

May 3, 2007

TO: Chairman Gibbons and Commissioners

FROM: Alfred H. Harf
Executive Director

RE: Monthly Report – May 2007

Highlights of staff's efforts and other noteworthy developments in April of 2007 follow:

1. Preparations following the passage of the state transportation bill. In anticipation of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority's (NVTA) approval of the NOVA "self-help" taxes authorized by the transportation bill, the NVTA meeting on April 12th was devoted largely to a discussion of issues that the NVTA must examine and resolve to transition from its present "advisory" role to the more substantial role of transportation investor/implementer. The Authority endorsed a work plan proposed by its Interim Technical Committee (attachment one), in which five working groups organized along topical lines will ready recommendations for the Authority's consideration later this year, cognizant of the effective date of the legislation (July 1, 2007) and the earliest effective date for new taxes (January 1, 2008). The endorsed work plan calls for each of the five working groups (Financial, Legal, Project Implementation, Public Outreach, and Organizational) to be chaired by an NVTA Board Member, with "member" appointees from all the jurisdictions and "advisory" appointees from specified other entities including PRTC (PRTC has received and responded affirmatively to an invitation to participate; attachment two). Assigned PRTC staff and I will be heavily involved in this effort over the next few months, and I will periodically brief the Commission on the progress of these efforts.
2. HOV Advisory Committee. I attended the second meeting of the HOV Advisory Committee on April 16th, at which the I-395/I-95 HOT lanes project was the principal topic of discussion. VDOT and Fluor-Transurban representatives ("the project team") made a presentation focused on "enforcement" issues and "shoulder/travel lane width" issues, topics that the HOV Advisory Committee Members had previously identified for discussion with the project team.

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With regard to enforcement, the project team had an instructive summary of enforcement practices being used by already-implemented HOT lanes project operators elsewhere in the US, providing a frame of reference for the project team's observations about how their thinking is evolving (they're not fully resolved as yet). Briefly stated, they are envisioning "toll payment" enforcement by wayside law enforcement personnel, aided by cameras that will capture license plate information. HOV enforcement will also be by wayside law enforcement personnel, eventually aided by technology that is still in the developmental stages (e.g., could be skin detection). The project team went on to say that it is inclined to require all users to have transponders (be they toll payers or HOV3+ vehicles), that can be "switched" from a "toll paying" mode to an "HOV" mode once this technology is proven. Several HOV Advisory Committee members expressed concerns about making the availability of a transponder compulsory because of the high incidence of occasional I-395/I-95 users (esp. on weekends), suggesting that a policy like this would not be "customer friendly" and would be an encumbrance for some. The project team acknowledged the legitimacy of these concerns, leaving the impression that this policy predisposition might be rethought.

The discussion then turned to "incident management plans" (because the project team repeatedly stressed how sophisticated its technology-aided incident detection plan will be, without evidencing an understanding of the multiple incident responders with jurisdiction over the roadway). The Advisory Committee urged the project team to convene a meeting of all the incident responders to exchange information and become more fully acquainted with "incident management" protocols, which team members indicated was already scheduled for early May.

Turning to "shoulder and travel lane" widths, the project team summarized what is envisioned, which prompted Committee members to restate their concerns about safety inside the beltway. The project team acknowledged its sensitivity to these concerns, and expressed confidence that these concerns will be ultimately allayed. To this end, the project team also pledged to examine the practicality of maintaining a single twelve-foot wide travel lane to more safely accommodate buses (in addition to the "busway" analysis that the project team had previously been asked by NVTC to examine).

Committee members concluded the meeting by identifying issues for the next meeting's agenda, agreeing that the "degradation standard" for establishing toll rates should be the principal topic for discussion.

