



## **Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes**

**January 10, 2024**  
**Location: via Zoom**

### **Attendance:**

**New Jersey:** Reggie Haynes, Alan Becker, Pamela Mack-Brooks, Jody Boldurian; Strasso Jovanovski, Ben Saracco

**Pennsylvania:** Tyrone Wesley, Robert Melikian

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

### **Other:**

**DRPA/PATCO:** John Hanson, CEO; John Rink, GM; Mike Venuto, CE; Robert Finnegan, CSS; Jerry Sahi, CFO; James White, CFO; Dawn Whiton, Executive Assistant; Cheryl Ansert, Administrative Coordinator

### **Public Member:**

### **Call to Order**

A motion was made to approve the November 15<sup>th</sup> 2023 minutes. Motion was approved and seconded. The Minutes were approved.

### **Finance**

#### **CFO Sahi**

- October audited YTD revenue \$266M, \$5.7M & 2.2% higher than October YTD 2022. \$12.7M & 4.55% less than 2019.
- Traffic ridership is 41.5M, 1.3M & 3.2% higher than 2022. 3M & 6.78% less than 2019.
- PATCO November YTD \$11.8M (audited #s), 1.3M & 12.5% higher than 2022. 13.2M & 52.5M less than 2019. October ridership YTD \$5M, \$548,000, 12.3% higher than 2022. 10.2M about 51% less than 2019.
- October YTD operating expenses \$138.4M, \$89M was DRPA, \$49.4M was PATCO.
- 13.2M favorable to budget. More than 50% savings come from employee related costs.

#### **CFO White**

- Holding pattern in terms of PATCO ridership and traffic.
- Traffic is from 91% to 94% of Pre-Covid traffic on any given day.
- PATCO was over 50% of Pre-Covid ridership in December, averaging 53%. Tapered off during Holidays. Around 48% right now.
- Converted taxable bonds to tax exempt bonds, thereby realizing \$1.8M in debt service savings. Over 10/11 years we will save \$12M.



### **CEO Hanson**

- Bridge traffic at 92% of pre COVID.
- PATCO Ridership little over 50% of pre COVID.
- PATCO operating used to be subsidized 50% now subsidized about 75% or an extra \$15M annually to DRPA to subsidize in round numbers for now.
- In a sustainable financial position.

### **Any increase to the bond to debt ratio?**

#### **CEO Hanson**

- Decreased outstanding bonds by about \$75M at beginning of this year, probably \$912M.
- Took out another \$75M, and we're about \$912M in bonded indebtedness.
- Tremendous reduction from where it was.

#### **CFO White**

- Over \$600M over the last 10 years.
- Reduces our debt service not our principles.
- Done through refunding in 2022, we saw a reduction in the principle.

### **Update on CFO search**

#### **CEO Hanson**

- Introduced Jerry Sahi, new CFO
- Jim White will support Jerry until the end of February

### **Update on Capital Projects**

#### **CEO Hanson**

- Suggested we save until end if time permits

#### **Reggie Haynes**

- Agreed to moving topic to next month.

### **Bridge and Highway**

#### **Status on proposal of the Delaware River Heritage Trail going under the Betsy Ross Bridge?**

#### **CEO Hanson**

- Unaware of proposal, not going under the bridge on DRPA property at this time.

#### **John Boyle**

- Proposal has been in circuit trail plans since 2012, partners have been talking to Camden Water Authority, TWP of Pennsauken and Palmyra about putting proposed alignment, which is drawn under the BRB. Happy to know they need to talk to DRPA if they move forward. Can't go under assumption that DRPA will allow a trail under the bridge. It's a proposal, no study is going on, informal at this point, wanted to make DRPA aware that plan is in process.

#### **CEO Hanson**

- When approached our ground rules will be: we are not accepting any additional liability, additional costs, or additional risks.
- Same thing we did with proposed Bridge Walkway Camden County is building under the BFB.
- In support of community initiatives, but they can't interfere with our operation.



### **Status of the Scofflaw situation?**

#### **CSS Finnegan**

- Bill S14-72 passed in NJ Senate on Monday unanimously is awaiting Governor's signature.
- Assuming he signs it will allow us to start enforcing some toll violations, at least from the NJ side.
- Believe PA has something already pertaining to this.

#### **CEO Hanson**

- Waiting for Governor Murphy to sign it.

