



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

Location: via: Zoom

Attendance:

New Jersey: Reggie Haynes, Dan Norfleet, Steve Benigno, Joe Russell, Ben Saracco

Pennsylvania: Larry Davis, Tyrone Wesley

Emeritus Member(s): Jeff Kessler

Potential Member(s):

DRPA/PATCO: Chairwoman, Cherelle Parker; John Hanson, CEO; Jim White, CFO; John Rink, GM; Mike Howard, Engineering; Dawn Whiton, Executive Assistant

Public Member(s):

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the May 12, 2021 minutes. The minutes were approved.

CEO John Hanson

Good evening and good to see you all. I do not think Mr. White is with us. From a financial perspective, not much of a difference. Hovering close to 85% pre-pandemic traffic. I had a plan ahead of our budget by a few million dollars but anticipate a little better than breaking even, which is basically what we budgeted. From there PATCO Ridership is around 30% one third of where we were and plateauing right now. Don't expect to see major gains until after the summer. May tick up a little bit but after summer should see it pick up. Mask mandate. Happened to be on twitter, and yes, we still have the mask mandate. You nailed it, Larry. Larry stated he asked every month. Mr. Hanson stated that the people that who do not wear masks tend to be aggressive and it is a difficult situation to be in. We always planned that if we were dealing with a widespread problem, we then we would run police details to address it. We would put

them on overtime and then would then perhaps grab some people and perhaps cite some people, but we haven't had that.

Even, one person today, one rider, I think, John Rink he mentioned there were three workers unmasked on the platform. John Rink as you know that should not be, but we have those allegations before, and when we run them down on video and they turn out to not be our people. John, please make sure that we are emphasizing, and they are not to take their masks off even with some of the changes we are contemplating. We are still going to be keeping masks even for public facing for the foreseeable future and certainly on transit where its required.

I will tell you that we have had begun the process given the new CDC guidelines to bringing our employees back to work. He ones that haven't been close to three quarters or probably already here those down in operations and PATCO for those employees who haven't been. The plan is for that first Monday after that 4th of July, July 12th, for any employee who are not in the workplace at this time. They will be required to be in the office one full day per week and 4 days working remotely. Then in August, This is not for those that are already in the office or working a hybrid schedule, it will be 2 days; it's not going to change for anyone who is working two or more and then in September, the Monday after Labor Day we are going to go to 3 days a week and the four weeks following that it will be in October and for the rest of the year 4 days a week in the office and 1 day remotely and then we will evaluate that at the end of the year. I firmly believe that we have done a good job in achieving our mission and when I look at a mission that is a primarily procedural and routine efforts to achieve our vision to continue to evolve into a world class stewardship and transportation organization. We need creativity, we need face to face to collaborate, innovate and create and so we are trying to bring everyone together for the largest part of the work week, but we will be looking to work one day remotely for those that can work remotely, at least until the end of the year because if there is a resurgence and things come back, we want people to be in a position to pick up remote work again seamlessly. It was very hard when we transition abruptly out of the workplace, so we are not ready to give up that capability.

Chairman asked that since the plan does bring everyone back 4 days a week does the plan to also transition this meeting back to DRPA headquarters sometime September, October timeframe? Mr. Hanson stated that the Governor of NJ has asked us not to have in-person public meetings so I would imagine we would do that when our Board transitions back as well. I hope it's then, but we are waiting to hear what everyone has to say. Our Board has mixed views. I think we are going to wait for the Governor to give the OK for public meetings.

