

December 2008

# OmniNews

## Fare Increase & Service Change Scheduled for December 15

PRTC will increase fares and implement a Service Change on Monday, December 15.

The new fare structure was approved in November by the PRTC Board of Commissioners. As always, those who are 60 and older and those with a disability will be entitled to reduced fares, though those fares are also increasing. Starting December 15, the new fares will be:

### **OmniRide**

\$4.75/trip with SmarTrip;  
\$6.50/trip with cash;  
\$3.25/trip reduced fare (limited hours).

### **Metro-Direct**

\$2.40/trip with SmarTrip;  
\$3.00/trip with cash;  
\$1.50/trip reduced fare (limited hours).

### **OmniLink / Cross County Connector**

\$1.10/trip with SmarTrip or cash;  
55 cents/trip reduced fare;  
\$2.50 for a day pass;  
\$1.25 for reduced fare day pass.

The fare increase comes 20 months after the last increase for OmniRide and Metro Direct, and more than 4 years since the last increase on OmniLink.

A fare increase is needed to help defray higher-than-budgeted fuel costs and the cost of more ser-

vice to accommodate ridership growth, including the cost of acquiring additional buses.

The new fare structure will take effect on the same day that PRTC implements its most recent Service Change. PRTC implements two service changes annually to add bus stops, retime routes and make other changes to improve area transportation services.

Updated schedule brochures will be available in early December. Be sure to visit [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org) in December for more detailed information about the Fall Service Change.

Among the most notable schedule changes taking effect December 15 are:

- All OmniRide trips serving Washington, D.C. have been retimed.
- The Prince William Metro Direct route has been retimed affecting all trips; the Manassas Metro Direct and Linton Hall Metro Direct routes have had start times adjusted.
- The Woodbridge/Lake Ridge OmniLink timepoint at Rt. 1 & Occoquan has been moved.
- The first morning trip on the Dumfries OmniLink leaving from Fuller Heights has a new departure time. ■

### **Inside this issue:**

New ESP Brochures Available	2
More Buses On Their Way	3
I Want to Know...	4


# Emergency Services Brochure is Revised



PRTC's Emergency Service Plan (ESP) brochure has been updated for 2008-09.

This brochure, available in English and Spanish, explains how PRTC's bus services operate during inclement weather and other times when traffic conditions are expected to be worse than normal.

Please pick up a copy of the newly revised brochure on the bus, or download the brochure from our website. To be sure you have the most recent edition, look for November 2008 on the front cover.

When winter weather or other emergencies strike, the ESP will help you get where you need to go! 

## Metrocheks Being Eliminated; Try SmartBenefits

Have you heard the news? Paper Metrocheks are being eliminated in favor of SmartBenefits.


Metrocheks are the paper transit benefits that some employers provide to encourage ridesharing and to help defray the cost of commuting.

In order to reduce costs and prevent fraud, the paper Metrocheks will be replaced with an electronic credit that can be downloaded monthly onto a registered SmarTrip card.

Recipients will simply take their SmarTrip card to

any Metro station and use a Passes/Farecard machine to download their monthly benefit. The maximum benefit is currently \$115 per month, and that amount is set to increase to \$120 per month on January 1, 2009.

Because Metrocheks are being eliminated, PRTC will not transfer the value of Metrocheks onto SmarTrip cards after March 31, 2009.

For details, visit [www.MetroOpensDoors.com](http://www.MetroOpensDoors.com) and click the "SmartBenefits" link. 

## Four New Locations to Load SmarTrip Value

By early December, you'll be able to add value to your SmarTrip card at four new locations. Of course, you can still load value on the bus and at any Metro station. The 4 new locations are:

**PRTC Transit Center**  
Woodbridge  
Monday - Friday  
7 AM to 7 PM

**Todos Supermarket**  
Woodbridge  
M-F: 9 AM to 9:30 PM  
Sat-Sun: 8:30 AM to 9:30 PM

**Manassas City Hall**  
Manassas  
Monday - Friday  
8:30 AM to 5 PM


**Todos Supermarket**  
Dumfries  
M-F: 9 AM to 9 PM  
Sat-Sun: 9AM to 9PM

## Metro Transfers End Jan. 4

Metro, Fairfax Connector and Arlington's ART bus will stop handing out or accepting paper transfers as of January 4, 2009.

Passengers who ride a PRTC bus and transfer to or from Metrobus, Fairfax Connector or ART will not receive the transfer discount as of January 4 unless they pay their fares with a SmarTrip card. SmarTrip is a rechargeable transit fare card that is accepted by many area transit agencies.

In order to receive the transfer discount, passengers must pay their fares with a SmarTrip card and must make the transfer within 3 hours.

SmarTrip cards can be purchased at the PRTC Transit Center, at Manassas-area Giant grocery stores or at Metro vending machines. 