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3. Farebox installation. Testing at Cubic's Chantilly facility continued this past month, with no significant glitches. Installations for all the remaining NOVA systems that are part of the Consortium have been schedule – PRTC's installation is slated for June 9-10.
4. Bike racks for installation on the buses. Two bids were received by the closing date (April 18th) and staff's evaluation is underway. If the evaluation is completed before the May Commission meeting, I'll report on this outcome (the bids are lower than the authority delegated to me for award, so there will not be a need for a Commission action).
5. I-395/I-95 HOT lanes project. The project team elected to make certain changes to the project description on April 16th, after reviewing the comments made by PRTC and others on the original description submitted to the TPB for conformity analysis. The changed project description (attachment three) remedied in part concerns that PRTC and others had expressed, especially in terms of the "degradation standard", though there is clearly more work to be done in seeking to forge a workable consensus. Further changes to the description were made by the project team immediately prior to the April 18th TPB vote, too late for the TPB members to fully digest, which precipitated lots of questions at the TPB meeting. Overwhelmed by the more than 300 comments received and the last-minute changes proposed by the project team, the TPB members called for a "deferral" vote that was approved by a razor-thin margin based on TPB's rarely-used weighted voting procedures. As a result, a vote on whether or not to include the project in the conformity analysis was deferred for a month.
6. Procurement efforts.
 - Transit Center surveillance cameras. Wrapped up the preparation of the "procurement solicitation" specifications this month (a request for proposals; RFP), and launched the solicitation. A pre-proposal conference is scheduled for May 4th, and the Commission will be asked to authorize an "award" at the June 2007 meeting.
 - Health insurance. Proposals were received on April 11th and the evaluation is continuing. The Commission will be asked to authorize an award at the June meeting.

- Design of the dispatch office's expansion. Wrapped up the preparation of the "procurement solicitation" specifications this month (another RFP) and launched the procurement. The proposal submission deadline was April 26th, and the Commission will be asked to authorize an award at the June meeting.
 - Real-time information plan (RTIP). Wrapped up the preparation of the "procurement solicitation" specifications this month (yet another RFP), and launched the solicitation. A pre-proposal conference was held on April 20th, and the Commission will be asked to authorize an award at the June meeting.
 - Orion bus rehabilitation. Work on the procurement specification neared completion this month and the authorization to launch the procurement is scheduled for the Commission's consideration at this month's meeting.
 - Self-cleaning bathrooms. The bathrooms already authorized for purchase have been manufactured and shipped to PRTC; delivery is expected by mid-May with installation expected by the end of May.
7. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) Initiatives. Work continued this past month on preparations for a "transit PPPs" series of sessions at the APTA rail conference scheduled for early June in Toronto. Plans are now nearly complete, and the sessions promise to be very stimulating. Look for a fuller discussion of these and other Rail Conference sessions in next month's Executive Director's Report.

Concurrently, interest in PPPs nationally continues to mount. The Highways and Transit Sub-committee (of the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee) held a second hearing on the subject on April 17th, with representatives of FHWA, FTA, the construction industry, and the Utah Department of Transportation invited to speak. An account of the hearing and the testimony delivered by FTA Chief Counsel David Horner appears here as attachment four. FHWA Acting Deputy Administrator James Ray recounted FHWA's experience with innovative contracting approaches since 1990, hailing the many successes. The construction industry representatives had mixed sentiments, acknowledging the cost and time saving potentials associated with PPPs but observing that practices for confirming the qualifications of firms on PPP projects have the unintended effect of precluding many small and mid-sized firms from competing because they can always demonstrate experience in PPPs. Mr. Horner's testimony focuses on FTA's Public-Private-Partnership Pilot Program (dubbed "Penta-P"), characterizing it as FTA's

effort to exploit the potential of PPPs to reduce the time and expense for delivery of transit projects by “incentivizing” several large pilots. Sub-committee Chairman Peter DeFazio reacted cautiously, reflecting wariness about whether the public interest can be adequately protected in a PPP undertaking.

Closer to home, the Dulles Rail Partners released a fact sheet on April 17th, responding to questions that have been raised in recent weeks about the Dulles rail project (attachment five). The fact sheet seeks to arrest concerns about project cost and the lack of transparency in this PPTA undertaking.

Also attached is the Reason Foundation’s April 2007 *Surface Transportation Newsletter* (attachment six), which seeks to counter the various forms of PPP criticisms that have surfaced in recent months. It makes for interesting reading.

