



# MINUTES

## VRE OPERATIONS BOARD MEETING PRTC HEADQUARTERS – PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA SEPTEMBER 19, 2008

**VIRGINIA RAILWAY  
EXPRESS**

BOARD MEMBERS

**JOHN JENKINS**  
CHAIRMAN

**SHARON BULOVA**  
VICE-CHAIRMAN

**CHRIS ZIMMERMAN**  
TREASURER

**PAUL MILDE**  
SECRETARY

**MAUREEN CADDIGAN**  
**WALLY COVINGTON**  
**PATRICK HERRITY**  
**FRANK JONES**  
**MATT KELLY**  
**KEVIN PAGE**  
**GEORGE SCHWARTZ**  
**PAUL SMEDBERG**  
**JONATHAN WAY**

ALTERNATES

**MARC AVENI**  
**JAY FISETTE**  
**TIMOTHY LOVAIN**  
**MICHAEL MAY**  
**JEFF McKAY**  
**MARTIN NOHE**  
**BRYAN POLK**  
**JOHN STIRRUP**  
**MATT TUCKER**

**DALE ZEHNER**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER

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MEMBERS PRESENT	JURISDICTION
Sharon Bulova (NVTC)	Fairfax County
Maureen Caddigan (PRTC)	Prince William County
Wally Covington (PRTC)	Prince William County
Patrick Herrity (NVTC)*	Fairfax County
John D. Jenkins (PRTC)	Prince William County
Matthew Kelly (PRTC)	City of Fredericksburg
Paul Milde (PRTC)	Stafford County
Kevin Page	DRPT
George H. Schwartz (PRTC)	Stafford County
Paul Smedberg (NVTC)	City of Alexandria
Jonathan Way (PRTC)	City of Manassas
Christopher Zimmerman (NVTC)*	Arlington County

MEMBERS ABSENT	JURISDICTION
Frank C. Jones (PRTC)	City of Manassas Park

ALTERNATES PRESENT	JURISDICTION

ALTERNATES ABSENT	JURISDICTION
Marc Aveni (PRTC)	City of Manassas
Jay Fisetite (NVTC)	Arlington County
Timothy Lovain (NVTC)	City of Alexandria
Michael C. May (PRTC)	Prince William County
Jeff McKay (NVTC)	Fairfax County
Martin E. Nohe (PRTC)	Prince William County
Bryan Polk (PRTC)	City of Manassas Park
John Stirrup (PRTC)	Prince William County
Matthew Tucker	DRPT

STAFF AND GENERAL PUBLIC	
George Billmyer – citizen	April Maguigad – VRE
John Duque – VRE	Peyton Onks – Sup. Herrity's office
Anna Gotthardt – VRE	Dick Peacock – citizen
Kelly Hannon – Free Lance-Star	Mark Roeber – VRE
Al Harf – PRTC staff	Mike Schaller – citizen
Christine Hoeffner – VRE	Jennifer Straub – VRE
Ann King – VRE	Rick Taube – NVTC staff
Mike Lake – Fairfax County	Dale Zehner – VRE
Steve MacIsaac – VRE counsel	

\*\* Delineates arrival following the commencement of the Board meeting. Notation of exact arrival time is included in the body of the minutes.

Chairman Jenkins called the meeting to order at 9:35 A.M. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, roll call was taken.

### Approval of the Agenda – 3

Chairman Jenkins stated that since some Board Members have other obligations and have to leave early, he asked that the agenda be changed to discuss action items first. There were no objections.

Mr. Milde moved, with a second by Mr. Kelly, to approve the amended agenda. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Smedberg and Way.

### Minutes of the August 15, 2008, VRE Operations Board Meeting – 4

Mr. Kelly moved, with a second by Mr. Milde, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Schwartz and Way. Board Members Caddigan, Page and Smedberg abstained.

[Mr. Zimmerman arrived at 9:40 A.M.]

