



February 2012

# OmniNews

## PRTC Ridership Sets Record in 2011

PRTC had a memorable year in 2011 as the agency celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and saw ridership increase by 7% – the largest annual increase in three years.

In 2011, the OmniRide and Metro Direct commuter services carried more than 2.3 million passengers – a 6% increase over 2010. At the same time, PRTC’s OmniLink and Cross County Connector local bus services carried more than 1 million passengers for the first time in their history – a 9% increase over 2010.

Combined, the commuter and local bus services carried more than 3.4 million passengers in 2011 – a 7% increase over 2010, and the largest annual increase since 2008 when gas prices surpassed \$4 per gallon

and area residents stepped up their search for ways to save money.

In September 2011, as PRTC was marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, the agency set a record by carrying more than 15,000 riders on a single day. Since then the 15,000 passenger mark has been exceeded eight times, reaching as high as 15,478 riders on October 25.

In addition, PRTC’s OmniMatch ride-sharing program had a daily average of 2,762 participants in 2011, helping to take even more vehicles off our congested roads.

“This continuing ridership growth demonstrates the value of public transportation and ridesharing in the

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## ACTS and SERVE Benefit from PRTC Passengers’ Anniversary Donations

As part of its 25th anniversary celebration in September 2011, PRTC held a Community Give Back event and asked passengers to donate items on the buses for distribution to two area food banks.

Because of space limitations on the buses, PRTC specifically requested donations of small non-perishables, toiletries and baby items.

Passengers generously donated more than 1,150 items on the buses and at the PRTC Transit Center! The items were sorted,



*Food, baby items and toiletries await delivery to ACTS and SERVE in October.*

boxed and distributed in October and November to ACTS in Dumfries and SERVE in Manassas.

PRTC thanks those who made donations. Your participation aided residents of our area and helped to

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# Ridership Up by Record 7% in 2011

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communities we serve," said PRTC Executive Director Alfred Harf.

In the most recent PRTC satisfaction survey, 81% of OmniRide customers and 74% of OmniLink customers said the overall services were excellent.

Another source of pride for PRTC in 2011 was customers' positive ratings of the services. While there are multiple service requests that PRTC would like to accommodate but cannot because of resource constraints, customers continue to give high marks to PRTC's services.

In the most recent PRTC satisfaction survey, 81% of OmniRide riders and 74% of OmniLink customers said the overall services were excellent. These figures reflect marked increases since remedies for overcrowded conditions on OmniRide and on-time performance challenges on OmniLink were implemented earlier in 2011.

Turning to 2012, challenges loom for the new year. Resource constraints remain acute, and the specter of fewer riders is present because Congress did not sustain the maximum allowable federal commuter transit benefit at \$230 per month. The maximum allowable transit benefit is now \$125 per month, an ironic change since the monthly parking benefit was increased at the same time from \$230 to \$240 per month. An unintended consequence of this disparity is that it encourages more commuters to drive on roads that are already highly congested.

"While the disparity between the parking and transit benefit is now an unfortunate fact, PRTC and other public transportation advocates are urging Congress to reinstate parity," Harf said, "because that's what sound public policy warrants." ■

## PRTC Announces 2012 Executive Board

At its January meeting, the PRTC Board of Commissioners formally announced the elected officials who will serve on the Executive Board for the upcoming year. They are:

- Chairman Michael C. May, a member of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors;
- Vice Chairman Francis C. Jones, Mayor of Manassas Park;
- Secretary Susan B. Stimpson, Chairman of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors;
- Treasurer Frederic N. Howe III, a member of the Fredericksburg City Council;
- Immediate Past Chairman John D. Jenkins, a member of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors;
- At Large Member Jonathan L. Way, of the Manassas City Council; and
- At Large Member Gary F. Skinner, a member of the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors. ■

## Anniversary Donations Aid Two Social Service Agencies

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make PRTC's anniversary celebration more special!

A quarter century of service is a tremendous achievement, but PRTC does not intend to rest on its laurels. The area population continues to grow, customers are requesting more service and PRTC is eager to be responsive despite current funding challenges.

We will continue to strive to improve your transportation options and make your commute as safe and reliable as possible. ■





## If You See Something, Say Something

You can help to keep PRTC's passengers, staff and buses safe by being our eyes and ears during your commute!

Please stay alert for packages and bags that are left unattended on a bus or near a bus stop.

