



## **Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes**

September 9, 2020  
Location: via: Zoom

### **Attendance:**

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

**Pennsylvania:** Daniel McArdle, Robert Melikian, Larry Davis, Tyrone Wesley

**Emeritus Member(s):** Jeff Kessler, John Boyle

**Potential Member(s):** Joseph Russell

**DRPA/PATCO:** John Hanson, John Rink, Mike Rakowski, Mike Venuto, Dawn Whiton, Jeff Nash

**Public Member(s):**

### **Call to Order**

A motion was made to approve the August 12, 2020 Minutes. Motion was approved and seconded. The Minutes were approved.

A motion was made to approve the August 19, 2020 Memo to the Commissioners. Motion was approved and seconded.

### **DRPA Vice-Chairman Jeff Nash**

Jeff Nash wanted to listen in and perhaps more to get a sense of what the committee is feeling which I think represents in a sampling way takes the temperature of our clients, customers, commuters who rides the bridges and takes PATCO, it's really important to me and our commissioners feel the same, important to know what people are thinking as we do our business at committee and board meetings and not to presume what people are thinking. I do take bridge and PATCO and am more aware of what I see

in my surroundings and I will pick up the phone to call John Rink. I wanted to participate and listen in to see what this committee meeting is thinking. Thanked committee for allowing him to listen in.

### **CEO John Hanson**

CEO Hanson thanked VC Nash. I appreciate the leadership and support. There is no bigger supporter of the PATCO line than VC Nash. Maybe some are equal, but he is a staunch advocate of the PATCO line as well as the bridges. My comments are brief and continue to be very proud of our staff and the work is getting done. We are doing everything we can do to keep people safe. And outside the organization we are doing everything we can to keep people from being infected and spreading it internally and externally. Our staff that cannot perform their work remotely are all working and working full schedules and certainly be at PATCO also. By and largest people on the tracks, bridges and police officers are here every day working full time and have had relatively few infections of the COVID virus.

John Hanson commented on the 15,000 bees on the walkway over the weekend, then opened up for questions.

### **PATCO Watchers**

Larry Davis asked VC Nash, news that the freeholder title is being away with. The State of NJ legislatively changed the name of freeholder to commissioners. We will now be known as commissioners. The reason is really two fold, the primary reason is that the word freeholder and that title was designated at a time when only white males would own their property in fee and no debt were permitted to hold elected office, so the name freeholder has that negative connotation to it. Second is that relatively few people know what a freeholder actually does. It's a confusing name and doesn't quite mix with the job responsibilities. IN DE Valley in particular, as most of the PA counties, they have county commissioners and that is more in line with county work. I think its fine if it helps explain what we do, offers a little more transparency and removes some of the negativity from the 1700's.

Larry Davis asked Mr. Hanson about an update on the new toll taking technology. CEO Hanson we have finished the design work and preparing RFP and do not intend to issue it until early next year. Right now, we have a situation with DRPA/PATCO finances, we are in good shape right now and in compliance with all our bond covenants. Bridge Traffic is about 82% most recently of prep-Covid-19, extremely helpful, PATCO is still 22% of pre-Covid-19 numbers. We are down in numbers but it's the same demographic. Commercial Traffic is not down. Mostly commuters, so we have important resolution that have to be introduced at the end of the year. One looks back to see if we have met our covenants and one looks forward at the next year and states we will meet our covenants. So, we are trying to delay any expenditures that can be delayed. It can be delayed a few months so can get a better view.

Larry Davis asked, have you been going after any of the big EZ-Pass violators. CEO Hanson stated that we really haven't, a lot of the violations have seemed to have fallen off, I think that most of the violators are disproportionately single vehicle cars, We will still continue to look at that, but we have been more swamped recently with the fallout from the cashless period where there were problems related to the tolls were billed and violations assessed. Quite frankly it's the same people that go after to toll violators and they are fully engaged in correcting accounts for people and dealing with this. Hopefully in the next 4 to 6 weeks we will get back to it.

Larry Davis asked CEO Hanson that recently SEPTA came out with new fares across the board, free transfer, etc. Free for kids under 12, is that something you would evaluate for kids riding PATCO? CEO Hanson mentioned he was not sure what SEPTA is thinking, I know they got financial issues and did not

hear that, will have to look into that. It would be certainly something we could address in Feb or March time frame. We get only about 15M Dollars from FTA and we are grateful, but you are talking about an operation that spends about 300M a year. We are down significant chunk right now. Trying to do something for free right now is not something that is on the top of my list. But gain Feb, March time frame we may consider something like that. Larry Davis stated that its cheaper to do an Uber for a family of 3,4 and 5 to get to jump an uber or take family of 5 cheaper to ride Uber and perhaps that why SEPTA is allowing kids under 12 to ride for free for the families. CEO Hanson stated that it would not be something that he would consider.