### Authorization to Issue a Request for Proposals for Operations and Services Contract – 8A

Chairman Jenkins stated that Resolution #8A-09-2008 would authorize the Chief Executive Officer to issue a RFP for VRE's Operating and Services Contract. VRE's current contract with Amtrak will expire on June 30, 2010. The RFP will solicit proposals from a single third party to assume full responsibility for VRE's train operations, locomotives and railcar equipment maintenance/repair, yard operations, and warehouse management. The RFP is planned to be published by March 2009, with proposals due in October 2009. The contract is expected to be awarded by January 2010, allowing for a six month transition period if necessary, if the contract is awarded to a proposer other than Amtrak. Board Members had no questions.

Mr. Kelly moved, with a second by Ms. Bulova, to approve Resolution #8A-09-2008. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Smedberg, Way and Zimmerman.

### Authorization to Approve a Task Order for the Installation of Locomotive Maintenance Equipment at the Crossroads Yard – 8B

Chairman Jenkins reported that the Operations Board is being asked to authorize VRE's CEO to execute a task order with STV, Inc. for the installation of locomotive maintenance equipment in the new engine house at the VRE Crossroads Yard in an

amount not to exceed \$86,000. Resolution #8B-09-2008 would accomplish this. There was no discussion.

Mr. Covington moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve the resolution. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Smedberg, Way and Zimmerman.

#### Authorization to Amend a Task Order for Railcar Camera Modifications – 8C

Mr. Zehner stated that Resolution #8C-09-2008 would authorize him to amend a task order with STV, Inc. for the installation of cameras on the 11 base order Gallery cars purchased from Sumitomo Corporation of America by \$45,595, for a total amount not to exceed \$83,728. He explained that following the production of the 11 base railcar order, but prior to the production of the 50 option order, VRE determined that adding front-viewing cameras and engineer monitors to all cab cars would enhance passenger safety. These cameras will provide the locomotive engineers with forward views of a blind spot immediately in front of the cab cars. This is especially critical in Manassas and Quantico where VRE stops at stations with grade crossings where passengers cross the tracks. There were no questions from Board Members.

Mr. Milde moved, with a second by Ms. Caddigan, to approve the resolution. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Smedberg, Way and Zimmerman.

#### Authorization to Exercise the First Option Year of the Locomotive Lube Oil Contract – 8D

Mr. Zehner reported that the VRE Operations Board is being asked to authorize him to execute the first option year of a contract with Quarles Petroleum for the provision on lube oil delivery services at both VRE yards in an amount not to exceed \$400,000. Resolution #8D-09-2008 would accomplish this. There were no questions from Board Members.

Mr. Kelly moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve the resolution. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Smedberg, Way and Zimmerman.

#### Chairman's Comments – 5

Chairman Jenkins announced that September has been a record breaking month for VRE ridership. On September 9<sup>th</sup> VRE carried 16,933 passenger trips and on September 11<sup>th</sup> had 17,612 passenger trips. The September 11<sup>th</sup> dedication of the Pentagon Memorial contributed to this day's increase, but overall highway conditions are worsening and VRE is seeing continual ridership growth. Improved on-time

performance is also a factor. VRE achieved over 90 percent on-time performance in August on both rail lines.

[Mr. Herrity joined the discussion at 9:42 A.M.]

Chairman Jenkins stated that the 10<sup>th</sup> and final set of new railcars arrived on September 18<sup>th</sup> and will be placed into service next week. Once in service, each line will have only one train consist of old railcars, which will be replaced with new equipment within 18 months. The option for the 50 railcars was completed on-time and on-budget. He extended the Board's appreciation to staff for their hard work on this procurement.

Chairman Jenkins also announced that the annual Master Agreement Survey is scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup>. The results of the survey are used to determine the jurisdictional subsidy allocation.

#### Chief Executive Officer's Report – 6

Mr. Zehner reported that ridership is tracking 10 percent higher compared to the same time last year during the months of July and August. He also stated that VRE has held three public hearings on the proposed fare increase. There has been fairly low attendance (Stafford-one person, Crystal City – no one, and Fredericksburg – 12-14 people). At the Fredericksburg hearing, VRE staff and participants discussed fares as well as other issues. Most of the comments received are that passengers understand the need for the fare increase, but there is concern about how high it will increase. There are four more public hearings (Woodbridge, L'Enfant, Manassas and Burke Centre). Mr. Zehner also reported that Donna Boxer went to Richmond to discuss other funding possibilities.