If you see or hear anything out of the ordinary or suspicious, please notify:

- The bus operator;
- A PRTC supervisor;
- A police officer or other authority figure;
- The police at 877-4VA-TIPS (877-482-8477); or
- For imminent threats, call 911

The If You See Something, Say Something campaign is funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. For more information, visit [securetransit.org](http://securetransit.org).

# Outstanding Operators



First Transit, the contract provider for PRTC's bus services, recognizes one outstanding operator each month. If you have a compliment about your operator, please let us know!

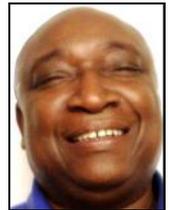
### Rony Chirinos — June 2011

Mr. Chirinos is celebrating his sixth year of working for First Transit and says he most enjoys getting to drive one of PRTC's newer buses. Originally from Honduras, he likes football and soccer and lives with his family in Fairfax. He operates afternoon and evening trips on the Manassas, Lake Ridge and Montclair OmniRide routes.



### William Gilbert — July 2011

The best thing about being a bus operator is meeting people, said Mr. Gilbert. When he's not behind the wheel, he spends time fishing and bowling. An Alexandria native, Mr. Gilbert and his family now live in Burke. He operates morning trips on the Montclair and Dale City OmniRide routes and an evening Montclair OmniRide trip.



### Judith Robles — August 2011

Mrs. Robles, who has been with First Transit for nearly three years, is a quick learner according to her colleagues. She said she enjoys meeting the customers on her current route, the Woodbridge OmniLink. Originally from Mexico and a mother of five, she said she enjoys cooking. Note: Mrs. Robles requested that her photo not be included.

### Silvester Woods — September 2011

Originally from Oklahoma, Mr. Woods has been in this area for 20 years and has been with First Transit for more than two years. He currently operates a Montclair OmniRide trip in the mornings and trips on the South Route 1 and Lake Ridge OmniRide routes in the afternoons and evenings.



### Michael Debrah — October 2011

Mr. Debrah is happy that his job allows him to meet and help people. He has been with First Transit for four years and currently operates trips on the Woodbridge OmniLink route. Originally from Ghana in West Africa, he has lived in this area for 11 years, and now resides in Woodbridge. He enjoys soccer and is married with one child.





Potomac and Rappahannock  
Transportation Commission

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

# I Want to Know...

***In the winter, how does PRTC determine whether or not to operate regular service? — W.R. of Triangle***

When winter weather is forecast for our area, PRTC participates in a regional teleconference at 3 a.m. with the National Weather Service, state/DC departments of transportation, local government agencies, fellow transit providers, the federal Office of Personnel Management and others.

PRTC decides what service to operate based on the weather forecast, current conditions (if applicable), and other factors such as whether we anticipate the conditions will impact the number of bus operators who can report to PRTC on time.

The same procedures are followed to determine midday bus operations.

PRTC will implement its Emergency Service Plan (ESP) if the weather forecasts predict the DC area will receive 4 or more inches of snow or accumulations

of freezing rain or ice.

Also, if icy road conditions are possible for the morning rush, our personnel begin checking streets by 2 a.m. Depending on conditions, we may implement the ESP or put detours in place to avoid hazardous locations.

When the ESP is in effect, commuter buses run only to and from nearby Metro stations, and OmniLink local buses do not make off-route trips. For a more thorough description of the ESP, visit [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org).

The ESP may be independently activated for only commuter bus services and/or only local bus services, depending on the circumstances.

To learn if the ESP is in effect, passengers should check at 4 a.m. (for morning service) and at 11 a.m. (for afternoon/evening service) for:

- A Rider Express email advisory or text message. (Subscribe multiple email addresses and/or your cell phone number at

[PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org));

- A Service Alert on the [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org) homepage;
- A recorded message at (703) 730-6664 or long distance (888) 730-6664; and
- Announcements on local TV stations and WTOG radio, if time and circumstances warrant.

Please be aware that Rider Express notifications are sent out and Service Alerts are posted on our website **only if PRTC is not operating regular service**. In other words, if you don't receive a Rider Express advisory or see a Service Alert on our website, PRTC will operate its regularly scheduled service.

ESP brochures with detailed information about how PRTC buses operate in emergency conditions are updated each fall. ESP brochures are available on buses, at the PRTC Transit Center and online at [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org). 