

# **RETHINKING MOBILITY IN A POST- COVID CHICAGO REGION**

**Task 5 Transportation Demand  
Management Case Studies**

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Planning**

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# 1.0 PURPOSE & INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed how and when people commute to work in northeastern Illinois and globally. With large scale adoption of remote and hybrid work models, coupled with flexible scheduling to create safety and distance, changes to work-related trip patterns are impacting congestion, transit utilization, air quality, and general regional mobility and connectivity in a new way. As the pandemic continues to change commuting and travel patterns, transportation demand management (TDM) programs and strategies will also continue to adapt to support the changes in travel patterns and can be employed to sustain positive changes to greater mobility overall and mitigate less desirable outcomes. This memorandum provides a summary of typical TDM strategies used in the United States, to inform CMAP and the Rethinking Mobility stakeholders of policy and project opportunities to help with post-COVID mobility recovery.

TDM is a collection of strategies that aim to reduce single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel. Ranging from shared ride options like carpool, vanpool, and transit, active modes like walking and bicycling, and teleworking, TDM programs work to influence behavior to redistribute travel across a variety of travel options and away from daily peak periods. TDM programs represent a flexible, low-cost way to engage residents, commuters, businesses, and local governments in the effort to reduce commuter travel and the associated impacts on the community including traffic congestion, emissions, mobility, and access.

TDM programs can be implemented through standalone organizations, most commonly as public-sector or non-profit entities. They may be funded by the private sector to address specific transportation issues (often called transportation management associations or TMAs), through local municipalities like city or county governments, coordinated regionally through metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), implemented statewide traditionally through departments of transportation, or any combination of the above. Recognizing that commuting patterns often cross political boundaries, regional and statewide approaches may have the greatest opportunity to influence not only behavior change, but also infrastructure, land use, and policy to support non-SOV travel.

The concept of TDM is not new to the Chicagoland area. Since 1989, the [Transportation Management Association \(TMA\) of Lake-Cook](#) has connected communities and business with transportation agencies to improve highways, reduce congestion, and improve safety. Pre-pandemic, the TMA was most known for its Shuttle Bug program, providing last-mile bus service to connect area train stations to member workplaces for reverse and suburb-to-suburb commuting. The public-private partnership between the TMA, Pace, Metra, and area businesses funded the network of Shuttle Bug routes.

The Pace Suburban Bus agency offers a Pace Vanpool program, connecting individuals who live and work near each other with similar work schedules. Pace provides the vehicle, and the riders share the cost of fuel, tolls, insurance, and maintenance. In coordination with finding vanpool routes or potential riders, Pace offers a Pace Ride Share database for individuals to connect with others interested in sharing the ride for carpools and vanpools.

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in Chicago offers the [My Transit Benefit](#) program enrolling employers in the pre-tax commuter benefit program. When employees can use pre-tax dollars to cover their transportation costs, commuters can save up to 40% on commuting costs and employers reduce their payroll tax burden.

The Lake County Department of Transportation has also initiated the [MY Commute study](#) to identify strategies to reduce the use of single occupancy



vehicle (SOV) travel. While the study is not complete, many of the draft SOV reduction measures identified are traditional TDM strategies.

While TDM programmatic elements are present in the Chicago area, there is not a coordinated regional approach to deploying TDM programs and services. Additionally, with vast changes in commuting habits and mobility due to the pandemic, this memo aims to look at four regional approaches to TDM programming to provide insight into the following topics as requested by CMAP:

- Overview of TDM programs and their structure focusing on the role of the MPO;
- TDM Programs pivoting due to the pandemic and addressing the increase in telework and work from home (WFH) programs; and
- Potential use of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds to expand TDM programs.

