

POTOMAC AND RAPPAHANNOCK
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (PRTC)

OFFICIAL COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

DATE: October 6, 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.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

*Richard Anderson	Virginia House of Delegates
*Maureen Caddigan	Prince William County (arrived at 7:08 p.m.)
*Fred Howe	City of Fredericksburg
*John Jenkins, Chairman	Prince William County
*Michael May, Immediate Past Chairman	Prince William County
*Jackson Miller	Virginia House of Delegates
*Gary Skinner	Spotsylvania County
*Jonathan Way, Vice Chairman	City of Manassas

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wally Covington	Prince William County
Thelma Drake	Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
Frank Jones	City of Manassas Park
Jerry Logan, Secretary	Spotsylvania County
Paul Milde, Treasurer	Stafford County
Marty Nohe	Prince William County
Frank Principi	Prince William County
Toddy Puller	Virginia Senate
Susan Stimpson	Stafford County

ALTERNATES PRESENT

*David Awbrey
*Lorraine Lasch

Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
Prince William County

ALTERNATES ABSENT

Ateeb Ahmad
Hilda Barg
Hap Connors
Harry Crisp
Mark Dudenhefer
Brad Ellis
Matthew Kelly
Suhaz Naddoni
Hal Parrish
Steve Pittard
Benjamin Pitts
Sorine Preli
Corey Stewart
John Stirrup
William Wren

Prince William County
Prince William County
Spotsylvania County
Stafford County
Stafford County
City of Fredericksburg
City of Fredericksburg
City of Manassas Park
City of Manassas
Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
Spotsylvania County
Prince William County
Prince William County
Prince William County
City of Manassas Park

*Voting Member

STAFF AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Nick Alexandrow
Gina Altis
Monica Backmon
Doris Chism
Rob Dickerson
Joyce Embrey
Althea Evans
Shanta Garth
Al Harf
Robb Howell
Todd Johnson
Eric Lee
Bob Leibbrandt
Eric Marx
Betsy Massie
Paul Pitchke
Cynthia Porter-Johnson
Chuck Steigerwald
Dale Zehner

PRTC Transit Project Manager
PRTC Executive Assistant
PWC Regional Transportation Planner
PRTC Dir., Customer Service & Dispatch
PRTC Legal Counsel
PRTC Dir., Finance & Administration
PRTC Dir., Marketing & Communications
FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Accounting & Admin.
PRTC Executive Director
FIRST TRANSIT General Manager
FIRST TRANSIT Maintenance Manager
FIRST TRANSIT Safety & Training Manager
PWC Budget & Analysis
PRTC Dir., Planning & Operations
PRTC Dir., of Grants & Project Management
FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Operations
PRTC Transportation Project Manager
PRTC Manager Planning & Quality Assurance
VRE Chief Executive Officer

3. INVOCATION Led by Vice Chairman Way.
4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Led by Commissioner Lasch.
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 August 2011 Operator-of-the-Month Judith Robles. Ms. Robles has been a bus operator since 2009 and currently operates the Woodbridge B OmniLink service.

Mr. Howell reported 21 commendations were received during the month of September (directed to 13 different operators and one supervisor). He went on to report that the complaint rate for both the actual number and rate per 10,000 trips on the OmniRide service decreased in September compared to the prior month (a fraction higher than this time last year). The year-to-date rate in September is trending higher than that of 2010. The complaint rate for both the actual number and rate per 10,000 trips on the OmniLink service decreased in September (significantly lower compared to the same time last year and the year-to-date total is virtually the same).

Continuing, Mr. Howell reported that the accident frequency rate for the month of September is 0.19 per 100,000 miles compared to the prior month. The year-to-date rate is 1.17 per 100,000 miles (a total of 31 collisions, 11 preventable). Last year approximately 50% of accidents were judged preventable. This year it's about one-third. Mr. Howell explained that most of the non-preventable collisions occur as a result of "mirror clips" by passing vehicles in downtown DC.

Mr. Howell expressed staffs' appreciation for the opportunity to attend and meet with many of the PRTC Commissioners at PRTC's 25th Anniversary Celebration on September 30th.