8. APTA Visioning Task Force. With Chairman Gibbons’ concurrence, I have accepted an invitation to serve as a member of a task force established by APTA’s Executive Committee to help APTA formulate a long-term vision for transit in the United States (attachment seven). By “long-term”, I mean a fifty year horizon, well beyond the next authorization period. The idea of this task force grew out of the Executive Committee’s belief that a more aspirational view of transit is necessary to inspire future legislative and APTA sponsored activities. The first of the Visioning Task Force meetings is scheduled for the day after this month’s Commission meeting (in Nashville), so I’ll have more to say on this subject in ensuing reports.
9. DRPT strategic planning assessment. Ms. Massie and I attended one of the four DRPT hosted workshops this past month to participate in DRPT’s ongoing strategic assessment of its performance and needs. Facilitated by a consultant, the workshop began with a report out of the results of an earlier survey completed by DRPT’s clients (including PRTC), and progressed from there to a discussion of DRPT’s legislative mandates, mission, and areas in which stepped up or improved effort is warranted. Later in the month, DRPT presented a status report on its assessment to the CTB (attachment eight), identifying improvement needs and prospective plans to address them.
10. Marketing Department efforts

Rider Express

- 4945 subscribed addresses;

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- Sent message advisory message about potential DC OmniRide service delays from IMF/World Bank and DC voting rights demonstrations;
- Sent an expression of condolence to the Virginia Tech community.

Website (www.PRTCtransit.org)

- Released updated schedules for the Spring Service Change;
- Posted service update notices for items sent as Rider Express messages;
- Notice posted to inform customers about pending electronic farebox installation;
- Posted employment notice;
- Performed general site maintenance.

Brochures/Schedules

- Completed installation of new bus stop displays with for Spring Service Change;
- Developing brochure to introduce customers to new electronic fareboxes and how to use them;
- Distributed bulk schedules to 23 outlets.

Advertising and Media Relations

- Postcard mailer sent to homes along Benita Fitzgerald Drive now served by North Route 1 OmniRide buses, follow-up mailing of actual bus schedules planned;
- Booked ad in special “Welcome to Washington” section that will be inserted in all local military newspapers;
- Booked ad in Potomac News special long shelf-life “Great Adventure” directory of PWC activities and destinations;
- Developing new welcome program for new home buyers and building database for future direct mailings.

Community Outreach

- Sent letters to senior community managers to inform them of PRTC’s availability to do transit presentations for their residents;
- As follow-up to senior facility mailing, delivered 200 flyers to the Agency on Aging to distribute to senior facilities to encourage booking presentations;
- Mailed packets to pre-schools and summer camps inviting them to book a youth presentation;

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- PR Specialist attended meeting of PW Regional Chamber's Hispanic Business Council and made presentation on PRTC's services;
- Pr Specialist made presentation to 15 teens enrolled in the vocational program at Freedom High School;
- Represented PRTC PWC Job Fair and Office on Youth's Teen Conference and distributed service information to participants;
- Partnered with NVTC on mailing to area employers regarding Ozone Red and Orange Days.

Miscellaneous Activities

- Marketing Assistant took Photoshop graphics class to enhance job skills;
- Participated in Google Webinar to learn more about new Google Transit product and how to have PRTC included;
- Participated in National Transit Institute conference call about Methods of Rider Communications;
- Preparing VTA marketing award submission;
- Marketing Assistant attended PW Regional Chamber Lunch and Learn Series on Effective Websites.

Customer Profile – May 07

- David Hancock (attachment nine).

11. Customer Service and Dispatch (Stats from March 21 - April 20)

- Handled 10,245 calls;
- Replied to 88 e-mail requests for transit information;
- Returned 223 voice mail messages for transit information;
- Assembled and mailed 41 requests for New Rider Kits and another 319 requests for schedules and brochures;
- Rideshare Specialist participated in a Webex internet conference call organized by VDRPT for final review of the public pages of the new regional ridematching software. Local jurisdictions in Virginia and Maryland participated and made suggestions for changes to the proposed web pages for general public use. Also participated in a collaborative session sponsored by COG's Commuter Connections Subcommittee to provide feedback on the administrative pages of the new regional ridematching software.

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- Rideshare Specialist also met with UrbanTrans, Prince William County's Employer Services contractor, to discuss on-going efforts with IKEA to develop a commuter transportation program.

Naturally, staff and I would be pleased to respond to any questions this report may prompt.

Attachments: As stated