

“PENDING BOARD APPROVAL”

POTOMAC AND RAPPAHANNOCK
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (PRTC)

OFFICIAL COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

DATE: January 8, 2009
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
14700 Potomac Mills Road, 2nd Floor
Woodbridge, VA 22192-6811

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

*Maureen Caddigan	Prince William County
*John Jenkins	Prince William County
*Frank Jones, Chairman	City of Manassas Park
*Corey Hill	DRPT
*Scott Lingamfelter	Virginia House of Delegates
*Michael May, Treasurer	Prince William County
*Paul Milde, Immediate Past Chmn	Stafford County
*Martin Nohe	Prince William County
*Frank Principi	Prince William County
*George Schwartz	Stafford County
*Jonathan Way, Vice Chairman	City of Manassas

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Jean Benson	City of Fredericksburg
*Brad Ellis	City of Fredericksburg
*Corey Stewart	Prince William County

STAFF AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Gina Altis	PRTC Executive Assistant
Tom Cain	FIRST TRANSIT Region Vice President
Doris Chism	PRTC Dir., Customer Service & Dispatch
Aroni El	Citizen
Joyce Embrey	PRTC Dir., Finance & Administration
Althea Evans	PRTC Dir., Marketing & Communications
Sandy Ferris	Citizen
Anthony Foster	PRTC Transportation Project Manager
Holly Frisch	Citizen
Shanta Garth	FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Accounting & Admin.
Al Harf	PRTC Executive Director
Steve Hastalis	Citizen
Ross Horton	PRTC Legal Counsel
Robb Howell	FIRST TRANSIT General Manager
Todd Johnson	FIRST TRANSIT Maintenance Manager
Bill Leisen	PRTC Mgr., Contract Operations
Bob Leibbrandt	PWC Budget & Analysis
Steve MacIsaac	VRE Legal Counsel
Mary Marshall	PRTC Account & Budget Manager
Eric Marx	PRTC Dir., Planning & Operations
Betsy Massie	PRTC Dir., Grants & Project Management
Suhas Naddoni	MANASSAS PARK City Councilmember
Paul Pitchke	FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Operations
Debbie Powell	Citizen
Chuck Steigerwald	PRTC Senior Transit Planner
Francis Setash	PRTC Technical Support Specialist
Jennifer Straub	VRE Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Dave Tyeryar	PWC Dir., Budget & Analysis
Clint Wade	PRTC Rideshare Specialist/CSA
Dale Zehner	VRE Chief Executive Officer

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wally Covington	Prince William County
Matthew Kelly, Secretary	City of Fredericksburg
Jackson Miller	Virginia House of Delegates
Toddy Puller	Virginia Senate

ALTERNATES ABSENT

Charles Badger	DRPT
Harry Crisp	Stafford County
Mark Dudenhefer	Stafford County
Peter LaMarca	City of Fredericksburg
Lorraine Lasch	Prince William County
Hal Parrish	City of Manassas

Sorine Preli
Phillip Rodenberg
John Stirrup
William Wren

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

*Voting Member

3. INVOCATION Led by Vice Chairman Way.
4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Led by Commissioner May.
5. CITIZENS' TIME

Ms. Debbie Powell, Haymarket, Virginia, voiced her concern about chronic overcrowding/standees on the Manassas OmniRide route and cited several incidents where passengers have been left at bus stops. She recommended buses be added to the route to alleviate the situation and that PRTC increase communications to the passengers.

Mr. Aroni El, Woodbridge, Virginia. Mr. El stated that at the September 3, 2008 PRTC public hearing regarding the "Proposed Bus Fare Increase and Fare Indexing Policy" he opposed the proposed bus fare increase and recommended that the Commission revisit the issue after November 2008. With the implementation of the fare increase and the decline in fuel prices, Mr. El questioned what passengers will receive for their money. He went on to ask about PRTC's protocol to add bus stops to the bus routes and noted that he has lodged several complaints, but the complaints cannot be located when he meets face-to-face with a supervisor. He also recommended that some type of "markings" be placed on the ground in front of the public restrooms located outside the Transit Center to maintain order for people waiting in line to use the restrooms.

