



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

August 12, 2020
Location: via: Zoom

Attendance:

New Jersey: Reggie Haynes, Ben Saracco, Steve Benigno, Mike Devlin, Marty King, Alan Becker, Bruce Schwartz, Judy Boldurian, Pamela Mack-Brooks, Dan Norfleet, Strasso Jovanovski, Pamela Mack-Brooks

Pennsylvania: Daniel McArdle, Bob Melikian, Larry Davis

Emeritus Member(s): Jeff Kessler, John Boyle

Potential Member(s): Joseph Russell

DRPA/PATCO: John Hanson, Jim White, John Rink, Mike Rakowski, Barbara Wagner

Public Member(s):

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the July 8, 2020 Minutes. The Minutes were approved.

A motion was made to approve the July 9, 2020 Memo to the Commissioners presented to the Board on July 15, 2020.

A Moment of Silence was held for Jack Schroeder.

CFO, Jim White:

Jim White updated the committee on the Second Quarter Financials of the Authority. The most up to date DRPA/PATCO Unaudited Financial Summary dated August 5, 2020 was shared with the Committee prior to the meeting, which was also sent to the Finance Committee and is a part of the Board Packet to the Commissioners. CFO White reported that bridge traffic thru May 31, 2020 is down 29.65% compared to 2019 and toll revenues are down 24% compared to 2019, which are audited numbers. At this time, CFO did not have final numbers for June, but

suspects the YTD drop in toll revenues will be at \$38 million or higher. (June YTD numbers just received show a \$37.2 million drop in 2020 toll revenues vs 2019)

Since the start of COVID-19, the bridge traffic was down by 6 million vs. budget through May and bridge revenues down at \$30.4 million vs. budget through May. The good news is that bridge traffic has increased to 82% of 2019, which was at a low of 30% in April compared to 2019.

CFO White reported that he and CEO Hanson speak on a weekly basis about the DRPA's net revenue requirements or Article 5.09 that requires the DRPA to have enough revenue on hand to offset the DRPA debt service and PATCO subsidy. CFO White is optimistic that the DRPA can meet that covenant with the assumption and hope that we do not see a resurgence of COVID-19 in the fall.

CFO White also reported that PATCO ridership dropped, significantly, in April to 10% ridership. In recent weeks, we have seen an increase in ridership and revenues at approximately 20%. The good news is the DRPA received a \$41 million transit grant that helped offset the loss in revenues from bridge tolls and PATCO ridership that also helped strengthen the General Fund, which has taken a hit due to aggressive Capital Spending and PATCO subsidies. PATCO ridership through June 30, 2020 is down 51.28% compared to 2019 with revenues down 52.37%.

Presently, for the month of August, the DRPA is down \$6.1 million in revenues and as a result, CFO White and CEO Hanson are closely watching expenditures, delaying hirings, etc. The good news is PATCO has recovered from 10% ridership to slightly above 20% and bridge tolls have increased to 82%.

CEO Hanson reiterated that the \$41million in Federal Transit Grant helped the DRPA with the PATCO subsidies. Presently, commercial traffic is higher than car traffic, the former which brings in a higher revenue. If the present trend continues with bridge tolls and PATCO ridership, the DRPA is expected to be in good shape until the end of the year to meet the bond covenants requirements and debt service ratios. A hiring freeze has been put in place and capital spending has been limited other than those that are a strategic priority. (The DRPA is already involved in an aggressive capital plan.)

John Rink reported that during the week of August 3rd, PATCO had its highest ridership since March 16th.

Q&A Session:

Q: How has commercial truck traffic increased toll revenues? Will you consider raising commercial truck tolls considering the DRPA tolls are lower than other bridges in the area?
Ben Sarraco

A: CFO White reported that the unaudited numbers through July show that commercial traffic is down 149K vs. 2019. Revenues have not been impacted as much by the loss of passenger tolls at \$5.00, because the DRPA has not lost that much in commercial traffic which has an average toll at \$6.50 to \$7.00.

CFO White further reported that he and CEO Hanson have a strategic plan where they are committed to not raising bridge tolls until January 2023 because of the strength of the General Fund and financial liquidity. Of course, if traffic falls below 80% for the next year and a half - that is a different story.

CEO Hanson further explained that if the DRPA cannot legally meet its bond covenants due to a drop in revenues, he would have to consult with the Traffic Engineer to discuss the possibility of raising tolls. The DRPA is carefully monitoring the bridge traffic and if it remains the same and PATCO ridership increases a little, he will be satisfied and will not have to consider raising bridge tolls.

