

**MOTION:**

**SECOND:**

**RE:           APPROVAL OF PRTC COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR MARCH 5, 2020 AND  
MAY 7, 2020**

**ACTION:**

**WHEREAS**, the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (“PRTC” or the “Commission”) has had the opportunity to review the draft meeting minutes for March 5, 2020 and May 7, 2020.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission does hereby approve the minutes of March 5, 2020 and May 7, 2020 as presented/amended.

**Votes:**

**Ayes:**

**Nays:**

**Abstain:**

**Absent from Vote:**

**Alternate Present Not Voting:**

**Absent from Meeting:**



# MINUTES

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

March 5, 2020  
OMNIRIDE Transit Center • 14700 Potomac Mills Road,  
Woodbridge, VA

**Members Present**

- \*Victor Angry
- \*Andrea Bailey, At-Large (arrived 7:16 p.m.)
- \*Kenny Boddye
- \*Margaret Franklin, Chair
- \*Jeanine Lawson
- \*Yesli Vega (arrived 7:04 p.m.)
- \*Tinesha Allen (arrived 7:29 p.m.)
- \*Cindy Shelton, Secretary
- \*Pamela Sebesky, Vice Chair
- \*Jeanette Rishell, At-Large
- \*Matthew Kelly
- \*Gary Skinner

**Members Absent**

- Deborah Frazier, Treasurer
- Jennifer Mitchell
- George Barker

**Alternates Present**

- Ralph Smith

**Alternates Absent**

- Ann Wheeler
- Pete Candland
- Maggie Hansford
- Bennie Smith
- Meg Bohmke
- Preston Banks
- Hector Cendejas
- Donald Shuemaker
- Jason Graham
- Tim McLaughlin
- David Ross
- Jennifer DeBruhl
- Todd Horsley
- Steve Pittard

**Jurisdiction**

- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Stafford County
- Stafford County
- City of Manassas
- City of Manassas Park
- City of Fredericksburg
- Spotsylvania County
- Spotsylvania County
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Virginia Senate
- City of Manassas
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Stafford County
- City of Manassas Park
- City of Manassas Park
- City of Manassas Park
- City of Fredericksburg
- Spotsylvania County
- Spotsylvania County
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation

\*Voting Member

Arrivals/departures following the commencement of the PRTC Commission Board Meeting are notated with the arrival/departure time.

### **Staff and General Public**

Dr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD – PRTC  
Doris Lookabill – PRTC  
Betsy Massie – PRTC  
Joyce Embrey – PRTC  
Rowena Reyes - PRTC  
Althea Evans - PRTC  
Chuck Steigerwald – PRTC  
Christine Rodrigo – PRTC  
Perrin Palistrant – PRTC  
Lamarr Johnson – PRTC  
Becky Merriner – PRTC  
Kenyetta Whitford – PRTC  
Tomonkia Byrd – PRTC  
Cynthia Porter-Johnson – PRTC  
Todd Johnson – First Transit  
Joey McKelvey – First Transit  
Monica Backmon – NVTA

Rich Dalton – VRE  
Joe Swartz – VRE  
Xavier Harmony – DRPT  
Rick Canizales – Prince William County  
Paolo Belita – Prince William County  
Megan Landis – Prince William County  
Ryan McManus – Prince William County  
Karen Mills – Prince William County  
Pamela Montgomery – Prince William County  
Sharon Pandak – Greehan, Taves & Pandak  
Nancy West – Exstare Federal Services Group  
Jacob Mosser – Potomac Local  
Bryan Jungwirth – Keolis  
Cozye Bailey – General Public  
James Earl Robinson – General Public  
David Sinclair – General Public

Chair Franklin called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call followed.

### **Approval of the Agenda –4 [RES 20-03-01]**

Commissioner Kelly moved with a second by Commissioner Rishell. There was no discussion on the motion. (KELLY/RISHELL, UNANIMOUS)

### **Approval of the Minutes of the February 13, 2020 PRTC Board Meeting – 5 [RES 20-03-02]**

Commissioner Boddye moved, with a second by Commissioner Lawson to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2020 meeting. There was no discussion on the motion. (BODDYE/LAWSON, HORSLEY ABSTAINED, UNANIMOUS)

### **Virginia Railway Express (VRE) – 6**

Acting CEO Rich Dalton briefed the Board on the following items of interest:

- Coronavirus – Because flu season has been underway for several months, VRE has already been disinfecting common areas and wiping down trains regularly. Staff continues to monitor what extra measures can be taken.

Commissioner Vega arrived at 7:04 p.m.

- February on-time performance was 90% (91% on Fredericksburg line and 89% on Manassas line).
- February average daily ridership was 18,200. In response to a question from Commissioner Shelton, Mr. Dalton said ridership figures are audited to verify accuracy from when the count is done by a train conductor to when the numbers are manually input into the system. He added that trains will be equipped with automated counters by this summer. Mr. Dalton agreed with Commissioner Skinner that ridership is highest on Tuesdays through Thursdays.