No other citizens came forward.

6. PRESENTATIONS

[First Transit\Info] A. First Transit General Manager Robb Howell – Employee Recognition and Operations Report.

Mr. Howell reported that the December 2008 Operator-of-the-Month Robert Magruder is not present this evening. Mr. Magruder has been a bus operator since November 2007 and currently operates bus service on one of the Dale City OmniRide routes.

Mr. Howell reported that 23 commendations (directed to 15 different bus operators and three supervisors) were received during the month of December. He noted that supervisors are making an effort to be more visible on the streets particularly at the Pentagon and in Washington, D.C. to address overcrowding concerns. He went on to note that the accident frequency rate during the month of December was .69 per 100,000 miles and the year-to-date rate is 1.38 compared to 1.58 for the same period last year.

Mr. Howell observed that the December System Performance and Ridership Report reflects a “spike” in customer complaint rates for both the OmniRide and OmniLink bus service and noted that staff is handling this as a top priority to reverse it. The complaint rate on the OmniRide service is 10.37% per 10,000 passengers compared to the prior month rate at 5.6%. The complaint rate on the OmniLink service increased to 6.09% though the year-to-date statistics on both bus services remain below the prior year.

Chairman Jones inquired about the basis of the complaints (i.e. service related, etc.) and asked if any of the complaints are justified. Mr. Howell explained that most of the complaints are justified in that the complaints are experiential (e.g., overcrowding, operator unfamiliarity, etc.), but further fact-finding is necessary to provide a complete diagnosis and set of remedies. Mr. Howell went on to observe that the spike comes right on the heels of a schedule change, operator pick, and fare increase, all of which surely contributed.

Commissioner Way asked if First Transit routinely analyzes/reports the number of standees and people left at bus stops to assess the need for additional capacity. Mr. Howell noted that the bus operators report to dispatch the number of standees on board the bus when overcrowding occurs. Mr. Harf explained that load factors are routinely tracked, but a more elusive number is the number of passengers left at the stop (either because there is no more room aboard the bus for standees or because some passengers opted to wait for a less crowded bus). He cited the last bus stop in Washington, D.C. (14th and Independence) as a prime example, and observed that PRTC does supplemental field work to assess conditions like this if they appear to be chronic. He went on to explain that if chronic overcrowding does occur on a particular trip, PRTC schedules an additional trip (resources permitting) or adjusts the schedule to remedy it.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RES 09-01-01 Minutes of December 4, 2008.
[PRTC\Minutes]

Commissioner Caddigan moved, with a second by Commissioner Milde, to approve the Minutes as presented. There was no discussion on the motion. (CADDIGAN\MILDE, WITH MAJORITY VOTE AYE; LINGAMFELTER/NOHE ABSTAINED)

8. AGENDA APPROVAL

RES 09-01-02 Agenda of January 8, 2009.
[PRTC\Agenda]

Commissioner Caddigan moved, with a second by Commissioner Jenkins, to approve the Agenda as amended. Chairman Jones moved Item 6-B – PRTC FY 2010 Budget – Preliminary Observations PowerPoint presentation to follow the VRE Proposed FY 2010 Budget Powerpoint presentation. There was no discussion on the motion. (CADDIGAN\JENKINS, UNANIMOUS)

9. CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL

RES 09-02-03 Consent Agenda of January 8, 2009.
[PRTC\Consent Agenda]

Vice Chairman Way made a motion, with a second by Commissioner May, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. (WAY\MAY, UNANIMOUS)

RES 09-01-04 A. Treasurer's Report.
[PRTC\Finance]

Approved the Treasurer's Report of October 31, 2008. (WAY\MAY, UNANIMOUS)

RES 09-01-05 B. Budget and Appropriate \$425,000 of the City of Manassas
[Manassas] Gas Tax Funds for Transportation Projects in the City and
 Unappropriate \$325,000 of the City of Manassas Gas Tax
 Funds from the FY 2009 Street Paving Program.