Q. Is there any more money that the DRPA can receive from Government Grants or Transit Grants?

Alan Becker

A. CFO White reported that there are some efforts to gain additional funding for the bridges and transit authorities, but it must work its way through Congress through lobbying efforts.

CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA's Government Relations Department is working with Senators Booker, Casey, Menendez, and Toomey for additional transit grants including bridge grants. The Chamber of Commerce and others have also joined in.

Q. Can you use capital funds for operating funds without disrupting covenants?

Bob Melikian

A. CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA has over \$200 million in the General Fund, which can be used for any lawful purpose to support the Authority. The DRPA is in better shape than similar agencies.

Q. _____
Strasso Jovanovski

A. CEO Hanson reported that even in the best of times, PATCO does not pay the full cost of operations, it pays approximately one-half of operating expenses. Capital costs is another order of magnitude. PATCO pays approximately 15%-40% of full cost, including capital expenses. Although we need financial contributions from PATCO, the bigger issue is the bridge traffic. If the bridge traffic remains strong, the DRPA can maintain PATCO. The Authority also receives approximately \$15 to \$20 million a year from the FTA. It takes approximately \$285 million to pay bills at the DRPA (debt service and operational costs).

Q. Do any Planning Agencies, such as the DVRPC, project when bridge traffic will return to pre COVID-19 levels or will it have a lasting effect?

Bruce Schwartz

A. CEO Hanson reported that no one is projecting it; however, if there is a vaccine people may become a little more flexible in using public transportation.

John Rink reported that some of the planning groups and transit agencies believe that there will be some return to the city in October 2020. Septa did a survey with some of the larger companies who are going to wait until after the New Year. We could possibly see an uptick after Labor Day.

Q. Does the DRPA employ lobbyists?

A. CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA does not employ lobbyists. He reported that our Government Relations Department, through its Directors and Managers, are very engaged and have been working with Senators Toomey, Casey, Booker & Menendez' offices, along with the Chamber of Commerce, APTA (on the transit side), our sister Bi-State Agencies and the Port of New York and New Jersey.

GM, John Rink:

John Rink reported that Jeff Kessler met with Mike Williams who continues to work with the GTFS vendor on ways to streamline our update process by creating a dashboard where we can upload schedules in Excel format and extract data to update the schedule daily with trackwork schedules. The GTF data will be updated in September.

The real time display contract will go before the Board for approval on August 19th, which will provide real time arrival information at the stations on the existing red LED signs on the platforms. We will be using the SCADA/signal system to locate where the trains are and will take data to post arrival times at the stations on the LED signs. The biggest job will be to take the LED signs and move them over to the closed loop system, as the SCADA system is a closed network that is hard to hack with the best security. Hopefully, the work will begin this year and be finished by early 2021

John Rink further reported that AT&T is going on its own to provide cell coverage in the tunnels based on the 5G system, which will go before the Board on August 19, 2020. PATCO is waiting to hear from Boingo on the other providers.

John Rink also reported on the data regarding the air exchange rate on the cars. PATCO cars currently have a fresh air exchange every 6 minutes and a supply air exchange at every 1.5 minutes. PATCO's system design of 8CFM/passenger is above ASHRAE's post-COVID guidelines of 7.5CFM/passenger. PATCO's filter system has a MERV rating of 7 to remove air particles. PATCO is also looking to add anti-viral filters, which are being tested to make sure we can maintain the system's air flow. We have LTK Engineering working with us on this effort, as they helped support PATCO with the refurb project.

The Fresh Air Design for the trains will be forwarded to Mike Williams, so that he could put that information out to the public.

Q&A Session:

Q. How do we change over air in the tunnels?

Alan Becker

A. John Rink reported that we do not change over air in the tunnels. There are air vent shafts that go to street level which provides fresh air throughout the tunnel, but no mechanical ventilation. There are fans on the subway platforms to move the air in the stations.

Q. Have there been any malware hits on PATCO's system?

Bob Melikian

A. John Rink reported that we haven't had any malware hits on our PATCO system. We are always updating the system and doing the necessary firewall work. A few years ago, someone got into our website changing our ticker and put messages on the system which came through as text alerts.