## **Public Comment Time – 7**

No comments

## **Approve the Consent Agenda – 8 [RES 20-03-03]**

Commissioner Sebesky moved, with a second by Commissioner Angry to approve the Consent Agenda. (SEBESKY/ANGRY, UNANIMOUS)

- **Acceptance of the PRTC Monthly Jurisdictional Financial Reports for the Period Ended December 31, 2019 [RES 20-03-04]**
- **Authorization to Budget and Appropriate City of Manassas Park’s Motor Fuels Tax Funds for Manassas Drive Roadway Improvements [RES 20-03-05]**

## **PRTC Executive Director’s Time – 9**

Dr. Schneider briefed the Board on the following items of interest:

**I-66 Slug Line Promotion Project** – At last month’s meeting, a resolution providing Authorization to Commence the Procurement Process for Consultant Assistance in Support of the I-66 Slug Line Promotion Project was deferred to allow time for legal consultation. The follow-up to that discussion will be on the April meeting agenda.

## **COVID-19 Preparations**

- Enhanced cleaning with hospital-grade materials has been underway for about six weeks.
- Continuity of Operations planning has been underway for the past two weeks.
- Sharing information with riders and employees and keeping track of messaging from Centers for Disease Control, Prince William County, Prince William County Public Schools, and the American Public Transportation Association.
- There are two main threats to continuity of service:
  - If OmniRide workforce was unable to come to work – how much service could be provided; how would essential functions be taken care of?
  - If OPM closes the federal government – what service level would OmniRide provide?
- Staff has met and determined how service would proceed under various scenarios. Staff is continuing to monitor the situation and steps that can be taken to reduce chances of infections.
- The U.S. Senate approved more than \$8 billion in response to COVID-19, and some of that support will flow to FTA and regional infrastructure.
- Staff attended a planning session at the PWC Emergency Operations Center, which has been fantastic to work with.

## **General Assembly Update**

- A compromise was struck between HB1414 and SB890, and as a result the state gas tax will be raised by 10 cents over the next two years. The bill provides partial relief on vehicle registration fees and no change to vehicle inspections. It permits regional gas taxes in areas that don’t have a regional authority, and restores \$15 million annually to NVTA. The net impact by 2024 is \$370 million in state taxes and \$6.5 million in regional taxes. OmniRide would expect to see approximately \$230,000 next year and by 2024-2025 to see additional revenues from the state apportionment of about \$850,000. This also would provide a little more stability for capital funding. In response to a question from Commissioner Skinner, Dr.

Schneider said that by 2024, the bill could result in an additional \$96.5 million in regional taxes for the transportation taxing districts including PRTC and Hampton Roads.

Commissioner Baily arrived at 7:16 p.m.

- The Commuter Tax Benefits Bill from Senator Barker did not pass, but OmniRide and DRPT will monitor over the next year and hope it will go through in the future.
- The Peer-to-Peer Car Rental bill was good for us. It created tiers and holds transit oriented revenues neutral.
- There was concern that the creation of new rail authority would diminish the influence of PRTC and NVTC with regard to VRE so we worked to add an amendment to the bill to have appointments occur with some involvement from PRTC and NVTC jurisdictions. In response to a question from Commissioner Lawson, Dr. Schneider said there were multiple versions of the amendment and he's not sure of the exact language in the final bill.

**Metro Summer Platform Shutdown** - Because Metro will shut down several Orange Line stations this summer, staff is requesting authorization tonight to submit a grant application to promote our services. Funds would enable OmniRide to add new trips to any overcrowded routes and market existing transit and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) services.

**Transit Driver Appreciation Day** – This event will be marked on Wednesday, March 18.

### **Presentations and Information – 10**

#### **FY2021 Proposed Budget – Review of Expenses**

Dr. Schneider said that the budget process begins in November/December. The Board sees the revenues and expenditures in February and March, and public hearings are held in April. Adjustments are made and the final budget comes before the Board in June.

Because the process starts seven months early, there are many budget variables such as federal grant amounts, state revenue sharing percentages, local funding, what General Assembly bills will be proposed, and what cost savings will be achieved.

Contractual services and fuel – in other words, buses on the street – together make up almost 79% of the total budget. Total operating expenses are proposed to increase by about \$6.4 million, and of that amount, \$5.4 million is for new bus services which are predominantly grant-funded.

Commissioner Allen arrived at 7:29 p.m.

In response to a question from Commissioner Lawson, Dr. Schneider said there is no longer a step-down provision in the state grant-funded services as long as the services are successful. Chair Franklin observed that PRTC needs to think long-term when applying for grants because of the step-down provisions.

Regarding Other Professional/Consulting services, staff designated each item as either essential, needed in the near term, or outlying need to assist Commissioners when deciding which items they want to fund.

Regarding subsidies, Manassas and Manassas Park will see a decrease primarily because of the local service restructuring, and because buses will have less deadhead time once the Western Facility opens.

Subsidies will increase in Stafford, Spotsylvania and Fredericksburg because of two new administrative positions and increases in Other Professional/Consulting services, Dr. Schneider said, adding that certain expenses are paid by the jurisdictions in proportionality to the fuel tax revenues they generate.

Subsidies for Prince William also will increase for reasons including reduced passenger revenues due to more passengers riding grant-funded services, a proposal to offer free fares to seniors riding local and Metro Express buses, losses in federal funding, and opening the new Western Facility.

