



Kirby Wilhelm: Making Commutes Easier, One Grant at a Time



"The real win comes when someone's daily commute gets a little easier."

-Kirby Wilhelm
Regional Planner,
MDOT MTA

A COMMUTE BUILT ON TWO WHEELS

Kirby Wilhelm's workday begins either by biking into the office or settling into his home office, consistently incorporating Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies regardless of his commute choice. A few days a week, he pedals two and a half miles from his home to the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) Office of Local Transit Support (OLTS) in Baltimore, sometimes swapping for a scooter or hopping on the Charm City Circulator or an MTA bus depending on the day. He calls biking one of the greatest joys in his life, crediting it with keeping him grounded physically and mentally while connecting him to a community of fellow riders across the city. Kirby started biking in college, when biking was the most economical way to get around, and it stuck after he moved into denser cities for work. He is also a regular at Baltimore Bike Party, the monthly group ride that draws around 100 riders in the winter and over 1,000 in the summer.

Kirby's firsthand experience with commuting by bike, transit, and utilizing telework and flexible work arrangements shapes how he approaches his work as a Regional Planner and Program Manager for MTA OLTS. In this role, he manages MTA's federally-funded Ridesharing Program, consisting of 9 programs covering 12 Maryland jurisdictions, and serves as the Regional Planner for Central Maryland's 5 Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS). The Ridesharing Program funds local TDM programs through staff positions at local transit systems and planning organizations. These programs engage with employers and commuters through outreach activities and promotion of local, state, and regional indicatives to support alternative transportation choices and TDM.

ALONG FOR THE RIDE

Kirby traces his interest in transportation back to his undergraduate sociology degree and his prior work at the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) in Washington, D.C. A pandemic-era move to Baltimore turned him into a longer-distance transit and active transportation commuter. Living in Baltimore and commuting to D.C., or utilizing telework when able, showed him the importance of having safe, efficient transportation options and flexible work arrangements. Now, he works in Baltimore out of MTA's Downtown Headquarters.

What keeps him energized is helping projects move from grant paperwork to something benefitting travelers and commuters. Watching agencies make equipment purchases with funding from his office has been a major career highlight. In those moments, he sees his grant administration work resulting in an actual bus or van that a local system can put on the road.

Much of his day-to-day work with the Ridesharing Program involves supporting TDM coordinators, some of whom arrive from marketing or planning backgrounds with little prior exposure to TDM. He provides onboarding to the program, organizes the annual grant application process, and helps troubleshoot issues throughout the local program's grant period. He also organizes and leads the quarterly meetings that bring coordinators together to compare successes, challenges, and innovations, a structure he sees as a valuable part of the program.

MEASURING SUCCESS ONE COMMUTE AT A TIME

When asked what success looks like for local Ridesharing programs, Kirby mentions the usual metrics like vehicle miles traveled, carpools formed, and employer contacts made. But he is quick to note that the number that matters most rarely shows up in a report. For him, the real win comes when someone's daily commute gets a little easier. It may not be a flashy statistic, but it is one he thinks is most worth caring about. It is a fitting outlook for someone who reaches that same conclusion on his own commute most mornings.

If you would like to contact Kirby or the Rideshare Coordinator for your county, [click here!](#)

If your organization offers and promotes commuter benefits or would like free assistance to start or expand your program, contact Commuter Choice or join the Employer Partner program online at: www.mdot.maryland.gov/employerpartner/