# Leased Buses to Help Relieve Overcrowding

It's no secret that some commuter routes have become overcrowded, but PRTC is expecting eight new buses to arrive within the next several months to improve the situation.

Four of these buses were ordered new back in the summer, and the PRTC Board of Commissioners authorized the lease-purchase of four more buses for \$1.79 million at the Commission's November 6 meeting.

All the new buses will enter PRTC's fleet as they arrive, allowing for the addition of new trips.

All eight buses are coming from Motor Coach Industries (MCI). The four lease-purchase buses are vehicles that MCI chose to build prior to PRTC's acquisition.

Two of the four lease-purchase buses are existing demonstrator models—buses that were built so prospective buyers could examine and drive them—and are already being prepped for delivery to PRTC. The other two buses were also envisioned as demonstrators and are now nearing the end of production.

By purchasing demonstrator buses, the vehicles will be deliverable some six to eight months sooner than they would be under a new bus procurement process. That will enable PRTC to address overcrowding issues more quickly.

All the new buses will enter PRTC's fleet as they arrive, allowing for the addition of new trips. Since May, PRTC has added 15 new OmniRide commuter trips to relieve overcrowding.

PRTC has experienced tremendous growth this year in its commuter bus ridership. In the first 10 months of 2008, commuter ridership exceeded the mark set for all 12 months in 2007.

And although gasoline prices have been declining over the past several months, ridership so far has not abated appreciably. In fact, PRTC commuter buses carried 35% more passengers in September and October 2008 than it did in those months in 2007. □

# Outstanding Operators

First Transit, the contract provider for PRTC's bus services, chooses one outstanding operator each month for special recognition. If you have a compliment about your operator, please let us know.

## Clifton Tate — July 2008

Mr. Tate is always professional and is very customer service-oriented. He is up very early in the mornings, operating two morning OmniRide trips: one on the Dale City - Pentagon route and another on the Dale City - Washington route. □

## Donnell Griffin — August 2008

Mr. Griffin is a perfect fit on his current Woodbridge/Lake Ridge OmniLink route because he is very knowledgeable about the area and its regular passengers. Mr. Griffin also won 3rd place in the PRTC - First Transit Bus Roadeo this fall for his bus operating skills. □

## Ahmed Arshad — September 2008

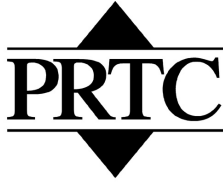
Mr. Arshad is courteous, calm and quiet and always greets his customers with a smile. He currently operates 2 morning OmniRide trips: a Dale City - Pentagon trip followed by a Lake Ridge - Washington trip. □

# Senior SmarTrip Cards Now Available at PRTC

PRTC is selling Senior SmarTrip cards, rechargeable transit fare cards for those 65 and older. When the card is tapped against the target on the bus electronic farebox, the fare—including any senior discounts—is automatically deducted.

The Senior SmarTrip card costs \$5 and is on sale at the PRTC Transit Center, M-F, 7 AM to 7 PM. Just remember to bring proof of your age!

Those ages 60-64 must continue paying PRTC fares in cash to receive the senior discount. □



Potomac and Rappahannock  
Transportation Commission

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Fax: 703-583-1377  
Website: [www.PRTCtransit.org](http://www.PRTCtransit.org)

**Serving Prince William County,  
Manassas and Manassas Park**

# I Want to Know...

**What safety measures are in place on PRTC buses in the event of an emergency? —**

*J.P. of Montclair*

PRTC buses have a variety of safety features to ensure passenger safety.

Each bus has multiple exits, including a roof hatch that can be opened in the event that the door is blocked. Also, windows may be used as emergency exits.

It is important to note that PRTC buses use low-sulfur diesel fuel, which is one of the safest fuels available. Diesel fuel is much less flammable than the gasoline we pump into our personal vehicles each day.

Also, the vast majority of the

PRTC bus fleet has built-in fire suppression equipment in the engine compartment to quickly extinguish any flames. Each PRTC bus also has hand-held fire extinguishers to put out any on-board fires.

Using Global Positioning Satellite technology, the Dispatch office can pinpoint the exact location of the bus to speed the response of the emergency personnel.

All PRTC bus operators are trained in first aid and CPR, and all buses have first aid kits.

In the event of an emergency of any type, the bus operator would first notify PRTC's Dispatch per-

sonnel. Our Dispatch office would then contact the appropriate agency — whether it's an ambulance, police or fire truck — to respond. Using Global Positioning Satellite technology, the Dispatch office can pinpoint the exact location of the bus to speed the response of the emergency personnel.

PRTC next would dispatch an extra bus to pick up the passengers from the bus and continue with the route. PRTC parks buses at strategic locations throughout the service area to provide a faster response in the event of an emergency.

In the event that a bus must be evacuated, all passengers should follow the instructions of the bus operator. 