



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

February 10, 2021

Location: via: Zoom

Attendance:

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

Pennsylvania: Bob Melikian, Larry Davis, Dan Norfleet, Tyrone Wesley

Emeritus Member(s): John Boyle, Jeff Kessler

Potential Member(s): Joseph Russell

DRPA/PATCO: John Hanson, Jim White, John Rink, Steve DeVillasanta, Ed Montgomery, Barbara Wagner

Public Member(s):

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the January 13, 2021 Minutes. The Minutes were approved.

CEO, John Hanson

CEO Hanson informed the committee of Chairman Ryan Boyer's resignation from the Board of Commissioners of the Delaware River Port Authority. He reported that Chairman Boyer will be working in another Government position in Pennsylvania. He is a great man and a great leader, and I learned a lot from him and his leadership. We are all sorry to see him go.

CEO Hanson further reported that he was in touch with Governor Wolf's new appointee for Chair, Cherelle Parker, who is expected to be elected at the February 17, 2021 Board Meeting. She will be the first woman to ever chair the Delaware River Port Authority and PATCO. Cherelle Parker is very energetic and has a lot of enthusiasm for the DRPA and its work. I am looking forward to working with her.

*Chairman Cherelle Parker was elected at the February 17th Board Meeting.

CFO, Jim White

CFO White reported that the January 2021 numbers for DRPA and PATCO revenues were slightly ahead of plan because we took a conservative approach on DRPA traffic and revenues, and PATCO ridership. We started off the year nicely in terms of traffic and ridership, which is between 73% and 77% in comparison to 2019 figures. The weather had an impact on traffic in February due to snowstorms, so we will keep an eye on the numbers. Typically, when forecasting in the winter months, we always take the weather into consideration as it always has an impact on traffic.

CFO White further reported that we are still working on our close for yearend, which will take a couple of weeks before we get into the audit process. It looks like combined losses, in terms of DRPA toll revenues and passenger revenues, are going to be at approximately \$83 million. We did pull in \$29 million from the CARES Act transit grant through the end of the year. In 2021, we pulled down another \$4 million, with another \$8 million to be drawn down in the early part of this year. The good news is that the DRPA was also awarded another \$15.7 million, which will help with the anticipated deficit for PATCO in 2021.

CEO Hanson summarized by reporting that traffic is running between 70% and 75% of pre-COVID numbers. Revenue is a little higher because the traffic that is dropping off is passenger car traffic at a lower fare class, so the average toll is a little higher. We received almost \$41 million in CARES Act money for PATCO, and at the beginning of this year we received another \$15.7 million grant. Out of the \$41 million in CARES allocated funds, there was \$8 million carried over from last year that we did not use plus we will have an additional \$15.7 million, making it about \$23 million available to help offset the PATCO deficit. John Rink will report that PATCO ridership is approximately at 20% closer to 21% of pre-COVID time as ridership on PATCO has gone way down. Our plan leaves us at a little bit better than break even if we stay on plan which is better than other businesses and agencies, but it is not in alignment with our plan to put away \$70-75 million annually for capital plans. We are depleting our reserves to fund the capital plans, although we probably have about \$450 million combined in bonds and the General Fund for that purpose.

CFO White further reported that we are down to \$408 million as of January 31, 2021. Mike Venuto continues pushing forward with Capital Projects. We have the sufficient resources to handle capital plans for this year. Typically, we would be bringing in \$60 to \$70 million a year that increases the general fund. That will not be the case this year. We are expecting toll revenues and PATCO fares to be down \$55 million in 2021 based on our forecast vs. the \$65 million decrease for 2020. There has been some improvement in the toll revenue figures, but we remain overly cautious considering the pandemic and its new variants in terms of being able to figure out what traffic and ridership is going to look like for the remainder of the year.

CFO White commented on the Q4 Financials of the Authority and its commitments. He reported that the Q4 Financials are in the process of closing out. We are still getting invoices in for 2020, so those books will be closed in early March. Regarding commitments, if you look at the 9/30

numbers, there is \$408 million in board approved contractual commitments, which has been reduced to \$365 million, or a drop of \$45 million, due to spending especially on the suspension span/corridor rehab project on the Walt Whitman Bridge, and approach roadway resurfacing on the Betsy Ross Bridge.

Q&A Session:

Q. Are there any impacts on the ability to pay down debts and/or bond payments?
Reggie Haynes

A. CFO White reported that we continue to pay our bond debt service payments that are approximately \$130 million a year. The payments are factored into our budget, so there is never a problem with our debt payments.