CFO James White

Brief update, we are seeing the numbers continue to inch up. For example, we are hovering around the 85% of the 2019 volume which is up from 2 to 3 months ago which was averaging 80%. Unaudited Traffic is around \$9M ahead of plan as we have taken a very conservative approach in budgeting for the first couple of months. We thought it would be about 72.5% for January/February and March and then it would move up gradually, but except for February when we had bad weather we have surpassed that so far. If you look at our budget our general fund

contribution should be around slightly over \$1M and the fact that we are \$9M ahead of plan and if we will continue to be ahead of plan because of our percentages, we should be able to do a contribution, maybe be in the \$15M range or perhaps more. One of the things that has really helped us even though we have lost a lot, in terms of toll revenues, is that we have received a number of FTA awards. So, in 2020 we got a transit grant award for \$40.7M CARES Act and then we recently heard this year that we are awarded \$15.7M based on the 2021 CRRSA Act and now it appears that under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act we will have access to another \$27.9M. So those numbers will more than cover the lost PATCO revenues and a large part of the subsidy that PATCO experienced in 2020 and 2021 and we expect that money to take us into 2022. We don't know the details of the ARP Act, but if it is like the CARES and CRRSA, we would have up to three years to expend those funds. As a result of that, that we are monitoring what's going on operationally and we still have a hiring freeze on, and we are still constraining expenses. On the capital program we still have an aggressive program, but we have dialed that back a bit on a couple of projects, but we still are spending around \$15M a month which is a high number for us. Last year we spent \$200M (audited numbers) in capital expenditures so in 2020 and 2021 we are really pumping out the cash as far as various projects. Thus far we are in good shape. Our general fund is around \$360 M and that will take us into 2022 hopefully by that time traffic will be back to, well I do not know if it will ever be at 100%, but perhaps close to 90% and perhaps we'll get a surprise that it will get closer to 100%.

On the PATCO side we are seeing nice numbers inching up to about 30% and we have surpassed on average 11K riders last week and the week before. That is an encouraging sign and of course the FTA money helps us offset PATCO revenues and operating expenses. So, some really great news. We are not certainly up to 2019 volumes, but we are inching our way particularly on the DRPA bridge side.

Larry Davis asked normally you get a little bump in ridership for the flower show, and now that the flower show is in south Philly are you seeing any ridership change numbers? Are people avoiding it now? John Rink stated that they have not seen any real increase now that it's all the way down to the park. It is quite a walk from the station to the park. Haven't seen the typical ridership numbers that we normally see.

PATCO General Manger, John Rink

Mr. Rink mentioned that last week we did inch up to 32% for this week and the other day we almost hit 12,000 riders. So as John and Jim mentioned we have seen a slow increase each week. Then last Saturday, on the 5th it's probably our highest ridership on a Saturday; getting close to 7300. But John mentioned the bigger thing, and from all the meetings that I have been in, most of the businesses are looking to bring people back after Labor Day, so as he mentioned, I will suspect we shall see an uptick then and since everything is opening up it will be interesting to see if we will have ridership from concerts when they come back to BBT as that was always a big thing for us for ridership, so we will see what happens. With the ridership up ticking a little bit we made some slight adjustments and added a train to am and pm and adjusted the times as we watched our ridership to make sure we are providing enough trains at the right times to keep the socially distancing inside the cars. That was a change on 6/5.

I see Joe is on here and Jeff, the GTS is back online on the update on the go live page, I think we are all worked out, all before the schedule.

The item with the mask, TSA sent out a letter to all agencies we are going to be required until September, along with Governor Murphy still requiring. Making sure all of our employees and all the contractors working on the property, know and stress again there is no change in our policy. Just so you know was on the train today, and everyone I encountered were wearing masks which is good to see. In support of that we have been doing the monthly mask up events that all the other transit agencies in the region are doing including SEPTA. We have one on next Thursday, the 17th we will have staff looking at Ferry Avenue and Woodcrest, giving out hand sanitizers.

Larry Davis asked about GTS back online I saw someone heard earlier website was down. Are you having website issues? Yes, Mike Williams was working on that there was a problem with the server, and he modified it to take the link to the DRPA site and they got it all rectified as soon as possible. Back-end server issues and confirmed it was back up.

Jeff Kessler mentioned that he saw a couple of tweets about the new PDF schedules don't have a year on them and some people may find it confusing especially those that are coming back to work may have an old schedule and downloaded on their computer. It's a very simple thing perhaps the year could be included going forward to schedule pdfs. Mr. Rink stated that he would have Mike Williams check on that matter. When you print it out you don't see the year in it. Mr. Hanson spoke Mike Williams to resolve. He mentioned that they would give it some consideration and report back.