TDM programs are in place across the United States, with wide variation in sponsorship, audience, and scope. The programs and services offered by traditional TDM programs includes outreach and education of travel options to commuters, employer consulting, ridematching<sup>1</sup> and trip logging, carpool and vanpool formation activities, incentives guaranteed ride home programs, and marketing campaigns to encourage commuters to adopt non-SOV travel modes. The scope of this case study was to prepare a survey of up to four TDM programs with relevant lessons for CMAP in a post-COVID context. The consultant team began with a short-list of MPOs with strong TDM programs. In coordination with CMAP, the project team finalized the list to include programs in Metro Atlanta, Georgia; a statewide program in Connecticut; and regional programs serving the areas around and including Austin, Texas, and King County, including Seattle, Washington. These areas are highly recognized for their TDM programs and services and offer differing levels of MPO involvement and structure, providing multiple perspectives for CMAP as it relates to TDM in and around Chicago for potential inclusion in the suite of recommendations for post-COVID mobility recovery.

## **2.0 OVERVIEW OF TDM PROGRAMS**

Case studies of the four selected TDM program are presented below, including description of the region; scope and content; distinctive features and takeaway lessons; and funding strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> Ridematching connects interested commuters to facilitate rideshare formations (e.g., carpools or vanpools) or connect bicycle commuters who could travel together. This service is often administered through online and app-based platforms using home location, work location, and work hours. Many ridematching systems also provide the added functions of tracking commute trips for the purpose of program measurement, administration of programs including incentives and Guaranteed Ride Home, and facilitation of special promotions or challenges.

## 2.1 Atlanta, Georgia

Geography	Lead Agency	Estimated Population	Program Start
Regional TDM program serving 20 counties in metro Atlanta	Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)	5,903,000	1996

### Program Overview

Formally started around the 1996 Olympics, the Atlanta TDM effort, [Georgia Commute Options](#), works with employers and commuters in a 20-county area to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. The regional program is funded by the Georgia DOT and managed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). ARC provides the regional ridematching platform, incentive programs like Gimme 5 and the \$25 Prizes program, telework consulting, data and research, and general marketing. Then, the outreach is conducted across the region's most dense employment districts by seven (soon to be six) Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), and across the rest of the region by a consultant to conduct outreach.



Source: Georgia Commute Options Website, Partner Organizations

### Role of the MPO

ARC, the federally designated MPO for metro Atlanta, houses the Mobility Services team which oversees Georgia Commute Options. Mobility Services is situated within their Center for Livable Communities and coordinates closely with the Transportation Access and Regional Planning team. Prior to 2017, Georgia DOT would hire outside firms to deliver Georgia Commute Options with ARC managing the ridematching platform, the Guaranteed Ride Home program, and the TMA contracts. Now, the program is entirely managed by ARC, allowing the agency to leverage its other efforts in community development, aging, workforce development, and housing.

### Pivot due to Pandemic

The biggest shift in the regional TDM program was the transition away from *employer-based* mode-shift surveys to track the outcomes of TDM programming at worksites, to *regional* Remote Work Surveys over a 21-month period, starting in April of 2020. With over 3,000 members of the region's workforce responding, ARC has been able to conduct a longitudinal analysis to share key findings on remote work adoption trends with corporate partners and transportation planners.

# one-year snapshot remote work in metro atlanta

Over the past year, Georgia Commute Options surveyed nearly 3,000 members of the Atlanta region's workforce to better understand their remote work experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Initial findings suggested remote work was a net positive, with growing demand for a new way to work in the future. As the pandemic endured, additional follow-up surveys uncovered data that point to evolving employee expectations for work post-COVID-19. The data also revealed an emerging need for more policies and resources for managers to lead hybrid teams effectively. This timeline illustrates key insights and trends that emerged over time.

Special thanks to our transportation management associations and to our survey participants who have contributed to this important research over the last year. Georgia Commute Options is conducting additional research and surveys through Fall 2021 and will share more updates to these trends soon.

