



# 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

**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
  
- 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

**Staff and General Public**

\*Voting Member

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

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]**

\*Voting Member

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

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 Boddy 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 Boddye 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.