In response to a question from Commissioner Skinner, Dr. Schneider said the PRTC subsidy amounts listed in the presentation do not include VRE because \$10 million of fuel tax money from PRTC's six jurisdictions is taken off the top for VRE.

Commissioner Allen asked if Stafford can see a copy of the agreement that lays out how expenses are shared.

Regarding a budget item to replace a staff vehicle, Commissioner Shelton asked about management's approach for lifecycle maintenance. Dr. Schneider said all assets have a minimum number of years for it to be kept. The staff vehicle in question is a 2009 Ford Escape with approximately 66,000 miles. Several Commissioners questioned the need to replace the vehicle, and Commissioner Skinner said the criteria for replacing equipment may need to be looked at. He asked for information at a future meeting about why staff wants to replace the vehicle.

Referring to the increase in Other Professional/Consulting services, Commissioner Angry noted that staff has designated the I-66 sluglines promotion as an essential function, presumably because it's grant-funded. He stated that he is on record as opposing this project because he believes it is a slippery slope.

Commissioner Lawson asked to meet separately with Dr. Schneider to get a better understanding of the proposed budget's specific impacts on Prince William County.

Commissioner Boddye asked if seniors could be offered a reduced fare instead of free fares, and Dr. Schneider replied that a half-fare program is already in place for seniors. Seniors make up 25% of revenue and 35% of local ridership, Dr. Schneider said, adding that seniors and those below the poverty level make up about 55% of local ridership.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan**

Mr. Steigerwald said this presentation is a high-level summary of the effort to produce an organizational development assessment and a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. This effort was the result of the EEO investigation recommendations. Not all issues stem from that one event, but there were some long-standing issues involving mistrust.

The organizational development assessment was comprised of three parts: PRTC staff interviews, a survey of PRTC and First Transit staff, and a review of policies and practices in place at other organizations. The assessment found five main take-aways:

- Employees don't mind working here;

- Employees are motivated;
- Improvements could be made to communication, transparency, recognition of staff, and collaboration;
- Employees are hopeful about improvements but have a wait-and-see attitude; and
- There was an expressed level of distrust, and the least amount of trust was toward the PRTC Board and the respondents' co-workers.

The assessment led to seven findings with a common theme of communication, training, awareness of practices, accountability, and the need for an honest and intentional discussion about events in the past. These themes are present in the resulting series of recommendations, including recognition, training, and communication. Many new initiatives have been started to address these recommendations.

The Strategic Plan itself is broken down into Goals and Priorities with those same themes. The recommendations also called for the formation of a Working Group devoted to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The group has three main tasks: to prioritize and implement the recommendations from the Strategic Plan, to advise executive and senior management on issues related to DEI, and to be the face of those efforts throughout the organization. The Working Group started meeting monthly in October and is an all-volunteer group of staff.

Chair Franklin said the three priorities in OmniRide's diversity statement: customer safety, employee morale, and diversity and inclusion, go hand-in-hand. She said there is a morale issue among OmniRide staff and asked if tonight's presentation had been shared with staff.

Mr. Steigerwald said that once the Strategic Plan was complete, all-hands meetings were held for staff to introduce the assessment and Strategic Plan as well as to generate interest in participating in the Working Group. Dr. Schneider said tonight's presentation will be shared with staff.

Chair Franklin said she would like to see a timeframe attached to the recommendations, particularly the meetings and training. She asked that an action item come before the Board so they can see when those things are planned. She also said she would like for staff to think about her role as Chair to make sure the Board is aligned with the recommendations. Finally, she added that a member of the Working Group should report directly to the Commission on the group's progress.

Commissioner Shelton asked what metrics and measures will be implemented to know when we are successful. Mr. Steigerwald said there are no set metrics and measures, but that would be a task for the DEI Working Group. Dr. Schneider said there is an annual employee survey. Mr. Steigerwald added that the Working Group is discussing doing an employee survey in the fall. Commissioner Shelton said she believes we can do better than having a survey once a year.

Dr. Schneider clarified that staff distrust of the PRTC Board dates back several years to 2015-2016 when fuel tax revenues were declining and the then-Board questioned if PRTC would exist in the future. Commissioner Angry said that because the PRTC Board members aren't in the building every day, it's up to the leadership to engage PRTC staff. He added that it can't just be the Working Group addressing this issue, but management needs to play a real part in engaging staff.

Commissioner Allen asked if a survey could be done quarterly. She also noted that one recommendation is to hire an employee to focus on diversity and inclusion, and asked if that position is part of the FY21 budget. Dr. Schneider said that position would be included in a future budget. Finally, Commissioner Allen asked if employee retention and ridership had been affected. Dr. Schneider said he believes there was one staff resignation and two retirements.

Commissioner Kelly said the lack of trust in the PRTC Board was related to a 2019 Reduction in Force, and this issue pre-dates those who joined the Board recently. He suggested that the Working Group make recommendations to the Board on how to be involved with staff so the Board can set a new tone. The Board needs to hear from employees about what they expect and what they would like to see of the Board, he said.