Mr. Zehner reported that the new Burke Centre parking garage is about 40 percent full and continues to increase daily. The new Manassas garage is almost 100 percent full. Brooke parking lot is at 80-85 percent capacity following the restriping project completed this past summer. The environmental analysis for Leeland Road and Brooke is on track and staff expects to report back to the Board sometime next spring.

Mr. Milde stated that 93.7 percent on-time performance on the Fredericksburg Line is amazing. VRE is meeting the immediate challenge of taking more people off the roads, but also meeting long-term goals of VRE. The Brooke restriping project has been good for Stafford County. There is a correlation between passengers understanding the need for a fare increase and being happy with the improved on-time performance. He reported that Stafford County did agree to extend the lease for the Leeland parking lot extension for another 2-3 years.

Mr. Kelly also expressed his pleasure in the improved on-time performance. He asked if Board Members could be provided with more specific details about each delay (train number, reason for delay, length of delay, etc.). Mr. Zehner stated that VRE's website includes a "daily download" section that posts the previous day's delays.

Ms. Bulova stated that it is great news that the Burke Centre parking garage is open and operational. She stated that the EZ buses were used during construction. Fairfax County will be evaluating the EZ Bus service to see how many people are still using it. In response to a question from Ms. Bulova, Mike Lake, Fairfax County DOT staff member, stated that Fairfax County decided to wait until after Labor Day to conduct the evaluation. Currently there is a strike underway with EZ Bus employees, but the County expects the results of the evaluation to be finished by the end of September.

Ms. Caddigan stated that she received some negative comments from the Base Commander about the proposed third track project at Quantico Station, because it is federal government property. She asked if VRE staff has had any contact with the Quantico Base Commander about this issue. Mr. Zehner replied that VRE sent a letter to the individual handling this project, but will send another letter to the Base Commander and speak with him about these concerns. Ms. Caddigan thanked staff and asked them to keep her informed about this issue since Prince William County has other dealings with the Base on other projects.

Mr. Covington observed that VRE seems to be doing more advertising on the radio and newspapers and asked if it is having an effect. Mr. Zehner explained that traditionally VRE has found that September and July are good months to run advertising. VRE did see a bump in ridership after the ad campaign began. This recent campaign is focusing on customer communication. He stated that it is important to keep name and brand recognition out there to keep your place in the market. It will pay off in the end. Since VRE has a natural turnover rate of 20-30 percent because of the transient nature of this region, VRE is constantly looking for new riders. Mr. Covington stated that VRE advertising has a "pour over" value for the community. He commended those that worked on the ad campaign. Chairman Jenkins stated that it is important to continue to inform the public on how to contact VRE, as well as how and when the service is available.

Mr. Roeber explained that VRE was to be featured on ABC's "Good Morning America" show this morning at the King Street Station in Alexandria. Unfortunately, there were satellite feed problems, but ABC hopes to return when they are back in the area. Chairman Jenkins reported that two national publications are developing stories about VRE. Mr. Roeber stated that VRE will be highlighted in articles in the U.S. Business News and Metro Magazines.

Mr. Milde reported that Stafford County has passed its legislative agenda, which includes non-member jurisdictions' (specifically Spotsylvania County) liability be borne by the state. It is his understanding that FAMPO is expected to take similar action. He suggested that when looking at the benefits for other counties to join VRE, track miles versus actual trips be analyzed. This could make it a more compelling argument and provide a different perspective.

Mr. Way asked, in regards to safety issues, if the priority or urgency of VRE's capital project for a two-way radio system had been impacted by the recent Metrolink train collision in California. Mr. Zehner stated that in terms of safety, he does not view the project as critical. In terms of service to customers on a disabled train, it is critical

because it would speed the response time to communicate to riders. This project should be completed by the end of 2008. The most critical project is cab control, which currently ends in Arlington County. The state has agreed to provide 70 percent of the funding to extend it into the District of Columbia. CSX will provide the 30 percent match for the \$1 million project. This will provide full cab control on the CSX rail line from Richmond to Washington, D.C., and should be completed within the next several months.