Larry Davis – that one of the PATCO Watchers asked if there were any intentions to install solar in more locations? Perhaps if they work out to go beyond 50% electric. CEO stated we would certainly consider it but Sun Power who is building them has looked at everything and has put the solar panels everywhere where they are viable, but changes in technology would make that possible, right now there is no other place that is viable and particularly are within the rules that are required to get the ESRA benefit to make this project work. I am being remis in not mentioning that VC Nash was a significant advocate for this project. He was persistent and Mike Venuto, John Rink and PATCO and thanks to VC never letting go of the idea. We have them coming up in Lindenwold. One Port Center Parking is underway. The state of the technology does not make it viable for more locations. VC Nash thanked the Engineering Department for their hard work. What makes it viable now as opposed to our green port committee when originally discussed was the finances. What you have to do is match the need with the ability under NJ incentives to building this company to build it for us for free and still give us the discount on electricity. We are very fortunately to have NJ Board of Public Utilities to agree to a little a little quirk in the law which would have prevented us from tying directly into the PATCO system. As you know, most of these companies connect directly into the grid directly so that you have an indirect financial benefit to you, but we wanted to use the solar energy to fuel PATCO and it took negotiations with NJ Board of Public Utilities to allow us to do that. This could not have been not been done without John and Christina Maroney and administration pushing the project forward. CEO mentioned that another big proponent on this project was Dr. Nicole Ochroch from our engineering department. Her doctorate is in this area and her insight, advice and actions has been invaluable. But there are quirks in the law about not tying into the grid directly and also, the power is supposed to be used where the panels are. This was thru the PATCO ROW and NJ Board of Utilities was helpful in getting this. VC Nash commended John Rink about doing such a great job. John Rink confirmed that when VC Nash says, he calls me when finding an issue on PATCO, he certainly does.

Larry Davis asked if he knew about the Look Up Speak Up APP ? Another option?

**Chief Engineer, Mike Venuto**, Updated on the following projects:

1. PATCO elevators – moving along. Ashland elevator work is complete and opened for the reopening. There is a small Issue with connection with last smoke alarm and we are actively working on that thru the weekend.
2. Westmont, the building work is complete, so we are just working on the building the car, cab and elevator and we expect it to be done by the end of the year.
3. And 12<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> & Locust we are doing electrical work and mechanical work in the station. We have the permits for the topside work, and it will start soon, we are trying to be the least disruptive to that area as we may have to take out an adjacent lane so it will affect parking and buses. Holding off as long as we can in order to time it right.
4. City Hall Station we are doing electrical work and interior demolition working below. Topside we started the excavation and unfortunately hit some undergrounds that were not on anyone's as-

built plans, so we are working with the contractor to negotiate a price. We have to move the stairwell about 5 feet, and we are obtaining a price to do that. We have a disagreement, our engineer and our contractor cannot come to an agreement, so a third-party contract is looking at it to give us an independent price and then we can make our decision on how we are moving forward.

5. PATCO Station Enhancements Project – The project is underway. The contractor mobilized at the Ferry Avenue Station and over the next couple of weeks they will start demolishing the existing concrete island and then continue to Ashland and Woodcrest stations in October and we should hit we Lindenwold early next year, probably Feb or March of 2021.
6. Corridor Project at the WWB - we are performing the final milling and paving the interior lanes. So right now, we have interior lanes on 76 closed and are paving around the toll plaza and once finished will shift to the outside lane construction. While we are there, we will finish rehabilitation Broad Street and also 10<sup>th</sup> street on those overpasses, drainage improvements, finish installing foundations for new sign structures, for sign replacement. If anyone has driven over the bridge lately, on the PA side the old gantries have been taken down and will be replaced with new gantries. Gantries A and C have been taken down and next couple of weeks, there will be 4-hour closures on bridges at night in October to replace the two old gantries. Also, there will be more slowdowns when we start taking down the old signs' structures along the corridor.
7. There was a question about the pier at the BFB. We do own that pier. Right now, it is fenced off and there is signage. There is not access to it. BRF will monitor it in their weekly inspections and they will watch and address if they see anything. We did do a full marine inspection of the pier about a year ago and we do have to do some repairs at some point in the future based on the condition assessment. It will be in our long range budget but as CEO Hanson mentioned earlier, like some of the other projects, at this time it is not a priority project and will have to defer some of this work to out years, but we do have a report on it that we just commissioned not too long ago. Ben Saracco thanked Mr. Venuto for answering his question. He stated that one thing that could be done short term is to address that it is covered in weeds and the barriers outside of it are covered in graffiti and the walkway to Camden County Wiggins Park attached to it is caving in slightly. Its contributing to blight. Can DRPA maintain it like they do every other vacant lot. Mike Venuto, yes to address the barriers and the steel plate, at some point the bulkhead started deteriorating even beyond where our property limit is and of course once that starts going it starts deteriorating and that's why we put the barriers and steel plate down. I haven't seen the barrels with graffiti and will talk to the bridge director about maintenance outside the fence line to take care of the foliage around that area. DRPA does a great job maintain the project at the bottom of the bridge, but this is where the bulkhead and graffiti is. Mike Venuto stated he will talk to Bridge Director and see what they can do.