Authorized the expenditure of \$425,000 of the City of Manassas's 2% motor fuels tax funds for the Battle Street and warehouse facility projects and unappropriated \$325,000 for the FY 2009 Street Paving Program. (WAY\MAY, UNANIMOUS)

RES 09-01-06 C. Unappropriate \$250,000 of the City of Manassas Gas Tax
[Manassas] Funds for Dean Drive Extended Project.

Authorized the unappropriation of \$250,000 of the City of Manassas's 2% motor fuels tax funds for the Dean Drive extended project. (WAY\MAY, UNANIMOUS)

RES 09-01-07 D. Budget and Appropriate \$500,000 of the City of Manassas
[Manassas Park] Park's 2% Motor Fuels Tax Funds for the Manassas Drive
 and Mathis Avenue Intersection Improvement Project.

Authorized the expenditure of \$500,000 of the City of Manassas Park's 2% motor fuels tax funds for the Manassas Drive and Mathis Avenue intersection improvement project. (WAY\MAY, UNANIMOUS)

10. VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS (VRE)

[VRE\Info] A. Operations Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes of
 December 19, 2008. There were no comments.

[VRE\Info] B. Chief Executive Officer's Report (Dec 08).

At this time, Mr. Zehner made a PowerPoint presentation to provide the Commission with a fuller elaboration of the proposed VRE FY 2010 Budget. A question and answer discussion followed the presentation, as summarized below:

Delegate Lingamfelter: Has a comparative cost analysis been conducted as to what the daily average single commute would cost as compared to riding the VRE and, if so, recommended that the VRE ridership be reminded of the cost savings riding the VRE versus driving. Mr. Zehner replied affirmatively.

Commissioner Ellis: Observed as a VRE rider that passengers are cost-sensitive, but not as sensitive as might be perceived. Not all costs can be captured, like the psychological comfort of being able to commute without the stress of driving and being able to use commuting time gainfully.

Commissioner Milde: How much revenue would be generated by the CAO Task Force's "fare increase" recommendation, and how does this square with the PowerPoint presentation's assertion about a reduction in ridership causing a \$1.35 million deficit? Mr. Zehner replied approximately \$400,000. Asked again to reconcile this with the PowerPoint assertion about a revenue loss, VRE's Deputy Executive Director Jennifer Straub said the revenue effect would be less than \$400,000 and both she and Mr. Zehner went on to discuss the substantial degree of uncertainty inherent in such projections, especially in light of the fact that fare increases of the magnitude enacted mid-year and proposed for FY 2010 are without precedent.

Commissioner Nohe: Observed that riders have different motivations for riding depending upon where they live, how far they travel, what their household incomes are, etc. Mr. Zehner concurred, noting that the Fredericksburg commute to Washington, D.C. captures 40-50% of the market because there is currently no competition from Fredericksburg except for vanpools and a limited number of buses. The commute from Burke captures about 3%, because it is closer-in and there are more choices (i.e., Metro, buses, vanpools, and HOV).

Commissioner Milde: Again questioned the PowerPoint assertion about a revenue loss, and asked for a further explanation. He asked whether the revenue loss appearing in the PowerPoint is simply the loss that would result if there were a 5% ridership loss and no fare increase. Mr. Zehner again replied that there is a substantial degree of uncertainty inherent in ridership/revenue projections stemming from fare increases, and noted management's reticence to assume that fare increases invariably result in revenue gains.

Delegate Lingamfelter: What amount of funding is needed at the state level to address VRE's immediate needs? Mr. Zehner replied \$4 million. Delegate Lingamfelter recommended that he and Mr. Zehner work together to produce a more explicit estimate.

[PRTC\FY2010
Budget]

FY 2010 Budget – Preliminary Observations by PRTC
Executive Director Alfred Harf and Open Discussion.