Mr. Smedberg stated that following the tragedy in California, cell phone/PDA usage is being banned in California. He asked if VRE has similar regulations. Mr. Zehner responded that all three railroads (Amtrak, CSX and Norfolk Southern) have regulations on the use of cell phones, which are not to be used when operating the trains. VRE supplies cell phones to engineers and conductors and their billings are monitored. In regards to banning cell phones, Mr. Zehner expressed his concern that in cases of emergencies, when cell phones are available first responders can get there faster. Using train dispatching can result in up to a 15 minute delay. He stated that in his opinion, if they are banned it would be a disservice to VRE's passengers and their safety. A cell phone is a great device but it needs to be controlled.

Mr. Page reported that on September 18<sup>th</sup> the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved \$26.6 million of rail enhancement funds to be applied to ten rail projects in the Commonwealth. Of the \$26.6 million, \$10.68 million represents enhancements for commuter rail projects in Virginia, which is 40 percent of the total allocation. Five of the projects can be defined as projects that will enhance VRE service, including the Gainesville-Haymarket Extension Phase II & Cherry Hill Third Track Phase II. Norfolk Southern has agreed to provide a significant portion of the local match requirement for the Gainesville-Haymarket Extension Phase II project. Also, Norfolk Southern has submitted an application for a six-year program to make improvements to the Alexandria to Manassas rail line section.

Mr. Page also stated that in light of the train accident in California, there is discussion about filling current gaps in safety systems. Chairman Jenkins thanked Mr. Page for his report, which is good news in a fiscally trying time.

Mr. Herryty reminded the Operations Board that there are still some black holes in cell phone coverage along the VRE system. Clifton Road is one of these areas where coverage is spotty and the grade crossing can be dangerous.

#### VRE Riders' and Public Comment – 7

George Billmyer stated that fare increases can be recognized as needed because of increased costs, such as fuel, but to implement service cuts undermines the entire system. Everyone wants more service. Throughout the country, rail systems that can afford it are adding more service. Chicago's Metra is taking out saloon cars and replacing them with cab cars, as well as reducing the number of toilets on trains to add more seating capacity. Mr. Billmyer expressed his opinion that service cuts tell passengers that VRE does not care about its customers.

Mr. Billmyer stated that although the accident in California was tragic, one positive thing that can come out of it is a wake-up call to implement true automatic train controls. He stated that insurance rates could possibly be reduced if such a system was installed. APTA may be able to help with this on a legislative level. Possibly the Federal Railroad Administration could finance it, since it is a safety issue.

Dick Peacock thanked Mr. Billmyer for his comments. He stated that VRE has an outstanding safety record and this should be conveyed to the General Assembly.

### Closed Session – 9

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, the following motion:

Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Sections 2.2-3711A (1) of the Code of Virginia), the VRE Operations Board authorizes a Closed Session for the purpose of discussing one legal matter requiring consultation with counsel concerning the scope and applicability of the VRE Liability Plan and one legal matter requiring consultation with counsel concerning the terms and conditions for inclusion of new participating jurisdictions in the Master Agreement for Commuter Rail.

The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Herrity, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Smedberg, Way and Zimmerman.

The Board entered into Closed Session at 10:20 A.M. Board Members Bulova, Herrity and Smedberg left during the Closed Session. The Board returned to Open Session at 11:02 A.M.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Ms. Caddigan, the following certification:

The VRE Operations Board certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge and with no individual member dissenting, at the just concluded Closed Session:

1. Only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Chapter 37, Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia were discussed; and
2. Only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Session was convened were heard, discussed or considered.

The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Way and Zimmerman.

Chairman Jenkins reported that the VRE Chief Executive Officer has been directed to send a letter to the County Executive of Spotsylvania County following Board Members input on the letter.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Jenkins adjourned the meeting at 11:03 A.M.

Approved this 17<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2008.

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JOHN D. JENKINS  
Chairman

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PAUL MILDE  
Secretary

**CERTIFICATION**

This certification hereby acknowledges that the minutes for the September 19, 2008 Virginia Railway Express Operations Board Meeting have been recorded to the best of my ability.

*Rhonda Gilchrest*

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Rhonda Gilchrest