Mr. Howell further reported that both he and Todd Johnson attended the APTA 2011 Annual Meeting in New Orleans and were able to glean helpful information to apply to the PRTC bus operation.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Howell reported that the results of the "Fleet Maintenance Audit" also appear elsewhere in this month's Board Kit as an information item. For this audit, the average number of per-bus defects increased slightly to 3.4 defects per bus from an average of 3.1 in the previous audit; both rates are above reproach. Also, for the first time there were no safety-critical "A" defects found. Mr. Howell commended First Transit Maintenance Manager Todd Johnson and staff for their continuing high level of proficiency/performance.

RES 11-10-05
[Stafford]

B. Stafford County Reimbursement for Transportation Expenditures for the Fourth Quarter of FY 2011.

Authorized to budget and appropriate of \$236,734 for the fourth quarter (FY 2011) of 2% motor fuels tax funding in Stafford County's account for Transportation Expenditures, as presented. (WAY\CADDIGAN ,UNANIMOUS)

10. VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS (VRE)

- A. Operations Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes of September 16, 2011. There were no comments.
- B. Chief Executive Officer's Report (09-11).

Mr. Zehner reported that the average daily ridership for the month of September was 18.8% (approaching 1,300 more passenger trips per day compared to September 2010). The year-to-date ridership increased 10% compared to this time last year. He explained that the average daily ridership is usually "light" following the Labor Day weekend. Also, service was cancelled on Friday evening, September 9th, as a result of rain and flood issues causing "wash outs" on both the Fredericksburg and Manassas lines.

Mr. Zehner also reported that on-time performance in September was 88% and 90% on the Fredericksburg and Manassas Lines, respectively. Heavy rain caused 66% of the delays at the beginning of September and service resumed operation at 100% after the rain subsided.

Mr. Zehner went on to report that VRE's Annual Survey was conducted aboard the trains on October 5th. The survey results will be presented to the VRE Operations Board at its December meeting.

Moving to another subject, Mr. Zehner reported that VRE is in receipt of all twenty of the new locomotives. The twentieth locomotive was received at the end of September, has been inspected, and will be placed into revenue service next week. The old locomotives have been sold and will be off the property by the end of the month.

Mr. Zehner announced that VRE was awarded a "Certificate of Achievement" from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for VRE's FY 2010 report. It's the fifth year in a row that VRE has received the award and is the highest form of recognition for governmental accounting.

Concluding, Mr. Zehner announced that "Clifton Day" is scheduled for Sunday, October 9th. VRE will operate trains from the Manassas, Manassas Park, Rolling Road, and Burke Centre stations to Clifton. Hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

With regard to the rain and flooding that occurred on September 8th, Commissioner Skinner recommended the Commission commend the Keolis engineer who discovered the track

damage as a result of the washout at Pohick Creek in Lorton averting what could have been a true disaster. He also commended Mr. Zehner for his leadership. Chairman Jenkins asked Mr. Zehner to prepare a "letter of appreciation" to be sent to the Keolis engineer who performed his duties and kept VRE's riders safe on the night of September 8th.

Mr. Zehner noted that the Keolis engineer along with two other crew members will be thanked and presented a letter or certificate of appreciation at the VRE Operations Board meeting on October 21st. He went on to say that PRTC, Fairfax Connector, and Metro all came to VRE's assistance and when he arrived at the Franconia/Springfield Station, the buses were already there. At least 1,000 VRE riders were affected. The bus drivers stayed calm, focused, and handled themselves well in an extremely difficult situation.

Chairman Jenkins noted that VRE's top ridership day occurred on April 12, 2011, with 21,496 riders and commended VRE on a job well done.

11. CHAIRMAN'S TIME -- ANNOUNCEMENTS

[PRTC] A. Executive Director's Self-Evaluation Mail Out in Mid-October.

Chairman Jenkins noted that Commissioners will receive the Executive Director's self-evaluation in mid-October to allow time for Commissioners to review and comment.

[PRTC] B. PRTC Executive Committee Meeting.

Chairman Jenkins announced that the PRTC Executive Committee will meet on November 3rd and December 1st to commence the annual evaluation of the Executive Director's performance and to review the PRTC FY 2011 Audit, conclude the annual evaluation of the Executive Director's performance, and propose a slate of officers for calendar year 2012, respectively. Both meetings will commence at 6:00 p.m. at the PRTC Transit Center.

