



TDM COORDINATOR PROFILE

ALLISON CALKINS: HOWARD COUNTY



Pictured Above: Allison Calkins with Howard County

Allison Calkins is the Transportation Demand Management Specialist for Howard County, Go Howard. Gladys Hurwitz, with Commuter Choice Maryland, had the pleasure of interviewing Allison about her role as a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Specialist, what she enjoys most about her job, outreach activities, commuter and employer opportunities, projects in the pipeline and what she loves about working with Commuter Choice Maryland. To learn more about Allison, keep reading!

Gladys Hurwitz: Thank you for joining us, Allison. Tell us a little bit about what your role is at Howard County, Go Howard.

Allison Calkins: I manage the Transportation Demand Management program for Howard County, Go Howard. I promote all of the non-Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) ways to get around Howard County, including our transit system, Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland (RTA), and our bikeshare system, Howard County Bikeshare. I meet with employers to talk about the benefits available to their employees and talk to residents about their options for getting around. Additionally, I work with other agencies and organizations on transportation issues around the County, including the two communities in Howard County that have TDM requirements: Downtown Columbia and Maple Lawn.

GH: What do you enjoy most about your job?

AC: I like finding new and creative ways to move around the County without the need to drive all the time. We are teaming up with the Downtown Columbia Partnership to host two events this Fall to get people out of their cars and traveling around Downtown Columbia on foot or by bike. As part of Walktober, there will be a Culinary Walking Tour, where participants will have two or three suggested walking routes throughout Downtown Columbia to sample food and beverages from participating restaurants. In November, we are hosting Cranksgiving, a food drive on two wheels. Participants will be able to use our trails and multiuse pathway system to bike to various stores to purchase food donations for a local charity and then bike to Downtown Columbia to drop them off. If someone would like to participate but does not have a bike, no problem! We have multiple bikeshare stations and those bikes have a basket that can carry up to 40 pounds, many with an electric assist, too.

GH: With COVID-19, what creative outreach have you been doing to promote TDM strategies?

AC: In addition to the referrals we received through Commuter Connections, we have used our stakeholder network, including agencies and organizations, as well as virtual events and messaging to continue these discussions. COVID-19 helped us show many employers a real life "proof of concept" the success and opportunities for working from home. We are seeing more employers in the County adopting Work-from-Home schedules, as well as flexible and compressed schedules. Moving forward, I think virtual and digital outreach will continue to be necessary to engage with the public, from employers and employees to residents and visitors alike.

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TDM Specialist
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GH: What would you like businesses and commuters to know about your program at Howard County?

AC: We are your resource to learn about how to get around in Howard County without the need to drive alone. Please visit our website, GoHoward.org, call our dedicated number 410-313-3130, or email Transportation@howardcountymd.gov for more information. I also want everyone to know that we are not just here to help you get to and from work. We are here to help for all of your transportation needs in Howard County. In August, we launched an initiative that allows all Howard County Public School System middle and high school students to ride the entire RTA system for free through next September. Students will need to do sign up at their school. It gives families another option for getting to and from school, as well as for afterschool activities, weekend plans or just grabbing something to eat.

GH: Do you have any projects in the pipeline that you would like to share?

AC: We rebranded our program in the beginning of 2020, prior to COVID-19, from a commuter-focused program to one that encompasses all local travel. In addition to the Culinary Walking Tour and Cranksgiving, I am looking forward to meeting with communities and with businesses to explore what getting around Howard County looks like to everyone now. I am also excited to take the lessons we have learned and expand them in the post-pandemic world. We took Bike-to-Work Day, which is usually a one morning, one pitstop event on the third Friday in May, and turned it into a full week with multiple pick up locations (participating local bike shops) and broadened it beyond the commute. We learned that people enjoyed that flexibility so we are now exploring how to incorporate that feedback into next year's event while also bringing back an in-person element to celebrate how fun it is getting around on two wheels.

GH: What do you like most about working with Commuter Choice Maryland?

AC: With my focus being on Howard County, it is good to have partners with a regional perspective. With Federal and State commuter tax credit updates, it is nice to know that there is a program that sees all the moving parts and can help ensure Marylanders know all about their transportation options, whether or not they live, work, or play in Howard County.