Marx is PRTC’s New Interim Executive Director

Eric Marx is PRTC’s new Interim Executive Director, taking over for Alfred Harf who decided to step down after more than 16 years as Executive Director.

Marx, who previously served as PRTC’s Director of Planning and Operations, was appointed to the post by the PRTC Board of Commissioners. He took the reins on May 15, 2015.

“The appointment of Mr. Marx reflects the confidence the Commission has in his readiness to assume the leadership position, having served with distinction as the organization’s Director of Planning and Operations for nearly 16 years of his 22-year tenure,” said PRTC Board Chairman John Jenkins. “It also reflects the Commission’s belief that the challenges the organization faces in the immediate future require a leader having intimacy with the agency and its history, as Mr. Marx clearly has.”

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FY 2017 Budget: What Does the Future Hold?

A Message from the Interim Executive Director:

Some local media outlets recently have published stories about PRTC’s budget situation. Although we face a serious challenge in the near future, I want to assure you that PRTC is doing all it can to sustain existing bus services.

In FY17, which begins in July 2016, PRTC is currently projected to have a $7 million deficit. Like virtually all public transportation providers, PRTC does not turn a profit. Just like other “public goods” (e.g. schools, roads, parks and emergency services), transit service requires tax subsidies.

PRTC’s subsidies come from local, state, and federal sources – currently, local funds come exclusively from a 2.1% motor fuels tax collected from PRTC’s member jurisdictions. Prince William County’s 2.1% tax, however, has never been sufficient to fully cover its share of PRTC bus and VRE train operating expenses.

Prior to FY09, the County supplemented its 2.1% revenues with general fund appropriations, and a combination of factors led to the build-up of a healthy reserve fund. That reserve fund has allowed PRTC to continue operating service without the need for an annual general fund supplement; however, that fund is projected to run out in early FY17.
Saturday Metro Direct Service is a Good Travel Alternative

Lots of people are taking advantage of PRTC’s Saturday bus service between eastern Prince William County and the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station, but there’s still room for you!

PRTC offers three round-trips on Saturday mornings and eight round-trips in the afternoons and evenings, providing a great alternative to those who don’t want to drive.

The timetable and stops are a bit different on Saturdays than on weekdays. On Saturdays, buses run less frequently and there are fewer local stops, but buses still serve the PRTC Transit Center and Potomac Mills.

Metro Direct buses pick up and drop off passengers directly at the Metro Station entrance/exit. And when you ride the bus, you won’t have to search for a parking space because there’s plenty of free parking at PRTC!

The one-way fare is $3.85 cash or $3.10 with a SmarTrip card. Those eligible for reduced fares can ride for half-price all day on Saturdays.

Executive Director

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Mr. Marx expressed his appreciation to the Commission for the vote of confidence his appointment signifies. “The challenges are real, and I’m honored by the Commission’s decision to let me assume this responsibility,” he said.

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—Eric Marx
Interim Exec. Director

Commenting on Mr. Harf’s tenure as the organization’s chief executive, Mr. Jenkins observed that “the organization’s growth during the 16 years of Mr. Harf’s direction has been nothing short of remarkable.”

Under his leadership, ridership more than tripled; the average age of the bus fleet was dramatically reduced; many new routes were started (including OmniRide services to the Washington Navy Yard, Rosslyn/Ballston, and Tysons; three separate Metro Direct routes to nearby Metrorail Stations; and a local Cross County Connector route); and service frequency on the local OmniLink routes was increased. Mr. Harf’s tenure was also marked by the introduction of new technologies to increase efficiency, improve reliability, and enhance the customer’s trip experience.

"The Commission and PRTC’s customers have been well served by Mr. Harf’s leadership, and he should feel proud of what has been accomplished on his watch," Mr. Jenkins said.

Seven New Bus Shelters Installed

Have you noticed the new bus shelters at the following locations?

- Old Bridge Road (eastbound) before Smoketown Road;
- Old Bridge Road (eastbound) before Cricket Lane;
- Prince William Parkway (eastbound) before Ridgewood Center Drive;
- Manassas Drive (westbound) after Andrews Drive;
- Dale Boulevard (eastbound) before Delaney Road; and
- Crestwood Drive (eastbound) after Ashton Avenue.
First Transit, PRTC’s bus services contract provider, recognizes one outstanding operator each month and one outstanding technician each quarter. If you have a compliment about First Transit personnel, please let us know!