Robert Melikian is the Port Authority doing the work on the PA side of the WWB and where does property line end and where does state take over. Went to the shore last weekend and as usual there was a backup down to one lane, not annoyed or anything, just asking the question. Mr. Venuto stated that at the WWB we actually own from the Bridge Toll to Pasyunk Avenue and we are rehabilitating the entire corridor. We are working on two lanes, closed a few ramps, and other partial lanes closures and including ramps on 95 and it is all of our project. Mr. Melikian then asked, unrelated and perhaps related does DRPA get state or federal funds from gas taxes to fund highway? CEO Hanson stated that we are not eligible. It is all funded by Bridge Tolls.

Ben Saracco asked about a project that involved DRPA to have water run off on the BFB going to a new rain garden. There has been a lot of meetings about it and other stakeholders and CCMUA was involved in it. I saw an RFP that went out recently and am so excited about this project. There is a lot of flooding in my neighborhood, possibly DRPA had legal concerns at the last minute and wanted to know whether that was true or not? And whether this project is moving forward. CEO Hanson stated that it is absolutely not true when you say “at the last minute” we have had concerns from the beginning about the liability that we told the county and all that is necessary is for them to give us an indemnification. Initially our suggestion was do the runoff and put it on another piece of property that they own and right now there are no environmental issues in that area but one you disturb it there can be environmental issues. We are fully supportive of this project, but we are not willing to undertake new environmental liability to make it happen. So, the project sponsor needs to come up with a solution that will not create more environment liability for DRPA or indemnify us and they have refused to do that. I would like to reemphasize that this is not a last-minute thing and anyone that told you that is distorting the facts. This on the table from the very beginning. Mr. Saracco asked if the RFP will be pulled and CEO Hanson stated that this is not our RFP you would have to speak to the county.

Mr. Norfleet asked what our agenda is for next week when everyone plans on coming back into the City. How are you going to do the social distancing on the PATCO line, what’s the plan? John Rink but before I address, I want to make sure there are no more questions for Mr. Venuto as he has another engagement.

Larry Davis when you were speaking about WWB project, is there any change to the South Philly Casino building their ramp in that section of roadway DRPA owns? Mike Venuto confirmed that we had spoken to the casino and PennDOT regarding their proposed ramp. There was some preliminary conceptual design probably over a year ago, but no further developments. We did not support that ramp where it was going to be positioned on the land it was going to be put. It created difficulties for the merge of onto 676 and the exit at the same time. It was only conceptually designed and there is no further action taken on that.

### **GM of PATCO, John Rink**

John Rink then answered Mr. Northfleet’s question. Yesterday if you saw the news we had made a big announcement starting Monday we will have a new schedule in place. Our new schedule will involve stopping at all 13 stations. The four closed stations will be reopened on 12:01 a.m. on Monday morning. The last few weeks we have been cleaning the stations to make sure everything is ready for Monday. They have been closed for six months and are actively cleaning those stations. New schedule in place pretty much matches our pre-Covid-19 schedule with the only difference being that we will not be running express trains. Only local trains. Every station stop every 5 to 10 minutes. Following weekend will go from 30 minute to 20 minute and on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> we will go from 60 to 30 min. which matches our pre-Covid-19 schedule. As John Hanson mentioned we have been inching up every week with higher ridership that the prior week. Last week we exceeded 23% pre-Covid-19 ridership. This will allow us to do the social distancing. Staff is monitoring the cars so that the cars do not exceed 50%. With the new schedule provides more service to not exceed 50% of the cars and forward reports to CEO Hanson. Will be able to provide more service with