### **When crimes are committed in Philly and the person(s) flee back to Jersey via Bridge is there an action plan in place with DRPA? A task force in place? Is it a process? Are you communicating with Philadelphia? Seems like an open market, they are committing crimes and fleeing back onto the bridges, wanted to know if there is any communication going on?**

#### **CSS Finnegan**

- Constant communication/collaboration between us and departments on NJ side as well as Philadelphia with regard to crime.
- There are radio channels we communicate on for crimes that have just occurred and this has taken place for years.
- Another tool to benefit law enforcement (including us) on both sides of the river, is License plate readers which will be installed on all four of our bridge facilities.
- Will aid in investigative side of criminality that takes place and people fleeing.

### **Invitation to watch fireworks from atop (inside) the DRPA tower?**

#### **CEO Hanson**

- We do not do that, we do not have events where people do that.

### **Update on Painting and lightwork on the Ben Franklin Bridge**

#### **CE Venuto**

- BFB Suspension span project.
- Painting 95% complete, will have to do some touch ups as platforms and temporary braces are removed.
- Majority of painting is complete.
- Decorative lighting system is working on the north side. South side is down and being worked on.
- Projected to be complete by the end of this year, around late fall lighting will be complete.
- Some of the final lights can't go up until the platforms are down.
- Most of the ancillary work like the conduit and lighting is going on now and a good portion of it is complete.



### **Update on the status of the South Walkway on bridge (timeline for projected reopening – 2024?)**

#### **CE Venuto**

- South walkway will open after platforms come down, North walkway is open.
- Platforms come down when work is complete and we will open the South walkway and close the north walkway to take the other platforms down.
- Job is to be closed out by the end of this year, platforms may start to come down soon.

### **Tightening some of the loose metal connector plates on BFB Walkway?**

#### **CE Venuto**

- Engineering has reached out to bridge operations about the plates located at the tower joints on the walkway and made them aware.
- Requested they tighten them.
- Follow up and report back in another month.

### **PATCO**

### **Update on the GIS project to identify DRPA property not contiguous to the Bridges and PATCO**

#### **CE Venuto**

- Had GIS initiative years ago and identified areas in/around bridges & PATCO.
- Ancillary properties off DRPA general sites were identified.
- Confident that all the properties were identified in the system.
- Have records from doing a search on all the deeds in the surrounding areas that showed DRPA as a grantee or grantor.
- Every once in a while we may find a transaction for a property that we own that wasn't filed within the county or township system, but it's very infrequent.
- GIS is continually updated, we update on properties that we divest, but not deleted from the GIS.
- We have transaction documentation in our records so we know where we have divested and for how much and then the opposite when we acquire new property we do the same thing.
- Expanding GIS system to include additional information, as we get into leases with billboards or fiber optics we're putting those leases in the GIS system.
- Automated and can be programmed to send emails to advise prior to the lease ending, will serve as a reminder that the lease is expiring and is up for renewal.
- Continuing to update and make advances to the system.

### **What is PATCO's plan for addressing the longstanding issues of providing customers with accurate GTFS schedule data? What is PATCO's strategy for updating the GTFS to account for recurring trackwork schedules?**

#### **GM Rink**

- Current vendor not doing the job.
- Our transit group would have to give to IS and then Mike daily, wasn't a good solution.
- Mike Williams and our traffic department attended a webinar before the Holidays that came from APTA as a potential solution from a company called Via, a program called remix.
- Solution looks promising but need to look at cost to buy the platform. Will meet tomorrow and share with John to decide if we can afford it.



- Due to limited staffing constraints and processes we believe it to be a good solution.
- Will allow us to update with track work and special schedules.

### **What is DRPA's plan to address inaccurate countdown clocks on the system?**

#### **GM Rink**

- No complaints were received in the last several months by our social team e-mail, no issues/reports from center tower.
- Management staff observes the clocks each month in their observation reports and they've been reporting them to be accurate.
- We have a process where if we have a service interruption we'll turn the clocks off until a point where we can reestablish them, but I'm not aware of any issue on that.
- Overall everything shows they're running as they should.

#### **Jeff Kessler**

- I saw at Lindenwold sometime between Christmas and New Years, I think Ben also observed something, I can see if Ben & I have a specific timestamp to send.

