



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

February 14, 2024

Location: via Zoom

Attendance:

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

Pennsylvania: Robert Melikian

Emeritus Member(s): Larry Davis, Bruce Schwartz, Kathleen Venuti, 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; Cheryl Ansert, Administrative Coordinator

Public Member: Grace Kimbaris

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the January 10, 2024 minutes. Motion was approved and seconded. The Minutes were approved.

Finance Update

CFO Sahi

- January 2024 unaudited traffic was around 5% less than January 2023 & 10% less than January 2019.
- January's traffic was adversely impacted by the weather. Eight days of bad weather (snow and heavy rain/flooding). Excluding those eight days, traffic was 1% better than January 2023 and 5% less than January 2019.
- Audited figures as of November year to date revenue is roughly around \$291.70M, 2.4M & .82% greater than 2023 budget. 6M or 2.11% better than 2022. 13.8M or 4.5% less than 2019.
- November YTD traffic ridership is 45.5M, which is .5% less than 2023 budget, 3% better than 2022 figures and 6.78% less than 2019 figures.
- PATCO December YTD revenue was \$12.9M, roughly around 5.79% less than budget. 12% better than 2022 and 52.7% less than 2019. December YTD ridership was 5.45M, 3.8% less than budget, 11.94% higher than 2022 and 50.9% less than 2019.
- Unaudited operating expenses as of November YTD is around 153M, which 98.6M is from DRPA and 54.4M is from PATCO which is 13.2M favorable to budget. Majority of savings, which is roughly around \$10M coming from employee related costs.

CFO White

- Will probably close out 2023 above budget.



Bridge & Toll Scofflaw Update:

CEO Hanson

- Violations are at same level they have been.
- Waiting for rules legislation passed in order to have states suspend registrations and driver's licenses.
- Next best action would be to run police details, but at this time we don't have the staff.
- Tried civil and criminal approach through courts with more failures than success.

What is the Status of PATCO ridership? Is it affecting finances positively?

CEO Hanson

- Above 50% of Pre-Covid numbers. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday numbers tend to be in the 60% range with Monday and Friday being much lower. Saturday is often times better, but the absolute numbers for Saturdays are not good. Saturday can sometimes be in the 70%, but those are low numbers.
- PATCO's finances could only be deemed to be affecting the authority's finances positively on some sort of a relative basis. On an absolute basis even at its best, PATCO is a subsidized operation and as such has never affected the finances of the Authority positively.
- At best we've covered half the operating costs with return at the fare box, which means we were out about \$30M in operating costs and depending on the year, anywhere from \$40 to \$75M in Capital costs. Capital costs average in the neighborhood of 50 to 60 in the long term.
- Always been a subsidized operation, so not a positive effect. It is an important part of the portfolio and of the value that we create, we consider it to have a very positive effect and that is why we continue to do it subsidized.

Larry Davis: Going back to the Scofflaw Topic, any update on the new toll taking technology system to replace the existing one?

CEO Hanson

- Gone through the RFP process, approved the new contract, we're just at the very beginning of the implementation process.
- It is an important project and the vendor is Transcore.

CE Venuto

- The Project passed the board and went through the Veto period. The project team is setting up e-builder for our documentation. The project is in it's infancy stage.

Bob Melikian: Last year you hinted that there might be a toll increase, can you give us any updates on that topic?

CEO Hanson

- Still working with the board on this, we are currently without a Chair, but are hoping to have a new one and hear about it at the February meeting. When the Chair is filled, we will get moving again on it.



Bob Melikian: Is that a topic that you believe is important in the near term?

CEO Hanson

- Yes, we have enough cash to make it through this year most likely on the Capital projects and then we won't.
- We will need to do something to enhance the revenues or dramatically reduce our Capital spending. Don't think anyone is going to reduce capital spending and don't think that's going to be the issue.
- Thirteen years since a toll increase, hoping the decision makers recognize that at some point an increase is necessary.
- Every other tolling agency in the area that I am aware of has increased tolls.
- Believe it is necessary at this point.

Larry Davis: Would eliminating or addressing the EZ Pass driver discount be on the table to be eliminated in lieu of a fare toll increase? (Frequent Driver discount)

CEO Hanson

- Everything would be on the table, unlikely that would be something we would do away with because it is not a lot in the way of dollars, but it's entirely possible.

Update on Capital Projects

CE Venuto

Ben Franklin Bridge Suspension Span Project

- Our biggest project, on pace to be complete by end of year.
- 95% of miscellaneous steel repairs completed, 98% of painting completed, working on touch ups, working on dehumidification on both sides and installing the lighting system on the South side.

