



# MINUTES

## VRE OPERATIONS BOARD MEETING PRTC HEADQUARTERS – PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA SEPTEMBER 18, 2009

### VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

#### BOARD MEMBERS

**CHRIS ZIMMERMAN**  
CHAIRMAN

**PAUL MILDE**  
VICE-CHAIRMAN

**WALLY COVINGTON**  
TREASURER

**SHARON BULOVA**  
SECRETARY

**MAUREEN CADDIGAN**  
**PATRICK HERRITY**  
**JOHN JENKINS**  
**MATTHEW KELLY**  
**SUHAS NADDONI**  
**KEVIN PAGE**  
**GEORGE SCHWARTZ**  
**PAUL SMEDBERG**  
**JONATHAN WAY**

#### ALTERNATES

**MARC AVENI**  
**CHARLES BADGER**  
**HARRY CRISP**  
**MARK DUDENHEFER**  
**BRAD ELLIS**  
**JAY FISETTE**  
**FRANK JONES**  
**TIMOTHY LOVAIN**  
**MICHAEL MAY**  
**JEFF McKAY**  
**MARTIN NOHE**  
**JOHN STIRRUP**

**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
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
Jonathan Way (PRTC)	City of Manassas
Christopher Zimmerman (NVTC)	Arlington County

MEMBERS ABSENT	JURISDICTION
Patrick Herrity (NVTC)	Fairfax County
Suhas Naddoni (PRTC)	City of Manassas Park
Paul Smedberg (NVTC)	City of Alexandria

ALTERNATES ABSENT	JURISDICTION
Marc Aveni (PRTC)	City of Manassas
Charles Badger	DRPT
Brad Ellis	City of Fredericksburg
Harry Crisp (PRTC)	Stafford County
Mark Dudenhefer (PRTC)	Stafford County
Jay Fiset (NVTC)	Arlington County
Frank C. Jones (PRTC)	City of Manassas Park
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
John Stirrup (PRTC)	Prince William County

STAFF AND GENERAL PUBLIC	
Laura Bateman – PHD Consulting/ Bombardier	Steve MacIsaac – VRE counsel
Tim Craver – BLET	April Maguigad – VRE
Anna Gotthardt – VRE	Greg Marston – IBT
Kelly Hannon – Free Lance-Star	Betsie Massie – PRTC staff
Al Harf – PRTC staff	Dick Peacock – citizen
Christine Hoeffner – VRE	Lynn Rivers – Arlington County
Angela Horan –PW Attorney	Mark Roeber – VRE
Ann King – VRE	Mike Schaller - citizen
Mike Lake -- Fairfax DOT	Jennifer Straub – VRE
Trinh Lam – VRE	Rick Taube – NVTC staff
Bob Leibbrandt – Prince William County	Walter Yeatts – United Transp. Union
	Dale Zehner – VRE

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

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

### Approval of the Agenda – 3

Mr. Zehner stated that Agenda Item #9C has been updated with a correction. Mr. Covington moved, with a second by Mr. Jenkins, to approve the amended agenda. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Way and Zimmerman.

### Minutes of the August 21, 2009, VRE Operations Board Meeting – 4

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

### Chairman's Comments – 5

Chairman Zimmerman had no comments.

### Chief Executive Officer's Report – 6

Mr. Zehner reported that VRE ridership for the period from July and August is up 1.5 % compared to the same time last year. On-time performance still remains strong. He also reported that he met with other commuter rail CEOs at a meeting in Chicago on September 15<sup>th</sup> and learned that nationally, commuter rail ridership is down (New York 4%, Los Angeles 6%, San Francisco 5%, and Chicago 5%). All of these systems are much bigger systems than VRE, but the economy has affected their ridership. Some of the systems will have to make service cuts.

Mr. Zehner also reported that Mark Roeber has been working with VDOT on a project to install 120 VRE pathfinder signs around the stations and roadways. Currently, 63 signs have been put up. The signs have VRE's new logo, which is easier to read.

