



MINUTES
VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS
OPERATIONS BOARD MEETING
May 17, 2019

14700 Potomac Mills Road, Woodbridge, VA 22192

Members Present

*Preston Banks (PRTC)
*Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (NVTC)
*Sharon Bulova
*Maureen Caddigan (PRTC) **
*John Cook (NVTC)
*Katie Cristol (NVTC)
*Mark Dudenhefer (PRTC)
*Matt Kelly (PRTC)
*Jeanine Lawson (PRTC)
*Wendy Maurer (PRTC)
*Martin Nohe (PRTC)
*Pamela Sebesky (PRTC)

Members Absent

Jennifer Mitchell (DRPT)
Gary Skinner (PRTC)

Alternates Present

*Michael McLaughlin (DRPT)
*Paul Trampe (PRTC)

Alternates Absent

Ruth Anderson (PRTC)
Pete Candland (PRTC)
Jack Cavalier (PRTC)
Hector Cendejas (PRTC)
Libby Garvey (NVTC)
Jason Graham (PRTC)
Todd Horsley (DRPT)
Tim Lovain (NVTC)
Jeff McKay (NVTC)
Cindy Shelton (PRTC)
Paul Trampe (PRTC)
Mark Wolfe (PRTC)

Jurisdiction

City of Manassas Park
City of Alexandria
Fairfax County
Prince William County
Fairfax County
Arlington County
Stafford County
City of Fredericksburg
Prince William County
Stafford County
Prince William County
City of Manassas

Commonwealth of Virginia
Spotsylvania County

Commonwealth of Virginia
Spotsylvania County

Prince William County
Prince William County
Stafford County
City of Manassas Park
Arlington County
City of Fredericksburg
Commonwealth of Virginia
City of Alexandria
Fairfax County
Stafford County
Spotsylvania County
City of Manassas

*Voting Member

**Delineates arrival/departure following the commencement of the Operations Board Meeting. Notation of exact arrival/departure time is included in the body of the minutes.

Staff and General Public

Khadra Abdulle – VRE
Doug Allen – VRE
Monica Backmon – NVTA
Paolo Belito – Prince William County
Alexander Buchanan - VRE
Matt Cheng – NVTC
Karen Finucan-Clarkson - VRE
Greg Deibler - VRE
Rich Dalton – VRE
Xavier Harmony - DRPT
Chris Henry – VRE
Christine Hoeffner – VRE
Robert Hostetka - VRE
Todd Johnson – First Transit
John Kerins – Keolis
Cindy King - VRE

Mike Lake – Fairfax County
Lezlie Lamb – VRE
Bob Leibbrandt – Prince William County
Steve MacIsaac – VRE Legal Counsel
Betsy Massie – PRTC
Kate Mattice - NVTC
Becky Merriner – PRTC
Charlotte Nourse - VRE
Kristin Nutter – VRE
Dr. Bob Schneider – PRTC
Mark Schofield – VRE
Steve Sindiong – City of Alexandria
Alex Sugatan - VRE
Joe Swartz – VRE
Detrius Williams - VRE

Chair Cristol called the meeting to order at 9:06 A. M. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Roll Call followed.

Approval of the Agenda – 3

Mr. Kelly moved, with a second by Ms. Bulova, to approve the agenda as presented. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Approval of the Minutes of the April 12, 2019 VRE Operations Board Meeting – 4

Maurer moved, with a second by Mr. Kelly, to approve the minutes from April 12, 2019. The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Kelly, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky, and Skinner. Ms. Bulova abstained.

Chair's Comments – 5

- Chair Cristol reported she had represented VRE at the NoVa Spring Transportation Meeting, which is a joint CTB, NVTA, NVTC, and VRE public meeting on projects proposed for Planning District 8. Public comment about the VDOT and DRPT Draft FY20-25 Six-Year Improvement Plan was heard. Many comments addressed latest SmartScale recommendations.
- VRE has been recommended for FY20 funding for track access fees and debt service for railcars, as well as for operating assistance. Chair Cristol thanked DRPT for their continued support of VRE.
- VRE applied for but were not recommended for Rail Enhancement Funds (REF) to begin construction improvements to the Crystal City Station. DPRT has prioritized REF funding for the Long Bridge project.
- Staff is looking for alternative funding for Crystal City, including upcoming NVTA call for projects.
- Chair Cristol attended the annual Meet the Management event at Crystal City station on Wednesday.
- Chair Cristol stated she wants VRE to initiate an online public comments option.