Commissioner Rishell said the Reduction in Force didn't have to be a long and agonizing process, and she's not surprised that employees didn't feel valued by the former Board. The RIF was a deep fracturing of trust that disrupted lives, even for those who weren't part of the RIF, she said. The 2015-2016 financial discussions are history, but the RIF is recent history and it will take time to heal. She also agreed with Commissioner Angry's comments about leadership engaging with staff.

Commissioner Lawson said that when she joined the Board, the gas tax revenues were plummeting and some Commissioners had a Chicken Little attitude that the sky is falling, but she doesn't recall the PRTC employees knowing the types of conversations the Commission was having or recall the Board sending out negative messages. On the contrary, the Board was confident they would work through the problem, she said. It's incumbent on the leaders of this organization, not the Board, to diffuse rumors like that among employees. She believes that the RIF, not the budget discussion, is the reason for employee distrust of the Board. She also supported Commissioner Angry's comment that the Board members are unable to be at the Transit Center daily so management must engage staff to rebuild trust.

In response to a question from Commissioner Boddye, Dr. Schneider said PRTC has about 50 employees and First Transit has about 255. That means about half of the PRTC staff was interviewed, and about half of all staff filled out surveys, Commissioner Boddye said.

Regarding the Employee Advisory Group, Commissioner Boddye asked how many were on the group and how they came to be part of the group. Dr. Schneider said Ms. Nancy West of Exstare Federal Services was hired as a consultant and she recommended that the management team surrounding the key issues – predominantly senior managers – be members of the group for the first phase. That group set up a structure for Ms. West to conduct interviews, take the survey and generate the DEI report. From there, the emphasis was on making this an employee-driven program that has the full support of management. The Working Group is designed to be initiated, propelled and steered by the workforce – by those who are volunteering because they want to make a difference, Dr. Schneider said. Part of the challenge is that we can't inform the workforce about some items until after those items come before the Board.

Commissioner Boddye said this is an opportunity for the new Board to flip the page, and he's glad to know there was involvement from an outside consultant so it doesn't appear that management is writing the rules of the road on how to fix things.



Finally, Commissioner Boddye noted that the Strategic Plan was finalized around the time of the First Transit work stoppage, and he asked if there was a follow-up survey that took that into account. Dr. Schneider replied that the survey was completed in the spring, well before the work stoppage. Dr. Schneider also clarified that the survey showed employees trusted their managers and the executive leadership more than their own co-workers, and he described that finding as chilling.

Commissioner Sebesky said addressing this issue is overdue. She added that when she joined the Board three years ago, a general Strategic Plan was underway due to concerns over the fiscal sustainability of the organization and the need for a reorganization to promote fiscal sustainability. When the Board gives directives, there are sometimes unintended consequences, she said.

She agreed with Supervisor Angry that the PRTC Board must lead by example but its members can't be at the Transit Center on a regular basis. She also supports having regular DEI updates to the Board and doing quarterly surveys. She added that some of the distrust of the Board is due to the direction of the Board, explaining that the first time she came to a PRTC Board meeting, after being in office only a short time, Supervisor Lawson asked if Manassas was going to pay its bill here. Commissioner Sebesky said the Board can't ignore that money played a part in the distrust of the board, and that a combination of things have led to these consequences.

Commissioner Bailey said an assessment like this one is for everybody and not just to check a box. There's a high accountability factor with something like this and it requires execution, reevaluation, a narrowing down and execution again, she said. Having repetitive surveys is crucial for the work the Board needs to do. She added that she agrees with Commissioner Lawson that PRTC leadership must take the lead.

Chair Franklin listed the items the Board had asked for: a written timeframe for the recommendations, an update from the Working Group, an opportunity to meet the Working Group members, and quarterly surveys

#### **PRTC Action Items – 11**

##### **Authorization to Submit a Mid-Cycle Grant Application to Market Existing Services, Additional Commuter Express Trips to Alleviate Overcrowding, and Transportation Demand Management Strategies During the Summer 2020 Metrorail Shutdown [RES 20-03-06]**

Chair Franklin noted there is an 80% state match and 20% local match. Commissioner Bailey moved, with a second by Commissioner Sebesky. (BAILEY/SEBESKY, HORSLEY ABSTAINED, UNANIMOUS)

#### **Chair's Time – 12**

Chair Franklin reviewed the list of Engagement Opportunities.

#### **Other Business/Commissioner's Time – 13**

Commissioner Skinner said he's been on the Board for at least 10 years and he encouraged the many new Board members to move ahead and determine what they want PRTC to be in the future. He said the reason there was a RIF was because the Board asked Dr. Schneider to make PRTC an efficient organization, which meant some people would have to leave. That didn't make people happy, but it made us more efficient. He also agreed that Dr. Schneider needs to take the lead in employee engagement.

Commissioner Vega thanked Dr. Schneider for visiting her office to discuss several items. She also reiterated Commissioner Bailey's comments that those in leadership positions also must have accountability. Finally, she asked to see information on PRTC's promotion process because that can have a huge impact on morale.

Commissioner Angry said dignity and respect creates trust. Words like "they" and "them" create lanes of separation.

Commissioner Bailey thanked Dr. Schneider for visiting her office recently. She thanked Commissioner Skinner for his comments and explaining some things that happened in the past.

