

MOTION:

SECOND:

**RE: APPROVE THE 2021 POTOMAC AND RAPPAHANNOCK TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

ACTION:

WHEREAS, each year the Potomac and Rappahannock Transit Commission (“PRTC” or the “Commission”) adopts a state and federal legislative agenda to guide its advocacy efforts; and

WHEREAS, the 2021 legislative agenda focuses on the Commission’s priorities of supporting enhanced funding for transit capital and operating programs, addressing the Virginia transit capital shortfall, restoring Northern Virginia Transportation Authority revenues, and addressing lost revenues associated with the conversion of HOV lanes to HOT lanes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Potomac and Rappahannock Transit Commission does hereby approve its 2021 legislative agenda as presented/amended.

Votes:

Ayes:

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent from Vote:

Alternate Present Not Voting:

Absent from Meeting:

With six individual jurisdictions coming together to speak as one voice under the name of the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), it is critical to outline key policy-level priorities for state and federal initiatives.

Federal and State COVID-19 Stimulus & Economic Relief

- It is essential to fund ongoing transit operations to preserve jobs, essential services, and maintain the robust economy of Northern Virginia.
 - Like most National Capital Region transit systems, PRTC has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With 90 percent of ridership and 40 percent of revenues coming from commuter-based services, PRTC has been operationally and economically devastated.
 - Coupled with loss of motor fuels tax revenue losses and reductions in tolls collections from the P3s, PRTC has been hit from all sides by the pandemic impacts.
- PRTC supports additional stimulus funding that ensures ongoing transit services that can be scaled to permit safe travel with social distancing (max capacity limited to 1/5th), prevent layoffs for employees, and maintain the essential services for employment, grocery access, and medical care.
- PRTC also supports enhanced dedicated funding for capital and operating expenses dedicated to sanitization for fleet and facilities, including personal protective equipment (PPE)/materials for employees and passengers.

Action:

- Support federal and state stimulus packages that will preserve services, jobs, and communities with an emphasis on flexible spending timelines to offset shifting revenue losses.
- Closely monitor all federal and state legislative proposals pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic that would impact PRTC's operations and policies, including leave policies, hazard pay, and employee liability.
- Emphasize funding for research and deployment of best-practices for PPE materials and sanitization.

Preserve State Revenues to Address the Virginia Transit Capital Shortfall

- PRTC supports a statewide approach to resolving the loss of revenues that fund transit capital projects. This becomes a critical issue when the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) allocates the last revenues received from the 2007 Transportation Capital Project Revenue Bonds, which makes up almost 40 percent of funding for transit capital investments across Virginia.
- The loss of state funds will directly impact **OmniRide**, which is particularly reliant on state funds because the vast majority of regional federal capital funds (98 percent) flows directly to WMATA/Virginia Railway Express (VRE).

Action:

- Work closely with fellow stakeholders to identify options for long-term, sustainable funding for the Commonwealth's transportation needs.
- Communicate the impact of the very small amount of federal transit capital funds that flow to **OmniRide** and the positive impact of state funds.

Meetings Held Through Electronic Communication Means

- Coordinate with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, VRE, Virginia FOIA Advisory Council, and other stakeholders on legislative proposals to increase flexibility among public bodies to use technology to accommodate the needs of voting and participating members while remaining open and transparent to the public.



Support State Restoration of Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Revenues

- PRTC supports restoration of NVTA revenues for continued funding/implementation of multimodal projects (including transit) that support the regional economy and reduce congestion. This will subsequently help transit in all of its forms.

Things to Watch

- *United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) & Virginia COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution:* Transit workers are in Phase II of the COVID-19 vaccination plan. PRTC will work to ensure transit workers remain a high priority for vaccines, PPE, and other solutions that maintain health for workers, riders, and the public at large.
- *Federal Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act Reauthorization:* USDOT's FAST Act (2015) has been extended into December 2020. PRTC will partner with stakeholders to advocate for appropriate funding levels and policies to support funding for bus and bus facilities and other programs critical to the region.
- *Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Annual Legislative Agenda:* As state-wide initiatives are proposed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) or the General Assembly, VTA members will work collectively to support or shape policy that will increase transit funding and expend or protect services. PRTC will coordinate with NVTC, VRE, and other transit systems to support commuter-based services to support the Northern Virginia economy.
- *Virginia I-95 Corridor Improvement Plan:* As the corridor improvement study advances, PRTC will partner with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and DRPT for improvements to park and ride lots for **OmniRide** services, vanpooling, and carpooling/slugging. Enhanced facilities essential to make High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) travel more attractive and increase throughput on I-95.
- *Federal High Occupancy Toll Lane (HOT Lane) Loss of Revenues:* In December 2015, PRTC lost federal funds when a new Federal Transit Administration (FTA) policy no longer gave credit to transit systems operating on HOT lanes, only HOV lanes, when converting I-95 to HOT lanes.
 - **OmniRide will lose \$1M over the next five years on I-95 alone.** As I-66 is converted from HOV lanes to HOT lanes, **OmniRide** will see another **loss of \$615K** in annual federal credits that are used for supporting capital needs.
 - PRTC and NVTC will jointly evaluate the federal policy climate to determine if seeking a policy reversal is appropriate. When considering the future impacts of funding losses forthcoming on I-66, this may be the time to pursue the ability to earn revenues for operating high intensity motorbus services in these congested corridors.



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