Q. Is the original vendor of SCADA system doing the real time upgrade to the system or a 3rd party vendor?

Jeff Kessler

A. John Rink reported that B&C Transit, a 3rd party vendor from California who already completed the upgrade to the office system, is performing the system upgrade.

Q. Are there plans to display the schedule data absent the real time information?

Jeff Kessler

A. John Rink reported that PATCO is working with Intersection to put a ticker up showing GTS data on the bottom of the red LED screen.

Q. Will PATCO be able to provide mobile apps, GTS data or real time alerts to the public?

Jeff Kessler

A. John Rink reported that we are looking into how to export the data.

Q. Will PATCO be able to overtake the sign to provide real time alerts and messaging?

Jeff Kessler

A. Yes.

Q. When will closed stations reopen?

Jeff Kessler

A. John Rink reported that 30% of ridership is our internal metric to reopen stations. We are currently at 21% ridership.

CEO Hanson further reported that he and John Rink recently spoke with certain stakeholders, including Rutgers, and will re-open the closed stations, if necessary. We are carefully monitoring ridership to see if additional trains should be added after Labor Day to ensure social distancing and provide the required space for riders.

Q. Would re-opening closed stations increase ridership?

Larry Davis

A. CEO Hanson reported that he does not believe that re-opening the closed stations would increase ridership, as the closed stations are very close to the open stations. Ridership above 30% is the threshold we established; however, if Rutgers decides to open their campus, we will consider re-opening stations.

Q. How do you enforce mask wearing?

Larry Davis

A. CEO Hanson reported that, at this time, we are fortunate that we have not had much of a problem as passengers have been compliant in wearing masks. PATCO has a variety of ways to enforce it, but it is not easy, compounded by people who refuse and who are generally aggressive and hostile. Our principle plan on the trains is to maintain physical distancing between passengers and not to engage non-compliant passengers.

Q. What is the cleaning schedule for the trains?

Larry Davis

A. John Rink reported that the trains are cleaned twice daily. The high touch spots in the Stations are also cleaned twice daily. The Stations are cleaned every evening.

Q. Will PATCO put out a survey to its Riders regarding their return to work?

A. John Hanson reported not at this time, as there is too much uncertainty with COVID19, and most people have no idea when and how they will return to the workplace. Presently, the data collected would not be that valuable in our decision making.

Mike Rakowski/Engineering

Elevators

Ashland Station – Final work on the sprinkler line is being performed. The elevator is going through testing and will be operational shortly.

Westmont Station – Work continues on the addition. The elevator is almost complete. Mechanical work will follow with the hopes of being operational by the 4th quarter of 2020 or 1st quarter of 2021.

12th/13th Station and City Hall/Camden Station – Demolition work and electrical work is being performed.

Stations

Ferry Avenue Station – The DRPA is waiting for the contractor’s schedule to begin work on the installation of the sewer line in the parking lot. Engineering will work with Mike Williams to put out a notice and alert the public when the work will begin.

Q&A Session:

Q. What is going on at the Franklin Square Station?
Alan Becker

A. Mike Rakowski reported that the design is complete. The DRPA is working with the Historic District and the FTA to finalize any build grant and/or environmental issues. Construction should start by late fall 2020 or beginning of 2021.

CEO Hanson reported that although the design is complete, the construction bids still have to go through the normal bid process.

Old Business: Committee member head shots have been forwarded to Mike Williams to be added to the DRPA website.

New Business: Bob Melikian introduced Joe Russell to the Committee as an interested CAC member.

Bob Melikian stated that there was a great shot in local newspapers and the Inquirer of DRPA workmen walking up the suspension of the Ben Franklin Bridge.

Judy Boldurian provided pictures of the Collingswood Station showing pigeon waste at the Handicap Spot. John Rink reported that he would have the Collingswood Station power washed sometime during the evening. On August 13, 2020, John Rink provided photographs to Judy Boldurian showing the area at the station power washed.

Judy Boldurian also provided photographs of exposed rebar at the Collingswood Station. John Rink reported that there is a contract to rehab the underside of the concrete structure.

Ben Saracco reported to the committee that he reached out through social media to report on a lantern/light that was out at the foot of the Anchorage on the Camden side by Pearl Street close to the water. He reported that the door was opened to the lantern, the light was out, and water was going inside the lantern. Mike Rakowski reported that it was part of the Biennial Inspection Report.

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held via Zoom on September 9, 2020 @ 6:00 p.m.

Next DRPA Board Meeting: Will be held virtually on September 16, 2020