

POTOMAC AND RAPPAHANNOCK
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (PRTC)

OFFICIAL COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

DATE: May 5, 2011
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
14700 Potomac Mills Road, 2nd Floor
Woodbridge, VA 22192-6811

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jenkins called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., with a quorum present.

At this time, Chairman Jenkins welcomed PRTC Alternate Darrel Feasel on behalf of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT). He also welcomed Thomas Mason, a member of Troop 1919 of the Dale City Boy Scouts, who is attending the meeting this evening to earn his “communications merit badge.”

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

*Richard Anderson	Virginia House of Delegates
*Maureen Caddigan	Prince William County
*Fred Howe	City of Fredericksburg
*John Jenkins, Chairman	Prince William County
*Jerry Logan, Secretary	Spotsylvania County
*Jackson Miller	Virginia House of Delegates
*Marty Nohe	Prince William County
*Gary Skinner	Spotsylvania County
*Susan Stimpson	Stafford County
*Jonathan Way, Vice Chairman	City of Manassas

MEMBERS ABSENT

David Awbrey	Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Wally Covington	Prince William County
Frank Jones	City of Manassas Park

Michael May,
Immediate Past Chairman
Paul Milde, Treasurer
Frank Principi
Toddy Puller

Prince William County
Stafford County
Prince William County
Virginia Senate

ALTERNATES PRESENT

*Darrel Feasel
*William Wren

Department of Rail and Public Transportation
City of Manassas Park

ALTERNATES ABSENT

Ateeb Ahmad
Hilda Barg
Hap Connors
Harry Crisp
Mark Dudenhefer
Brad Ellis
Lorraine Lasch
Sushas Naddoni
Hal Parrish
Benjamin Pitts
Sorine Preli
Corey Stewart
John Stirrup

Prince William County
Prince William County
Spotsylvania County
Stafford County
Stafford County
City of Fredericksburg
Prince William County
City of Manassas Park
City of Manassas
Spotsylvania County
Prince William County
Prince William County
Prince William County

*Voting Member

STAFF AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Gina Altis
Monica Backmon
Rob Dickerson
Joyce Embrey
Althea Evans
Anthony Foster
Shanta Garth
Alfred Harf
Robb Howell
Ryan Jones
Eric Lee
Bob Leibbrandt
Majdi Mehyar
Eric Marx
Thomas Mason
Betsy Massie
Holly Morello
Tim McCann

PRTC Executive Assistant
PWC Regional Transportation Planner
PRTC Legal Counsel
PRTC, Dir., Finance & Administration
PRTC Dir., Marketing & Communications
PRTC Transportation Project Manager
FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Accounting & Admin.
PRTC Executive Director
FIRST TRANSIT General Manager
PRTC Special Projects Coordinator
FIRST TRANSIT Safety & Training Manager
PWC Budget & Analysis
FIRST TRANSIT Bus Operator
PRTC Dir., Planning & Operations
Citizen
PRTC Dir., Grants & Project Management
PRTC Rideshare Specialist
FIRST TRANSIT Region Vice President

Ginger Murphy	PRTC Transit Operations Planner
Paul Pitchke	FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Operations
Michael Weinberger	PRTC Transportation Apprentice
Dale Zehner	VRE Chief Executive Officer

3. INVOCATION Led by Vice Chairman Way.
4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Led by Commissioner Skinner.
5. CITIZENS' TIME No citizens came forward.
6. PRESENTATIONS
 - A. First Transit General Manager Robb Howell – Employee Recognition and Operations Report.

Mr. Howell recognized the March 2011 Operator-of-the-Month Majdi Mehyar. Mr. Mehyar has been a bus operator since 2007.

Mr. Howell reported 13 commendations (directed to 12 different operators and one “general”) were received during the month of April. He went on to report that the accident frequency rate for the month of April is 1.63 per 100,000 miles. Eight collisions occurred during the month of April (two preventable, six non-preventable). Mr. Howell explained that most of the collisions occurred as a result of “mirror clips” -- a common occurrence while operating buses in downtown DC. Management is exploring solutions and the issue will be a topic of discussion at next week’s bus operator “safety” meeting.