Commissioner Jenkins explained that the VRE FY 2010 budget has been approved by the VRE Operations Board and the action before the Commission this evening is to authorize forwarding the VRE budget to the local jurisdictions so that it can be incorporated into their prospective budgets. He went on to explain that Prince William County's budget will be presented to the Prince William Board of County Supervisors on February 17th for inclusion of the proposed VRE budget. Currently, there is no time to remand the budget to the VRE Operations Board.

Delegate Lingamfelter agreed with Commissioner Jenkins and recommended that the VRE budget be in place so that he will be able to convey what needs to be fixed and that the budget process needs to move forward.

From a procedural perspective, Commissioner Nohe asked if a bigger problem will exist if the budget is remanded to the VRE Operations Board and doesn't move forward by February 1st or if the budget is forwarded to the jurisdictions and some of the jurisdictions remand the budget back to VRE. Mr. Zehner explained that a bigger problem will exist if the jurisdictions remand the budget. He went on to explain that NVTC's jurisdictions pay the VRE subsidy from "general fund revenue" and the entire 2% motor fuels tax goes to WMATA meaning that the two Commissions tend to view the budget differently. He recommended moving forward with the budget process and dealing with issues as they arise.

Commissioner Caddigan commented that stimulus funds could be forthcoming and the 2% motor fuels tax could increase. She recommended taking a hard look at the budget in 2010 and again in 2011 moving forward with the proposed budget and in 2011 working with Prince William County staff and the Board of County Supervisors to determine what can be improved.

Vice Chairman Way read a statement for the record that he provided to the Manassas City Council: "In my judgment the budget is an excellent balance designed to permit operations of the VRE under its established guidelines including maintenance of a reserve fund, having fares cover about 55% of operating costs, sustaining necessary equipment maintenance, and giving local jurisdictions a small 5% reduction in subsidy demands in FY2010." He elaborated that the VRE budget is well balanced and can cope with variances. PRTC's budget problems need to be addressed, but "not on the back of the VRE budget".

Based on the answer to Commissioner Nohe's procedural question, Commissioner Milde proposed an amended resolution embodying his earlier suggestions, namely: 1) strike the \$2.65/gallon projected diesel fuel cost and insert \$2.50/gallon, and 2) strike a 6% fare increase in July and insert 8%. Commissioner Ellis seconded.

Chairman Jones inquired about the impact on the overall budget by striking and inserting the two changes proposed by Stafford and Fredericksburg. Mr. Zehner explained that reducing the fuel cost to \$2.50/gallon would reduce the required local subsidy by \$230,000 and changing the 6% fare increase to 8% would reduce the required local subsidy by another \$500,000.

RES 09-01-14
[PRTC\CTB]

3. Approval of Testimony for the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Public Hearing on Proposed Six-Year Plan.

Mr. Harf observed that management debated whether the proposed testimony to the CTB should take exception to the initiation of a new intercity rail subsidization program at the same time the state is curtailing assistance for traditional transit services. In the end, management concluded that the arguments for not opposing this initiative are more compelling than the arguments otherwise, though he said it is important for the Commission to be aware of both.

Commissioner Caddigan moved, with a second by Commissioner Milde, to approve the testimony prepared for delivery to the Commonwealth Transportation Board on January 13, 2009 public hearing. There was no discussion on the motion. (CADDIGAN\MILDE, WITH MAJORITY VOTE AYE; LINGAMFELTER ABSTAINED)

[PRTC\Info]

C. Information Items:

1. PRTC Service Performance Reports. There were no comments.
2. PRTC Budget-to-Actual Comparison. There were no comments.
3. Fleet Maintenance Audit. There were no comments.
4. Communications:
 - a. Related to Funding. There were no comments.
 - b. Related to Jurisdiction. There were no comments.
 - c. General Interest. There were no comments.

13. OTHER BUSINESS/COMMISSIONERS' TIME

On behalf of the Commission, Commissioner Caddigan expressed appreciation to Chairman Jones for his outstanding service as Chairman during the calendar year 2008.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, newly appointed Chairman May adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, February 11, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
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Woodbridge, VA 22192-6811
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