Chairman Jenkins announced that PRTC is receipt of an American Public Transportation Association (APTA) first place AdWheel Award, and he congratulated Mrs. Evans and her Marketing and Communications staff for its successful submission. The award is for PRTC's upgraded "New Rider Kit."

Chairman Jenkins also noted that PRTC is in receipt of a framed copy of the Congressional record, which Representative Gerald Connolly introduced commemorating PRTC's 25th Anniversary.

12. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S TIME

A. Executive Director's Report.

Mr. Harf commented on the positive feedback received regarding PRTC's 25th Anniversary Celebration on September 30th and noted that those Commissioners who could not attend

will receive a “memento” this evening. Chairman Jenkins expressed his appreciation to PRTC staff for planning and executing an outstanding event.

On the Federal side, Mr. Harf reported that the transportation authorization has been extended for another six months, carrying through to the end of March 2012. He noted that that alone is not sufficient “to keep the spigots flowing” since monies must also be appropriated. The current Continuing Resolution (CR) will carry through to the Thanksgiving holiday, but the possibility of another CR cannot be discounted thereafter, perhaps through the end of the year. Finally, he reported that the Administration has not disclosed which of the applicants for discretionary grant funds were successful (PRTC submitted an application for its mid-life bus overhaul campaign).

Returning to the issue of the federal reauthorization, Mr. Harf noted that the Republican leadership has sanctioned the idea of “beefing up” the reauthorization so that the funding levels continue to be at the same levels as they were with SAFETEA-LU. This is encouraging, since the original House reauthorization proposal conforming to the House budget principles would have cut transportation by about 35%.

On the State funding side, Mr. Harf reminded the Commission that PRTC was vying for some “bonus obligation” money that Virginia anticipated this year. However, the amount Virginia received (about \$49 million) was less than what the McDonnell Administration had hoped for, and consequently PRTC’s quest was not fruitful.

Moving to another subject, Mr. Harf noted that the November Board Kit will include an informational report on the outcome of a “Vanpool Design Study” PRTC conducted in cooperation with NVTC and the George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC). The vanpool program promises to earn the Washington region additional dollars that can be used to promote increased vanpooling and at the same time generate net revenue for transportation investment. The plan envisions the start of a vanpool program in the greater Northern Virginia area extending to Caroline and King George Counties and perhaps points further south. The vanpool program also promises to be self-supporting as it would generate more money than it would cost to operate. The challenge to launching the program is that while the earnings are greater than the cost of the program, there is a lag time associated with the earnings -- a minimum of two years before the dollars earned actually materialize. Thus there is a cash flow hurdle that would need to be surmounted to permit the program to be launched. A variety of ideas are currently being examined for how this might be done.

With regard to fuel purchases, Mr. Harf reported that PRTC purchased seven additional futures contracts in September spanning the period March through August 2012. PRTC will continue to take advantage of market opportunities.

Mr. Harf went on to report that management has reviewed the I-95 HOT Lanes Project and I-95 HOT Lanes TDM/Transit Plan proposals and has readied an action item located elsewhere in the Board Kit seeking the Commission’s authorization to transmit letters to VDOT and VDRPT commenting on various facets of the proposals.

Mr. Harf reported that PRTC is nearing the end of its Computer Aided Dispatch/Automated Vehicle Locator (CAD/AVL) procurement. He explained that the prospective project is funded by a 100% TIGER grant, supplemented by state assistance and, if everything goes according to plan, the Commission will be asked at its November meeting to award a contract for the CAD/AVL venture. The CAD/AVL project promises to greatly enhance the quality of real-time information and the customers' experience.

Mr. Harf reminded the Commission that Vice Chairman Way expressed an interest in receiving a "comparative analysis" of PRTC's ongoing mid-life bus overhaul program with WMATA's mid-life overhaul program (the WMATA program was front page news in The Washington Post earlier this month). A response has been furnished to Vice Chairman Way and, at his suggestion, is also present as an information item elsewhere in the Board Kit.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Harf reported that PRTC is experiencing record-high ridership levels, approaching 15,000 daily riders with continuing growth despite the seat shortage. He observed that this is naturally gratifying, and he expressed the hope that bus service can be added in the foreseeable future.