Mr. Zehner announced that Clifton Day is scheduled for Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup> and VRE will again run special trains for this event. The event will be promoted on VRE's website and via seat notices on the trains.

Mr. Zehner also announced that beginning November 9th, PRTC will start a new bus service to Tysons Corner with a connection at the Woodbridge VRE station. Four round trips are currently scheduled, most of which were designed to meet VRE trains at the station. VRE riders with a monthly ticket will be able to receive a free trip to Tysons Corner, but must pay the full fare for the return trip. Prices and schedules are being finalized. VRE and PRTC will be closely monitoring this new service and will make

adjustments as necessary. Mr. Zehner explained that this is a new market that PRTC and VRE do not currently serve and actually is not served very well by any form of transit. Mr. Harf explained that this is a mitigation project funded by the Commonwealth and is being launched because of the Beltway HOT Lanes construction. The expectation is that when the HOT Lanes are completed, the market will be ripe for bus traffic.

Mr. Zehner stated that VRE is being proactive in its response to addressing the H1N1 flu. Railcars are being thoroughly wiped down on all “touch points” (i.e., handrails, door handles and grab handles). VRE is also conducting internal training to better inform staff of H1N1 and emphasize VRE’s contingency plans. Amtrak has taken steps to ensure that their train crews are immunized and extra boards are fully staffed to replace sick crew members. In addition, managers who are qualified to operate trains will do so, if needed. The last resort would be to cut service (starting with mid-day service), but that is unlikely.

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

Dick Peacock stated that he is pleased to see that the state sponsored train service from Lynchburg to Washington, D.C. will stop at the L’Enfant Plaza station, which is a major tourist destination station, as well as a station that serves four Metrorail lines. He is also pleased with VRE’s on-time performance, PRTC bus service to Tysons Corner, and contingency plans for H1N1.

#### Consent Agenda – 8

Ms. Caddigan moved, with a second by Mr. Kelly, to approve the following Consent Agenda items:

Resolution #8A-08-2009: Authorization to Issue an Invitation for Bids for Gallery Railcar Parts

Resolution #8B-08-2009: Authorization to Amend a Task Order with HDR for Construction Phase Geotechnical and Materials Testing

The Board voted on the motion and it unanimously passed. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Way and Zimmerman.

#### Authorization to Execute a Purchase Order with Dominion Power for Installation of New Electric Service at the Broad Run Yard - 9A

Mr. Zehner stated that the Operations Board is being asked to authorize him as CEO to execute a purchase order with Dominion Power for installation of new electric service for the Broad Run Yard in the amount of \$67,272, plus a 15 percent contingency of

\$10,091, for a total amount not to exceed \$77,363. Resolution #9A-09-2009 would accomplish this.

Mr. Zehner explained that an electric service capable of meeting the increased demands of the new maintenance facility is now required. This new service will provide the necessary upgrades to the existing service and allow VRE to begin use of the facility immediately upon construction completion. The installation will be performed by Dominion Power.

Mr. Covington moved, by 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, Way and Zimmerman.

#### Authorization to Conduct Public Hearings Related to a Proposed Tariff Amendment and Amend the VRE Tariff – 9B

Mr. Zehner stated that the Operations Board is being asked to authorize him to amend the VRE tariff to reflect changes in the discounted fare policy process, Free Ride Certificate/Service Guarantee Program (FRC program), and other administrative changes. The Board is also being asked to authorize him to solicit comments through a public hearing in Alexandria related to a proposed change to eliminate the discounted youth fare.

Mr. Zehner explained that as part of the budget process, VRE staff not only examined opportunities to reduce expenses and/or increase revenue, but also considered policy changes that could be made to enhance the rider experience. Based on these discussions, two tariff changes are being recommended: changes to the discounted fare program and lowering the FRC threshold. In addition, several other administrative changes are being recommended to ensure consistency with current policies. Jurisdictional staff have been briefed on these changes.

