



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

March 13, 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, Steve Benigno, Jeff Kessler, Daniel McArdle, Tyrone Wesley, Bruce Schwartz

Other:

DRPA/PATCO: John Hanson, CEO; John Rink, GM; Elisabeth Klawunn, SE; Robert Finnegan, CSS; Jerry Sahi, CFO; James White, CFO; Cheryl Ansert, Administrative Coordinator

Public Member:

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the February 14, 2024 minutes. Motion was approved and seconded. The Minutes were approved.

Finance Update

CFO Sahi

- January 2024 unaudited traffic was around 6% less favorable to 2019. In February, we had an extra day due to leap year and that has offset some of the bad weather variance we had in January. Last month we were 10% unfavorable and now we are 6% unfavorable.
- Audited traffic as of December year to date for the bridges, we ended the year at \$317.3M, which is around 1% better than the budget, around 2% better than the year before and 4.5% less than 2019.
- The traffic was 45.5M, which was .5% better than the budget, around 3% better than 2022 & 6.7% less than 2019.
- PATCO's January revenue figures was \$1.05M, which was around 2% less than budget and around 1.3% less than 2023 and around 53% less than 2019.
- PATCO ridership for the month of January was 445,000, which was 1.5% less than budget (pretty much the same as last years January figure) 52.9% less than 2019.
- Operating expenses for December YTD \$181.4M of which \$117M is from DRPA and \$64.6M is from PATCO. Around 12.8M favorable to budget with majority of the savings coming from employee related costs.
- Still closing the books from the expense side and the numbers may move a little bit.

Snow event text messages on Jan 16-18, 3 consecutive messages sent regarding BFB walkway closings with no opening information, was this an error?

CSS Finnegan

- January 16th @ 6:05AM the footwalk was closed with an initial alert being sent.
- Follow-up alert was sent January 17th @ 7:47AM to reaffirm the footwalk would remain closed due to icing and snow.
- January 18th @ 6:31AM reaffirmed it would remain closed on this day until further notice.
- Morning of January 18th weather and temperatures eased and BFB Maintenance ensured the footwalk was clear and was reopened at 10:00AM.
- ROAM alert was sent out at 9:37AM confirming the footwalk was reopen.

Construction updates for the Betsy Ross Bridge.

SE Klawunn

- Work is continuing, begin blasting on the Richmond Street overpass as night work.
- Have been doing some girder spans with power washing and some finish coats.
- We are 20% complete for the project.

Steve Benigno: Has there been any testing with the paint to require air monitoring?

SE Klawunn

- Will check on that, typically with painting they do test.

Update on resurfacing/painting of the Ben Franklin Bridge and other DRPA bridges.

SE Klawunn

- Ongoing meetings for a full resurfacing on the BFB.
- Acquired some grant money to perform work, making it a high priority.
- In Capital Budget to start in 2026.
- Platform is starting to come down on the South cable, once that is down and the contractor cleans up the south walkway will be opening.
- We will be moving traffic from the north walkway over to the south walkway and taking the platforms down on the North cable.
- Project is still on track to be finished towards the end of the year.
- Decorative lighting is being replaced, still have to do some of the programming and expect that will be completed by the end of the year.

Reggie: There is another question about toll technology.

CEO Hanson

- The award has been made. In the beginning phases of that project, not much to report.

Larry Davis: I was asking for an update about having that project (toll technology) added to the DRPA website.

CEO Hanson

- Will follow up on that again if it is not there.



Will DRPA begin discussions for toll increases this year?

CEO Hanson

- Working to get new chair James Schultz up to speed on what our options are.
- Will share more information when we have it.

Will there be a Grand opening for the Franklin Square Station, and when?

CEO Hanson

- Yes. Could be Summer or Early Fall, you will all be invited.
- Expecting contractor to finish up in late summer and then DRPA has some things to work on.
- Not exactly sure when the work will be completed.

Has there been an uptick in ridership since Mayor Parker's initiative to get workers back into the office?

CEO Hanson

- We are still just over the 50% mark on average.
- Hoping to see an uptick when all the businesses get their workers back into the office.

GM Rink

- Last week was the Flower show, we did see some increased ridership from that.
- On the two Sundays we added about 2,200 and 2,500 riders on each of the Sundays. Saturdays weren't as good because of the rainy weather. On the 9th (Saturday) we had about 500 more riders. On the 8th (Friday) we had about 2,000 more riders than we normally do. Each weekday there were about 1,000 additional riders per day for the Flower Show. On the 10th (Sunday) we had a higher number due to the St. Patrick's Day Parade in the City.