Vice Chairman Way observed the intriguing economics of the vanpool design program structure as it will be the first public transit project or semi-public transit project that is self-financing -- a very interesting evolution.

B. Action Items:

RES 11-10-06 1. I-95 HOT Lanes Transit Plan Comments.
[PRTC]

Mr. Harf noted that the Commission is being asked to authorize the transmittal of a letter to VDOT reacting to the I-95 HOT Lanes project itself and the transmittal of a second letter to VDRPT providing comments on the recently completed companion I-95 HOT Lanes TDM/Transit plan.

Commissioner Caddigan moved, with a second by Commissioner Howe, to authorize the Executive Director to transmit PRTC's comments to VDRPT and VDOT on behalf of the Commission.

With regard to safety, Commissioner Howe asked how people will get off a disabled bus in a 10 ft. wide pull off area up against a barrier. Mr. Harf explained there will be a continuous shoulder with periodic "refuge" areas for disabled vehicles that are separate from the 10 ft. wide shoulder, which are one to two miles apart. He went on to explain that buses will have to wait for traffic enforcement so an area can be properly coned and nobody will be discharged from the bus until it's declared safe. The bus will have to be sufficiently far removed from the barrier for people to exit the bus.

There was no further discussion on the motion. (CADDIGAN\HOWE; WITH MAJORITY VOTE, AWBREY ABSTAINED)

RES 11-10-07 2. Fuel Conservation Initiative.
[PRTC]

Mr. Harf thanked Vice Chairman Way for pointing out the erroneous calculation in the staff report of how quickly the one-time investment for the engine cooling system will be recovered. The correct calculation is that it would take nearly six years of fuel savings to recover the up-front cost, not one year. Mr. Harf went on to observe that, as corrected, the venture is still deserving of pursuit, so he recommended the Commission's authorization.

Commissioner Skinner moved, with a second by Commissioner Howe, to authorize the Executive Director to execute an agreement with Engineered Machined Products, Inc. (EMP) for a no-cost pilot program to test a radiator fan package system on one of PRTC's MCI over-the-road coaches. There was no discussion on the motion. (SKINNER\HOWE, UNANIMOUS)

RES 11-10-08 3. Bus Shelter Siting and Lighting Plan.
[PRTC]

Commissioner Miller moved, with a second by Vice Chairman Way, to approve the FY 2012 amended plan as presented.

Vice Chairman Way asked whether any of the bus shelters installed to date exceeded the \$50,000 "exception" threshold. Ms. Massie noted that the threshold has not been reached to date.

Commissioner May asked if the bus shelter plan is updated every year and what is the time line for the engineering and construction to take place. Mr. Harf replied "yes," and explained that the engineering and design work is a year-long proposition to obtain the required permits. Thus shelters scheduled for engineering and design work in FY 2012 should be poised for a FY 2013 implementation.

Commissioner Howe asked what a "standard" bus shelter cost. Ms. Massie replied "\$5,000." Mr. Harf added that the cost over and above the standard shelter cost (\$10,000 to \$20,000) is associated with anything that requires design work or construction, and that this is not the exception but the rule.

Commissioner Caddigan asked what can be done to contact "unresponsive" property owners. Mr. Harf explained that PRTC has attempted to contact property owners repeatedly only to be met with silence or a property owner refusing approval. The only recourse PRTC has when a property owner spurns PRTC's request is to entertain the idea of "eminent domain," which PRTC has never attempted with bus shelters.

Commissioner Skinner asked what the storage capacity of a solar powered light is when the weather is overcast or rainy. Mr. Alexandrow explained that the lights will still charge on an overcast or rainy day since it's not totally dark, so the shelters will be lit in the evening.

Commissioner May asked if new "shelter" ideas should be presented to PRTC. Mr. Harf replied "yes," and went on to explain that the amended updates are not simply status reports on progress relative to a fixed plan but rather redefined plans to account for changed conditions (e.g., ridership continues to grow and one of PRTC's warrants is the actual boarding volumes). Stated differently, the number of warranted bus shelters will grow over time.

Commissioner Howe asked if PRTC has considered advertising inside the bus shelters to help support and/or expand the program. Mr. Harf replied "yes," but went on to say that the idea has been rejected because this is viewed as a "visual detriment" to the community.