CEO Hansen reported that our bond covenants require that we do two calculations at the end of each year regarding our ability to pay off our debt. We do one at the end of every year, and one that looks back and shows that our revenues have exceeded our expenses, including debt service, with money left over. That is the “net revenue” requirement. The other looks forward based on projections that we could pay everything including our debt service. If we are unable to meet bond covenants, we would have to engage a traffic engineer and initiate a toll increase. We safely exceeded that for 2020 and our projections look like we will safely exceed that for 2021. We do not expect a problem, which means we will be paying down the principle on our debt including interest.

CFO White stated that we passed the 509 Certification for 2020, which we were genuinely concerned about, but things turned around by the end of the year and we kept spending down. When you put together the annual budget you must keep in mind the ability to pay down the debt service after operations. So when we submit the Certifications to the Bond Trustees on December 31 of each year, the budget submitted must ensure that we are able to handle the debt service on all revenue bonds, the operating budget, and the PATCO subsidy.

CFO White also added that the DRPA paid down \$70 million in debt/principle as of January 2021. Every month we contribute to various debt service funds, or roughly \$12 million. We are in good shape as it relates to handling our debt service. CEO Hanson, Mike Venuto and I continuously communicate on capital plan spending and make adjustments based on traffic and revenue numbers.

GM, John Rink:

GM Rink reported that ridership is at 20% to 22% pre-COVID in contrast to 2019 numbers. We did see an increase every weekend in January, but due to recent inclement weather we saw a decline in ridership. We did anticipate this level of ridership when we finalized the budget in October and November, so this is what we anticipated. Hopefully in the spring, with people receiving vaccines, we will start seeing an increase in people returning to the workplace. On a more positive note, the city is lifting their restrictions as of Friday, February 13th increasing the capacity in restaurants and other places to 50 percent if you meet the new ventilation guidelines.

Additionally, GM Rink reported that he and the GM of SEPTA will be taking part in the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce Executive Web Series. They will speak to 150 business executives on polled questions regarding what their plans are on bringing their employees back to the workplace. In addition, SEPTA's GM and GM Rink will be providing updates on plans in providing safe transportation service. It will be an opportunity to gather information to see what these business leaders have planned on returning their employees back to the workplace in the coming months.

GM Rink further reported that because of the recent inclement weather, his crews have been out plowing and removing snow. In 2020, we did not have this weather. This year, crews have been out busy working the storms.

Q&A Session:

Q. Are there text alerts or notifications when the Ben Franklin Bridge walkway re-opens as is when it is closed?

Straso Jovanovski

A. GM Rink reported that he checked his APP, and it does provide text notifications when the Ben Franklin Bridge walkway closes as well as when it re-opens.

Q. What is the feasibility of having a PATCO app that will show real time dynamic train location? SEPTA has an app that shows that.

Straso Jovanovski

A. GM Rink reported that we have not explored that function. We are moving forward with providing real time information by displaying real time information on our platform signs showing that the train will arrive in so many minutes. GM Rink further stated that the train line is only 14 miles long, 1 line, with 13 stations. SEPTA has a larger system with interchanges between buses, trollies, regional rail, and local rail where it would be more prevalent for passengers to know the exact location, especially if they are interchanging with systems. PATCO pushes out alerts when trains are late and that would be the best way for us to communicate with our customers.

CEO Hanson reported that now that we have the whole fleet up, the next step is to provide real time information on our platforms based on where the train is located. For better understanding, CEO Hanson asked the CAC members to forward to him an e-mail outlining the necessity of that type of information, as he is not sure what the value is in knowing exactly where the train is as long as you know how long it will be before the train arrives.

Q. What is the status of the Scada system update and has it been deployed at Center Tower?

Jeff Kessler

A. GM Rink reported that the next phase went to the Board and we now have a new contract with the vendor who has the module that will be used for the Scada system to pull the information for real time announcements on our station platforms.

Q. Does the contract include any information for a public API that can be used to release that information?

Jeff Kessler

A. GM Rink reported that it does not. We have to pull the signs off the standard network and are moving them to the Scada network which is a closed loop system. We are using the Scada system to drive the train ID location. Nothing is available to the outside world so no one can hack into the system. We would have to see if there is any way we can transmit out, but not receive.

Jeff Kessler stated that it's done everywhere else. He recommends that PATCO look into a public API, especially related to GTFS bids. You would want to spec out GTFS real time, which allows you to take the real time data and link it up to what is actually in the schedule for the GTFS data.

Q. Do you know what the time frame is for getting the updated GTFS data out?

Jeff Kessler

A. GM Rink reported that he will send Mike Williams a text and will provide that information to the committee when he receives it.

Jeff Kessler also commented that it was nice to see the onboard VMS use the full width of the display as opposed to the black borders on the side.

