

February 2010

OmniNews

OmniRide's Tysons Express Offers Half-Fares Until May

Many commuters are taking advantage of the half-price fares being offered on OmniRide's Tysons Express bus through mid-May.



Bus wraps are coming soon!

If you or someone you know commutes to Tysons Corner, give OmniRide's Tysons Express a try! You'll have a safe and inexpensive ride, and can put your commuting time to good use for a change. Maybe you want to finish that book you've been reading, catch a few winks, or browse the Internet on the Wi-Fi enabled Tysons Express buses!

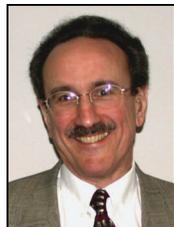
OmniRide's Tysons Express is funded entirely by Virginia Megaprojects – a partnership between the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the Virginia Department of Transportation to help mitigate congestion

in the Tysons area during the construction of High Occupancy Toll lanes.

Until mid-May, OmniRide's Tysons Express passengers who use a SmarTrip card pay \$2.40 per trip, and those using cash pay \$3 per trip. After mid-May, the regular OmniRide fare structure will take effect: \$4.75 for SmarTrip fares or \$6.50 cash.

OmniRide's Tysons Express offers four trips to Tysons in the morning and four trips back to eastern Prince William in the afternoon. Buses serve two local stops: the Woodbridge VRE station and the Route 123/I-95 commuter lot. □

Budget Addresses Financial Needs



By Alfred H. Harf, Executive Director of PRTC

PRTC's proposed FY 2011 budget, which includes a fare increase,

is being driven by the financial challenges our member governments are facing - challenges that we hope will be eased by economic recovery and increased federal and state assistance to lessen the need for local subsidy.

As much as I wish I could say relief from the state or federal governments is close at hand, there are

no signs of that on the state side and only a possible one-time, short-term remedy in the near-term on the federal side.

Relief on the state side would require action by the General Assembly. While there is broad-based agreement among legislators that the state should invest more on transportation, how to do so continues to be fiercely debated. Some think higher taxes and fees are necessary, while others believe that the solution is to devote a larger share of existing taxes and fees to trans-

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PRTC Accepting Public Comments on Proposed Budget & Fare Increase

PRTC held an online forum on February 9 and two public hearings on February 17 to gather comments about its proposed \$30.4 million budget for Fiscal Year 2011. The final public hearings will be held on February 25 at Manassas City Hall at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. The proposed budget calls for a fare increase of about 10 percent for commuter bus services and 9 percent for local bus services to take effect July 1, 2010.

Comments will be accepted through February 26. Once the public comment period is closed, all comments will be reviewed to see if changes to the proposed budget are warranted. The PRTC Board of Commissioners is expected to vote on the budget and potential fare increase, in their final proposed state, in March.

There is a chance that the OmniRide fare could increase by another 25 cents. If Congress allows the maximum commuter transit benefit to remain at \$230 per month (the maximum amount is scheduled to revert back to \$120 per month in January 2011), then the OmniRide fare will increase by another 25 cents. ■

Proposed SmarTrip Fares as of Feb. 1		
Bus Service	Current SmarTrip Fare	Proposed SmarTrip Fare
OmniRide	\$4.75	\$5.25
Metro Direct	\$2.40	\$2.65
OmniLink	\$1.10	\$1.20
Cross County	\$1.10	\$1.20

Proposed Cash Fares as of Feb. 1		
Bus Service	Current Cash Fare	Proposed Cash Fare
OmniRide	\$6.50	\$7.00
Metro Direct	\$3.00	\$3.30
OmniLink	\$1.10	\$1.20
Cross County	\$1.10	\$1.20

New Commuter Lot To Open in April

An unusually cold winter and multiple snowfalls along with adverse soil conditions have pushed back the estimated opening date for the new commuter parking lot being built at PRTC.

The new 122-space lot at the intersection of Potomac Mills and Telegraph roads is now scheduled to open to the public in April, a delay of about two months.

When working on the site, the contractor discovered a previously-unreported oil tank, septic tank and oil/water separator. In addition, in several places the soil was not stable enough for construction or required special attention so it would compact sufficiently to accommodate the parking lot.

The new parking lot will replace a gravel lot across the street, where commuters currently park.



Last year, two structures on the property were demolished. Since then, the land has been leveled, a retaining wall has been built at the rear of the property and electricity is being installed for lighting.

A lane will be created next to the parking lot to accommodate buses pulling over to pick up and drop off passengers, and a shelter will be added to the site before it opens. ■

Spotsylvania Joins PRTC

PRTC is pleased to welcome Spotsylvania County as the newest member of the regional transportation commission.

As of February 15, Spotsylvania County joined PRTC's other member jurisdictions: Prince William County, Stafford County and the Cities of Manassas, Manassas Park and Fredericksburg.