J. Kessler: Were you running a 20-minute schedule instead of a 30 Sunday?

GM Rink

- Yes, on both Sundays we ran 20-minute headways to increase the headway and it showed.

CEO Hanson

- Pre-Pandemic weekend ridership has far out-performed weekday ridership.

Upcoming Advance Notice on Public Events

CEO Hanson

- We have no public events planned at this time.

Update on the PATCO study out to Glassboro

CEO Hanson

- Getting ready to go meet with the high-level employees of the towns we will be going through.
- Working on the Conrail contract. The negotiations on that are progressing slowly but steadily.
- Still have some issues to resolve between SJTA & NJ Transit.



Will PATCO consider screening to check packages like the MTA will be starting?

CEO Hanson

- There are no plans to setup checkpoints to screen people or packages at this time.

Has the increased violence on SEPTA had an impact on PATCO ridership?

CEO Hanson

- Ridership has not changed very much in a long time on PATCO. It stays pretty close to 50%, except for when we have special events.
- I regularly read activity reports and speak with Chief Cobbs and CSS Finnegan. Based on those conversations and the data received, our riders are safe while on the PATCO line and within our jurisdiction.

Larry Davis: As a follow up, I have a couple questions that came in from social. Do they have any initiatives to improve safety and rider experience; trains have never been dirtier and cops have been called more often to address rider issues. I know it's not as bad as SEPTA, but I'm less comfortable on PATCO than I was pre pandemic.

CEO Hanson

- We just received comments from a Philadelphia Inquirer reporter that was tweeting about the high level of cleanliness in our stations. I suspect at times and based on the times that people enter the trains and they are dirty.
- PATCO just hired four new custodians which brings us to be fully staffed. Even with that there may be times that something happens and our custodians are somewhere else.

GM Rink

- We have employees stationed at Lindenwold platform in the morning when the trains come in who remove the trash and clean the trains.
- Trains are cleaned every night, however during the course of the run someone could enter the train and leave their trash behind upon exiting.
- Would have to disagree with the comment that trains are completely filthy.
- If a train has trash on it, we clean it right away or we B zone it and deal with it.

Larry Davis: Are they working with SEPTA and Philly OTIS to restore the direct connection with the Broad Street Line, if not what are the obstacles and can they be overcome?

CEO Hanson

- We did not shut that connection, that was part of the City of Philadelphia's plan under the Kenny Administration to deal with the homeless and unsheltered population.
- It has not solved the problem, but instead has moved the problem around in the concourses.
- Have not heard anything from SEPTA that they are reconsidering at this time, but SEPTA and the City would have to both open their gates for that connection to be made.



Ben Saracco: One issue that has not been much better is smoking on the concourses and not just tobacco, but a lot of times marijuana, crack, frankly I've seen crack pipes out. A lot of times I am there with my toddler, frequently it is the City Hall stop on weekends where there is just not a lot of people around and I would love to challenge DRPA to think of some creative solutions to stop it. Even if it's just announcements that go off every 10 minutes or having some signs maybe a smoke detector, I don't know, but it makes it really unpleasant to use especially if you have young kids with you.

CEO Hanson

- Instructed CSS Finnegan to get with Chief Cobbs and look further into this at City Hall.
- We don't have this in our concourses, we rarely have it and I don't want it.

Judy Boldurian: Getting back to the homeless population, I ride over at 5:55 and about a week ago I was on the train, there is a lot of construction guys and every other seat had someone sleeping in it. Police Officers did meet the train at Broadway, but they didn't take anybody off the train. Here all these people had tickets so the Police Officer told one of the construction guys that if they have a ticket we can't make them get off. So, if they have a ticket they just ride back and forth? It has actually been really bad, we got off a car one day b/c it smelled so bad and waited for the next train.

CEO Hanson

- You are not supposed to be able to ride back and forth, the ticket is valid between certain stops. If they look at the ticket and they are outside those stops they can be taken off the train.
- The actions we take must be taken respectfully and appropriately, but they should not be riding for hours on one ticket.
- Requested CSS Finnegan to get with the Chief and try to work on getting a detail together to help solve this problem.

GM Rink

- It's their first amendment right, if they buy a ticket, they paid for the service. The officers keep track of them because some of them will try to ride multiple times, but the officers will remove them after they've used their ticket.

CSS Finnegan

- People give them money and they purchase a ticket to ride the train b/c they know they can't loiter in the station. Our officers address it the best they can, but we only have so many officers.

Jeff Kessler: The past three times I have been on PATCO I have experienced smoking on the platforms as well as onboard the trains. I did send it in on the look up, speak up app and very pleased that they called it in to the train operator. They played the no smoking on the train message about four or five times in a row. After that there was no police presence on the train or to escort anyone off. As we were pulling into 8th & Market I saw someone on the platform smoking there and sent that in as well, but got no response.



