



# OmniNews

March 2016

Passenger Newsletter

## Budget Shortfall Requires Fare Increase, Service Cuts in July

While low fuel prices have provided an economic benefit for consumers and businesses, they have contributed to a significant budget shortfall for PRTC. As a result, PRTC’s proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget calls for a 5% fare increase and service cuts that will impact all routes and affect an estimated 125,000 annual passengers starting in July 2016.

Fuel prices started declining in September 2014 and, although they have recently started to rise, they are far below where they were three years ago. For PRTC, which relies on a regional 2.1% motor fuels tax to fund a large portion of its annual budget, the loss of fuel tax revenues has created an average annual budget shortfall of \$9.2 million.

That budget shortfall would be even worse if PRTC was not proposing to increase fares and cut services in July. *(See details about both proposals on page 2.)*

PRTC had hoped that the Virginia General Assembly would establish a “floor” for the motor fuels tax during the 2016 session, effectively helping to stabilize revenues. A bill was introduced and approved by the Virginia Senate, but it was tabled by a House of Delegates subcommittee until next year.

“This is a critical time for public transportation in Northern Virginia,” said PRTC Interim Executive Director Eric Marx. “The need has never been greater, but the

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## Thanks for expressions of support for PRTC



By Eric Marx, Interim Executive Director

Passengers and Friends of PRTC –

Thank you for all you have done over the past two months to help PRTC during a critical time in our budget cycle.

Lots of you responded to our many requests, whether it was to attend public meetings or contact elected officials — we truly appreciate your efforts!

We’re entering the final stretch as Prince William County will hold a public hearing on its proposed FY17 budget on April 12 at the county’s McCoart Administration Building.

We would be grateful for your continued support. Please consider attending the hearing and/or sending an email to [BOCS@pwcgov.org](mailto:BOCS@pwcgov.org) expressing your support for PRTC funding and why our services are important to you, your family, friends, employees, and the community.

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# Fare increase and service changes take effect in July 2016

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funding model that supports vital transit services is unsustainable.”

PRTC’s budget also is suffering from a loss of federal formula funds. PRTC received, on average, \$4.2 million annually in formula funding under the federal transportation funding program that was in place in 2009-2012. However, under the next program which was in place from 2013-2015, PRTC received an average of \$2.7 million—an annual loss of \$1.5 million. And the current program further drops PRTC’s funding by yet another \$50,000 annually.

PRTC and Prince William County, which provides the majority of PRTC’s local funding, have been projecting PRTC’s budget shortfall for years, and PRTC has made substantial changes over the past seven years in order to sustain its transportation services for as long as possible. Since 2009, PRTC has implemented cost-saving service reductions amounting to 9% of its scheduled bus services and also increased fares by nearly 30%.

Prince William’s proposed FY17 budget currently includes \$6 million for PRTC—an amount that was found by proposing to establish a separate funding source for the Virginia Railway Express. If this proposal is adopted by the Board of County Supervisors, the buses and trains would no longer have to share the limited fuel tax revenues.

Prince William will host a public hearing on its proposed FY17 budget on April 12 at the McCoart Building. Everyone who is concerned about PRTC funding is encouraged to attend.

## Proposed one-way fares as of July 2016:

- OmniRide: SmarTrip- \$6.50, cash- \$8.75, reduced fare for seniors and those with disabilities (limited hours)- \$4.35;
- Metro Direct: SmarTrip- \$3.25, cash- \$4, reduced fare for seniors and those with disabilities (limited hours)- \$2;
- OmniLink and Cross County Connector: regular fare- \$1.50, reduced fare for seniors and those with disabilities- \$0.75;
- Local bus day pass: regular fare- \$3.40, reduced fare for seniors and those with disabilities- \$1.70;
- Local bus weekly pass: regular fare- \$13.65, reduced fare for seniors and those with disabilities- \$6.80.

## Proposed service cuts as of July 2016:

### OmniRide commuter bus

- Elimination of the Capitol Hill route;
- Elimination of two trips on the South Route 1 route;
- Elimination of one trip on the Dale City – Washington route;
- Elimination of neighborhood routing on all Lake Ridge routes;
- Elimination of neighborhood routing on the Dale City and Lake Ridge DL and DLX trips;
- Elimination of service to Manassas Mall on Manassas OmniRide;
- Route consolidation of all trips serving Crystal City requiring Dale City passengers to transfer to Lake Ridge buses at the Pentagon;
- Elimination of Modified Holiday service; and
- Reduction of service on Fridays.

### Metro Direct commuter bus

- Elimination of two trips on Linton Hall Metro Direct;
- Elimination of all non-rush hour and reverse-commute trips on Manassas Metro Direct; and
- Reduction of frequency of mid-day trips on Prince William Metro Direct.