## key findings

### 1 strong demand for a hybrid future

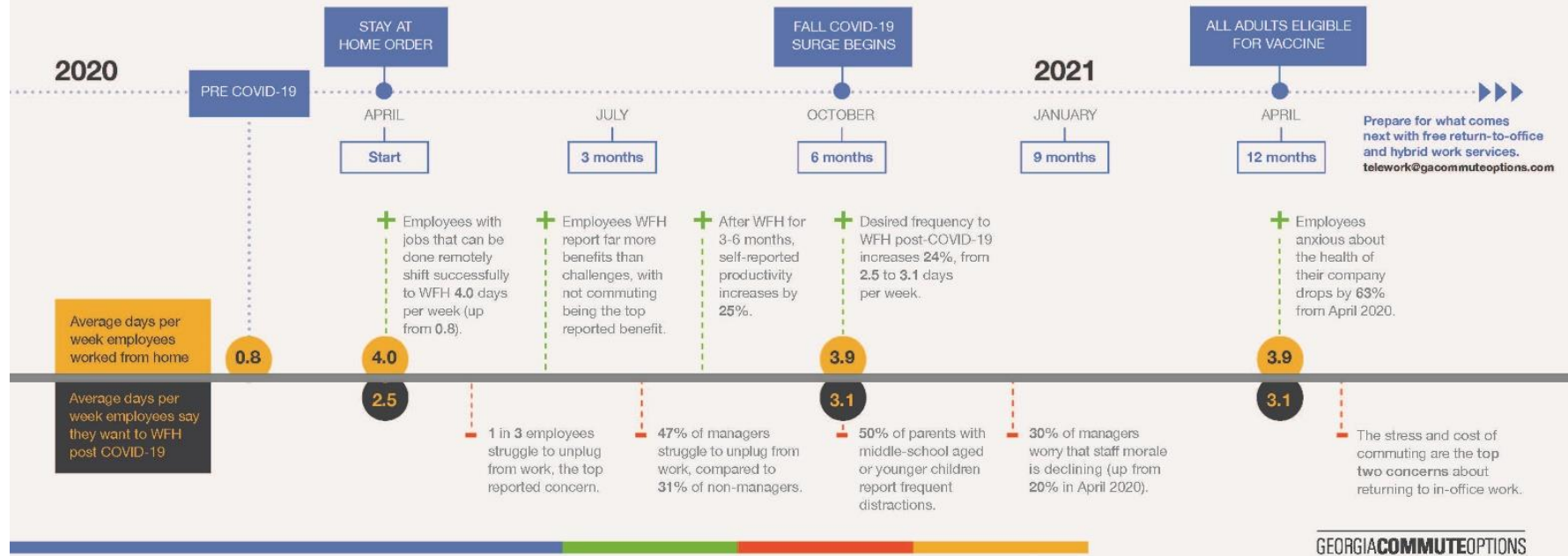
A full year of WFH yielded a strong desire from employees for at least part-time remote work post-COVID-19.

### 2 flexibility key to varied workday challenges

Millennials and parents were most likely to report challenges and needed flexibility to combat at-home distractions.

### 3 commuting a top barrier for in-office work

Not commuting reigned as the #1 WFH benefit. Now with reopenings in sight, commuting has become a big concern.



<sup>1</sup> Georgia Commute Options conducted the Remote Work Survey in April 2020, with follow-up surveys in August 2020, October 2020, January 2021 and April 2021.

Source: Georgia Commute Options, One-Year Snapshot Remote Work Key Findings

The TDM program has always provided telework consulting services, but ARC saw a major need for better resources, more content delivered through different channels, and supporting more small and medium-sized businesses and local municipalities than they had in years past.

Lastly, as the pandemic has impacted housing trends (people moving away from Atlanta's city core) and employers locating their offices in more fringe areas, the MPO is recognizing a potential change in commuting patterns. Peak travel for all travel around Atlanta is down, but overall trips are up, with freight playing a large role in that due to geographic proximity to the ports. All these factors will likely contribute to additional future changes in the TDM program in Atlanta.

### ***IIJA Funding Plans***

While much is still unknown about the specific uses of IIJA funding for the TDM program, the MPO recognizes that IIJA provides access to new funding resources, enabling greater integration of TDM into equity and climate change. They hope to use anonymized travel location data from mobile devices to get a better handle on what the future trip patterns might look like and have started brainstorming how to use funding to support TDM so that they can act quickly once the funding is available.

