



Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes

April 10, 2024

Location: via Zoom

Attendance:

New Jersey: Reggie Haynes, Alan Becker, Judy Boldurian, Straso Jovanovski, Grace Kimbaris

Pennsylvania: Robert Melikian, Scott Cohen, Tyrone Wesley

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

DRPA/PATCO: John Hanson, CEO; John Rink, GM; Michael Venuto, CE; Robert Finnegan, CSSO; Jerry Sahi, CFO; Cheryl Ansert, Administrative Coordinator

Public Member:

Call to Order

A motion was made to approve the March 13, 2024 minutes. The Minutes were approved.

Finance Update

CFO Sahi

- Year to date unaudited March traffic figures, YTD traffic is roughly around 11M, which is 1% less than last year and around 6.8% less than 2019. Truck revenue is close to 99% of 2019.
- Audited revenue figures for January was \$24M, which was 1% better than last year's budget and roughly around 4% less than last year's numbers and 5.5% less than 2019. The figures are less than last year probably due to the inclement weather, we had around 8 days of bad weather (snow/heavy rain) which drove the numbers down.
- The traffic for the month of January was 3.7M, which was 1.2% less than the budget, around 5% less than 2023 & 8% less than 2019. Truck traffic was much better than cars and that has helped revenue exceed the budget figures.

Earthquake Impact Update

GM Rink

- Procedure was crafted after the 2011 earthquake, when we know an earthquake has occurred, any train operating out on the main line stops, proceeds into the next station at restricted speed (>15MPH), trains are offloaded and passengers are asked to leave the system.
- Different levels of responses depending on the magnitude scale.
- This earthquake was a Level 1 response. Anything below a 4.999 gets a visual inspection of the system. Using a high rail vehicle our track department proceeds from Lindenwold to 15th Street to verify the track integrity. If there are no issues on the bridges or right of ways we re-instate service and the first train to operate across the track does so at restricted speed (>15MPH) in order to verify that the track integrity is fine.



Alan: When you do that first pass with the train you don't have passengers, do you?

GM Rink

- After the track has been inspected by our staff and track integrity has been deemed to be good, we allow people back into the system and back onto the train.
- During the time we closed the system we made a call to NJ Transit to have cross honoring for patrons to utilize their bus system which was granted.

Bob Melikian: PATCO is on overhead structures, was there concern for damages on the concrete super structure and the steel that holds the tracks?

GM Rink

- No, at that level of response it wasn't required, but we had our employees out at various stations looking at the structures.
- There are three response levels, level I is the mildest, level II is more severe and level III is the most severe.

Bob Melikian: Any concern about the underground tunnels and how long were you out of service?

GM Rink

- All that was inspected, we went from one end to the other.
- Earthquake occurred around 10:23AM, everything was stopped a couple of minutes after that and we were back to running trains around noon.
- No damage was found.

Bruce: Were you notified by the shaking or from an agency that reports earthquakes? Do you have any strain gauges on any DRPA/PATCO facilities?

GM Rink

- We do not have anything on PATCO.

CE Venuto

- We have different gauges up on different facilities at different times depending on what we are studying. We do not have anything specific to monitor full time for earthquakes. We do have something at Franklin Square b/c we are monitoring a certain condition there so we can check those gauges. We have some at other facilities, but nothing specifically for earthquakes.

Bruce: So you're relying on visual inspection if one of these incidents happens?

CE Venuto

- Depending on the magnitude. That particular day at the bridges we had our maintenance & engineering staff at each facility meet and immediately do visual inspections. Driving across the roadway surface and looking for things like joint buckling, tilting, cracking, rotation in the super structure and the sub structure. We look in the surrounding soil for settling.
- Biennial inspections of the bridges are done every 2 years and we also do interim inspections. We have an allowance in those consulting firms, after our inspections if anything was found and we need those firms they are on call to send staff out. We added drones to our inspection process the last 2 cycles. Providing us the ability to have a drone out there to inspect anything if needed.