Lindenwold Control Center

- Completed pile driving and concrete pile caps.
- Currently forming and pouring concrete foundations.
- Expect structural steel to start being erected at end of March.

Betsy Ross Bridge Painting

- Work is ongoing, we put containment up and do the blasting and then we do the painting. We move those activities forward, so as we get to painting in one area we have already started blasting the next set of spans.
- We are complete intermediate and finish coating some of the spans, we're putting the rigging up and in other spans we're doing the containment so we are leap frogging along the bridge.
- Project is going very well, a little over 20% complete at this time.
- Painting is weather dependent, so if it gets too cold or we have bad weather we can't paint, but we have not shut the job down. It is just going at a slower pace through the winter months.

Reopening Franklin Square

- Work continues throughout the station.
- Built up out of the ground, you can see the structural steel, the roof is on and we recently finished putting in all the glass walls.



- Starting the elevator support systems, so the elevator shaft is in and they will start to put the elevator system together.
- Working in the concourse on the communications, electrical system and building out some rooms for public safety, PATCO operations and IS.
- Doing lighting and security and public address systems
- Looking at the latter part of the summer to be substantially complete.

Upcoming Projects:

CE Venuto

- Just passed budget & includes over \$150M worth of work, over next couple of months you will see:

Commodore Barry Bridge de-leading and painting project
Bid: Spring 2024
Cost: \$145M

Walt Whitman Bridge Tower Links- Phase 2
Bid: Spring 2024
Cost: \$8.5M

PATCO Interlocking (Replace interlockings along PATCO right of way)
Bid: Fall 2024
Cost: \$38M

Viaduct substructure preservation (Collingswood & Westmont)
Bid: Late 2024
Cost: \$12M

PATCO embankment restoration
Bid: Late 2024
Cost: \$20M (Significant FTA funding)

Ben Franklin Bridge Eastbound Operational Improvements
Bid: Early 2025
Cost: \$100M (partially funded by PennDOT grant)

- Long term solution to some of the issues we're having on that wearing surface and rehabilitate the 5th Street tunnel roof.

Alan: The work that was done on the Evesham Bridge by Ashland station, is that pretty much completed? How much is it costing us?

CE Venuto

- Bridge was hit by a truck years ago and bent one of the beams. Over the last few weeks, we heat straightened (heat the metal and straighten into position)
- Majority of work is done, still have some touch-up paint and some bearings to replace.



- Bearings are a long lead time item, so we will have to go back out there and replace those when they come in.
- Concrete repairs have been done.
- Speed restrictions on PATCO trains are lifted at this point
- We will pay for concrete repairs, bearings and some other things we wanted to do. Heat straightening that was done because of the truck was claimed under insurance and we submit those costs to be reimbursed.

GM Rink

- Contract was awarded to replace both original platforms at Woodcrest station.
- Will be utilizing center track while each of the platforms are demolished and rebuilt.
- Will be a single platform during the construction.
- About \$20M project.

Discontinued Monthly Weekend Pass – Will this be brought back at a later date?

GM Rink

- No plans to do it at this time.
- Basically was a wash, we didn't lose money, we didn't make money
- Majority of the users were current weekend riders that had a benefit, we didn't attract many new riders, which was the original intent.

Update on increasing “Out of Service Cars” on Saturday morning 1:34 am departing 15/16 Locust Street

GM Rink

- Operators notify the dispatcher if trains are full or platforms are crowded at which time they will open up the other two cars. It is left to the discretion of the operator.
- Dispatcher will verify that each and every weekend.
- Will make sure we keep an eye on that and are proactive on that.
- When they get to Lindenwold we turn off the lights and close up the cars again.

Jeff Kessler: When we just use the eastbound platform for both directions, will you reverse the down escalator to go up?

GM Rink

- Yes we will do that Jeff, we will make sure the down escalator is changed to go up during that time.

Steve Benigno: Is there an agreement with the adjacent railroad for the construction work next to Woodcrest?

GM Rink

- Already have agreements with NJ Transit and funding mechanism if their flagmen are needed.
- Should not impact them during that time.

CE Venuto

- We try to minimize any disruption to NJ Transit as well as our own PATCO services.



- At Franklin Square we built temporary walls so we didn't need as much PATCO support and worked within them unimpeded. Plan to do the same at Woodcrest, build temporary walls in order to keep construction personnel out of operating areas and minimize the impact to PATCO operations or even the need for as much PATCO staff to help.

Steve Benigno: Any significant excavations that would require supporting of their track structure?

