



# OmniNews

Passenger Newsletter

## Avoid tolls by sharing your ride

**H**igh tolls on I-66 have made national news, but hundreds of savvy commuters, like you, know how to get a faster trip without having to pay a toll on I-66 or I-95. They use transit or rideshare!

Single occupant vehicles are now allowed to use I-66 Inside the Beltway during rush hours but only if they pay a toll. The toll cost varies based on traffic volume, and when the toll lanes opened in early December the



high costs astonished many drivers.

Toll lanes have been open on I-95 and I-395 since late 2014 and currently extend between Duke Street in Alexandria and Garrisonville Road in Stafford.

### New Executive Board

The PRTC Board of Commissioners has a new Executive Committee for 2018. They are:

- Chairman Ruth Anderson, member of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors;
- Vice Chairman Jeanette Rishell, Mayor of Manassas Park;
- Secretary Pamela Sebesky, member of the Manassas City Council;
- Treasurer—currently vacant;
- Immediate Past Chairman Frank J. Principi, member of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors; and
- At-Large Member Gary Skinner, member of the Spotsylvania Board of County Supervisors.

**The newest of the commuter bus routes is the Gainesville to Pentagon OmniRide service which started in December 2016**

The good news is that Prince William County area commuters can reap the benefits of the new toll lanes without the hassle and expense of driving solo! And as an added bonus, those who share their commute can relax or get some work done before arriving at the office!

PRTC offers OmniRide commuter bus services in communities along I-66 and I-95 with destinations including Washington, D.C.; the

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## PRTC Spotlight

# Information Technology

*Behind the scenes, PRTC staff members are dedicated to improving the lives of area citizens by providing and promoting safe and reliable mobility services. Here's a quick look at our Information Technology Department.*

As technology advances, PRTC's IT Department keeps up with the latest trends and implements resources that ultimately help customers have a better trip.

For example the department oversaw the installation of on-board technology that announces the next bus stop, provides

operators with navigational instructions, and supplies real-time arrival data.

The two-person department also oversees PRTC's contracts for phone and internet service, which allow staff to communicate with passengers—whether a rider calls our Customer Service office with a question or we send a Rider Express email and text message about that day's trips.

At the PRTC Transit Center, the IT staff ensure the computers and servers are operating properly and also maintain the software that enable us to do everything from planning routes to paying bills.



The Information Technology Department is working behind the scenes to help you have a better trip.

## Holiday gifts



PRTC participates in the area's annual Un-Trim-A-Tree program, which benefits children and seniors in need.

In 2017, PRTC staff donated three senior baskets as well as gifts for 12 children in six families. The gifts ranged from toys and gift cards to shoes and clothing.

Many thanks to all the staff members who bought presents and those who donated cash to help brighten the holidays for those in need in our area!

## Transit Driver Appreciation

Transit Driver Appreciation Day will be celebrated on March 16, 2018.

Please remember to thank your bus operators for all they do!



Or you can print a card at **TransitDriverDay.org** and make your operator's day even more special!

# Outstanding Employees

*First Transit, PRTC's contract service provider, recognizes one outstanding operator each month and one outstanding technician each quarter. In addition, an Operator of the Year is named annually. If you have a compliment about First Transit personnel, please tell us!*

## Operator of the Month

### Cesar Javier - October 2017

For more than 12 years, Mr. Javier has been greeting PRTC passengers and driving them safely to their destinations. He says the best part of his job is interacting with people. Originally from the Dominican Republic, he now lives in Prince William. He is married with children and currently operates trips on the Dumfries OmniLink route.



### Badassa Karayu - November 2017

A native of Ethiopia, Mr. Karayu has lived in the region for 18 years and now calls Prince William home. He recently marked his second anniversary of working at PRTC and says the best part of his job is communicating with passengers and making sure they arrive safely. He currently operates trips on the Montclair, Dale City, Lake Ridge and Gainesville OmniRide routes. A married father of two college students, in his free time he enjoys reading, travelling and doing church ministry.



### Dawit Solomon - December 2017

Mr. Solomon, who has been operating buses at PRTC for more than four years, currently operates trips on the Prince William Metro Direct, South Route 1, Lake Ridge and Gainesville OmniRide routes. He's originally from Ethiopia and has lived for six years in Woodbridge, where he enjoys driving, walking and watching movies in his free time. He's married and has two sons. He says he really enjoys helping passengers each day.



## Avoid tolls by ridesharing

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Pentagon; Crystal City; Rosslyn/Ballston; the Mark Center; Washington Navy Yard; and Tysons Corner.

The newest of the commuter bus routes is the Gainesville to Pentagon OmniRide service, which started in December 2016 thanks to full funding from the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, NVTC. Ridership on the route is growing steadily and now averages 250 passengers daily, but there's room for more!

Another option to avoid paying tolls is to join a carpool or vanpool. Any vehicle with at least two occupants travels for free in the I-66 HOT lanes during rush hours.

So how do people find someone to rideshare with? They use our free ride-matching service, OmniMatch. Simply fill out some basic information about your commute and OmniMatch will submit it into a regional database and then contact you with a list of carpools or vanpools that fit your needs.

There surely will be greater demand for transit and ridesharing alternatives as work begins to add toll lanes on I-66 Outside the Beltway. That's why NVTC will use toll revenues to fund more bus services, promote more ridesharing, and build new commuter parking lots in the coming years.

Three new lots already are planned to be built between Haymarket and Manassas – amenities that will make it easier for people in western Prince William to leave their vehicles behind and share their ride with others.

So the next time you hear someone talking about high tolls, let them know that there are alternatives!

For more information about transit and ridesharing, visit [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org) or call (703) 730-6664.



Potomac and Rappahannock  
Transportation Commission

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Woodbridge, VA 22192  
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## Review ESP for changes to services during weather events

In November, PRTC revised its Emergency Service Plan (ESP), updating how our bus services operate during weather events and other emergency situations.

This year's changes to the plan include:

- In the mornings, OmniRide routes **only operate between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m.** Buses run every 20 minutes with the final bus departing the first stop on the route at 8 a.m.
- **Dale City – Washington/ Pentagon/ Rosslyn/ Ballston/ Navy Yard.** All AM buses start at the Lindendale Commuter Lot. Stops along Minnieville and Caton Hill are not served.
- **Gainesville – Washington/ Pentagon.** All AM buses start at the Limestone Commuter Lot and serve the Cushing Road Commuter Lot.

- **South Route 1.** AM passengers catch a shuttle bus at any PRTC bus stop along Route 1 between Fox Lair and Wayside Drive, and then transfer to a waiting Montclair OmniRide bus at the Route 234 Commuter Lot.

For more details about routing and the ESP in general, please visit [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org) or pick up a copy of the ESP brochure on your bus.

One question we sometimes hear from passengers is why morning OmniRide buses start their ESP trips between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m. even if the federal government has a delayed opening.

The primary reason is that having one consistent plan is easier for passengers to recall and for the staff of PRTC and First Transit to communicate and implement.

It's also important to note that when OmniRide is operating regular (not ESP) service most morning trips are already complete by 8 a.m., so passengers who catch that last ESP bus of the morning are travelling later than usual.

Also, delaying the start of OmniRide's morning service could potentially cause a ripple effect of delays for bus operators who are scheduled to operate other trips later that day.

Anyone who needs to travel later than 8 a.m. should consider riding a Metro Direct bus to a nearby Metro Station and transferring there to complete their commute.