Commissioner Shelton said it's wonderful to be working with a new Board that cares, not that the previous Board didn't care.

Commissioner Sebesky said she's looking forward to having more of these productive conversations on important issues. She also thanked OmniRide staff for recently coming to the Visitor's Center at the Manassas VRE Station to conduct an orientation session so staff could better promote OmniRide and VRE services to visitors. Finally she invited everyone to attend Manassas' St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 14.

Commissioner Rishell said she looks forward to a genuine culture of respect and caring for all PRTC people because we're all part of the same community. She added that she's thrilled to be part of the new Board.

Commissioner Kelly welcomed all the new Board members and said he's been a PRTC Board member for about 16 years and he's seen the shifting of the organization. He explained that Fredericksburg has a seat on the PRTC Board because of the gas tax so when buses are discussed, he defers to Prince William because they're footing the bill. He said this is an opportunity for the Board to make its mark on the organization.

Commissioner Lawson asked if PRTC still recognizes an Employee of the Month, noting that it's been a while since the Board has seen anyone receive that recognition. Dr. Schneider replied that many staff didn't like coming out to an evening meeting, but quarterly staff recognition events are taking place during the workday. Commissioner Lawson said that the Board should receive invitations to staff recognition events to provide an opportunity to interact with staff.

Commissioner Boddy thanked Dr. Schneider and Mr. Steigerwald for their presentation, noting that it's good to know that staff is taking steps to address DEI. He also thanked Commissioner Rishell for asking that the DEI Strategic Plan be presented to the Board, noting that the Board wants to make sure this effort succeeds. He added that he is looking forward to seeing what the Board can do to take this organization into the next century. Finally, he thanked PRTC for providing him with a tablet to test the new board management software and recommended it to the other Board members.

Commissioner Horsley said:

- A presentation on WMATA's summer shutdown will take place at the CTB workshop on March 17, and he could provide the presentation for the April meeting or do a presentation on the presentation;

- The Commonwealth's Six Year Improvement Program will be published in May, one month later than usual, but will still be finalized by June; and
- At the instruction of the Governor, DRPT is now requesting weekly reports on Coronavirus efforts from all transit systems statewide.

Chair Franklin said she and Dr. Schneider have talked about opportunities for her to meet with PRTC employees and she welcomed other Board members to join her. She added that the Diversity and Inclusion effort is important and that PRTC staff are excited and optimistic about having a new Board. Chair Franklin said it is the governing body's responsibility to make sure PRTC is run well and that means talking with employees, visiting every now and then, and saying thank you to the operators. OmniRide is incredibly important so please take pride in being part of this commission, she added.

#### **Adjournment – 14**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Franklin asked for a Motion to Adjourn. Commissioner Bailey moved, with a second by Commissioner Boddye. (BAILEY/BODDYE, UNANIMOUS). The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

#### **Information Items**

There were no comments.



# MINUTES

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

May 7, 2020  
ZOOM Virtual Meeting  
Livestreamed at [YouTube.com/PRTCtransit](https://www.youtube.com/PRTCtransit)

**Members Present**

- \*Victor Angry
- \*Andrea Bailey, At-Large
- \*Kenny Boddye (arrived 7:08 p.m.)
- \*Margaret Franklin, Chair
- \*Jeanine Lawson
- \*Yesli Vega
- \*Cindy Shelton, Secretary
- \*Tinesha Allen (arrived 7:20 p.m.)
- \*Pamela Sebesky, Vice Chair
- \*Jeanette Rishell, At-Large
- \*Matthew Kelly
- \*Gary Skinner
- \*Deborah Frazier, Treasurer

**Members Absent**

Jennifer Mitchell

**Alternates Present**

- Maggie Hansford
- Ralph Smith
- \*Jennifer DeBruhl

**Alternates Absent**

- Ann Wheeler
- Pete Candland
- Bennie Smith
- Meg Bohmke
- Preston Banks
- Hector Cendejas
- Donald Shuemaker
- Jason Graham
- Tim McLaughlin
- David Ross
- Todd Horsley
- Steve Pittard

**Jurisdiction**

- Prince William County
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- Prince William County
- Prince William County
- Stafford County
- Stafford County
- City of Manassas
- City of Manassas Park
- City of Fredericksburg
- Spotsylvania County
- Spotsylvania County

Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Prince William County

City of Manassas

Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Prince William County

Prince William County

Prince William County

Stafford County

City of Manassas Park

City of Manassas Park

City of Manassas Park

City of Fredericksburg

Spotsylvania County

Spotsylvania County

Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Department of Rail and Public Transportation

\*Voting Member

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### **Staff and Public on ZOOM**

Dr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD – PRTC  
Doris Lookabill – PRTC  
Joyce Embrey – PRTC  
Christine Rodrigo – PRTC

Becky Merriner – PRTC  
Carl Roeser - PRTC  
George Barker – Virginia Senate  
Sharon Pandak – Greehan, Taves & Pandak

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam issued a stay-at-home order on March 30, 2020 and stated that public gatherings must not exceed 10 people. In compliance with the Governor's orders, this meeting of the PRTC Board of Commissioners was conducted online using ZOOM. The ZOOM meeting was livestreamed at YouTube.com/PRTCtransit so the public could watch the proceedings.

