and associated regulations. The CMP has identified Commuter Connections as the “cornerstone” of the region’s demand management approach to congestion. TDM programs and strategies employed by Commuter Connections are strategically developed to help address and diminish the negative effects of congestion identified through the CMP.

Annual Work Program

All work completed by the Commuter Connections program is determined at the onset of the fiscal year by means of the Annual Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP). The CCWP is developed over the course of the year preceding implementation by TPB staff, the State TDM Work Group, the Commuter Connections Subcommittee, the TPB Technical Committee, and the TPB (see *TPB’s Role and Key Staff*).

TPB staff and the State TDM (STDM) Work Group collaborate to identify TDM program elements that are projected to have the greatest impact at reducing vehicular congestion and improving air quality throughout the region. Primary program elements include Commuter Program Operations, Guaranteed Ride Home, Mass Marketing, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Employer Outreach. Many work products and services are listed as program deliverables under each primary program element. TPB staff and the STDM Work Group use programmatic data gathered from prior fiscal

years alongside trends observed from external sources to inform deliverables included in each annual work program.

Following initial development of the CCWP by TPB Staff and the State TDM Work Group, the document is provided to the Commuter Connections Subcommittee, the TPB Technical Committee, and the TPB for review and comment. TPB staff then incorporates feedback and presents a final version of the CCWP to the TPB for final approval. Historically, the CCWP is typically approved by the TPB in March, which allows program implementation to begin at the start of the Council of Government's fiscal year (July).

Funding

Funding for the various project elements of the CCWP is allocated to the District, Maryland, and Virginia Departments of Transportation using a formula agreed to by the STDM Work Group (see *Role of Key Planning Agencies*). Allocations are determined prior to each fiscal year.

Program Operations and Refinement

Commuter Connections TDM programs are implemented by a mixture of TPB staff and contractors. Rideshare coordinators at local jurisdictions throughout the region also provide customer support to program participants located within their respective jurisdictions.

While the CCWP serves as the guiding document for all work performed as part of the program, daily operations are detailed in various management documents such as the Commuter Operations Standard Operating Procedures, the Washington Metropolitan Region TDM Resource Guide and Strategic Marketing Plan, and the TDM Program Elements Revised Evaluation Framework. Each document provides helpful context and direction for implementation processes related to TDM program elements.

The program is refined through routine data collection and surveying. Program data is reported in quarterly progress reports to the Commuter Connections Subcommittee. Marketing metrics are tracked and reported in biannual Campaign Summary Reports to the Regional TDM Marketing Group. These reports, among others, are used to continuously tweak program implementation to better optimize results (i.e., shifting more commuters into non-SOV travel modes).