### ***Performance Evaluation***

The evaluation of the Georgia Commute Options programs looks programmatically at the outreach activities (meetings and events) as well as the outcomes (changes in employer partner level engagement, increase in program adoption and the associated changes in travel behaviors by commuters at those worksites). Campaigns and promotions have their own unique performance measures that are agreed upon through the planning process. Metrics from the ridematching database showing trips logged, vehicle miles reduced, and emissions reduction are used by the state DOT for federal reporting requirements.

## 2.2 Connecticut

Geography	Lead Agency	Estimated Population	Program Start
Statewide TDM program serving travelers, commuters, and employers in Connecticut	Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	3,565,000	Consolidated into one statewide effort in 2011; previous standalone efforts date back to 1980s

### ***Program Overview***

CTrides is a statewide travel demand management program of the Connecticut DOT. The program promotes the use of all travel options other than driving alone to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and make Connecticut a healthy place to live and work. The outreach services provide dedicated transportation consultants to conduct site assessments, develop custom transportation demand management plans, and assist with the implementation of onsite programs like parking management, telework policies, carpool and vanpool formations, and other events. When commuters take part in CTrides, they gain access to custom trip planning, a rewards and incentive program, trial ride bus passes, and the Emergency Ride Home program. AECOM is hired to deliver the program across the state in addition to providing customer service and marketing for CTrail and assist 211 with COVID-19 Vaccination Transportation Services.

### ***Role of the MPO***

In Connecticut, the metropolitan planning organizations are either situated within the Council of Governments (COGs) or are hosted with joint staff through the COGs. For the purposes of CTrides, this case study will refer to the COGs.

The COGs are important stakeholders for the statewide TDM program since they approve the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds that the DOT uses for CTrides. The DOT has the formal relationship with the COGs from a reporting capacity for the outcomes of the CTrides program. However, the day-to-day engagement with the COGs occurs through the outreach efforts where they may coordinate on education and recruitment activities, provide introductions to employers and potential stakeholders, and leverage the program’s resources as needed in a stakeholder capacity.

### ***Pivot due to Pandemic***

Like all TDM programs, CTrides had to make many shifts in their program to meet the changing needs of the traveling public. Below are the significant programmatic changes that have occurred over the past two years. CTrides has:

- Expanded target audience due to the large increase in remote work. The outreach team now targets community organizations and residential areas adjacent to key transit corridors.



- Increased virtual engagement including the development of a [Virtual Room](#) to conduct commuter outreach with a chat integration.
- Rolled out a new student education program, All About Trains, with a strong emphasis on rail safety, the benefits of using rail, and an optional ride-along field trip.



Source: CTrides Virtual Commuter Services Room Website

- Adapted marketing and outreach messaging to address safety concerns for shared rides on transit, carpools, and vanpools.
- Moved away from employer recognition program and suspended an employer competition, Drive Less CT.
- Conducted general population statewide Return to Work commuter surveys about changes to their commutes and their views on commuting to employer worksites.

### ***IIJA Funding Plans***

As of February 2022, the Connecticut DOT is conducting a customer experience study to analyze all public transportation and TDM services across the state. The project will produce a report of recommendations on how to enhance the customer experience that will then inform the agency how to best utilize the IIJA funds with the customer in mind.

### ***Performance Evaluation***

CTrides aims to correlate outreach activities to changes in transit usage; for example, if outreach efforts are targeted in a specific corridor, the management team is using before and after transit usage to evaluate effectiveness of the efforts. Other outreach metrics collected include activity-based inputs. Like Georgia Commute Options, metrics from the ridematching database showing trips logged, vehicle miles reduced, and emissions reduction are used by CTDOT for federal reporting requirements. Data points collected through marketing efforts like impressions, for example, are compared to industry averages to evaluate success.

## 2.3 Austin, Texas

Geography	Lead Agency	Estimated Population	Program Start
Regional TDM program in Austin, TX and surrounding 6-county metropolitan area	Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)	1,878,000	2010

### Program Overview

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) is the MPO for the six-county area around Austin, Texas. Through their 2019 Regional TDM plan, CAMPO aims to promote a regional view that advances TDM practices and fosters the implementation of TDM within the planning process.