Chair Franklin called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and read an announcement detailing procedures for the electronic meeting. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, and Roll Call followed.

Commissioner Boddye arrived at 7:08 p.m.

### **Authorizing the Adoption of Procedures for Electronic Public Meetings and Public Hearings During COVID-19 Pandemic Disaster – 4 [RES 20-05-01]**

Commissioner Boddye moved with a second by Commissioner Bailey. In response to a question from Commissioner Skinner, Ms. Pandak said the procedures take into account House Bill 29 and 30. (BODDYE/BAILEY, UNANIMOUS)

### **Approval of Agenda – 5 [RES 20-05-02]**

Commissioner Bailey moved with a second by Commissioner Angry. There was no discussion on the motion. (BAILEY/ANGRY, UNANIMOUS)

### **Public Comment Time – 6**

The Chair explained no public comments would be received during the virtual meeting; however, the public was advised to submit written comments to the Board Clerk by May 6 at 5 p.m. No comments were received.

### **PRTC Executive Director's Time – 7**

Dr. Schneider briefed the Board on the following items of interest:

**COVID-19 Response and Update** – Dr. Schneider briefed the Board on the impact of COVID-19 on bus services and gave a timeline for steps that have been taken in response to the pandemic.

- Ridership – Within a 10-day span in March, ridership plummeted by 95% on commuter routes and by 65% on local routes; OmniRide lost approximately \$35,000 in fares per day.
- Personal Protective Equipment – The Prince William County Emergency Operations group elevated OmniRide's status to an essential provider and was able to deliver gloves and hand sanitizer to the facility when OmniRide was unable to obtain those items from vendors.
- Cleaning – New procedures include enhanced cleaning of vehicles including mid-day cleaning of commuter buses, swapping out local buses mid-day, and increased frequency of deep cleaning for the facility, especially in the driver's room.
- Other health measures – Physical distancing measures are in place in the building, new hand sanitizing stations were installed, and environmental design and management are being used to protect staff.
- Budget – While re-tooling the entire service plan, staff also shifted to forecasting fare losses as well as losses directly related to reduction in the motor fuels tax. Staff re-cast the entire budget within a week, all without knowing the amount of CARES Act federal funding PRTC would receive.

- Reduced services – Once it was clear that the stay-at-home order would remain in effect for a longer period to slow the infection rates, OmniRide further reduced services. We maintained 100% of local service but reduced to just four commuter routes. We haven't received any complaints; however, did receive a few compliments from riders who were thankful we were still operating service.
- OmniRide staff – There isn't a single employee who hasn't helped us survive the impacts of this pandemic. One employee made 200 reusable cloth masks for the front line staff. The leadership, energy, and support of this staff is special, Dr. Schneider said.

Commissioner Allen joined the meeting at approximately 7:20 p.m.

### **CARES Act Funding and Process**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed in several phases at the end of March. The portion for transit was \$25B nationwide with more than \$1B coming to the Metro DC Area. That area includes Maryland's MTA (\$44M), WMATA (\$876M), and PRTC (\$99M). The \$99M is shared by formula with VRE and FRED. OmniRide is eligible for \$9.3M and all spending must conform to very specific uses, primarily:

- Reimbursement for expenses for personal protective equipment & expanded cleaning or associated materials for cleaning.
- Reimbursement for lost revenues as a result of ridership decline, operating fare free, or other tax revenues that would otherwise force service reductions that would cause employee layoffs and shuttering of transit systems.
- Maintaining payroll for direct and contracted employees who might otherwise be furloughed as a result of reduced services and budget impacts.

Enhancement projects, capital purchases, construction projects, etc. may not be funded through CARES Act funds. Without these funds, OmniRide would be in extremely dire circumstances, Dr. Schneider said.

This funding will enable OmniRide to maintain at least six months of operations at our current level, with one month already passed. This does not include OmniRide's reserve fund, any additional action taken by the Commonwealth or the Federal government, or any other ways that expenses can be reduced.

### **Phased Reopening:**

With the governor's orders of expanded business openings next week, OmniRide expects to see an increase in local ridership, but only a limited ridership increase on commuter services which will be driven by the Federal agencies and their policies. We expect to see a blend of continued telework, staggered federal employee schedules, and reduced demand for transit until traffic builds up demand.

OmniRide plans to be ready to restore some commuter services by June 15, but that date can be pushed back as needed. The restored service would put OmniRide at 85% of normal operations. Our budget assumes a return to full service at Labor Day, based upon ridership volumes. Critical in this process will be customer engagement to welcome back riders, but also to share our protocols for keeping employees and passengers safe.

Internally, we have created working groups to help prepare for the return of staff by using environmental design and process. We will examine workspaces, telework options, physical distancing policies, and visitors and gatherings. We are also working with the regional systems to develop protocols for cleaning equipment, working for coordinated service increases, and sharing knowledge and lessons learned.

Following the conclusion of Dr. Schneider's comments, Chair Franklin noted that Dr. Schneider has shared much of this information with the Board in various updates. She asked him to share a written version of the Executive Director's report with the Commissioners so all the information would be in one document.