Mr. Zehner stated that VRE currently has three types of discounted fares entitling patrons to ride at a 50 percent discount: youth, seniors and riders with disabilities. VRE has built a system of checks and balances into the discounted fare system to mitigate the potential for discounted fare abuse. First, discounted fares can only be purchased at an authorized vendor. Currently, all vendors are trained to look for specific identification indicating that a rider is eligible for a discount. Second, conductors have the authority to check the identification used to purchase the discounted ticket when a rider may not appear to be eligible. Despite these efforts, over the past several months, VRE staff has noticed an increase in the usage of discounted tickets by riders who are not eligible for a discount. Therefore, staff is recommending some changes.

Mr. Zehner stated that for the senior fare it is recommended that VRE continue to offer the same discount for seniors 65 years and older, but limit the number of vendors selling discounted tickets to those near destination stations of Franconia/Springfield, Alexandria, Crystal City, L'Enfant and Union Station. In addition, Commuter Direct would be able to sell the discounted tickets for seniors. Mr. Schwartz observed that a

senior traveling from Fredericksburg would not be able to purchase a senior fare in Fredericksburg. Mr. Zehner stated that the senior would have to purchase a one-way fare for the first trip and then could purchase a 10-Ride discounted ticket when he reached his destination. Currently there are only 11 vendors, so many stations are not being served by a vendor. Ms. Straub stated that most regular riders buy their tickets in advance. Mr. Way asked what percentage of senior tickets are sold near destination stations. Mr. Zehner stated that staff does not know this information. Mr. Way asked if staff is convinced that this change will not represent any serious inconvenience for seniors. Mr. Zehner responded no. However, potentially a senior tourist or one-time rider could be inconvenienced.

Mr. Zehner stated that the recommended change for disabled fare would be to continue to offer the discount, but bring in-house the distribution of the identification card required to purchase disabled tickets. The number of vendors selling these types of tickets would also be limited to the destination stations. In addition, Commuter Direct would be able to sell the discounted tickets by mail for riders with disabilities.

Mr. Zehner stated that the recommended change for the youth fare is for children 10 years and under to ride free with a fare paying adult and eliminate further youth discounts. VRE would conduct a public hearing on this fare change and report back to the Board with a recommendation. Ms. Bulova asked if Metro or other transit systems have a youth fare. Chairman Zimmerman replied that Metro does not; Prince Georges just cut its youth fare; and Arlington has a half price bus youth fare. Mr. Zehner does not believe that MARC has a youth fare.

Mr. Zehner stated that the Free Ride Certificate (FRC) program is another program that VRE can adjust to provide an extra level of customer service without additional cost. Despite the improvement in on-time performance, VRE riders are still concerned about arriving at their destination at the scheduled time. VRE staff believes that decreasing the FRC program threshold back to 30 minutes from 60 minutes will not only highlight VRE's commitment to on-time performance, but will promote a sense of goodwill among the riders at a time when fares are rising. The change in this policy is expected to have no effect on the budget.

Mr. Zehner explained the other administrative changes that need to be made to the tariff to bring it in line with current VRE policies, which include:

1. Bicycle policy – In May 2009, VRE amended its bike policy to allow full-sized bicycles on select trains. The tariff would be changed to reflect those changes.
2. Dangerous Items, Weapons, and Firearms – VRE's tariff currently states that firearms are not permitted on-board trains. However, that conflicts with the current laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The tariff would be amended to reflect Commonwealth laws and further delineate those items which are banned from the train.

3. Ticket Names – the names of different ticket types have caused confusion for some of VRE's new riders. For instance, there are those who have mistaken a 10-trip ticket to be good for 10 round trips, rather than 10 one-way trips. Tariff changes to ticket names may assist riders in better understanding VRE's system and avoiding fare evasion penalties. In this example, 10-Trip would be changed to 10-Ride.