I see Mr. Russell is on the call. Our GTFS vendor confirmed receipt and is making the changes now. So that data should be up by the end of the week for your app. So any of those that are using your app, the GTFS will be should be updated for that. Right now we are busy cleaning the stations that includes the northside of Ashland will be clear from the solar project and north lot will be open to start and signage directing customers who go to southside to go to northside lot and hope to have the southside lot open by end of September. We made sure that all the stations that are opening that they all have the hand sanitizers installed for our customers coming through that is where we are at. I know one of the questions is the City Hall Station and that will be reopening. That will be reopened. We are working on the west headhouse will be reopened. We are working with the City to clean the area. They are the ones that installed the fencing around the location. There is a lot of trash in that area and working with them to clean it up and looking to reopen soon back to pre-Covid-19 schedule.

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Mr. Northfleet then asked if DRPA would be getting into mask reinforcement like SEPTA had? CEO Hanson right now we are requiring that people wear mask, but not our primary way to provide safety to people. Our primary way right now is to keep increasing capacity so that people who are wearing masks can keep enough safe distance from people who don't. Our police department is monitoring but not enforcing. They have indicated that compliance with the mask policy is very high.

John Rink added that when he had been out on the trains, the majority of the customers are wearing masks.

Judy Boldurian asked that as far as the 50% do you put, does that mean 1 person per seat? This morning was the first time I actually almost witnessed a scuffle. How are they supposed to be seated? A lady was having an issue that a person sat in front of her. The woman was making snarky remark, and I didn't want to be in a YouTube video. I have my mask on and just read my book, so was wondering, how the 50% is handled with seating. Basically, a person with every row. We tell people to go to the first and last cars. 38 people per car. If ridership outgrows that for right now, we are taking the steps of keeping people safe. That's why we are not taking the measure of enforcing. The people are not wearing masking seem to be hostile. We want to provide enough space for our people to be able to move away, we don't even want our police to be involved. We are enforcing for our employees to wear them.

Mr. Melikian commended Mr. Hanson and the crew for really keeping a level head during the very stressful time. Applauses were made. We are still down, still have openings on the committee, especially from Pennsylvania. Perhaps this may not be a good time as people are concerned about their help. CEO Hanson will asked Mike to put something out and Mr. Rink volunteered to work with Mike on that to.

Dr. Jovanski asked a question about PATCO fare evasions. John Rink mentioned that he was speaking with the Chief and Captain today and they were talking about have more detail going on right now to address these issues at the stations. They do in fact enforce and we rely on our customers and station supervisors about a time in particular. We will forward this to the police. If there is a particular time frame, please forward to me and I will notify the chief on this. Dr. Jovanski stated Broadway at night is when he sees a lot. John Rink stated he would let them know.

Larry Davis mentioned one other question about roof in Lindenwold, it still leaks. That is a capital project that was probably held up due to Covid-19. CEO Hanson stated that he would follow-up with Mike Venuto about that and get back to you next week. I will also walk down with Mike by the pier to check it out. If we can improve the look and we will get back next month.

Mr. Melikian mentioned that this has been Joe Russell's second meeting for being a potential member. Mr. Russell mentioned that he is amazed at keeping to the precision of the agenda. It's the only organization that he has ever seen do that. I love to hear about the status of PATCO and happy to hear about the numbers going up as it helps to fund all the projects we have in the pipeline. Thanks for inviting me back and for the updates.

### **Old Business**

Daniel McArdle thanked Barbara Wagner for sending over the press release from Mike Williams. He mentioned he is very excited to ride PATCO more frequently, perhaps not so much for teaching. CEO Hanson mentioned that they had spoken with Rutgers and did offer to open up that particular station if the need was there, and Rutgers stated that they were just curious about what we were doing. The key to provide our riders safety is to provide ample capacity to social distance and with this may be able to adjust the schedule a little but not by much and we will have to look at other ways if ridership comes back above 50%.

Chairman McArdle stated that, we finished revamping the CAC website. If you have not sent a headshot as of yet, please do. We modeled it after Commissioner Nash and the rest of the commissioners, looks very nice. Will echo with numbers of the PA members.

Meeting adjourned.

**Next CAC Meeting:** Will be held via Zoom on October 14, 2020 @ 6:00 p.m.

**Next DRPA Board Meeting:** Will be held virtually on October 21, 2020

