



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Location: via: Zoom

Attendance:

New Jersey: Reggie Haynes, Joe Russell, Ben Saracco, Straso Jovanovski, Pamela Mack-Brooks, Bruce Schwartz, Steve Benigno

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

Emeritus Member(s): Jeff Kessler, Judy Boldurian

Potential Member(s): Scott Cohen

DRPA/PATCO: CEO, John Hanson; Chairwoman, Cherelle Parker; Chief of Safety & Security, Robert Finnegan; Lieutenant Sean Longfellow; GM, John Rink; CFO, Jim White; Nicole Ochroch, Engineer; Barbara Wagner, Executive Assistant

Public Member(s):

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the May 11, 2022 minutes. The minutes were approved.

CEO, John Hanson

At the CAC Committee's request, CEO Hanson introduced Chairwoman Cherelle Parker. He stated that Chairwoman Parker has had a big impact on the DRPA and PATCO right from the beginning. She is someone who dug right into the details, assimilate them in a way I have never seen before, so she's able to lead and perform the oversight function, make policy, and collaborate with us on issues to help create solutions and innovations.

Chairwoman Cherelle Parker started off by thanking CEO Hanson for the introduction and thanking GM Rink, Reggie Haynes, and all the CAC members for the invitation to participate in the meeting. She stated that when you look across the Nation today, if there was ever a time for us to acknowledge the value and importance as it relates to mass transit systems, now is the time

when it comes to the realm of public safety. Chairwoman Parker stated that she had a meeting last week with New York City Mayor, Eric Adams. One of the things discussed during the call was the importance of helping to increase ridership on mass transit and public transit systems. At the same time, there is no way we could encourage people to ride if they don't feel safe. So, from that perspective, I want to say thanks to each of you for your service and it's an honor to work with you all.

Chairwoman Parker further stated that she hopes she will get the opportunity to meet each member in-person, to get to know you, and to say thank you for your service. It is very challenging to get people engaged and actively involved, especially when it's a non-paid position, whether it's being recruited for the school board, community councils across the city, advisory councils for recreation centers, or advisory councils for the transit systems. We have to find a way to make the spirit of volunteerism and service in vogue again. Chairwoman Parker stated that each member of the committee serves as a role model and that she is looking forward to working with the committee.

Reggie Haynes thanked the Chairwoman and stated that the committee appreciates the warm welcome and looks forward to partnering with her, as well as the other DRPA representatives. We've had a great partnership over the years and have been able to get so many great things accomplished. He stated that without the partnership, it's not really going to work. They listen and action has been taken. It is a volunteer position and we do it because we care about the environment, public transportation, and making a difference in our local communities.

Chairwoman Parker stated that Mr. Haynes struck a chord inside of her as one of the greatest compliments that she's ever received. A woman she met who is a family therapist and counselor told her after a meeting they attended that I was an active listener. I have been elected for some time, engaged in politics and community organizing since the age of seventeen (17) and will be fifty (50) this year. Most times, when we are having an exchange, people are not listening actively, they are listening to respond. When you are actively listening, policies are proffered – procedures, protocols, regulations, rules, adjustments – you should see that reflected when you are actively listening. She thanked Reggie Haynes for affirming that has been the relationship between the CAC Committee and the DRPA and PATCO.

CEO Hanson then introduced Chief of Safety and Security, Robert Finnegan to the CAC Committee. CEO Hanson stated that Rob worked his way up from a patrolman in the Police Force while holding the rank of Captain and was recently promoted to Chief of Safety and Security outside the service of a sworn officer and is now a member of my staff. This position is newly designed to improve the safety and security at the DRPA. He is also working to coordinate the activities of our Safety Department which is housed at PATCO under GM Rink and has oversight of the DRPA Police Department.

CEO Hanson also introduced Lieutenant Sean Longfellow who was recently promoted from Sergeant to Lieutenant. He served as a Sergeant in a supervisory capacity doing investigations and supervising the other officers involved in investigations, including internal affairs for the DRPA. He's keeping that role as the Lieutenant, but he will also report to Chief Cobbs with a dual reporting relationship with Rob Finnegan on Cyber Security matters.