In response to a question from Chairman Zimmerman, Mr. Zehner explained that VRE only needs a public hearing regarding the proposed change to the youth fare discount, which would be held during October/early November in Alexandria. Staff will report back to the Operations Board with a summary of comments and recommendation for action in November. With all of the recommended changes, staff believes that between 15 and 30 percent of current discounted fares will be converted to full fare purchases. This could result in an increase in annual fare revenue of between \$150,000 and \$300,000. In response to a question from Chairman Zimmerman, Mr. Zehner stated that the other tariff changes just require Board action, which would be accomplished by approving Resolution #9B-09-2009.

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Milde, to approve the resolution.

Mr. Milde stated that he has the opportunity to ride VRE occasionally and he hears regularly from passengers that they did not like it when VRE changed the FRC program to 60 minutes. Chairman Zimmerman asked how much revenue was generated from the last fare increase. Mr. Zehner replied that it was approximately \$1.5 million. Chairman Zimmerman stated that the estimated cost for the FRC program is \$20,000 and, therefore, changing the FRC policy is a smart thing to do.

Chairman Zimmerman noted for the record that encouraging people to bring guns onto loaded trains is a stupid idea. He personally would not change the tariff. He worries about the message that is being sent to the public. In response to a question from Mr. Way, Mr. Zehner stated that VRE makes it clear to any rider that asks about firearms, that once the train crosses the river into Washington, D.C., the rider is under D.C. law, which requires people to have permits to carry a firearm. Mr. Milde disagreed with Chairman Zimmerman and stated that there is no evidence that a person carrying a firearm on a train increases the risk of violence. In fact, it could decrease the risk. Ms. Bulova stated that whether carrying firearms on a train is a good idea or not, there is a state law that allows it, so VRE is bringing its policies into consistency with the laws of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Covington stated that he would like to see some flexibility with the tourist element, especially in the summer time when there is more space on the trains. He encouraged VRE to look at possible variations that would not hurt VRE's revenue stream.

The Board then voted on the motion and it passed. The unanimous vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Way and Zimmerman.

Authorization to Enter Into a Contract for Custodial and Facility Maintenance Services – 9C

Mr. Zehner explained that the VRE Operations Board is being asked to authorize him to enter into contracts for custodial and facility maintenance services with NV Enterprises of Reston, Virginia in an amount not to exceed \$2.6 million. Resolution #9C-09-2009 would accomplish this.

Mr. Zehner explained that the existing contract will expire on October 31, 2009. Different from previous years, VRE issued an RFP that separated daily custodial services and routine maintenance into two separate contracts, allowing specialized firms to bid either or both scopes of work. One proposal for each solicitation was received on July 31, 2009. Following selection committee review of the proposals, VRE staff is recommending award of both contracts to NV Enterprises. The procurement was designed to allow for a five-year contract for each service (base year, plus four one-year renewable options). Award of the first year of the custodial facilities contract is being recommended at an amount not to exceed \$1.8 million. Award of the first year of the maintenance services contract is being recommended at an amount not to exceed \$800,000. Due to the size of the contract, award of subsequent contract years will be brought before the Operations Board annually.

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Schwartz, to approve Resolution #9C-09-2009. The vote in favor was cast by Board Members Bulova, Caddigan, Covington, Jenkins, Kelly, Milde, Page, Schwartz, Way and Zimmerman.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Zimmerman adjourned the meeting at 10:11 A.M.

Approved this 16<sup>th</sup> day of October 2009.

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Christopher Zimmerman  
Chairman

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Sharon Bulova  
Secretary

**CERTIFICATION**

This certification hereby acknowledges that the minutes for the September 18, 2009 Virginia Railway Express Operations Board Meeting have been recorded to the best of my ability.

*Rhonda Gilchrest*

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Rhonda Gilchrest