Update on Rail and Franklin Square project/other station project updates.

GM Rink

- Major project that is starting is the Woodcrest Platforms. One platform at a time will be closed and we will use the center track.

What's the long-term strategy with GTFS? Is the DRPA changing vendors to partner with Remix/Via?

GM Rink

- Mr. Williams & myself had a meeting with another company equans, but that kind of program is not something we are looking at now.
- Appears that remix might be the preferred solution for us. We need to meet with our people to make sure that the program will work for us and then we will present it to John.

What is the status of getting the GTFS corrected in the interim?

GM Rink

- Mike has not heard anything about getting the GTFS corrected.

Jeff Kessler: Has there been any look into using any of the tools as an interim measure just to get it updated as a stop gap?

GM Rink

- He did and there were cyber security issues with getting the program.
- Appears Remix will be the solution on our end with creating our schedules.

Has the issues with motors on PATCO been resolved?

GM Rink

- The supply chain issues we faced a year and a half ago have been solved.
- We did a lot of in-house program and preventive maintenance to reduce the amount of motor failures that we had occurring in the past.
- The performance of the motors has increased to the point that our on-time performance last month was 98.4%. So far this year we are over 98%.
- The things we have done in-house has reflected in our on time performance.

Update on increase of closed cars on PATCO.

GM Rink

- It was something our operators requested our dispatchers do, but now the dispatchers check with the operators and there have been a couple of weekends where we open the other cars and there were a couple where there was no need to do so.
- Dispatchers are monitoring the Saturday night last bar car (last train out of the city) and if we need to open the cars from 2-4AM we do.



Countdown clock was off by 7-8 minutes late February at 15th/16th Locust Street.

GM Rink

- I checked and there were no records or anything that employees found that day to show the clock was off.

Larry Davis: About a year ago we had talked about the call boxes at the stations and in the elevators and many of them were out of service at that time. It came up that they were being checked regularly and I want to know are there still call boxes out of service, are they still being checked on a regular basis on the platforms and the elevators? With Franklin Square opening I'm sure there will be a call box there, will that necessitate new call boxes at all the stations?

CSS Finnegan

- We have two that were just brought online this week that we are testing. If the testing phase works with both video and audio we will look into replacing the old call boxes with new ones.

Larry Davis: In all the stations and elevators?

CSS Finnegan

- Not the elevators, the stations and then the lots will be replaced after the stations.
- Zenitel is the manufacturer of the call boxes.

GM Rink

- The new call boxes have a new feature, besides having a camera inside the box, the ones located on the platforms will have a direct call to police dispatch. There is also an information button, so if a customer needs information it will direct the call to Center Tower. Mainly to keep people from going into the track area when they drop something.
- If there is an issue that is not police related they can use the information button.
- Homeland security does the call box tests and reports are sent to the group via email. If there is any found not to be working, they put a sticker on it that says it is out of service and it facilitates a repair.
- There are a few boxes in the Ashland parking lot that we are waiting to replace cable on.

Larry Davis: With Franklin Square re opening how much time will that add to the schedule for commuters?

GM Rink

- 30 seconds, so we will add one minute to our runtime when it's open.

Larry Davis: Increasing service on weekends?

GM Rink

- Right now with the way our ridership is we have been running 20/30 and it meets what we are seeing ridership wise.
- During the flower show we went from 20 to 30 to 20 on Sunday.
- We will adjust the headways as needed when we have an event that will attract more people.



Bob Melikian: Question about the solar power and the cost savings. Has enough time passed that you can tell whether or not the effort was worth having them installed?

CEO Hanson

- If you really want to try to calculate the costs and the savings it is phenomenally complicated and I am not sure where we are on it.
- Will have Mike Venuto come back next month and talk to us about it.

Members transitioning to Emeritus:

Benjamin Saracco – March 2024

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

Daniel McArdle has application to re-apply (Pennsylvania)

Grace’s application was sent to Dawn (NJ)

Voting for members:

Chair: Reggie Haynes

Vice Chair: Scott Cohen

Secretary: Pamela Mack-Brooks

OPEN Forum: Proposed Dates for 2025 CAC

January 8, 2025	6PM
February 12, 2025	6PM
March 12, 2025	6PM
April 9, 2025	6PM
May 14, 2025	6PM
June 11, 2025	6PM
July 9, 2025	Summer Break
August 13, 2025	6PM
September 10, 2025	6PM
October 8, 2025	6PM
November 12, 2025	6PM
December 10, 2025	Winter Break

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held April 10, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

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