As a background, Lieutenant Longfellow started to talk, internally, about the need to do more with Cyber Security at the DRPA and PATCO. After going through a long list of employees, I realized Sean was the man for the job. I was able to work out an arrangement with the Union that allowed me to move him into a detail where he reports directly to me for Cyber Security issues. Since then, he has led the Cyber Security Task Force that we created as my delegate until recently being promoted to Lieutenant. Both Chief Rob Finnegan and Sergeant Sean Longfellow are seasoned law enforcement professionals, well trained, well educated, and extremely dedicated.

Steve Benigno asked Chief Finnegan if the DRPA has had penetration testing done and how frequently?

Lieutenant Longfellow stated that the DRPA performs regular penetration testing and vulnerability testing. He stated that penetration testing is done annually, and vulnerability testing is done quarterly. That is the interval that has been established; however, we are in the process of expanding our penetration testing to do more in the future.

Financial & Revenue – What are the forecasted financials as compared to the actuals? Ridership and toll revenues as compared to pre-Covid.

CEO Hanson reported that we are slightly above our forecast for revenues. Bridge tolls are just under 90 percent of pre-Covid numbers. PATCO ridership and revenues bounce around and has been as high as 50 percent, but most days we're at 40 percent of pre-Covid revenue. The combination is about \$50M in less revenue than what we saw pre-Covid. Unfortunately, we are looking at those numbers as a long-term impairment and beginning to develop strategies to deal with it. As this committee is aware, we received very little in the way of outside funding. Our revenues largely come from bridge tolls, and PATCO revenues are a distant second. In that regard, as revenues decline the level of spending is going to have to decline, as well. There is not any wasteful spending at the DRPA and PATCO, so when we talk about declining spending, we mean declining capacity to do things at least in the short term.

Status on scofflaws on bridge tolls.

CEO Hanson reported that he doesn't have an answer for the Committee tonight but will ask Lieutenant Longfellow to look into what's happening interfaced with COO, Robert Hicks and CFO, Jim White and to look into what we are doing to identify major toll violators and what steps we are taking or should take.

Bob Melikian asked CEO Hanson if he read that the PA Turnpike has attempted to make it easier for the pay-by-mail or plate patrons to pay their bills and not have to do it by mail. They partnered with KUBRA, a cash payment network, that allows fees to be paid at the 7 Eleven, CVS, Dollar General, Family Dollar, Sheetz, and Walgreens. Walmart is not on the list, yet.

CEO Hanson stated that it's a great idea and something that's timely. He stated that he is reading a book called "The Human Element" and it is about getting people to act by reducing

friction and resistance obstacles that are in their way. The plan that is being used at the turnpike and many other places are electronic tolling that captures license plates and is fraught with problems. People are not paying, they usually don't have accounts, and are driving along with no toll booth, and in many cases, are not even prepared to receive a bill in the mail. It's a much different problem and I appreciate that they are trying to solve it, but they need to bring a different awareness to the problem first, or a method of tolling for these people.

With respect to the DRPA and PATCO, we don't have that problem. The issue we have is not people accidentally not paying the tolls, people who have EZPass have accounts and methods of paying online as well as at our Freedom Centers. They can't cross the bridges without going through the EZPass toll lane or an active toll lane. For right now, I think our resources are better spent on looking at the people who are just deciding not to pay. CEO Hanson stated that tolling agencies that are all electronic, it's the right time, but for the DRPA and PATCO the time isn't right. He stated that he looks forward to continuing this conversation so that when the time comes for the DRPA and PATCO, we won't miss it.

Bob Melikian stated that there was an article in yesterday's Inquirer entitled "Easier Way to Pay PA Turnpike Bills You Get Via Mail." It states that approximately 85 percent of the turnpike users use EZPass and that the historical rate of payment for those that use pay by plate is only 67 percent. He stated that is a lot of money to be chased.