Chair Franklin said many former transit users will likely want to drive at least initially as the economy reopens and noted that PRTC is taking that into consideration when looking at the economic outlook.

Chair Franklin also thanked front-line workers for doing an “incredible” job during the pandemic.

Commissioner Bailey shared that the Boys and Girls Club on Dale Boulevard is offering daycare for the children of first responders during the pandemic, and that she considers transit workers to be first responders.

Commissioner Vega asked if the bus operators are provided with masks, gloves and other forms of protection during their duties. Dr. Schneider said yes, although some equipment was difficult to find in the early days of the pandemic. Commissioner Vega also asked if there is a restriction on the number of people per bus to comply with physical distancing. Dr. Schneider replied that OmniRide is currently limiting each vehicle to no more than 10 passengers.

Commissioner Shelton complimented all PRTC workers for their professionalism during the crisis. She said OmniRide’s services helped keep people employed when the slug lines disappeared. She thanked staff for keeping so many commuter buses operating for so long.

Commissioner Sebesky thanked the transit workers for helping people get to critical jobs and for all staff who made such monumental changes in a short period of time. She asked if transit workers are being paid whether or not they have a route to operate. Dr. Schneider replied that all operators who are available for work are being paid (including insurance) regardless of operational status. If someone chooses to take leave, whether existing leave or leave without pay, that’s permitted, Dr. Schneider said.

Commissioner Rishell said all of Manassas Park is proud of the frontline workers and the response of PRTC’s staff to this crisis. She asked about a PRTC communication that was shared in April regarding a potential legal issue with requiring face coverings for operators and asked if the legal issue had been clarified. Dr. Schneider said he didn’t recall the specifics and would follow-up with a reply.

In response to a question from Commissioner Skinner, Dr. Schneider said no PRTC employees have contracted COVID-19.

Commissioner DeBruhl expressed thanks to Dr. Schneider and the PRTC staff for their work during this challenging time.

### **Presentations and Information – 8**

Chair Franklin noted that the Commissioners would see PRTC’s Revised Proposed FY21 Budget presentation tonight, and the Board will take action on the budget at the June meeting.

Director of Finance and Administration, Joyce Embrey, presented the revised proposed FY21 budget. A budget public hearing is scheduled for May 20, 2020.

Following the presentation, Chair Franklin said she will probably push for some restoration of funding for Wheels-to-Wellness, as well as support for the promotion of I-66 slugging, understanding that some Commissioners have reservations about promoting slugging and that the Board is waiting for a legal opinion of liability issues.

Commissioner Boddye asked about provisions for the May 20 budget public hearing in case people aren’t able to gather in public. Ms. Embrey said the hearing will be at the Transit Center with no more than 10 people in the room at one time, and that the public can submit comments in advance. Commissioner Boddye said Prince William County plans to review its budget quarterly to stay updated on revenues and expenses as the region begins to re-open.

Commissioner Boddye asked about the status of the bus service contract. Dr. Schneider replied that negotiations are on-going and something should come before the Board at the June meeting. Finally, Commissioner Boddye said he agrees with the Chair about taking a look at Wheels-to-Wellness and added that he also would like to see some form of the equity implementation back in the budget.

Commissioner Angry said he's been a proponent of a long-term solution for Wheels-to-Wellness funding since he joined the PRTC Board. He also expressed his concerns about linking PRTC to slugging and said he wants to hear the legal opinion about liability concerns.

Chair Franklin said the Board will await a legal opinion from Ms. Pandak on promoting I-66 slugging and asked for specifics about how the grant money would be used. She added that her top concern with promoting slugging is making sure that OmniRide continues to get as many passengers as possible.

Ms. Pandak said a confidential memo has been forwarded to the Commission in response to their I-66 slugging concerns and she's available for questions or can address any concerns at a future meeting.

Commissioner Shelton said she agrees with Commissioner Angry's slugging comments, but she isn't sure about Wheels-to-Wellness. She also asked about the risk of a proposed decrease in funding for bus rehabs, engines and transmissions, noting that delayed maintenance can have long-term consequences. Dr. Schneider replied that PRTC buses are rehabbed after 8 years so we're able to get 16 years out of a vehicle instead of 12 years. In this case, some buses would not undergo the rehab and would be retired after 12 years of service. PRTC is not proposing a delay or deferral of maintenance.

Commissioner Rishell said she agrees with Supervisor Angry's slugging comments. She also agreed with the Chair's statements about focusing on bus ridership.

Commissioner Sebesky said she would like to support Wheels-to-Wellness, but the Board must find a way to fund it. She added that her concerns about promoting slugging aren't just legal, but also include potential unforeseen issues. Things are different when it's a documented funded program from the government, she said.

Commissioner Kelly noted that while the Commissioners are looking at putting items back in the budget, Fredericksburg just furloughed 43 employees and will have to pull money from its reserves for this year and next year. The impact of the pandemic won't be a one- or two-year thing, and every dollar counts, he said.