#### **Reggie Haynes**

- Any chance you only had issues with the countdown clock during the Santa trains?

#### **GM Rink**

- Santa Trains are special trains and trying to intertwine those with revenue trains could make it chaotic.
- Turn that off next year during that time to prevent any confusion.

### **What, if anything, is being done to address the ongoing quality-of-life issues encountered in the unpaid area of various stations, particularly those in Center City and at Lindenwold?**

#### **GM Rink**

- Myself, my team, and public safety continue to contact the city relative to the area.
- Work with the Chief and Captain to address homeless issues in our area.

#### **CEO Hanson**

- On the Philadelphia side except 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> we do not own the concourses & do not have jurisdiction inside those concourses.
- Will have jurisdiction at Franklin Square.
- Social media talks from time to time about this matter being kicked back and forth between the City of Philadelphia & PATCO/DRPA. This idea is not accurate, it's not something that can be moved.
- Governments have jurisdictions and responsibilities.
- Outside the paid areas at 8<sup>th</sup> & Market, 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> & Locust and 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> & Locust are the responsibility of the City of Philadelphia. Told the city on more than one occasion that I will commit resources, police officers, money, cleaners, whatever it takes to clean it out, but only doing it one time.
- Not going to keep spending money, more importantly, putting DRPA employees at risk. If the city will not act, we will not act.



- Key point is that most states and municipal governments have sovereign liability which limits their liability. DRPA and PATCO were not included in sovereign liability, so we're very careful about how we approach things.
- Will always act in public interest, but not going to take the lead and do things outside our jurisdiction then have to explain to our insurance company why we did this and why we incurred a liability that wasn't ours with hopes of getting coverage for it.
- Prepared to support it, up until now the City of Philadelphia's approach has been to move this problem around. They take action now and then just to show they are doing something, then they let it go back to the way it was and we are not going to participate in that. We're not going to waste or spend money on that, but we will be all in when they are ready to address their problem, it's theirs to address.
- Very heartened at the inauguration of the new Mayor, who I know personally, is my boss, also a friend and a force of nature. If anybody can solve this and any other problems of the City of Philadelphia it is without question, Mayor Parker. I'm hoping that when she gets started things will change.
- Heard about the pushing around of the issue from our New Jersey governors authority unit who contacted Jeff Nash. Jeff contacted me and I suggested sending some New Jersey State Police Officer's there, those officers have as much jurisdiction as DRPA officers do, if they think we can and should do it, perhaps they can do it for us.
- Prepared to help and solve the problem, want to be part of the solution, but not prepared to make moves to quiet the criticism, too much at stake for us and we can't do that.

### **Is the City of Philadelphia fencing off the area at 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> and Locust and 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> and Locust?**

#### **GM Rink**

- 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> is ours, our officers respond and remove the homeless.

#### **CEO Hanson**

- 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> the city has fenced off, but it was held up by a question about the minimum required areas for egress and could the city of Philadelphia lock an emergency exit gate. The city has old style gates if you push on they open, PATCO's gates are tied into the fire suppression system, they're locked until the alarm goes off and then if the alarm goes off they unlock.
- City determined they could lock those gates with a belief it was going to solve the problem.
- Helped the problem, but at 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> & Locust it's just moved from one end of the concourse to the middle.
- GM Rink has been communicating with City of Philadelphia offering assistance but asking them to take the lead and do something.

#### **GM Rink**

- The question about reopening connections, the city and SEPTA determined they will solve the issue by having complete closures in these areas, leading to the walkways between the concourse and SEPTA Broad Street Line being closed.

#### **CEO Hanson**

- This area belongs to them, not DRPA.

#### **Jeff Kessler**

- The walkway to the AC line?



### **GM Rink**

- Lindenwold is ours, our officers respond to the issues there.
- Walkway that goes under our tracks and the platform in that area are New Jersey Transit's.
- Complaints are forwarded to New Jersey Transit to handle.

### **What is the anticipated increase in end-to-end runtime with the opening of Franklin Square station?**

#### **GM Rink**

- Adding approx. 30 to 60 seconds to runtime in each direction.