Mr. Howell went on to report that the complaint rate per 10,000 trips on the OmniRide service increased in April. He attributed the rise in complaints to two principal factors -- increased tourism (especially around the Cherry Blossom time, which causes significant congestion leading to more late buses), and temperature increases that mark the first test of air conditioning systems (which, despite preventive maintenance performed in the off-season, are susceptible to parts failures). There was also a significant increase in the number of complaints regarding operator courtesy. The rate per 10,000 trips continues to be higher compared to this same time last year, as well as the year-to-date figure compared to the prior year. First Transit traditionally tracks complaints as a ratio to the total number of complaints per category, but going forward management will look at each complaint category to determine how many complaints result from each of the different categories in absolute number terms.

Continuing, Mr. Howell reported that on May 23, 2011, Eric Lee commences work as First Transit’s new Safety and Training Manager. Mr. Lee comes to First Transit with a career in the military and transportation as well as working with Exxon Mobile Company overseeing the shipping/delivery of fuel where he had extensive experience with commercial driving and safety aspects. Mr. Lee will be introduced at the Commission’s June meeting.

In conclusion, Mr. Howell reported that the “Maintenance Audit” is complete and the final report will be presented to the Commission at a subsequent meeting.

Vice Chairman Way asked if First Transit will be able to identify complaints that are related to standees on the OmniRide Service. Mr. Howell replied “yes,” and explained they are classified in the database as “overcrowded.”

Vice Chairman Way asked if the increase in complaints is also a result of overcrowding. Mr. Howell noted that the complaint rate compared to last year’s year-to-date complaint rate is lower, but ridership is also lower this month compared to last year. Mr. Harf added that “overcrowding” complaints have probably been muted by the fact that PRTC management addressed the issue directly in a recent Rider Express communication, acknowledging the problem and explaining why PRTC is not in the position to alleviate it.

Commissioner Skinner asked how many categories are included in the Maintenance Audit. Mr. Howell noted the Maintenance Audit includes approximately 30 categories -- about 15 to 16 categories receive the most frequent entries. The “operator” and “mechanical” categories include about 20.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RES 11-05-01 Minutes of April 7, 2011.
[PRTC]

Commissioner Caddigan moved, with a second by Commissioner Anderson, to approve the Minutes, as presented. There was no discussion on the motion. (CADDIGAN\ANDERSON; WITH MAJORITY VOTE, FEASEL\LOGAN\SKINNER\STIMPSON ABSTAINED)

8. AGENDA APPROVAL

RES 11-05-02 Agenda of May 5, 2011.
[PRTC]

Vice Chairman Way moved, with a second by Commissioner Howe, to approve the Agenda, as amended (Items 12-B.3 and 12-B.6 revised and Item 12-C.5 new item). There was no discussion on the motion. (WAY\HOWE, UNANIMOUS)

9. CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL

RES 11-05-03 Consent Agenda of May 5, 2011.
[PRTC]

Commissioner Nohe moved, with a second by Commissioner Caddigan, to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. (NOHE\CADDIGAN, UNANIMOUS)

Vice Chairman Way asked if the additional \$2.2 million match will compromise any other VRE projects such as the “siding” track storage adjacent to the L’Enfant VRE Station. Mr. Zehner replied “no.”

Commissioner Howe asked if there is any information available from March and April with regard to passenger revenue. Mr. Zehner stated that fare revenue is running about \$1.4 million above budget as a result of ridership being higher than projected. As previously mentioned, funding sources include \$1.4 million in capital reserve funds not currently programmed, \$1.4 million in additional fare revenue received through February 2011, and \$1.2 million set aside in the FY 2011 revised budget for unfunded match. Management’s recommendation to the VRE Operations Board to match the state funding is to use the \$1.4 million in the capital reserve fund and \$800,000 of the resources available from the unfunded match, leaving the favorable fare revenue variance untouched.