During the pandemic, CAMPO took over the [Commute Solutions](#) program, previously operated by the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG). Commute Solutions previously promoted TDM through social media advertising and outreach, and the ridematching platform which serves as a trip planner for people to plan their commute trips.



Other entities that support TDM services and programs in the region include:



[Movability](#) is the Central Texas TMA focused on the Austin central business district and large tech employers, developing custom mobility policies and programs. This membership-based organization creates mobility plans for employers to help connect their employees to a range of mobility options for commuting.



The City of Austin offers an internal TDM program for employees. Additionally, in partnership with Capital Metro, the City delivers the Smart Trips program to the public, offering personalized transportation solutions focused on walking, biking,

and riding transit in neighborhoods around Austin. In early 2022, Smart Trips was integrated into [Get There ATX](#), a general resource including all transportation options in greater Austin.

### Role of the MPO

As stated in the 2019 TDM Plan, the MPO is focused on planning, policy, and evaluation for the region. In spring 2020, CAMPO brought the Commute Solutions program back under its management and later hired a consultant to develop a TDM program, which will be a relaunch of the Commute Solutions program. The new program will define target audiences, TDM programs and services provided, and how they will be delivered in the region. CAMPO will fund and manage the TDM program delivery for the region. Additionally, CAMPO has put out a call for TDM projects in the past to support other TDM efforts in the region.

### ***Pivot due to Pandemic***

CAMPO's interest in developing a TDM program came out of the pandemic to create a greater focus on essential workers and equity more broadly. The outcomes of this new program with a broader equity focus will not be shared externally until the TDM program recommendations are accepted by CAMPO in late spring 2022.

In 2020, Movability partnered with a team of Texas State University researchers to launch a survey to better understand the mental and physical health impacts of telework. In addition to serving smaller businesses during the pandemic, Movability partnered with the City of Austin to offer a grant to small businesses to develop and expand active commuting options like cycling. Capitalizing on their increased use of active travel options, they also launched their first Mobility Games encouraging people to walk, bike, and use micromobility options in place of single occupant vehicle (SOV) travel.

The Smart Trips program expanded their focus from neighborhoods to citywide in response to the pandemic. They also launched Transportation Resource Guides focused on traveling safely around the city during the pandemic. The guide included incentives like free bus passes and promo codes to access mobility options offered around the city.

### ***IIJA Funding Plans***

As of February 2022, no information is readily available on how CAMPO may use IIJA funds to support their TDM program, but the new TDM program was predicated on using existing funds in the Transportation Investment Program (TIP). Texas Department of Transportation requires a large percentage of funding be spent on highways, so MPOs have limited state and local sources for funding TDM.

### ***Performance Evaluation***

The [CAMPO TDM plan](#) identifies goals and measures that may be confirmed in the new TDM program being developed including:

- Regional coordination measures looking at planning documents and agencies supporting TDM strategies;
- Incorporating TDM into the transportation planning process measures for city codes including TDM and the TIP applications and percentage of funds dedicated to TDM;
- Outreach and education activities measuring materials created, employer commitments, and campaigns developed;
- Increase mobility choice measures tied to vanpool/carpool participation and access to transportation infrastructure and amenities; and
- Improving the Transportation System measures focused on providing real time traveler information and reduction in SOV travel.

## 2.4 King County, Washington

Geography	Lead Agency	Estimated Population	Program Start
King County, one of four counties included in the Puget Sound Regional Council	King County Metro, Commute Seattle, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)	2,287,050 (King County)	1991

### Program Overview

Washington State passed the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Law in 1991 that targets eight urban areas in the state. The law requires employers with 100 or more employees to implement TDM strategies at their worksites and measure vehicle miles traveled through worksite surveys. Ten cities in King County are receiving state funding for TDM, however other organizations are also operating TDM programs including:

- King County Metro's TDM offerings include transit and rideshare programs, employer support on the CTR program and commuter tax benefits, vanpools, an emergency ride home program, and telework resources for businesses and employees.
- Commute Seattle is a TMA working with businesses in Downtown Seattle assisting with the CTR employer requirements and local ordinance requiring buildings to implement TDM strategies for employees in the building. They are supported by the Downtown Transportation Alliance.