### **What has been the biggest driver in increased running times over the past 10 to 15 years or any longer and are there any plans or targets to reduce it?**

#### **GM Rink**

- Runtimes have been increased twice.
- April, 2017 and December, 2022 1 minute was added each time making our 26 minute runtime a 28 minute runtime.
- 2017 was for re-evaluation of safe braking distances on the train cars when the Alstom cars came. Changes were made to safe braking and signal system in subway tunnels.
- 2022 we developed a new braking profile during leaf season and found the new braking profile dramatically reduced the number of flats and saves our traction motors. The amount of traction motor repairs we've done in the past has dramatically reduced, the braking profile takes the stress off the motors as the trains came in and it added one minute to the time.
- Franklin Square will most likely be a 28 and ½ to 29 minute run time.

### **Has SEPTA involved PATCO in its recent "SEPTA Metro" rebranding initiative?**

#### **GM Rink**

- Yes, I was invited by SEPTA to look at how they redid all their identification lines so I was involved in numerous meetings over the years.
- When we redo our route map signs in the stations, train cars and when Franklin Square's open we will use SEPTA's new designations as part of our route maps.

### **Does SEPTA maintain cleaning up litter on the PATCO entrances on Locust Street?**

#### **GM Rink**

- It's not SEPTA, it's the city of Philadelphia, they maintain the concourse areas in the stairs.
- Complaints from customers are forwarded to the city.

### **Has PATCO pursued naming rights revenue opportunities?**

#### **GM Rink**

- Naming rights is part of our advertising contract with our vendor Intersection.
- Marketing is down throughout the nation with ridership where it is.
- Noone has approached our company in regards to naming rights at this time.
- Trying to maintain and get back to the level of advertising and marketing prior to COVID.



- Pre-COVID there was some naming rights interest, that goes to an advertising contractor then to the board to accept.

**Is DRPA tracking the issue that pops up every 5-10 years in Camden where some outside agency tries to construct a billboard directly adjacent to BFB? There is typically community uproar organizing against it the last 2 attempts for very large LED billboards directly adjacent to the bridge were denied. The latest proposal came out tonight said the Camden Parking Authority, which owns the parking lot directly adjacent to the bridge on the North Camden side is pulling the proposal. I'm curious if DRPA has an official stance on this because it seems like DRPA would not like to see this type of development directly on this property for whatever reason, safety, aesthetics or whatever. Might help stop these things moving forward.**

**CEO Hanson**

- Subject to zoning and planning boards in the municipalities where property is owned.
- We are notified about plans due to our proximity to the location. We have the opportunity to attend the planning or zoning board meeting then evaluate the proposal and make a decision on how to respond.
- In this particular case there was no notification to us. We do carefully evaluate them but there are billboards all along the bridge that aren't ours.
- My understanding in this case is that the community uproar caused many of the elected leaders to take notice and get the parking authority to stand down on it.

**Social Media**

**Ask DRPA about applying for funding to do a feasibility study for the PATCO to University City train, any plans for that?**

**CEO Hanson**

- No plans for that. We can not afford under our current funding situation.
- Would be duplicative of 8<sup>th</sup> & Market to the L, not a one seat ride.

**What happened to the Delaware Columbus Avenue light rail line proposed by DRPA in the late 2000's?**

**CEO Hanson**

- I assume the benefits outweighed the costs or the cost was just prohibitive.
- GCL is a project not being funded by the DRPA, we are acting as project manager, but not providing any funding.

**CE Venuto**

- There was 2 studies, one was improving mass transportation in southern NJ that turned into the GCL and there was also improving mass transit along Columbus Blvd.
- Not much interest for Columbus Blvd on the PA side after these studies and talk on that ended.
- NJ side went to alternative analysis which then led to EIS where we are today.



**Public Events being held for mid-January to mid-February?**

**Extra trains for Auto Show?**

**GM Rink**

- Usually run 6 car trains and make sure we stay close to regular schedule.
- Not sure of any track work that would prevent that.
- Get some ridership, but the bigger one is the Flower Show.
- Auto show starts this weekend, we have no construction, will be on our normal 20 Saturday and 30 Sunday, but then we add additional cars.

**Members transitioning to Emeritus:**

Benjamin Saracco – March 2024

Alan Becker – September 2024

Pamela Mack-Brooks – September 2024

Reggie Haynes – December 2024

**OPEN Forum:**

**Next CAC Meeting:** Will be held February 14, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

**Next DRPA Meeting:** DRPA Board Meeting on February 21, 2024 @ 9:00 a.m.