Steve Benigno mentioned that when SEPTA gets audited from APTA we have to have the date on all our forms. Mr. Hanson stated that we belong to APTA, and Mr. Rink stated that we have not been audited.

Mr. Rink also asks Larry to look into the person that saw workers on the platform not wearing masks. I believe he comes in at Lindenwold, but if he has a time, I could look into that.

Chairman mentioned that there are two additional items that were submitted after I submitted the agenda. The first one being: Will there be any future tours of the facilities like we have done so in the past? We haven't really talked about that yet. We haven't scheduled anything at this point. Second: Mr. Boyle questioned about the e-bike policy and was wondering if that's going to be codified and if so, I think we would like to discuss. Mr. Hanson mentioned that he called our police chief and all motorized vehicles including e-bikes are prohibited on the walkway at this time as a safety issue. Saw your request for a meeting and I am happy to facilitate that. They seem pretty solid and have a lot of safety concerns. Let's see if we can get to a place where we can all agree.

PATCO Watchers

Mr. Davis mentioned that someone asked about the status of real time screen updates on the platforms. Mr. Rink responded that the final design has been reviewed and approved.

Contractor is installing the fiber optic cabling where needed and the entire project should be up and running before Thanksgiving.

Mr. Hanson made mention about the mask mandate question and commented on Mr. Davis' great response.

When will DRPA move to cashless tolls and gantry style system in recording EZ-Pass? Seems like traffic on the BFB could be greatly improved if the booths were eliminated and the lanes straightened out. Mr. Davis advised that he replied that DRPA is probably never going to go entirely cashless and that the bridge toll taking fare technology is about to get an update. Mr. Hanson replied that his response was near perfect and added that by improved traffic, this individual means people going faster over the bridges and they are already going too fast. We actually like that; to slow things down. It's a good check and the configuration is like a big funnel anyway and it's good to have that situation there to allow people to organize slow down. We just had a tractor trailer turned over on the BFB again. I think we had pretzels the last time. It's been beer, pretzels, pineapples, and avocados. This is an old bridge and the reason for that is that after you crest the bridge it's a pretty short distance down and you get to the monument at that circle there, and a lot of drivers don't realize how fast they get there and when they try and stop, they turn over. So, I don't want people going over fast over the bridge. This is a good way to slow people down. We disagree that it will improve traffic.

Would you go cashless and an update on the toll taking technology? Mr. Hanson stated that the design work is done, and we are working on the RFP for the cashless system. Would we ever go cashless? Mr. Hanson replied that one day it's inevitable, but not in the short to intermediate term. Because we have not been able to get the ability to suspend licenses for those who do not pay. So, we do not have the same hammer that other tolling agencies have. In fact, there was a bill out there and they removed DRPA from it. Mr. Davis asked from PA or NJ? Mr. Hanson stated he thinks it was on the NJ side. The other point that in order for us to ever go cashless, you made this point in your response, and it's the biggest thing, we have to address how to handle the unbanked, because people who don't have bank accounts or limited ability to write checks as high cost, and that type of tolling system discriminates against people who are on the low end of the income scale and we do not want to do that. So, unable to collect is one and the issue of the unbanked, people, who are lower income, or just above or below the poverty line, it hard enough to get the \$5.00 to come over than hit them with a bill, so at this juncture we are just not interested in doing that. We don't have all the tools that we need to collect from people who aren't paying and there just isn't a fair way to approach those that do not have access to a checking account and cannot afford a big bill at the end of the month.

Last question was someone asking about adding a stop in South Camden at Kaign Avenue. Mr. Davis responded that we are not looking to add more stops along the line. Not exactly sure what he is talking about. Not sure how far that is from other Camden stops. Mr. Hanson replied that actually we are considering adding stops along the Glassboro Camden Line. But not on the PATCO line? Mr. Hanson replied that they would connect. Mr. Hanson asked Mike Howard, Principal Engineer where would the stops be on the GCL. Mr. Howard responded that we would have three station stops in South Camden area, on around Ferry Avenue, one south of Haddon

Avenue towards the hospital and then direct connection at PATCO at Walter Rand. Mr. Rink responded that Kaighn Avenue is maybe six blocks from Ferry Avenue, and we wouldn't generate enough ridership to give us the financial needs to spend the money.