CEO Hanson stated that is a lot of money to be chased and this is the fundamental difference between us and them and why our strategy is different. You don't have to take the NJ Turnpike to get anywhere, it is a choice of convenience and efficiency, but you can get anywhere in the state on all three roads. It may take you longer, it may be a little harder, and a little more scenic and relaxing, but if you want to cross the river you have to cross one of our four bridges. That is why we are making a cash option available because not everybody can handle a bill at the end of the month. If they have that choice, they don't have to use the turnpikes, they can take the 42 Freeway. It is, however, an idea that could be a solution applicable to the DRPA but we're not quite there yet.

Bob Melikian asked if he misunderstood that maybe in a previous month's discussion that the plan was ultimately to go to un-manned tollbooths?

CEO Hanson stated that he doesn't expect that to happen while he is the CEO. The next CEO may have a different vision, but it's not his vision.

Steve Benigno stated that CEO Hanson talked about the ridership, specifically for PATCO. Is PATCO using any type of metrics to predict future ridership?

CEO Hanson stated that we are forecasting based on history and our sense of what is happening in the community. We're a little behind budget as we expected a faster return to work. We are in a position, presently, where we are basically running the same number of trains to provide appropriate physical distancing on the trains. Forecasting is important for the creation of the budget, but in terms of ridership between 40 and 50 percent, we titrated the trains that we

brought back. We literally had people watching every car on every train until we finally concluded that we needed to run our maximum schedule and we continue to do so.

Bruce Schwartz stated that anecdote is evidence. A few weeks ago, he went to a wedding in Philadelphia using the Ben Franklin Bridge with a friend who drove and doesn't use EZPass. The reason he doesn't use toll roads is he doesn't want to pay the \$12 annual fee, and the discounts don't impress him. Has EZPass ever looked at whether they could improve the number of people signing up for accounts and make the accounts free and finance the operation by putting a few cents surcharge on the tolls?

CEO Hanson stated that it's not something that we've looked at but will take it to COO Hicks. The DRPA is part of a consortium that handles the back office to defray the expense of maintaining the account. We'd probably make out better if we put a few cents on each transaction, but it would cost people more. CEO Hanson agreed that anecdote is not evidence; however, a corollary to that is people often don't tell you why they do things, and the corollary to that is they don't really know why, it's usually just a gut feeling they can't justify. CEO Hanson stated that he has no doubt that \$12 is a deterrent to some people, but for most people it's the effort of getting a transponder, and for others they don't like to have their whereabouts documented. However, the idea of a couple cents per transaction as opposed to \$1.00 per month is certainly another way to do it, so I will ask COO Robert Hicks to bring it up at the next meeting and see what they say.

Steve Benigno added that Pennsylvania has a \$3.00 annual fee for EZPass. CEO Hanson stated that he believes that is relatively new as it was free for a long time. Mr. Benigno stated that was true and that he has his EZPass through PA. CEO Hanson stated that you can't get a frequent commuter discount through PA because they haven't made the necessary changes. He stated that the Senior Citizen Discount is only available through NJ EZPass. CEO Hanson further stated that the DRPA is not the big decider. The votes are according to revenue share which is the New Jersey Turnpike, South Jersey Transportation Authority and the Expressway, the DRPA, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. We are a distant second in terms of size compared to the New Jersey Turnpike so it's their call. If we wanted to make a change, we would have to leave. We joined because it is significantly less expensive.

Larry Davis stated that the frequent commuter discount is not a frequent commuter discount because it doesn't apply to all commuters only people who drive and have an EZPass.

Larry Davis asked if being a Bi-State Agency makes it difficult to go after a lien on a license for scofflaws?

CEO Hanson stated that we have tried to do that; however, there was a Bill that was working its way through New Jersey and his understanding was that we were removed from the Bill and that is a battle for us in NJ. Regarding PA, the only way something could be done is if the law exists on both sides. The reality is, in terms of bridge users in the region who are scofflaws, the overwhelming majority are coming from New Jersey to Pennsylvania. They are New Jersey residents commuting to work.