What protection procedures/infrastructure does DRPA have in place to protect the bridges from large cargo ships hitting the structure?

CEO Hanson

- Adopted an all-threat approach to the threats that the authority faces. Had a threat assessment in 2003/2004 and undertook a number of projects to help protect us from the possible threat of terrorism.
- Assessments identified that we needed to better protect the CBB so we constructed large artificial stone islands around the piers which would cause ships to run aground before getting to the piers.
- The BRB has dolphins in place, they are larger than the dolphins that were at the Francis Scott Key bridge.
- The BFB and the WWB have structural steel towers that the suspension cables are attached to that hold the main span up. They are anchored to foundations that are in turn anchored to the riverbed. They are protected by Timber fender systems in shallow water which would make it very hard for a ship to come close to them.
- Believe we are very well prepared to prevent a direct hit or any hit at all.
- The modeling and studies we did during the assessment looked at ships larger than the one that hit the Francis Scott Key Bridge.
- Most of the ships in our channel and around our properties are escorted by tugboats.

CE Venuto

- Showed slideshow of DRPA Collision Protection Strategies. Advised we will look at the studies we had done in 2003/2005 to see if any improvements are needed based on shipping channel use.

Bob Melikian: The dolphins and other structures are not completely surrounding the pedestals. If something happened is there a means for a ship to communicate with DRPA?

CEO Hanson

- Ships come from the South, not the North. There are no ports north of the BRB, so there's no reason for a cargo ship to go under the BRB.
- Notification would come through law enforcement channels.

Bob Melikian: Why are the Tacony Palmyra and Burlington Bristol bridges opening?

CEO Hanson

- To allow for the big boats to pass, the bridges are small.
- Surrounding the structural towers and concrete piers with some sort of structure to protect them would prevent the possibility of a hit, but it would impede the shipping channel and no ship would be able to come down river.
- Placement of the dolphins and islands have been thoroughly examined and it's believed there's an excellent chance they will prevent the bridge from being struck. They would be extremely protective in preventing a direct hit.

Alan: On the Capital Project, is it within the five years we're going to upgrade that?

CEO Hanson

- The inner bridges upgrading the timber system is underway now.



- We had planned a review of the protections at the outer bridges and we will now expedite that review.

Is there adequate insurance to repair/replace, remove/salvage, and claims from others for loss of business, etc?

CEO Hanson

- In terms of insurance, we estimate that the most expensive bridge to replace would be the BFB and the cost would be nearly \$1.1Billion and we have \$950M of insurance. So, we would be \$50M shy of \$1B in terms of our insurance, which puts us \$100M short. We imagine the federal government would step in if there were a catastrophic event like this.

New Toll technology presentation to DRPA CAC & update on the DRPA website.

CEO Hanson

- Toll Technology is now on the website
- Will schedule Robert Hicks to attend meeting and give a presentation. (June Meeting)

Fare Evasion-Have there been an uptick in fare evasions, if so, what remediation steps are being taken?

CSSO Finnegan

- Over the last 15 months we averaged about 20 calls for service for fare evasions/month. The numbers fluctuate from the low to mid 30s on a high month to single digits on a low month.
- No specific pattern over the three year period that was looked at.
- Averages are very similar over a year period.
- No uptick, pretty consistent over the 3 year period looked at.
- Response to toll or fare evasions are similar. They are reported to police dispatch, a call for service goes out to the officers and they respond, unless an officer observes it before a call goes out.

Why do police only clear the cars sporadically?

CSSO Finnegan

- They clear the cars a few times throughout the day depending on when we have officers available to rotate and walk through cars.
- September 2023 we had 706 removals, October we had 676, November we had 1,310, December we had 1,417, January we had 1,621, February we had 1,522, March we had 1,772, and so far this month to date we had 625.
- It's a repetitive issue that we are dealing with and we do our best not to violate anyone's rights while policing our stations and trains as best as we can.
- We've had anywhere from 68 to 155 arrests of those during the removal times.