### OmniLink and Cross County Connector local buses

- Reduction of frequency on all OmniLink routes;
- Elimination of one trip on the Route 1 OmniLink route;
- Restructuring of Manassas and Manassas Park OmniLink routing including eliminating one Manassas Park bus and reduction in frequency of service; and
- Elimination of three Cross County trips and reduction in frequency of service.

# Outstanding Employees

First Transit, the contract provider for PRTC's bus services, 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!

## Operator of the Month

### Silvia Martinez - November 2015

Ms. Martinez has worked at PRTC for more than three years and most recently operated trips on the Woodbridge OmniLink route. She enjoys her job, she says, because she loves to drive. A Guatemala native, she has lived in the Prince William County area for nine years, and is married with one child. In her free time, she cares for her child and enjoys cooking.



### Patrice Brown - December 2015

After 13 years of operating PRTC buses, Ms. Brown says she still enjoys seeing the excitement of young children when they ride the bus. Originally from Washington, D.C., she now lives in Prince William and most recently operated trips on the Manassas OmniLink and Dale City OmniLink routes. As a married mother of four, in her free time, she enjoys photography, spending time with her children, and playing board games and basketball.



### Robert Wilkins - January 2016

A Rhode Island native, Mr. Wilkins moved to the area in 1996 and now lives in Prince William County. He has been at PRTC for nearly two years and most recently operated trips on the Dumfries OmniLink and Manassas Park OmniLink routes. He says the best thing about his job is the people he works with. A married father of six, Mr. Wilkins is a diehard



Steelers fan and enjoys working on his 1971 Buick Skylark.

### Porfirio Diaz - February 2016

Serving the public is the best part of the job for Mr. Diaz, who has operated buses at PRTC for eight years. Originally from El Salvador, Mr. Diaz has lived in the area for 37 years and now makes his home in Woodbridge. He most recently operated trips on OmniRide buses serving Manassas, Dale City and Lake Ridge. He is married and has 10 children: five adults and five who haven't yet reached their teen years. When he's not working, he spends time with his children, plays soccer and enjoys travel.



## Technician of the Quarter

### Matthew Osei - July to September 2015

Mr. Osei, the Technician of the Quarter for the months of July to September, 2015, is originally from Ghana and has lived in the area for 14 years. Mr. Osei is married with four children. In his free time he enjoys soccer, golf and basketball. Mr. Osei requested that his photo not be included.

### Artford White - October to December 2015

Working as a technician on PRTC buses, there's always something new to learn, said Mr. White, who was recognized as Technician of the Quarter for the months of October to December, 2015. Mr. White lives in Maryland and is originally from Jamaica. When he's not working, he enjoys fishing, horse racing, car racing and spending time at the beach. He asked that his photo not be included.





Potomac and Rappahannock  
Transportation Commission

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14700 Potomac Mills Road  
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703-730-6664  
PRTCtransit.org

## I want to Know...

# Mark Center service does not depend on local funding

**I've heard that PRTC has to cut service and raise fares in July. Knowing that, why did you recently start new OmniRide bus services to the Mark Center?**

—Y.L. of Dale City

In February 2016, PRTC introduced two new OmniRide routes to the Mark Center: one route starts in Dale City and the other in Lake Ridge.

All of PRTC's operating expenses for these Mark Center routes that are not covered by fares are 100% funded by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, (DRPT).

Because DRPT is paying all expenses, no local funding is required from PRTC's bus-sponsoring jurisdictions.

Additionally, DRPT funded the buses that will be used for Mark Center service. New equipment is scheduled to arrive in the spring; in the meantime, PRTC is using contingency buses already in its fleet.

The Mark Center service, and others that will be added and paid for by DPRT over the next 20 years, are included in the Department's *I-95 Corridor Transit and TDM (Transportation Demand Management) Plan*.

Each Mark Center route has four trips to the facility in the mornings, and four return trips in the afternoons/evenings.

For schedule information, visit [PRTCtransit.org](http://PRTCtransit.org) or contact Customer Service at (703) 730-6664.

## Thank you

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Prince William's proposed FY17 budget currently includes \$6 million for PRTC—an amount that was found by proposing to establish a separate funding source for the Virginia Railway Express. If this proposal is adopted by the Board of County Supervisors, buses and trains will no longer have to share Prince William's share of limited revenues generated by our region's 2.1% motor fuels tax.

However if the proposal is not adopted and PRTC is forced to make significant additional budget cuts, drastic reductions in bus services will be required. Under the worst case scenario, all local bus services would be eliminated, and most commuter buses would only serve Metrorail stations.

This scenario would have a devastating impact on our community, forcing more vehicles onto already-congested roads during rush hours and eliminating access to transportation for those who can't or don't drive for various reasons.

Again, please consider making your voice heard one more time. Thank you!