- Chair Cristol offered the following reminders:
 - The Finance Committee will meet after the Operations Board meeting. The Agenda includes discussions about fuel hedging, C-ROC funding, among other issues.
 - The Audit Committee will meet at 8:45 am on June 21st, just before the June Operations Board meeting.
 - The CEO Evaluation Committee will also meet on June 21st, just after the Operation Board meeting.

Chief Executive Officer's Report – 6

Mr. Allen briefed the Operations Board on the following items of interest:

- Safety and Security activities for April included the following:
 - Staff met with MARC counterparts for the first of regular meetings to share best practices and lessons-learned.
 - Staff attended the SecureRail conference and gave a presentation on the advanced security camera and access control program deployment currently underway.
 - FRA leaders have re-chartered the Rail Safety Advisory Committee to allow industry and labor leaders to discuss proposed regulations with FRA in a public forum. VRE attended and committed to support APTA in the RSAC's Passengers Rail Safety Working Group.
- Customer Service Survey
 - The annual Survey will be conducted on all morning trains on Wednesday, May 22nd.
- Meet the Management
 - The annual events began at Union Station on May 1st
 - Will hold the event at Alexandria on May 29th and at Franconia-Springfield on June 5th
- Performance for April
 - Average Daily Ridership was just below 19,000
 - On-Time Performance was only 57% overall
 - 76% for the Fredericksburg Line
 - 39% for the Manassas Line
- Metro Shutdown plans
- Rich Dalton reported on the issues impacting service reliability.
 - Positive Train Control (PTC) Implementation:
 - Manassas Line trains were experiencing delays transitioning from Norfolk Southern to CSX tracks. VRE worked with both railroads to identify a way to enhance that transition.
 - Train turnarounds are unique to the Manassas Line and presented another challenge VRE and NS had to work through.
 - Train Congestion along with Signal issues has also impacted on-time performance.
 - Some delays were caused by air-brake issues and VRE got the manufacturer involved to address that issue.
 - Weekend track maintenance work on Norfolk Southern tracks had encountered some weather-related delays and impacted the speeds trains could operate.
 - Board Members' Questions:
 - Q: Mr. Banks asked if there are lingering problems and when will they be fixed?

- A: The PTC implementation issues encountered thus far have been addressed and resolved. There may be sporadic minor communications issues going forward; but the operational issues have been resolved. The mechanical issues have also been addressed and the manufacturer has assisted addressing the air brake issues.
- Q: Ms. Sebesky asked if PTC operations could have been suspended in order to mitigate the delays to passengers?
- A: The specific issues had to do with operating conditions within the full-service schedule. As each issue presented, it provided data to the railroads that was essential to developing solutions.
- Q: Ms. Lawson referenced a 70-minute delay she'd heard about from constituents, and asked if it was an outlier or if it was typical of the delays encountered?
- A: Mr. Dalton indicated he would get information on specific delays and provide details for the Members.
- Q: Ms. Bennett-Parker asked if PTC and track maintenance issues might impact VRE service during the upcoming Metro Shutdown.
- A: Mr. Dalton explained the NS track work was major work that is now done. It is always possible maintenance can occur if routine track inspections identify an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Q: Mr. Kelly stated that PTC seems to be magnifying routine issues and asked if that was a fair analysis.
- A: Railroad capacity issues and train congestion make recovery from any issue more challenging. PTC implementation and familiarization just an added to those challenges.
 - Mr. McLaughlin discussed railroad capacity projects such as Long Bridge and 4th Track.
 - Mr. Dalton also discussed the larger view of scheduling coordination with CSX and Amtrak, to mitigate railroad congestion.
- Q: Mr. Cook asked about potential dwell time delays that may be anticipated with increased passenger loads during the upcoming Metro Shutdown
- A: The congestion issues are already making our schedules very tight; however, we don't know what the impact is going to be. It is unknown how many Metro riders will be absorbed by VRE or whether platform crowding will impact dwell times. VRE plans on having staff at stations to help unfamiliar new riders.
- Q: Mr. Cook asked about heat restrictions and when that is going to start impacting service.
- A: Mr. Dalton said heat restrictions could begin right away and that's going to add a new element.
- Q: Ms. Cristol asked about how VRE communicates with passengers about delays.
- A: Mr. Henry described how the VRE communications room operates. When a "Train-Talk" message is sent, it automatically posts to Facebook and Twitter. The timing of the messages is biggest challenge. Often a delay can be made up over the course of the trip; so, a delay at one point doesn't necessarily mean an

actual delay impacting riders at another point. That fluidity is factored into when and how messages are composed and sent.

- Ms. Bulova states that the discussion illustrates how complicated each situation can be. She suggested VRE make a concerted effort to educate the public on the complexity and help them to understand.
- Ms. Cristol proposed VRE Staff develop a communications plan and bring it to the Board for feedback.

