



October 2010

OmniNews

Fall Service Change Takes Effect October 25

PRTC will implement its Fall Service Change on Monday, October 25. Twice a year, PRTC updates its timetables and maps to reflect current running times and introduce new and/or revised routings.

This fall, look for changes on these routes:

Linton Hall Metro Direct – A PM trip will be retimed. But the big news is that passengers will have the option of riding two new express trips – one in the mornings and one in the evenings. Because these are express trips, they will not serve local stops. The express AM trip will start at 7:30 a.m. at the

Limestone Commuter lot and travel straight to the West Falls Church Metro Station. The express PM trip will start at 7 p.m. at West Falls Church and go straight to the Limestone Commuter lot.



Despite a tight budget, PRTC is able to add these trips because they will be financially self-supporting and don't require an increase in the size of the bus fleet. PRTC receives federal and state funds when its buses travel in HOV lanes, and now that the I-66 HOV lanes have been extended

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PRTC Addressing OmniLink Performance Traffic and Slow Speeds Causing Late Buses

PRTC is taking steps to address OmniLink on-time performance issues that are being caused by growing traffic congestion, the increased number of traffic signals and resultant slower travel speeds.

Since 2004, the number of traffic signals in our service area has increased by 35%, the population has grown by 21%, and the vehicle miles travelled have increased by 14%. As a result, OmniLink is confronting:

- Difficulties in maintaining the existing service frequency while still accommodating off-route trip requests;

- More restrictive limits on off-route trips, which have been instituted to ease on-time performance issues but which limit the appeal of this service feature;
- Longer wait times for those making transfers, particularly at the PRTC Transit Center; and
- A diminished level of customer satisfaction with on-time performance.

To address the OmniLink problems, the PRTC Board of Commissioners in September approved the following steps:

1. Adjust the running times for

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Four Solutions to Aid OmniLink Performance

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easterly OmniLink routes based on actual performance measures. By taking traffic patterns and off-route trip trends into account in the newly revised timetables, passengers should notice improved OmniLink on-time performance. The new timetables will be implemented on October 25 with the Fall Service Change.

2. Consider increasing the off-route trip surcharge. Those who are ineligible for reduced fares must pay a \$1 surcharge when taking an off-route trip. A higher surcharge could prompt able-bodied people to use established bus stops rather than scheduling off-route trips, freeing up time for off-route trips to be booked by those age 60 and older and people with disabilities.

3. Analyze "on demand" stops to determine if any should be eliminated to shorten travel times.

4. Continue examining technological investments that would enable buses to bypass traffic backups at signalized intersections. (Prince William County has already embraced this idea in its recently-completed Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit study.)

Because funding is scarce, the solutions adopted by the PRTC Board of Commissioners do not require additional revenues, though the Board recognizes that solutions of this sort are merely interim measures. ■

Customer Service Facing Challenges of its Own

At the same time that OmniLink is encountering challenges, PRTC's Customer Service Department is confronting the problem of longer caller wait times. To address this, the PRTC Board of Commissioners in September approved the following steps:

1. Extend the dates for scheduling off-route trips. Customers, in the course of one phone call, can now schedule off-route trips up to 7 days in advance rather than 2 days.

2. Simplify customer instructions on PRTC's interactive voice response (IVR) phone system.

3. Broaden the use of an IVR call-back feature to include same-day off-route trips.

4. Activate the IVR's capability to allow callers to schedule their own off-route trips once software testing is complete.

5. Acquire trip planning software that will allow Customer Service Agents to retrieve information faster and transmit that information to customers so the duration of calls is shorter.

6. Pursue a partnership with Google to implement Google Transit as PRTC's TripPlanner.

Look for more information about these remedies in future issues of *OmniNews* and on our website, PRTCtransit.org. ■

Pick up a Revised ESP Brochure in November



When winter weather strikes, or when other emergency events arise, PRTC may activate its Emergency Service Plan (ESP).

The ESP brochure is currently being revised for the winter of 2010-2011 and will be available by mid-November on buses and at the PRTC Transit Center.

To make it even more convenient for you, the plan also will be posted in November at

PRTCtransit.org so you can print and download a copy of the brochure and keep it with you! Then you'll know how all the services you use will operate when the weather turns bad or when other emergency situations prevent PRTC from operating regular service. ■

Teaching Children to Stay Safe when Riding OmniLink



PRTC offers a Safe Bus Adventure Program to groups of children in preschool through 2nd grade. The free presentations include the reading of an original story about Ricky, a 9-year-old making his first solo bus ride.