CEO Hanson added that he doesn't think that Larry Davis' comment about commuter discounts tells the whole story. We had two toll increases at 33 percent for bridge users and made the decision to keep PATCO fares as low as possible for everybody. We later increased tolls by 25 percent for all bridge users and only 10 percent for fares. Our philosophy was to keep fares as low as possible for everybody. Under your approach, we certainly could have increased bridge fares at 33 percent and then 25 percent for PATCO riders and funded a commuter discount that would be completely viable. However, then CEO, John Matthiessen and the rest of the Board didn't agree at that time.

Mr. Davis added that an EZPass discount is not a discount that applies to PATCO riders. CEO Hanson stated for the people who use it infrequently to pay a little more can fund a discount for the people who use it frequently. We will look at it the next time around. Larry Davis stated that the previous administration agreed with it and by the time it was enacted the DRPA had about \$1.5B in debt. He was wondering why an organization that has \$1.5B in debt would give a discount to anyone. CEO Hanson stated that when he was CFO he was against all discounts, but your position provides a little bit of protection, as well. The interesting thing about where this debt came from is not that it was wasteful. The philosophy for many years was to raise tolls in order to afford the capital plan. When we raised tolls \$1.00 under the old pre-Covid paradigms, we got between \$50-55M in revenue that could be bonded about ten times over to get about \$550M in debt that's invested in capital spending and pledging all the revenues from the toll increase. Theoretically, you raise tolls, and you raise debt in an equal way. The reality is as financial guys, it drove me and CFO White crazy and that's why working with this Committee, working with the Board, and working with a lot of people we went on to a Pay/Go capital approach and that's how we've been doing it for many years now. As CEO, I haven't raised tolls since I took over.

Bruce Schwartz stated that he drove into New York City travelling over the George Washington Bridge and the EZPass was \$13.75, and cash would have been \$16.00. Do you have any insight on why it's so much more expensive to use the New York Port Authority Bridges?

CEO Hanson stated that everything in the northern end of the State and New York is more expensive. The Port of New York and New Jersey has always been involved in economic development and other things. They have a bigger public transit network that they support. Going back a few CEOs ago, the DRPA Board and the CEO tried to pattern themselves after the Port of New York and New Jersey. That's when we got into economic development and other things that the public clearly reacted to in a way that let us know we shouldn't be doing it, and we got out. The DRPA is narrowly focused, and the Port of New York and New Jersey is more broadly focused. With the cost of living in that area, they believe they can get the higher number and it allows them to do more. We're focused on a pretty narrow niche and that is where the public has told us we should be and it's the best approach for us.

Bob Melikian added that they are also trying to restrict traffic - automobiles driving into Manhattan - and thinks that DeBlasio was trying to impose some sort of tax on vehicles and use EZPasses to charge drivers. Mr. Melikian stated that he's not sure if it was implemented.

Scott Cohen stated that DHS came out with a new memo this week on security for the summer without saying anything. He added that this week our security plans are being tweaked with new information being released.

Chief Finnegan stated that the DHS or Homeland Security's memo that came out this week was an extension of a prior memo issuance pertaining to Homeland Security matters by extending those multiple times over the last two years which was set to expire. Instead of letting it sunset, they extended it to November. Not saying that we will or won't tweak our Homeland Security posture, but we were already observing parts of that memo.

Lieutenant Longfellow stated that we take our security very seriously and have a good staff who is always checking the DHS guidance and any other guidance from federal organizations and state organizations. We are tied in with all these organizations and we review all documents as they come in and tweak as necessary.

Engineer, Dr. Nicole Ochroch

Updates on continuing construction on the bridges – noted daily on KYW Traffic Reports.

CEO Hanson reported that we have a very aggressive capital program going on right now. The Capital project has been underway for some time, and we are performing our stewardship function making sure that our perpetual assets are what they need to be to last forever. We do everything we can to minimize the impact on ridership, but this is a version of the classic economics problem vs. capital investment and retooling. Those projects represent capital investment and retooling which must be done to allow for the production of running trains and allowing cars and trucks to go safely across the bridges, including people who use the Ben Franklin Bridge walkways. In terms of the projects on the Commodore Barry Bridge and the Ben Franklin Bridge mega project that's underway, Dr. Nicole Ochroch from the Engineering Department will discuss this issue further.