Ben Sarracco asked that with regard to the federal infrastructure bills, I am curious if the DRPA sort of has in their back pocket some wish list projects that if they came into a huge amount of funding, some projects would like to do. Mr. Hanson replied that it would basically come from our Capital Plan, and we are in the process of prioritizing them. We have a capital improve plan that goes out longer than 5 years and goes out in excess of 800 M dollars right now. So, Mike Venuto and his team are working on prioritizing projects and are working on that now. This is one of the tricky things that DRPA wasn't always good at, about grant funding and taking money that you don't need just creates more expense down the line for things that have marginal benefit, so we are focused on grants for our capital plan that goes out longer than 5 years, 800 M close to a Billion and aside from that we are a Project Manager for the Glassboro Project Line which we would consider an extremely important project and we would look for an opportunity to fund there as well.

Larry asked if he could mention that we are planning to add three stations in Camden? Mr. Howard responded that there are three proposed Camden stations in the GCL. The south Camden station is proposed to be just north of Ferry Avenue, what is shown in the current EIS. Would be two new stops and then stopping at the Walter Rand Station. Mr. Rink advised to direct the inquiry to the GCL website. The other proposed Camden station will be around Haddon Avenue serving the hospital.

Engineering, Mike Howard

Chairman asked Mr. Howard to give an update on the Walt Whitman Construction Projects. Mr. Howard confirmed it was regarding the traffic impact during construction. We started the single lane operation between Broad Street and Passyunk Avenue on May 10th and as part of that we are doing work, traffic has been shifted to the left lanes while the contractor is doing work on the right lane and the shoulder. A lot of this work requires a lengthy work zone for time and distance because not only are we doing milling and paving of the roadway, but also doing the concrete rehabilitation of all the overpasses through this section and that's really what's driving the time frame. One of things that we have been doing is watching is what traffic has been doing in both the eastbound and westbound direction. Ahead of this project we knew that there would be an issue, so we are working with PennDot and NJDOT to provide information to the travelling public on their VMS Boards to seek alternate routes primarily the Vine Street Expressway and the BFB for traffic that is proceeding through and beyond the construction zone and seems to be working pretty well. We do see traffic backups in the am rush hour coming out of the toll plaza as three lanes have to drop down to one lane. But since we are in about a 1 mile and half stretch of roadway, traffic is moving through slowly which is good for our safety in terms of our construction crews. However, in the eastbound direction, we are catching a break, because we are fed directly from the Schuylkill Expressway which is a two-lane highway that opens up briefly to four lanes and you have traffic diverging to both 26th Street to go to the airport, Oregon Avenue and one lane to the Walt Whitman Bridge. That one lane opens up to

two lanes once it hits DRPA property, however, we are still maintaining the one lane, so traffic is actually able to proceed through with similar volume, but a place where it opens up has been push back further east. Couple of things we noticed, and we worked with the contractor to push through and prioritize a couple areas so that we can help with traffic. The first is in the westbound direction where there's traffic before entering the Schuylkill Expressway at the ramp for Passyunk Avenue. We asked the contractor to move up the work so that we can flip traffic from the left lanes to the right lanes, which will give a little more storage capacity. We would like to make changes to get more storage on that stretch of the road, so it helps traffic proceeding to the Schuylkill.

Mr. Howard reported that we continue to monitor traffic with Bridge Operations and our Police, especially on Fridays, to make sure there are no issues, and we are also working with local stakeholders. In the beginning of the week, we had to close ramps. Luckily, the Phillies haven't drawn a huge crowd, so we were able to open-up a few ramps ahead of time. We expected the ramps to be closed for three weeks but were able to open the ramps in two weeks. Right now, the only ramp we have closed is the ramp from Passyunk Avenue to Eastbound 76 and that should open at the end of next week. We are trying to push the contractor as we do have an Incentive Program to help get all the work complete and minimize the impact on traffic. So far, we are a few days ahead of schedule and, hopefully, it will improve when we do flip traffic from one side of the roadway to the other and switch the construction zones.