Secretary Logan asked for a breakdown on the needed match funds. Mr. Zehner replied that \$1.9 million is for the third track project and \$300,000 is for the railcar project. The match for the third track is higher because that funding is from the rail enhancement funds (70/30) whereas the railcar funding is from state capital funding (80/20).

There was no further discussion on the motion. (SKINNER\HOWE, UNANIMOUS)

11. CHAIRMAN'S TIME

[PRTC] A. PRTC’s 25th Anniversary.

Chairman Jenkins reported that planning has commenced for PRTC’s 25th Anniversary celebration to be held on September 30, 2011, 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Osprey’s Landing in Belmont Bay. He noted that Virginia Secretary of Transportation Connaughton has been invited to be the keynoter speaker.

12. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S TIME

A. Executive Director’s Report.

On the federal side, Mr. Harf reported that the Federal FY 2011 budget is now a resolved issue. Transit funding on the Federal side in FY 2011 largely replicates FY 2010 funding levels, and excludes earmarks. Transportation did, however, take some hits, principally in the High Speed Rail (HSR) program and the “New Starts” program (the “silver line” extension of MetroRail to Dulles is an example of a new starts project, though that project is not affected by the new starts cut). Neither VRE nor PRTC were anticipating any new start funds in FY 2011.

Continuing, Mr. Harf noted that there could potentially be far more significant cuts in the FY 2012 budget. He went on to note that the House has already fashioned its budget proposal for FY 2012 that includes a 55% cut in transportation funding. Interestingly, the

Obama Administration unveiled its reauthorization proposal earlier this week which envisions a significant increase in transportation funding beginning in FY 2012 and continuing thereafter. He went on to say that the question that the Administration heretofore had not answered – how would the increase be funded – has seemingly been answered; reportedly the Administration has embraced the idea of a mileage-based tax and more permissive tolling.

Mr. Harf went on to report that he had the privilege of serving on the “evaluation panel” at VDRPT’s request to evaluate possible successors to Corey Hill. VDRPT Director Thelma Drake issued a press release earlier this week announcing that George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) Executive Director Bob Wilson is the successor and he will start on June 10th. Mr. Harf stated that it speaks well of VDRPT to have recognized the importance of bringing a “grantee” perspective to bear on its “selection” decision.

Mr. Harf reported that on May 2nd, PRTC commenced a new afternoon shuttle bus service between the Horner Road commuter lot and the lot at the First Baptist Church of Woodbridge at Prince William Parkway and Minnieville Road. The shuttle service was initiated after commuters complained that they do not park at the church lot because of the lack of later evening bus service. The new shuttle service will permit commuters returning home later than the last Rosslyn bus to catch one of three shuttles from the Horner Road lot back to the church lot. He noted that the usage of the shuttle in the first four days of operation has been meager, but went on to say that it is too soon to draw any conclusions.

Mr. Harf also reported that PRTC has dedicated some of its “bus exterior advertising space” on ten buses to publicize the existence of the slug website (www.slug-lines.com) where slug line locations are continuously posted. He explained that “body-snatchers” are having a difficult time adjusting to the changing slug line locations and will be able to determine where slugs are congregating via the slug website.

Mr. Harf noted PRTC signed a new “lease” with the Gainesville United Methodist Church for handling overflow parking at the Limestone commuter park-ride lot. He explained that PRTC ended a previous lease with the Church as a result of PRTC paying for parking spaces whether they were occupied or not. The new lease allows PRTC to pay for only those parking spaces which are occupied by commuters.

Moving to another subject, Mr. Harf reminded the Commission that in March, PRTC sent a letter to Virginia Tax Commissioner Craig Burns urging more expeditious resolution of mis-postings. Commissioner Burns’ reply outlined the Department’s plan to conduct audits of distributors and report the adjustments to PRTC. He also reminded PRTC management that it is not at liberty to divulge proprietary information about individual taxpayers to any other persons, including the members of the Commission. Mr. Harf noted that adjustments are being realized and more significant adjustment updates should be available beginning next month, and he noted the existence in the board kit of another letter PRTC sent to Commissioner Burns in response to the Commissioner’s letter.