Unlike their northern partners, Spotsylvania, Stafford and Fredericksburg do not pay for the bus services operated by PRTC. Instead these members sponsor the FRED local bus services operated by the City of Fredericksburg and fund/help make policy decisions regarding Virginia Railway Express operations. ■

Proposed Budget

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portation while making cuts elsewhere in the state budget. These competing views are proving difficult to reconcile, and a deadlock seems likely.

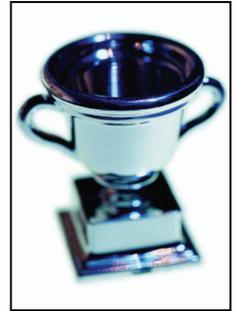
On the federal side, the principal question is: When will the Congress enact the next multi-year transportation funding bill? The last such bill expired in September 2009, and the Congress has only enacted extensions a month or two at a time. At this time, the Congress is not expected to take up a multi-year transportation bill until sometime in 2011.

The one-time, short-term remedy that may provide some relief is the prospective "jobs bill" on which the Senate is working. That bill reportedly will include a one-time infusion of transportation funding. If PRTC receives funding as a result, it would be used to the maximum extent allowed for operating budget relief. Why? Because the principal source of public funding for PRTC's operating budget is Prince William County's local motor fuels tax, which is generating less revenue than the County is spending for PRTC bus and VRE train services.

In summary, so long as the only near term relief amounts to a one-time, short-term infusion of federal funds, PRTC is likely to have to stay the course with its FY 2011 budget as proposed. ■

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.



Jerry Swinson — September 2009

Mr. Swinson is a "people person" who enjoys his job and is also a member of his church choir. He has been at PRTC for more than 2 years. In the mornings, he currently operates a Lake Ridge OmniRide trip as well as a Rosslyn OmniRide trip. In the afternoons, he operates a Montclair OmniRide trip. ■

Milton Powell — October 2009

A member of the First Transit / PRTC team for more than 2 years, Mr. Powell is punctual, pleasant and courteous—all qualities that are important when dealing with the public. Mr. Powell currently operates a Lake Ridge OmniRide trip in the mornings and a Dale City OmniRide trip in the afternoons. ■

Laddavanh Guss — November 2009

Known among her co-workers for her bright smile and pleasant demeanor, Ms. Guss is very knowledgeable about all the PRTC routes. She has been with PRTC for 5 years and currently operates trips on the Dale City OmniLink route. ■

Kingsley Dubeng — December 2009

Mr. Dubeng enjoys being a bus operator - a job he has held at PRTC for the past 3 years. He is a true professional in every sense of the word. He currently operates trips on the Dumfries OmniLink route. ■



Potomac and Rappahannock
Transportation Commission

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

I Want to Know...

I've noticed that your Rider Express messages encourage me to forward any comments to Omni@OmniRide.com.

Why? And do you really investigate complaints that are made by passengers? Will you follow up and let me know the outcome of any investigation? — D. M. of Lake Ridge

Thank you, D. M., for your questions. Let's take them in order.

1. At the top of each Rider Express message is a notice asking that the reader not hit the "reply" button, but to "forward" any responses to Omni@OmniRide.com. This email address sends your comments directly to PRTC's Customer Service Department, where your compliment or complaint is logged and investigated, as appropriate. Using the Omni@OmniRide.com address is the fastest way to let us know your thoughts and to get a reply.

2. Yes, PRTC really does inves-

tigate complaints—every one of them. If you have a problem or notice that something isn't operating as it should, you may:

- Send an email to Omni@OmniRide.com;
- Call the Customer Service Department at (703) 730-6664; or
- Fill out an online customer comment form by going to our website, PRTCtransit.org, clicking on "Contact Us" at the top of the page, and selecting "Customer Comment Form."

When notifying us of a problem, it's best if you can provide specific information such as the bus number, route, location, date and time that the incident occurred. If those details are unavailable, we will do our best to determine what happened and why, although the investigation may take longer to complete.

During the investigation, PRTC researches operational records and speaks with anyone who may have information, such as

dispatchers and supervisors. If the issue is one that our contractor, First Transit, must resolve, we refer the issue to the contractor for resolution. This may involve additional research and interviews by First Transit personnel.

Once the issue is resolved, the outcome is entered into a log. Those who have requested a follow-up call are contacted with the results of the investigation, and that contact is also logged.

3. When you make a complaint or comment, you will be asked if you'd like a response. If so, we will get in touch with you as soon as the investigation is complete. In some cases, even if you have not specifically requested a follow up, one is provided based on the circumstances of the issue.

Your comments are important to us! Please let us know what we are doing right as well as the problems you encounter so that, if possible, we can take steps to improve your commute! 