Steve Benigno asked Mike Howard when the construction will start for the Glassboro Camden Line. Mr. Howard reported that we expect two and a half, three years for the preliminary design. We have not been given the green light yet to start; however, we have all the documents ready to go to bring a preliminary engineering firm onboard to start doing the necessary work and, hopefully, that will get us to the point where we can advertise through a design build. If everything works, we can proceed, but it will take at least two and a half to three years before we have a shovel in the ground. We are ready to go as soon as we get the instructions to start advertising to bring firms onboard.

Steve Benigno asked if there is any environmental work that has to be done for the line. Mike Howard reported that the EIS, the Environmental Impact Study, looks at all the impacts the light rail line will have in the area, at least the right of way that the light rail will be operating in. The EIS identifies all the impacts, whether it's environmental issues, having to take trees down, noise, or social justice. There are a number of things that the EIS has identified and once we get into the preliminary engineering all those issues will be mitigated.

Steve Benigno asked if there was a budget for the project. Mike Howard reported that there are estimates, but nothing in terms of what we are ready to spend. Once we get a preliminary design together, we will be able to have a cost estimate for construction. CEO Hanson stated that the estimate is at \$1.6 to \$1.8 billion, right now. We have \$200 million in funding committed from South Jersey Transportation Authority and we are getting ready to go out with RFPs for program management and design to 30% as soon as we finalize an agreement.

Steve Benigno further asked if the Delaware River Port Authority had to enter into any Agreements with any railroads. Mike Howard reported that the DRPA would have to work with the stakeholders, Conrail and New Jersey Transit. There would have to be an agreement to build and operate. It's either an agreement or a memorandum of understanding that's going to outline all the requirements, not only for construction of the line, but how it's going to operate. So, there will be several agreements that would have to be addressed as part of the construction.

Old Business:

Larry Davis asked if it would be possible to advertise on social media the need for people on this committee. The committee seems to be dwindling as tonight's meeting is the smallest we've had. Mr. Davis said he could put something on social media but coming from the DRPA means a little bit more. CEO Hanson stated that he and GM Rink will talk to Mike Williams, as we've done it in the past. John Rink also indicated that advertisement has also been put on the stations' LCD panels. GM Rink said that the topic came up a few meetings back and he will verify that the advertisements are up on the screens.

Reggie Haynes will follow-up with Bob Melikian on any interest in new membership to the committee.

New Business:

CEO Hanson stated that for over the past five years, the DRPA has been engaged in organizational development, first aimed at our leadership team, and then it moved from executive and senior leadership to what we are calling Peer to Peer, the middle management. It's all about our stewardship culture emphasizing our role as stewards to serve the region, along with our transformation toward customer service. As part of that, we have done regular leadership sessions and we've taught cutting edge leadership skills; however, to do the soft skills, we've employed improvisational exercises taken from improvisational comedy. Through the pandemic, it morphed from in-person meetings to Zoom meetings, and from that we created a Webinar Series which we rolled out to everyone in the organization so they can be exposed to the concepts. CEO Hanson stated that the reason for informing the committee is that the Inquirer heard about the Webinar Series, interviewed us, and are planning to run an article in Sunday's paper, June 13, 2021. (CEO Hanson asked Dawn Whiton to forward the Webinar Series to the CAC Committee.)

Larry Davis asked how it's going with the new body cameras for the DRPA Police and have there been any glitches since in operation. CEO Hanson reported that there have been no problems nor any glitches. He indicated that it's been in the works for a long time. There's been a lot of planning and a lot of training. He stated that it's a great way to protect the public and our officers in making sure that everyone knows what's going on. It's a great accountability tool.

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held via Zoom on August 11, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Next DRPA Board Meeting: Will be held virtually on July 21, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.