Delays on the Commodore Barry Bridge impacting traffic backups on I-95.

Dr. Ochroch stated that she heard there was quite a bit of discussion last month about the Commodore Barry Bridge. We currently have four projects ongoing as well as our Biennial inspection, so we are trying to optimize lane outages for all the work. The most significant delays now are because of work in lanes one and two. That is planned to be completed by mid-July and the outages will only be in lane one and lane five so they will be on opposite sides and, hopefully, reduce some of the traffic. It's looking like delays may still occur until we are out of lanes one and two in mid-July. We do try to optimize all the construction projects in order to minimize our lane outages, so we are being as efficient as possible. The projects that are being done are for the longevity of our assets and facilities.

Dr. Ochroch stated that a detour went in place at the Betsy Ross Bridge I-95 project in the last few months which will remain for the next year or so. Things are going pretty well with that detour as we haven't had many issues there.

The contractor at Franklin Square is currently installing the new 36-inch water main. That is a big utility relocation that's required and part of this project. It's in the right lane at 7th Street between Race and Vine Streets. If you have driven by there, there's quite a bit of traffic control. We are currently slated for construction to be completed during the second week of July. The water inspections in Philadelphia City are the second week of every Tuesday, but we missed that date where it was moved to Tuesday of the third week in July. Hopefully that goes well, and we can minimize our traffic control in that area on 7th Street.

The Lantern Festival will begin in that area on June 21st and end on August 8, 2022. The project construction team is working very closely with the City of Philadelphia because it is a very public area with lots of things going on.

Inside the station at Franklin Square, the contractors installed temporary walls to secure the work areas to minimize the impact to PATCO. There is also temporary lighting and power that has been installed so the contractor can do the work.

There are no real big updates on the PATCO elevator projects. The work is still ongoing at City Hall and 12th and 13th Streets in Center City.

Ben Franklin Bridge lighting/walkway status.

Dr. Ochroch reported that we are doing work on the Philadelphia Tower rocker link which is getting replaced. There will be some lane closures during the day which will be cleared by rush hour times. There will be some night work which also requires significant coordination with the Coast Guard. There will be a barge in the water and that's all slated for this coming weekend.

Reggie Haynes asked if the contractor performing the water main work is on-schedule?

Dr. Ochroch stated that she believes the goal is the second week in July to be complete. If you are having a July meeting, hopefully, it will be complete by then, but the entire project will be ongoing. Reggie Haynes stated that July is our vacation month so our next meeting will be in August.

PATCO General Manager, John Rink

Heightened security protocols on PATCO trains, stations, etc.

CEO Hanson reported that we are always open to the committee's comments and suggestions about this topic. He stated that he, Rob Finnegan, and John Rink confer with the Chief of Police, Edward Cobbs, regularly as does COO, Robert Hicks. Rob Finnegan has the supervisory responsibility over the Police Department. We are all very involved in working with our partners in the region and that includes gathering intelligence, sharing information, coordinating our enforcement and deterrent efforts. We are aware of the latest intelligence, and we are working in unprecedented ways to complement each other in the law enforcement community. In terms of specific enforcement methods, techniques, and deployments, we simply don't comment on that because that's a part of the deterrent factor.

GTFS Update.

GM Rink reported that the GTFS is working. Mike Williams texted GM Rink to go on-line and enter a Google trip from 15th/16th to Haddonfield tonight at 11:40 p.m. and you will see the modified alert on the system.

GM Rink reported that we gave all data to Google, and they have entered it live. It's going to be two weeks to confirm on their end, then two more weeks of testing, so it should be completely live by the end of four weeks. Right now, we are sending Google the updates to our vendor and the information is being loaded. We just performed a test, and it showed a modified alert due to track work scheduled tonight. If you play around on Google or Trip Planning, it should show that we have a track schedule tonight. By August's meeting, we should be in full control of uploading all our schedules daily.

Jeff Kessler added that he sees it come up as an alert and that there's an altered schedule, however, is the actual schedule update being propagated because he sees a modified service. The schedule is showing a 20-minute headway from 16th after the hour at 10 and 11 o'clock.