**Hector Lopez—Operator of the Year**

Hector Lopez was selected as Operator of the Year for his outstanding performance. He has been operating buses for PRTC for 10 years and currently operates trips on the Dale City and Manassas OmniLink routes. Originally from Guatemala, Mr. Lopez lives in Woodbridge and is married with three children. He enjoys doing home activities in his free time.

**Operator of the Month**

**Deborah Peregrina - January 2015**
A long-time resident of Northern Virginia, Ms. Peregrina has been operating buses for PRTC for 8 years. She currently operates trips on the Lake Ridge OmniRide and Prince William Metro Direct routes. Ms. Peregrina, who has two grown children, said the best part of her job is being outdoors and assisting people. Even in her free time, she focuses attention on others by assisting her elderly mother and working with rescue and feral cats. She’s also interested in real estate investment and wildlife rehabilitation.

**Elmo Maranon - February 2015**
Mr. Maranon, who also was recognized as Operator of the Month in September 2014, is a native of Bolivia. He has lived in this area for 10 years and now makes his home in Montclair. Mr. Maranon currently operates trips on the Lake Ridge and Dale City OmniRide routes. He has been at PRTC for more than 3 years and says that he enjoys serving the community. He and his wife have three children. In his free time, he enjoys music, soccer and movies.

**George Dwamena - March 2015**
As a bus operator, Mr. Dwamena most enjoys the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life. He has operated buses for PRTC for 12 years and currently operates trips on the Dale City OmniLink route. A native of Ghana, he now lives in Lorton and has three children. When he’s not driving buses, he enjoys reading, soccer and watching scary movies.

**Abiy Moguss - April 2015**
Ms. Moguss currently operates trips on the Dale City and Route 1 OmniRide routes and says the best part of her job is serving people. She has been operating buses for PRTC for 3 years. Originally from Ethiopia, she now lives in Fairfax. She is married and has four children and also enjoys reading and swimming. Ms. Moguss requested that her photo not be included.

**Majdi Meyhar - May 2015**
Spending time with God every Sunday and with family is a priority for Mr. Meyhar. Originally from Jordan, he has lived in the area for 22 years and has worked at PRTC for the past 9 years. He currently operates trips on the Lake Ridge and Dale City OmniRide routes. A married father with two children, he also enjoys swimming, soccer, horses and fishing.

**Technician of the Quarter**

**Alberto Morales - October to December 2014**
The best part of being a bus technician is the daily challenge and learning something new, said Mr. Morales, who has worked at PRTC for more than 3 years and is ASE certified. Mr. Morales is originally from Guatemala and has lived in the area for 25 years. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with his family and watching movies.

**Agwe Ahanda - January to March 2015**
Mr. Ahanda enjoys working with others to keep PRTC buses on the road. A native of Cameroon, he has lived in the area for 3 years and has worked at PRTC for 1 year. He is married with one child and one of his hobbies is learning about computers.
Is there still a bus connecting Woodbridge and Tysons?

Last year, I heard that the Tysons OmniRide bus would be discontinued, but I recently noticed that it’s still operating. What happened?

—D.B. of Dumfries

The Tysons Express OmniRide route was to make its final trip in late 2014 because of a lack of funding, but is continuing with the assistance of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, DRPT.

The route began in November 2009 with the goal of lessening traffic congestion during Beltway Express Lane construction. It was fully funded by DRPT and VDOT with the understanding that funding would cease when the Express Lanes opened.

Dozens of passengers attended a public hearing last year and urged PRTC to find a way to save the route, which operates weekdays between Woodbridge and Tysons.

Ultimately DRPT agreed to incorporate the route into a state-sponsored I-95 Express Lanes plan, enabling the route to continue.

Tysons OmniRide buses offer passengers a ride directly from Woodbridge to 14 stops in Tysons, including Tysons Corner Center and the West Park Transit Center.

Learn more about Tysons OmniRide at PRTCtransit.org.

Budget

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We are optimistic that additional funding will be found to sustain PRTC’s bus services, but service cuts starting in July 2016 are a real possibility.

I will keep you informed about this situation and hope that we can count on you to share your thoughts with elected officials about the importance of public transportation to our community.

Safe travels,

Eric Marx
Interim Executive Director