ITEM 9
June 7, 2018
PRTC Regular Meeting

PRTC Executive Director's Time

A.   INFO   Staff Recognition – Sidney Elam – 15 Years of Service

B.   INFO   Follow-Up from Prior Meetings
- Legislative Update

C.   INFO   Executive Director's Report
- Update on Mohamed Elatrebi – represented PRTC/First Transit at the National Bus Roadeo in Tampa Bay, Florida, May 5-7, 2018
- Industry Article – Key Factors Influencing Riders in North America: The Emerging Urban Mobility Ecosystem

Summary: "Key Factors Influencing Riders in North America: The Emerging Urban Mobility Ecosystem."

Original Report by Masabi for Mass Transit Rider Research. Appeared April 2018.

Masabi issued a Google Survey poll in the fall of 2017 to a diverse group of over 1,000 US residents in order to gain an overview of the trends taking place in regards to public transit ridership across North America. The survey included those who use public transit services and those who do not. All respondents, however, did have access to public transit services. Those who did not have access were excluded from taking the survey.

The survey was conducted to isolate the macro trends that are currently impacting public transit ridership and to indicate subgroup trends taking place, which might highlight behavior occurring and may spur others to conduct more in-depth research. Topline findings include:

- *Citizens are mostly optimistic about public transit services*
- *Public transit is still underutilized*
- *Convenience is the top priority for passengers when choosing to ride public transit*
- *Ridesharing is connecting public transit for many, facilitating multimodal journeys*
- *Convenience enablers attract riders (combining modes of transit through an app, mobile ticketing and location tracking)*
- *Private car ownership vs. ridesharing and public transit: The use of a shared mobility services vastly increases the likelihood of riding public transit, pointing to a growing urban mobility system.*

This report states that convenience, more than cost and necessity is the number one driver behind public transit ridership across all of the respondents. Riders with multiple options for transportation – the ones that are most rapidly reducing their reliance on public transit – are concerned first and foremost with convenience, not cost or comfort. While this means public transit agencies are vulnerable to losing riders to more convenient options, it also means that even minor improvements in convenience can boost ridership numbers.

Per this report, the bad news for public transit agencies is that their ridership numbers are indeed being impacted in some capacity by the increasing popularity of ridesharing services – nearly 10% of all consumers with access to public transit are using ridesharing on a weekly basis. The good news, however, is that there's a major opportunity to play to the trend of combining ridesharing and public transit by creating first/last mile partnerships.

The report concludes that agencies can take a lesson from some of the convenient features that ridesharing apps provide, like location tracking and seamless payment, and deploy them relatively easily within their own systems. Increasing ridership by boosting convenience would have a positive impact on street congestion, while ridesharing can serve to replace personal vehicles in the first/last mile and in places underserved by public transit.

So what? How could OmniRide grow by becoming innovative?

The report's findings clearly paint a picture of urban transit that is growing increasingly complex. Given what we know about the importance of convenience, it's clear that many consumers who are not strictly motivated by price are combining public transit and ridesharing.

While fare reductions and service hour changes could certainly be cost prohibitive, technology changes are relatively inexpensive to implement, and have also measurably increased ridership based on the data in this report. OmniRide is currently in the process of implementing a real-time arrival and location tracking application, but could also benefit from a mobile ticketing solution and first/last mile partnerships.

There is much more potential moving forward for interoperability between public and private services to enable full first/last mile journeys with public transit at its core. Not to mention the fact that relatively small changes in convenience – the addition of location tracking or convenient ticket purchase options, for example – could result in a major ridership boost for OmniRide in the short term. Increasing ridership, even marginally, is a must for OmniRide for the sake of our congested county.

Through better public/private partnerships and a more integrated transit system in general, it is possible to reduce overall congestion while enabling growth in Prince William County by:

- Increasing the use and ridership of OmniRide, starting with easier to deploy, consumer-facing features that increase convenience and build good will

- Recognize that OmniRide has been suffering from years of investment neglect, but that immediate changes can be made to start moving things in the right direction

- Facilitating partnerships between different modes of transit to increase efficiency

- Moving towards a more integrated transit model with closer partnerships between public and private organizations

There is no reason to be focused on one transportation mode or another. Instead, improving the current situation should be about facilitating seamless mobility and enabling consumers to use the best mode for each situation, thereby increasing convenience. This is absolutely critical to converting the riders who aren't using public transit every day out of necessity – a huge growth opportunity that OmniRide can start taking advantage of right now.