GM Rink reported that we are sending information to Google and they're updating so there might be some quirks over the next four weeks. According to the vendor, everything should work on Google's end, and they will make sure the dashboard is given to us four weeks from today where we will take over from that point.

Joe Boyle stated that he sees in Google maps at 15th/16th at 11:41 p.m. getting into Haddonfield at 12:00 a.m. which is on the adjusted night schedule.

Jeff Kessler stated that is exceptionally good! He also added that right now the stat is being sent from the vendor to Google, is the plan for this to be posted to the DRPA website so consumers don't have to use Google transit apps?

GM Rink stated that he will discuss that issue with Mike Williams. We will also be sending that feed to our advertiser that controls the LCD screens so they can add it to the ticker on the bottom of the screens and be displayed inside the station.

Jeff Kessler stated if they're making the GTFS and PATCO is receiving the link, it may be worthwhile to post that link as the download to the GTFS on the DRPA website instead of having to download a file then upload a file. GM Rink asked Jeff Kessler to e-mail his suggestions to him and Mike Williams. He asked the committee members to play around on the GTFS and if they see anything to send that information to him and Mike Williams.

Jeff Kessler thanked the DRPA and PATCO for making the investment in the GTFS and making it happen. GM Rink also thanked Jeff Kessler for pushing us to get it done and making a great enhancement for everyone.

PATCO Ridership:

GM Rink further reported that Sunday's ridership during Philly Pride weekend was more than 100 percent pre-Covid where we had the highest ridership since March of 2020. We made the adjustment, we were prepared, and riders did show-up.

GM Rink reported that we opened our Woodcrest Freedom Center this past Monday. The operation switched from Broadway to Woodcrest. Broadway will be our satellite office going forward. Jeff Kessler asked if passengers could access it from within the paid area? GM Rink stated that we have windows on both the paid side and free side.

Social Media, Larry Davis

Larry Davis reported that there were no comments or questions from social media.

Larry Davis stated that Jefferson is planning new research at 9th and Locust. Are they consulting with the DRPA and PATCO because it looks like it's going to be on top of PATCO tracks? Will the train schedules be affected?

GM Rink reported that the DRPA and PATCO had meetings with Jefferson's engineers to get an engineering drawing relative to the foundations of the subway tunnel. It will be at the same building line as the garages. GM Rink stated that the train schedules will not be affected. The only thing that might impact ridership is we may have to shut down the stairwell. We asked that access to the elevators remain clear, but there might be times when we have to close it off for a period. The actual building line sits back pretty far in that location.

Steve Benigno asked if Jefferson shared constructability designs such as cranes in the street, etc.?

GM Rink reported not at the time as it was more of a preliminary meeting to get to know the partners. As in the past, if they do have cranes, the city is aware that they have to send us the loading diagrams for review to allow a crane on the street. GM Rink stated that the parking garage will be a nice addition which means they will be using less transit to get there.

Old Business:

Upcoming Advanced Notice on Public Events (mid-May to mid-June)

GM Rink reported there are no upcoming public events.

New Business:

Members transitioning to Emeritus Status: At this time, there are no members transitioning to Emeritus Status. The next member will be announced at the September 14, 2022 meeting.

Reggie Haynes reported that Mike Devlin sent an e-mail to the CAC members informing of his resignation from the Committee. The letter reads in part:

“It’s been my distinct honor and pleasure to be a part of this excellent group of selfless and civic minded individuals. It is my regret I need to tender my resignation due to an overwhelming family obligation as I need to assist in the care of parents suffering from Alzheimer’s with severe mobility difficulties. I am afraid I have been unable to participate as fully as I wish, and I need to make room for those who can. I will cherish the time spent with the group and the good that we do particularly the connections I have made with each of you. Sincerely, Mike Devlin.”

The CAC members discussed doing something for Mike Devlin by providing a Certificate of Appreciation. It will be discussed with John Hanson and Mike Williams.

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held via Hybrid on August 10, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

Next DRPA Board Meeting: Will be held via Hybrid on August 17, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.