Public Comment Time – 7

Chair Cristol opened the floor for public comment time. There were no speakers. There was one comment submitted via email from Andrew Whitesell (Attached.)

Approval of the Consent Agenda – 8

Mr. Kelly moved, with a second by Ms. Bulova, to approve the Consent Agenda. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Kelly, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Sebesky, and Trampe. Mr. Nohe abstained.

- Authorization to Issue an Invitation for Bids for Forklift Trucks – 8A
- Authorization to Issue a Request for Proposals for Website Management Services – 8B
- Authorization to Execute a Standard Project Agreement with the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority for Crystal City Station Improvements – 8C

Action Items – 9

Authorization to Execute Contracts for the Delivery of Diesel Fuel for VRE Locomotives– 9A

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Ms. Maurer, to authorize the CEO to execute a contract for the delivery of diesel fuel to the Crossroads Yard with James River Solutions and a contract for the delivery of diesel fuel to the Broad Run Yard with Griffith Energy Services.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe

Authorization to Execute a Sole Source Contract for Maintenance, Software, and Hosting Services for the Automated Fare Collections System – 9B

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Nohe, to authorize the CEO to execute a sole source contract with Scheidt and Bachmann, Inc. for maintenance, software, and hosting services for the automated fare collections systems.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Authorization to Amend the Contract for Engineering, Environmental and Construction Services for the Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade Facility– 9C

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Ms. Maurer, to authorize the CEO to amend the contract with STV, Inc. to complete design services for the Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade facility.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Authorization to Amend VRE's Passenger Tariff – 9D

Mr. Nohe moved, with a second by Mr. Kelly, to authorize the CEO to retroactively amend the Passenger Tariff to reduce the cost of the Amtrak Step-Up ticket from \$8 to \$4 effective May 1, 2019; and to authorize the CEO to amend the Passenger Tariff to restore the passenger cost for the Amtrak Step-Up tickets to \$8 when the Metrorail work is completed.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Recommend Authorization to Amend the Amtrak Access and Storage Agreement to Reduce the Cost of the Amtrak Step-Up Ticket – 9E

Mr. Nohe moved, with a second by Mr. Kelly, to recommend the Commissions retroactively authorize the CEO to amend the Amtrak Access and Storage Agreement to reflect an agreed upon change to the cost of the Amtrak Step-Up ticket from \$13 to \$4 effective May 1, 2019 until Metrorail's platform improvement work is complete.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Recommend Authorization to Execute an Amendment for the Fifth Year of the First Option Period of the Contract for Operating Services for Commuter Rail – 9F

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Ms. Maurer, to recommend the Commissions authorize the CEO to amend the contract for operating services for commuter rail with Keolis Rail Services Virginia, LLC for the fifth year of the first option period.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Recommend Authorization to Execute an Amendment for the Fourth Year of the Contract for Maintenance Services for Commuter Rail – 9G

Mr. Kelly moved, with a second by Ms. Maurer, to recommend the Commissions authorize the CEO to amend the contract for maintenance services for commuter rail with Keolis Rail Services Virginia, LLC.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Resolution of Support for Prince William County's FY 2020 I-395/95 Commuter Choice Program Application for the I-395/95 Mobility Education Campaign and Transportation Demand Management Project – 9H

Mr. Nohe moved, with a second by Mr. Kelly, to support and endorse the application by Prince William County to the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission FY 2020 I-395-95 Commuter Choice Program for the I-395/95 Mobility Education Campaign and Transportation Demand Management Project.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Recommend Authorization to Extend the Amended and Restated Operating/Access Agreement with CSX Transportation – 9I

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Nohe, to recommend the Commissions authorize the CEO to execute a one-year extension of the existing Amended and Restated Operating/Access Agreement with CSX Transportation.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Banks, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Caddigan, Cook, Cristol, Lawson, Maurer, McLaughlin, Nohe, Sebesky and Trampe.

Information Items – 10

Spending Authority Report – 10A

In, the following purchases greater than \$50,000 but less than \$100,000 were made:

- A Purchase Order in the amount of \$86,350 to Powersolv, Inc. to provide support services for VRE's project controls system, e-builder.

Closed Session – 11

There was no Closed Session

Chair Cristol asked if there was any other business. There was none.

Chair Cristol adjourned the meeting, without objection, at 10:44 A.M.

Approved this 21st day of June 2019

<Signature on File>

Katie Cristol
Chair

<Signature on File>

John Cook
Secretary

CERTIFICATION

This certification hereby acknowledges the minutes for the May 17, 2019 Virginia Railway Express Operations Board Meeting have been recorded to the best of my ability.