Q. Jeff Kessler also stated that nixel alerts can now go to an app on your phone so you can get a push notification instead of a text message. It is a free option to add PATCO and the DRPA to the app. It also saves on the amount of text messages that are sent out. Is that something we can look into?

A. GM Rink will follow-up with Mike Williams and report back to the committee.

Q. Does the DRPA/PATCO run a red team attack where security people are hired to probe any security flaws in the system?

Bruce Schwartz

A. CEO Hanson reported that we do have a security system set-up. The Scada system is not connected to anything in the outside world, it is isolated from everything. GM Rink reported that to access the Scada system, you have to use specific laptops that are not connected to networks. There are processes in place that assure that no one has access unless approved. Our IS Department does not have access to Scada, only our Power and Signal groups do that work. However, CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA does have Cyber Security in place who advise and protect the Authority's computers. As a smaller operation with minimal lines and

connections, we do not require that type of high-end cyber security where red team attacks take place. There is a physical security and business process in place that prevents access to the Scada system from those who are not approved to use the laptops. We have management audits, inspector general audits, homeland security and cyber security experts who advise and protect our computers that are accessible to the outside world. John Rink reported that all the LAN rooms have alarms and security features, and prox card readers that only allow certain people in the room.

Q. Does the DPRA have plans or strategic plans to replace any of its staff vehicles with electric vehicles?

Ben Saracco

A. CEO Hanson reported that we do not have plans at this time due to the investment in charging stations and additional costs. The focus right now is on fuel efficiency and lower emissions. It is something we may consider in the future as it becomes easier to access the technology, but right now we do not think it is feasible.

Q. Did the company who created the previous data ever get back to the DRPA/PATCO/
Joe Russell

A. GM Rink reported that he will have to reach out to Mike Williams and report back to the committee.

Q. Larry Davis mentioned that the committee has been asking about updates on when the GTFS data can be made available for about a year and a half now with no progress and feels the DRPA/PATCO is not taking it seriously. Can we get a timeline on that?

A. CEO Hanson reported that he has not been personally involved in finding out that information, however, he knows the questions have come up and that John Rink and Mike Williams have been working on it. It may be that it is just not feasible because we are a smaller transit agency. GM Rink reported that the DRPA/PATCO has taken it seriously and that Mike Williams has been trying to find other resources. Mike Williams also met with Jeff Kessler to talk it over, but the issue is the vendor that we currently have who is not providing good service. Mike Williams is presently looking for a new vendor to provide that information.

Social Media, Larry Davis

Q. With the Federal Government coming out with a new mask mandate on public transportation, is that going to impact on how you handle mask wearing on the trains? There have been comments on social media (two different threads) with complaints that passengers, including PATCO employees, are not wearing masks.

A. GM Rink disputed the report that PATCO employees were not wearing masks. He reported that he checked the video for the date and time of the complaints and found that all PATCO employees were wearing masks. Our employees know they are being watched. However, we did find that there were construction workers not related to PATCO not wearing masks.

Larry Davis also stated that it was also mentioned that passengers were not wearing masks on PATCO on a regular basis. CEO Hanson reported that our approach to mask wearing is not going to change right now. Passengers are required to wear masks and our police department provides masks to passengers not wearing masks. We have 20% of the pre-COVID ridership and verify everyday usage on the trains and right now there is ample room to social distance. That is our main approach. As that becomes less workable, we will have more of an enforcement effort. Unfortunately, it is largely the unsheltered and homeless who are maskless. We will continue to monitor and make changes when necessary. We take mask wearing very seriously and have suspended our own employees for a period for violating our COVID rules. The day may come when we have to put a detail in place to enforce or write citations.

Reggie Haynes stated that he rides the train twice a week and has observed that all passengers and PATCO employees are following the mask mandate and social distancing rules on the trains.

Q. Are announcements made on the train about mask wearing?

A. GM Rink reported that announcements are made on the LCD screens and changes have been made to the train automated announcements that passengers are required to wear a mask and provide the proper social distancing on the trains. The same messaging is also at every station.

Q. When will the DRPA enforce speed limits on bridges, especially the Ben Franklin Bridge and do you enforce speed limits going through bridge toll booths?

A. CEO Hanson stated that we do enforce traffic violations on the bridges and will continue to do so. It's largely detailed. Our police write a lot of speeding tickets and drunken driving tickets throughout the year. The police no sooner get it under control, then it picks back up again. John Hanson reported that he meets with employees once a year and was told by police that it used to be that people would not pass a police car and now, they have their pick on who to pull over. We also get complaints from maintenance workers on the bridge of riders speeding across the bridge. There are times when we add extra police and step-up enforcement.