Group presentations are booked on a first-come, first-served basis by calling (703) 583-7782. ■

Fall Service Change

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to Route 29, additional funding will be forthcoming. The new trips will have slightly different routing from the non-express trips to maximize their utilization of the HOV lanes and take full advantage of the federal earnings opportunity.

Manassas Metro Direct – Retiming all AM trips to more realistically match actual travel times. Start times will not change. The three AM trips to Vienna will continue to also serve West Falls Church.

Dale City to Washington Navy Yard OmniRide – Retiming the local stops for the first AM trip. Start times and arrival times in D.C. will not change.

Montclair and South Route 1 OmniRide – PM stop at 11th before G will no longer be served because of safety concerns.

Dale City OmniLink – Retiming route.

Dumfries OmniLink – Retiming route and adding two new bus stops: on Route 1 before Celestial Drive (northbound) and on Route 1 before American Eagle Boulevard (southbound).

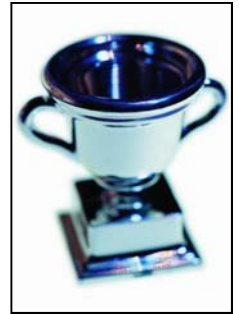
Route 1 OmniLink – Adding two new bus stops: on Route 1 before Celestial Drive (northbound) and on Route 1 before American Eagle Boulevard (southbound).

Tysons Express OmniRide - Half-fares extended through June 2011. Also, a new shuttle service connects locations in eastern Tysons with Tysons Express buses at the West Park Transit Center.

Woodbridge / Lake Ridge OmniLink – Retiming route. ■

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.



Silas Aiken— Employee of the Year 2009

Mr. Aiken was recognized in December as Employee of the Year for 2009. He is a dedicated professional who considers safety and on-time performance as the priorities in his work. He has been with PRTC for more than two years and currently operates OmniRide mid-day trips serving South Route 1, Manassas and Dale City. ■

Kingsley Dubeng— June 2010

A PRTC operator for more than five years, Mr. Dubeng is known for his skills both behind the wheel and in dealing with the public. He currently operates trips on the Route 1 OmniLink. ■

William Alvarez— July 2010

Mr. Alvarez has a good sense of humor and is always ready to greet his passengers with a smile. He has been with PRTC for more than one year and currently operates a Manassas OmniRide trip in the mornings and a Dale City OmniRide trip in the afternoons. ■

Clara Hambrite— August 2010

A safe driver who is known for her polite demeanor, Ms. Hambrite has been with PRTC for more than six years. She also is happy to fill in, as needed, around the office when she's not driving. She is currently assigned to operate two OmniRide trips in the mornings serving Montclair and Lake Ridge, and in the afternoons she operates an OmniRide trip serving South Route 1. ■



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

I Want to Know...

I'd like to start riding the Tysons Express bus to my job, but I wonder how easy it is to make connections with other transit services in Tysons. Can you provide me with some information? — A. D. of Woodbridge

We have good news, A.D.! First, we need to share that half-fares on OmniRide's Tysons Express are extended through June 2011!

Moving on to your question, passengers on OmniRide's Tysons Express can now connect with a new shuttle bus service to reach even more destinations—specifically those in eastern Tysons Corner.

The new shuttle bus, launched in mid-September by Loudoun County Transit with funding from

Virginia Megaprojects, picks up Tysons Express passengers inside the West Park Transit Station and serves four stops:

- Old Meadow at Colshire Meadow;
- Northrop Grumman;
- MITRE 1; and
- Capital One.

The shuttle provides transfer opportunities for passengers on three of PRTC's trips in the AMs and three trips in the PMs. The eastern Tysons shuttle is free for those who board and disembark at West Park.

This new eastern Tysons shuttle service shouldn't be confused with the existing Tysons Connector mid-day shuttle, which offers two looping routes around Tysons every 10 minutes between 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

There are multiple stops at popular locations along both loops!

The Tysons Connector is also free and is operated by Fairfax Connector with funding provided by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

The mid-day shuttle is great for those who want to go out for lunch or run an errand!

Need more information about OmniRide's Tysons Express? You can find maps and timetables at PRTCtransit.org, or call our Customer Service office at (703) 730-6664.

For comprehensive information about all alternatives to driving to and in Tysons—including all the services mentioned here plus carpool, vanpool and telework—visit GoTysons.org. 