### Role of the MPO

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the 4-county MPO that includes King County. PSRC convenes the TDM implementers across their region for coordination and education through their TDM Advisory Committee that meets every other month. No funds are earmarked for TDM through PSRC, but they are available through the competitive applications and PSRC expects TDM to be incorporated into all projects.

Source: King County Metro, [Restart Your Commute, Vanpool Program](#) webpage graphic

### ***Pivot due to Pandemic***

Generally, the shifts in TDM program delivery during the pandemic in the Puget Sound region align with what other sponsors have experienced around the country. Some of those program pivots include:

- Initiating data collection efforts around changes in telecommuting and other travel behaviors.
- Including safety messaging in travel options marketing.
- Broadening the equity focus of TDM efforts to expand support for people of color, low income, and aging populations, and those with disabilities. The CTR law limits TDM programs and efforts to focus on larger employers in the eight target urban areas across the state. In a [presentation](#) to PRSC's TDM Advisory Committee in June 2021, a few concepts were presented as ways to address equity in TDM in the region including:
  - Leveraging data and visualization tools to evaluate existing underserved populations compared to existing TDM programs, CTR worksites, and other trip type behaviors to identify gaps;
  - Collect better demographic data through surveys and assessments to improve equity evaluation; and
  - Consider expanding TDM programs to broader range of trip types. This expansion should include improved outreach to learn how the TDM programs could better serve these audiences, and then focus on new or modified TDM strategies to meet the needs of these additional audiences.

Additionally, the state is exploring changes to the CTR law to be more inclusive of non-commute trips, which could impact resources needed to support additional employers and other trip types.

### ***IJJA Funding Plans***

As of February 2022, the Puget Sound region has no definitive plans for how to use the IJJA funds to support TDM in the region.

### ***Performance Evaluation***

The CTR law requires periodic measurement of commute behavior and the worksite survey has been used to collect this data over many years. The survey collects data on trips reduced, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction, and reduced fuel consumption, among others. If the surveys do not show a decrease in drive-alone rates, the state looks at outreach activities, meetings, and campaigns as good faith efforts to reduce drive alone commuting.

## 3.0 CONCLUSION

Successful TDM programs and structures are multifaceted, bringing together multiple entities to tackle challenges and efficiently use resources to influence travel behavior change. As CMAP considers its role in TDM program delivery, a few themes and best practices emerged from the case study program overviews:

- **Coordination.** While TDM programs can be delivered by neighborhoods, districts or cities, there are always opportunities for related organizations to come together to improve the services across a region. The TDM Advisory Committee hosted by PSRC often brings together the state, MPO staff, transit agencies, cities, and TMA staff to develop consensus on ideas and brainstorm the data collection efforts during the pandemic.
- **Integrate TDM into Planning.** Traffic congestion, mobility, and access to jobs is regional in nature, and so should be TDM efforts. The Atlanta Regional Commission is not only conducting regional TDM planning but is also realizing the relationship between housing and freight, for example, and how TDM strategies should be incorporated into those plans and efforts addressing these broadly connected topics.
- **Expand TDM Programs and Audiences.** Traditional TDM programs focused on employers and influencing commuting behaviors. The pandemic has forced many TDM implementers to expand their target audiences, broaden their service offerings, and ensure an equitable distribution of services and resources. CAMPO in Austin is relaunching their TDM program to focus on essential workers and be more equitable mobility across the region.
- **Explore Funding.** While many organizations are still unsure how they will use the funding available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), it is still a viable source to diversify funding for TDM including the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), the Carbon Reduction Program, and the Congestion Relief Program. Understanding customer needs and experiences similar to the effort of Connecticut DOT could be one way to identify how CMAP could support TDM into the future.