Reggie: Rob, the numbers you provided, do they have time frames around them? Is it during the peak of rush hour or non-rush hour?

CSSO Finnegan

- It presents a commuter issue if they get involved in too many removals during load line because then you have train delays.
- We do larger numbers between 3:30 and 5:15.
- We started to run some details during the morning rush time to have officers physically on trains.
- Reggie requested a detailed plan and status on what is initiated and what the result has been for next month's meeting

CEO Hanson

- We will provide some details, we never disclose the specifics of any enforcement plan.
- We have limited ability to deter or remediate this issue. As long as the problem is not being solved the unsheltered are going to go somewhere.
- This is a problem that originates outside of our system and the solution to the problem really exists outside of our solution. I'm not so sure that we can affect lasting change.

Alan Becker: NJ Riverline, you buy a ticket and it puts a time limit on it. Have you ever considered doing that with PATCO?

CEO Hanson

- Our tickets do expire.
- The officers get to know the frequent riders and develop rapport with them. They are in our system so much and it's more effective to deal with them that way.
- There is a time limit on the tickets and we know how long it takes to ride from station to station. The officers should be looking and at the tickets for the expiration and remove individuals.
- Time and time again they take them off the trains only to have them show up in the space of two to three hours.

Why are the parking lot lights out at Collingswood Station?

GM Rink

- Unaware of parking lot lights being out at Collingswood Station.
- Advised he will look into.

CEO Hanson

- Requested it be checked and fixed.

GTFS Update

GM Rink

- We fixed the issue that was brought up last month the current schedule is on GTFS.
- Haven't gone any further with the trackwork part of the GTFS.
- Let Jeff know we had that fixed and advised the current schedule is in the system.

Jeff Kessler: Any interest in moving to a different vendor or you still with Ad Transit?

GM Rink

- They are still doing it and we are pursuing that change.



Ridership Update-Have the ridership been steadily increasing?

GM Rink

- Not a steady increase. Looking at the averages so far this year we noticed March's weekday average numbers are higher than February, which was higher than January.
- Did have extra service when Wrestle mania was there.
- Saw a small uptick in ridership for those events and we try to plan for those events.
- Yesterday's ridership was the highest Tuesday since November.
- Still at a steady 50%.
- Little improvement here and there.

Are there any scheduled upcoming site tours?

CEO Hanson

- No scheduled tours, if interested in touring Franklin Square Station before it opens, (midsummer or late fall) we can arrange that.
- Spoke with bridge director at BFB and we have not removed our protection from the bike path along the road over the winter. Will do our best to keep that in place depending upon what we see with winter weather in the future.

Bob Melikian: Anything we can do as the CAC to help you with this issue of the homeless on the trains?

CEO Hanson

- Camden County just came out with a new shelter that will be opening, but that's not where most of the origin comes from. Most of it comes from the concourse in the City of Philadelphia.
- Our new chairman and vice chairman have been in contact with the Mayor and they are talking about plans to clean this up. It's probably going to happen in steps. If they are moving them out of other places it might cause a migration into the subway system. I favor trying to come up with some sort of housing that they will voluntarily go to. We will do everything that we can with the resources that we have available to continue to keep people off the trains and out of the platforms that do not belong there.
- We will continue to do our best to keep them off the trains, to keep them off the platforms.

Members transitioning to Emeritus:

Benjamin Saracco - Emeritus

Active members (8) New Jersey (5) and Pennsylvania (3)

Daniel McArdle and Grace have applications and are going through process

Vote for members: **Approved**

Chair: **Reggie Haynes**

Vice Chair: **Scott Cohen**

Secretary: **Pamela Mack-Brooks**

OPEN Forum

Next CAC Meeting: Will be held May 8, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Next DRPA Meeting: DRPA Board Meeting on April 17, 2024 @ 9:00 a.m.