Mr. Harf reported that PRTC's Transportation Apprentice Michael Weinberger completed work on a "BRAC resource guide." In visiting BRAC coordinators, Mr. Weinberger was struck by the absence of any consolidated information about what services exist for each of the BRAC sites now and in the future. He recognized a significant gap in the information that BRAC coordinators had at their disposal, so he fashioned a BRAC coordination plan that is now being used by the BRAC coordinators and transportation providers. Mr. Weinberger has received "kudos" from everyone who has seen the resource guide, a tribute to his ingenuity, his recognition that there was a problem that needed to be solved, and the quality product he produced as a result.

In conclusion, Mr. Harf announced that the spring schedule change will take effect on Monday, May 23rd -- this is one of PRTC's customary "twice a year" schedule changes made to deal with seasonal variations. The change will be fairly consequential not because PRTC is changing a lot of the services, but because bus stops in downtown DC are changing (a related information item is located elsewhere in the board kit). PRTC currently has 93 bus stops in downtown DC and management has worked closely with the District Government to rationalize bus routings, relocating bus stops, and slug lines. Eighteen of PRTC's bus stops will be eliminated in downtown DC, chosen only after confirming that customers who now use those stops will not have more than a couple of blocks to walk to the nearest neighboring stop. PRTC is communicating with customers so they are aware of the changes. Mr. Harf concluded by noting the likelihood of some customer complaints stemming from the elimination of stops.

B. Action Items:

RES 11-05-09 1. First Transit Contract Extension.
[PRTC]

Mr. Harf explained that the Commission is being asked to authorize the last "two year" option of the contract with First Transit which, if approved, would extend the termination of the contract to June 30, 2013 or ten years after the contract's inception.

Commissioner Caddigan moved, with a second by Commissioner Stimpson, to authorize the Executive Director to exercise the "final" two-year contract option with First Transit for provision of commuter and local bus services, thereby extending the contract to June 30, 2013. There was no discussion on the motion. (CADDIGAN\STIMPSON, UNANIMOUS)

RES 11-05-10 2. Bus Shelter Cleaning Award.
[PRTC]

Mr. Harf noted that the Commission is being asked to award a contract to the incumbent Window Wizard. A single bid was received and PRTC evaluated it for reasonableness. Window Wizard's bid was determined to be reasonable as the bid prices were either equal to or lower than current rates.

4. Communications:
 - a. Related to Funding. There were no comments.
 - b. Related to Jurisdiction – Not applicable.
 - c. General Interest. There were no comments.

5. Status of Commuter Bus Study and Other Bus-Related Downtown DC Issues. As previously mentioned in the Executive Director’s report, Mr. Harf reiterated that the commuter bus study encompasses all of downtown DC and in all 18 of PRTC’s 93 Washington, D.C. bus stops will be eliminated.

13. OTHER BUSINESS/COMMISSIONERS' TIME

Secretary Logan stated that in light of Bob Wilson’s resignation, GWRC has called an emergency meeting of its Executive Committee to occur on Monday to deal with Mr. Wilson’s impending departure. He noted that GWRC’s loss is VDRPT’s gain and it will be hard to replace Mr. Wilson.

Commissioner Nohe also noted that Mr. Wilson’s departure will be a great loss for the Virginia Association of Planning Districts’ Board of Directors, noting that Mr. Wilson is currently serving as Treasurer.

Mr. Harf announced that a meeting of the PRTC Operations Committee (principally the bus-sponsoring jurisdictions) will be held on June 2nd at 6:00 p.m. prior to the start of the regular Board meeting at 7:00 p.m. to brief the members on two subjects: (1) the western maintenance facility, which is in the early stages of the environmental and design work; and (2) ticketing changes PRTC envisions now that the SmarTrip cards have been programmed to accept pass products. A recommendation will be presented to the Commission at its July meeting to authorize the beginning of a public review process on the second of these two subjects.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman Jenkins adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, June 2, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
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