Commissioner Skinner said Spotsylvania County had to pull \$4 million from its reserves and is required to pay the money back over the next two years, so the County will be starting in the hole for the next two years. He asked that the Commissioners keep that in mind during the PRTC budget discussions. Commissioner Skinner asked how PRTC's \$9.3 million in CARES Act funding will affect this budget since it's not reflected in the document. Dr. Schneider said staff didn't know how much money PRTC would receive when the revised budget was completed and shared. He said the CARES funding will be used to cover farebox revenue losses and the reduction in revenues generated by the motor fuels tax, which is projected to fall by 30-to-35 percent.

Chair Franklin asked that figures about the number of people served by Wheels-to-Wellness be provided to the Board. Dr. Schneider said he would include that in the meeting summary that's sent out to all Commissioners.

Commissioner Bailey said she can offer opportunities for funding Wheels-to-Wellness and will share that information with Dr. Schneider.

Commissioner Rishell said she was sad to see that Wheels-to-Wellness had been cut from the budget and was especially concerned because that population may have a high percentage of people with underlying health issues that would place them in a high risk category for COVID-19.



Commissioner Lawson asked if there are other federal programs that could assist Wheels-to-Wellness users so our region could utilize the service but fund it differently. Dr. Schneider replied that historically Wheels-to-Wellness was funded with federal funds, but the program was forced to shrink and grow every year or two depending on which funding was in place. Including the program in PRTC's budget would enable the program to operate, and any federal funds that become available would be used before local funds. As of now, there is no additional federal funding for COVID-19 specifically for health and welfare, Dr. Schneider said, but staff will look for additional funding opportunities.

#### **PRTC Action Items – 9**

##### **Adoption of Amended PRTC Bylaws – First Reading [RES 20-05-03]**

Ms. Pandak gave an overview of proposed changes to the bylaws. Commissioner Kelly moved, with a second by Commissioner Bailey. Commissioner Bailey said these proposed changes are consistent with other electronic meetings she's been involved in and thanked Ms. Pandak for her work. (KELLY/BAILEY, UNANIMOUS)

##### **Authorization to Submit FTA's Federal FY20 Annual Certifications and Assurances [RES 20-05-04]**

Commissioner Kelly moved, with a second by Commissioner Rishell. There was no discussion. (KELLY/RISHELL, UNANIMOUS)

##### **Concurrence with Stafford County's Appointment of Supervisor Gary Snellings to the VRE Operations Board [RES 20-05-05]**

Commissioner Shelton moved, with a second by Commissioner Lawson. There was no discussion. (SHELTON/LAWSON, UNANIMOUS)

#### **Chair's Time – 10**

Chair Franklin thanked PRTC transit workers. She said she's thankful for federal funding that's coming in, noting that she's been working closely with our Congressional delegation including Representatives Wittman and Connolly along with Senators Warner and Kaine. She thanked the Commissioners for their patience with all the updates that have been sent out. She noted that the transit center is being cleaned as often as possible to help keep transit workers and others healthy.

#### **Other Business/Commissioner's Time – 11**

Many Commissioners said they were happy to see everyone at the virtual meeting and looked forward to being together in person soon.

Commissioner Boddy commended Chair Franklin for her leadership and work with Dr. Schneider and the PRTC staff to prevent layoffs during the pandemic. He also noted that the Northern Virginia Regional Commission is pushing for federal funding for our region.

Commissioner Lawson thanked Ms. Pandak for her work through the legal "unchartered waters" and PRTC staff for organizing the ZOOM meeting.

Commissioner Sebesky thanked Chair Franklin and Dr. Schneider for getting a budget together in this difficult time.

Commissioner Rishell said she had found the email that referenced a potential legal issue with requiring the wearing of masks (which she had mentioned during the Executive Director's time) and had forwarded that email to Dr. Schneider. Dr. Schneider replied that the communication was referring to legal issues with requiring passengers to wear masks, not operators. If PRTC denied service to a rider because they were not wearing a mask that wasn't required by the governor or health department, there could be a legal problem, Dr. Schneider said. OmniRide has had a public education campaign to encourage riders to wear face masks

and is looking into getting protective barriers for operators. OmniRide is following the recommendations of the CDC, FTA and APTA, Dr. Schneider said.

Commissioner Allen said she appreciates the efforts of Dr. Schneider and Chair Franklin to maintain as much normalcy as possible during this time.

Commissioner Shelton said she's amazed to be able to say that PRTC has had no COVID-19 cases and that it says something good about our operational model.

Commissioner Frazier said she missed the March meeting because her granddaughter was born that week. She thanked Chair Franklin and Dr. Schneider for their work.

Commissioner DeBruhl said Commissioner Horsley will represent DRPT at PRTC's next meeting. She also thanked PRTC's Information Technology staff for arranging a smooth virtual meeting.

Chair Franklin thanked Dr. Schneider for the way he sprang into action, mitigated concerns about the pandemic and revised the budget.

In other business, Senator George Barker said he expects to be reappointed to the PRTC Board soon and he hopes to share good news from Richmond with the Commissioners at the June 2020 meeting.

#### **Adjournment – 12**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Franklin entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Bailey moved, with a second by Commissioner Angry. There was no discussion. (BAILEY/ANGRY, UNANIMOUS)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

#### **Information Items**

None