Steve DeVillasanta and Ed Montgomery/Engineering

Ben Franklin Bridge:

Q. How is the lighting project going on the Ben Franklin Bridge?
Bob Melikian

A. CEO Hanson reported that the lighting project is part of the Ben Franklin Bridge's mega project which is the largest project the DRPA has ever undertaken. The project includes the dehumidification of the main suspension cables, rehabilitation of the north and south walkways, maintenance painting and miscellaneous steel repairs, replacement of the decorative lighting system and widening of the north walkway in Camden which is progressing according to schedule. Steve DeVillasanta reported that the bridge work is a four-year project and the DRPA is one year into the project.

Q. Is the integrity of the Ben Franklin Bridge affected by the dehumidification of the main suspension cables?

Bruce Schwartz

A. CEO Hanson reported that the bridge would be affected if the dehumidification process was not done to the suspension cables. By letting the cables rust and decay would jeopardize the integrity of the bridge. In the past, the cables were oiled, and the dehumidification process will be the first performed on cables that were previously oiled. There is a specific science, calculation and theory that goes into the technology of pumping dry air that removes moisture from the bridge cables.

Q. How dry is the dehumidification designed to keep the air?

Bruce Schwartz

A. Ed Montgomery reported that the system is set-up where the intake air and exit air will be continuously monitored. The long-term target rate for humidity is 40%. It will take a while before the initial humidity level is significantly reduced, so the system will run for a while. We are wrapping the main cables and there will be injection/extraction points every 200-300 feet.

Q. Is this an ongoing process or only during the 3–4-year rehab period?

Bob Melikian

A. Ed Montgomery reported that the dehumidification system on the Ben Franklin Bridge is a long-term capital investment. We have been monitoring the dehumidification chambers inside the anchorages for the past 12 years. The main cables are on the outside of the anchorage and the whole system will be upgraded to include the main cable dehumidification, so the system will run seamlessly. There is a science behind corrosion and humidity levels on bridges. There are a lot of bridges overseas that use this system. The system being installed is the state-of-the-art.

CEO Hanson reported that our bridges are perpetual assets, and we will continue to maintain them indefinitely. Steve DeVillasanta informed the committee that the Ben Franklin Bridge was re-decked in 1984-85 using a state-of-the-art orthotropic deck which reduced the weight of the bridge and increased the live load capacity.

Q. What would it cost to replace the bridges and are they insured in case of a catastrophic event?

Bob Melikian

A. CEO Hanson reported that that is something that is always at the forefront of our minds. The bridges are insured. There is a \$25 million deductible per catastrophic event.

Q. Has the DRPA ever been approached to purchase the Burlington Bristol Bridge and the Tacony Palmyra Bridge?

Bob Melikian

A. CEO Hanson reported that during his tenure the DRPA has not been approached. It would be too complicated to purchase other bridges because the DRPA is a Bi-State Agency. It is a New Jersey County that operates those bridges. At the end of the 20th Century, there was talk of unification for the DRPA to take over their assets, but the DRPA resisted. According to my understanding, the bridges are still making a profit and some of the excess funds are sometimes used for economic development.

Old Business:

There are no upcoming public events planned during the months of February and March 2021.

Joe Russell was nominated to join the DRPA's Citizen Advisory Committee. Mr. Russell's application is scheduled to go before the Audit Committee on Wednesday, March 3, 2021.

New Business:

Bruce Schwartz brought up the topic of returning to in-person CAC Meetings. Reggie Haynes tabled the topic as it is too soon to consider in-person meetings.

Bruce Schwartz asked the committee if it was possible to add a bike lane on the Betsy Ross Bridge. John Hanson reported that he would ask Engineering to look at that possibility.

Bruce Schwartz asked about receipt of tolling records/EZ Pass records. John Hanson reported that the DRPA does not retain those records. The DRPA belongs to a consortium, NJETC, which is run by the NJ Turnpike who retains all tolling records.

Bruce Schwartz asked about planning an event to commemorate the groundbreaking of the Ben Franklin Bridge in 1922. John Hanson reported that most likely a press release will go out in commemoration of the groundbreaking in 1922. However, an event will be planned, through bridge operations and corporate communications, for the grand opening of the bridge in 1926.

Reggie Haynes asked if any of the Emeritus members would like to change their status to active members. The Emeritus members declined at this time.

Board nominations were taken for Reggie Haynes as Chair, Alan Becker as Vice Chair, and Daniel Norfleet as Secretary. All nominations were confirmed.

Bob Melikian asked the committee to forward the names of anyone interested in becoming a member of the CAC.

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held via Zoom on March 12, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m.

Next DRPA Board Meeting: Will be held virtually on March 19, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.