GM Rink

- No, we are just tearing down the platform and rebuilding it.
- This contract will finish the rest of the station enhancements inside the lobby, redo the ceiling, the floors, concrete repairs, and resurfacing of all the stairs.

Steve Benigno: Will the turnstiles be closer to the doors?

GM Rink

- No, at this time there is no work in that area, we just did all those improvements.

Countdown Clock Sync Issues – Off by 30 minutes on Feb 1 (8th & Market Street)

GM Rink

- We were aware of an issue overnight with clock sync issues, received other complaints and had already looked into the issue.
- Software issue was found, information was sent to vendor, have a service contract with them.
- They have the ability to print out the diagnostic log and see where the issue is.
- The train was sitting there and the system showed the train leaving when in reality it did not.
- After that weekend the issues self corrected, but we are having the vendor check into that.

SEPTA's new contactless payment has been widely received. Is PATCO looking to do something similar with the payment system?

GM Rink

- Yes we will be doing an all new payment system with Cubic.
- Cubic is working on this, it should be up and running mid 2025.
- We will no longer have the Freedom Card, it would be a mobile app and you pay using Apple, Google, etc. Would still be able to buy a paper ticket, but it would be plastic not paper at that point.
- The reduced payment system would remain the same.

Jeff Kesler: GTFS Update?

GM Rink

- Last month, Mike Williams and I met with the vendor, Remix.
- Need to relay it all to John Hanson.
- Could improve our static GTFS, including trackwork schedules and might make improvements on how our staff writes the schedules.

Jeff Kesler: Current GTFS has not been updated since the September schedule change.



Anyone using the mobile app or Google maps still has the September schedule.

GM Rink

- I will get with Mr. Williams on that.

Larry Davis: I don't see information on the DRPA website about the Toll Taking System under Projects.

CEO Hanson

- I will talk to Mike Williams about putting it up there.
- You can find the resolution on it under Board Package.

Larry Davis: There's been talk about redeveloping I-95 through South Philadelphia and one of the articles in the Inquirer said part of the plans has to do with taking over rebuilding and expanding a ramp in South Philadelphia that's used for athletic fields and the property is owned by DRPA. Does DRPA plan on acquiescing to PennDot and giving up that ramp and getting rid of the athletic fields?

CEO Hanson

- No, we don't

CE Venuto

- We have talked to PennDOT and submitted a public comment when they had a public comment period. Agency to agency we had communication about that particular project in and around the WWB. Engineering Department and Attorneys responded b/c it was a plan they published.
- We have no intentions of giving any of that property up.

Jeff Kessler: Is the DRPA exempt from Eminent domain as a Bi-State Agency?

CEO Hanson

- DRPA is not subject to the governance of the states, we are a federal entity.
- We sent a response to their plan, which was we have no intention of giving any of that property up.

Reggie Haynes: Any Public Notices from Mid-February to Mid-March?

GM Rink

- No, I'm not aware of any.

Alan: I know NJ Turnpike increased their fares and Governor Murphy knocked it down. Can either Governor knock down the fare increase if the DRPA decides to do that by resolution?

CEO Hanson

- NJ Turnpike did get their budget approved and did raise their tolls.
- For us to go through the process that we prefer to go through, would mean to be fully transparent, hold public hearings, and get feedback from the public before we take action, making sure that we considered every opinion, option and bit of information that's out there. That's what we would like to do and will require first the board to vote, to authorize us to go out and do the public hearings and then at the end of the public hearings they'd have to vote in favor of a toll increase. Either one of those resolutions could be vetoed by the governor of PA or NJ.



- We have a CPI toll increase that was created when we did the initial toll increase and we've put it off every year and most recently we put it off until April 1st this year. Only way to postpone it or eliminate it is for our board to vote to postpone or remove it. No way either governor's office as a practical matter can stop that. Only our board can stop it formally.
- The outcome I am looking for is not to raise tolls, it is to fund our Capital Program. If someone has an idea how we can come up with \$800M I'm willing to listen.

Bruce: Is there any planning for the Centennial in 2 years?

CEO Hanson

- No

Bob Melikian: Meaning there hasn't been anything started yet or will there be something?

- Most likely will be some planning, yes

Members transitioning to Emeritus:

Benjamin Saracco – March 2024

Active members – 9 New Jersey (6) and Pennsylvania (3)

Bob Melikian would like to Nominate Grace (NJ) into CAC

OPEN Forum:

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held March 13, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Next DRPA Meeting: DRPA Board Meeting on March 20, 2024 @ 9:00 a.m.