There was no further discussion on the motion. (MILLER\WAY, UNANIMOUS)

RES 11-10-09 4. CMAQ Funding Endorsement.
[PRTC]

Mr. Harf explained that CMAQ funds are allocated regionally by VDOT and each region then determines how its funds will be employed. PRTC is seeking funds for buses and ridesharing. Also, NVTC is seeking its Board's approval to vie for CMAQ funds as a source of "bridge" funding to launch the vanpool program until it's financially supportive. The resolution expresses support for this vanpool venture on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Howe moved, with a second by Commissioner Caddigan, to endorse the proposed projects for regional consideration by the NVRTA and expressed support for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission's (NVTC) CMAQ application to seek "up-front funding" for a prospective vanpool program. There was no discussion on the motion. (HOWE\CADDIGAN, UNANIMOUS)

C. Information Items:

1. Fleet Maintenance Audit. Mr. Harf explained that the fleet maintenance audit is conducted three times per year to determine whether or not the maintenance practices are what PRTC want them to be (both preventive maintenance and otherwise). Mr. Harf commended First Transit staff on continued stellar results and a job well done.
2. PRTC Bus Rider Petition. Mr. Harf noted that PRTC received a petition with some 1,700 signatures urging more OmniLink (and Metro-Direct) weekend bus service than what PRTC now operates. The petition was presented to the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (PWBOCS) in September and a response is being prepared by the County. PRTC had informed the petition organizer earlier-on that

more weekend service is deserving and is included in PRTC's adopted plan. The petition organizer understands that the costs would have to be locally borne and that the PWBOCS is responsible for determining what it can and cannot fund in a fiscally challenged environment.

Continuing, Mr. Harf noted that PRTC's "Legislative Agenda" will be presented at the Commission's November meeting for discussion purposes. One possible element of the legislative agenda would allow PRTC to purchase its fuel "futures contracts" in a different manner. Mr. Harf explained that the current law allows PRTC to buy futures contracts only through its fuel supplier. The fuel supplier prices its futures contracts to cover a differential that is uncertain, and thus the supplier builds in a healthy margin to protect itself. If futures contracts could be purchased instead via "exchange trading" independent of the fuel supplier, cost savings would be realized. To do so, however, requires a statutory change. PRTC's risk management consultant advises that futures contracts purchased in this fashion would save PRTC upwards of \$0.09/gallon and, given PRTC's consumption rates, would save PRTC about \$100,000 per year.

Commissioner Miller asked if the state code specifically does not allow PRTC to purchase exchange trading and does the City of Manassas currently purchase fuel in this fashion. Mr. Harf replied "no," and believes the City of Manassas purchases fuel as PRTC does through its supplier. The concept behind exchange trading is that PRTC would not only buy futures contracts but would also sell them. The fuel supplier delivers fuel to PRTC and is paid by PRTC based on "rack" prices (retail). PRTC would continue to compensate the fuel supplier to purchase fuel and deliver the fuel to PRTC, but independent of that PRTC would buy and sell futures contracts independent of the supplier, because by doing so PRTC will not pay as high a differential on the futures contracts as it currently does.

Mr. Harf said he was highlighting this particular issue to get a "sense of the Board's receptivity. Chairman Jenkins directed staff to incorporate the idea and return to the Board at its November meeting with additional information.

3. How the Travel Patterns of Older Adults Are Changing: Highlights from the 2009 National Household Travel Survey. There were no comments.
4. Downshifting: U.S. Transportation Reacts as GDP Growth Flattens. There were no comments.
5. GAO-11-660 Public Transportation – Washington Metro Could Benefit from Clarified Board Roles and Responsibilities, Improved Strategic Planning. There were no comments.
6. Surface Transportation Innovations Issue No. 95 (9/11). There were no comments.
7. PRTC Service Performance Reports. There were no comments.

8. PRTC Budget-to-Actual Comparison. There were no comments.

9. Communications:

a. Related to Funding. There were no comments.

b. Related to Jurisdiction. There were no comments.

c. General Interest. There no comments.

13. OTHER BUSINESS/COMMISSIONERS' TIME

Commissioner Caddigan expressed appreciation to staff for the wonderful PRTC 25th Anniversary celebration event.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman Jenkins adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, November 3, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
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Woodbridge, VA 22192-6811
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www.PRTCtransit.org