Lezlie M. Lamb

From: Andrew Whitesell [REDACTED]
Date: May 16, 2019 at 12:15:28 PM EDT
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Public Comment for VRE Board of Operations

Good afternoon Ms Cristol,
I recently saw a comment on Twitter that you were willing to bring public comments to the upcoming VRE Board meeting for those unable to attend. I would like to submit such a comment.

It is no secret that since mid-march the VRE's On Time Performance has been well below standards. I do not fault them for having to implement PTC (it was, after all, a federal mandate). Any complex system is going to have bugs, and simulations and testing on off hours will only go so far in terms of catching those bugs.

However, while I don't fully blame the VRE for facing issues with the PTC, I do fully blame them for the way they have handled the roll out of the system. It only takes a few moments worth of scrolling through comments on Facebook or Twitter to see how negatively affected VRE riders have become in the past few months.

Doctors appointments have been missed, child care pick up times have been missed, meetings have been missed. People are losing money and losing reputation at work because of the way the VRE has handled things.

Yes, not all delays are the VRE's fault. One could hardly blame them for Norfolk Souther or CSX speed restrictions, however, warnings and notices often go late, if not at all.

For example, on May 4th, the VRE issued an update on the PTC issues. In this update, they also indicated there was planned track work on the Manassas Line which was scheduled to be completed that weekend, saying "The track maintenance work on the Manassas line should be completed before the start of Monday's service. We thank our host railroad, Norfolk Southern, for performing this important work safely and expeditiously."

Track work had not been completed that weekend, and the first notice of that went out at 6:22 when Manassas 322 was already running 15 minutes late. Again, it wasn't like the VRE didn't know that there was scheduled track work. It seems as though it should have been easy enough to see if the speed restrictions remained in place and sent out a notice that the work hadn't finished and it would be likely all trains from Manassas would be delayed.

This is not an isolated incident. From my personal experience, I

recently talked with the VRE management at one of their meet the management receptions that was at L'Enfante station. I spoke with the communications administrator about a recent delayed train that I had in which no "Train Talk" notices had gone out, only the GPS "train status" page showed us as being delayed. He confirmed that had happened, that because the train was north of Alexandria, no notice had gone out, as the train was likely done picking up passengers. He did say he would pass along my comments about the need for better communication.

The next Monday, I arrived at my train station about a minute too late to catch the "early for me" train from Leeland (Train 306). Having gotten there slightly late, and seeing a train pulling into the station, I figured I had just missed it as I had received no notices that the train was late. In actuality, the train that was arriving was actually train 304. I sat in my car waiting for what I thought was 308 when the real 306 came into the station. I attempted to make a run for that train, but ended up missing that one as well. Once I had made it to the platform, I saw the board was showing 302, 304, and 306 as being delayed. So the VRE already knew, or should have known, those trains would be delayed.

Instead of getting a notice promptly when the train was delayed (again, the delayed 304 pulled out of Leeland around 5:51-5:53am, around 15 minutes behind), I got the first notice that those trains were behind at 6:15am. Which would mean that notice went out no less than 20 minutes after the delay. That is an unacceptable delay in communication from the VRE. Furthermore, the notice that did go out indicated that 302 was delayed due to "following a freight train." On the monthly on time performance page, 302 is indicated as being late because "due to PNA passengers." The fact that these two reasons do not match makes it hard to trust the information that the VRE does put out.

Finally, I would like to end on the issue of Free Ride Certificates. Generally, it has been the policy of the VRE to hand out FRCs to riders when the train is delayed 30 minutes or more (it used to be 20 minutes). I know it has been brought up multiple times on the online question and answer forums that the majority of VRE riders are monthly ticket holders. For those of us who do purchase monthlies, FRCs are worse than useless. And to be honest, when dealing with the constant delays only made worse from the VRE's lack of communication, they are equivalent to a slap in the face.

Again, this has been brought up multiple times in the VRE's online forums. Normally the VRE's answer is to save them up. If that is the only option, I would suggest the VRE move immediately to implement a policy that FRCs will never expire. Barring that, there should be some

way for riders to trade in their FRCs for a cash value. Otherwise, they are not worth much of anything to your most steady ridership.

Again, I would like to reinforce that at no point during these past few months of delays has the VRE's communication resembled anything close to adequate. With fare prices set to rise, the least they could do would be to issue timely, and accurate information to it's riders.

Finally, Ms Cristol, I would like to thank you for bringing this issues, and any other of my fellow rider's issues, to the board meeting for us.

-Andrew