



2024 Legislative Agenda

With *six individual jurisdictions* coming together to speak as one voice under the name of the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), it is critical to outline key policy-level priorities for state and federal initiatives.

Support Efforts to Establish Stable/Dedicated Local Funding

- Identify a stable and consistent mechanism of local funding for **OmniRide** operations that will replenish the declining revenues of the motor fuels tax. The 2018 motor fuels tax floor and the subsequent 2020 inflation index did not account for the significant decline in “gallons pumped” due to increases in electric vehicle use, improved fuel economy, market conditions, and ironically...great transit service.

Action:

- Work with local elected leaders to identify and establish new revenue sources to fund current and future operational demands. These could include general fund set-asides, new revenue sources (ex: EV fees to offset revenue loss, sales tax percentage) or some other combination.
- Establish a regional roadmap for localities wanting to implement new or enhanced transit options. Must be able to support urban and suburban corridors as well as rural areas to match community-level needs.

Protect Existing Transit Programs and Funding

- Prevent the Commonwealth re-directing money from public transportation, especially in the area of toll revenues and operating assistance for local communities. Increase funding for existing state transit programs and revenue sources that benefit local transit systems, especially for **OmniRide** and VRE.
- WMATA’s fiscal cliff creates interest in re-directing funds from other revenue streams (ex, raiding NVTA funds in 2018) vs. direct solutions for increasing overall revenues. Work aggressively to ensure no state or regional bodies attempt to take funds from hard-fought sources such as I-95/395/66 tolls, NVTA, or any other programs.

Action:

- Work with elected (especially newly elected) officials to inform on funding mechanisms and support new or potential General Assembly proposals to increase revenues. Support DRPT programs or legislative packages that maximize resources provided. Highlight **OmniRide’s** post-pandemic recovery and success.
- Oppose any proposed reductions to existing and codified funding levels, as this provides guardrails and relative consistency in revenue streams for state-level operational and capital support.

Support Funding to Implement Strategic Transit Fleet Decarbonization with Zero/Low Emission Vehicles

- **OmniRide** has completed its Zero/Low Emission fleet study and now seeks funding to implement the near-term fleet transition of light and medium duty fleets with zero- and low-emission vehicles and infrastructure as well as the necessary workforce training.

Action:

- Maintain **OmniRide’s** path of light and medium duty fleet electrification. The combination of large EV-fleet manufacturer instability (i.e., Proterra bankruptcy) and industry-wide struggles with manufacturer support, fleet performance, and reliability make this an increasingly smart choice.
- Support state and federal legislation to fund fleet and facilities for transit vehicles with medium (5-year) and long-term (12-year) operating lifespans. Ensure all technologies are equally considered as solutions (i.e., CNG/hydrogen) and increase the federal spare ratio limit of 20% for fleets with electric vehicles.
- Ensure sufficient funding for electric transit vehicles as costs are 1.5x higher than traditional buses and require significant charging and electrical infrastructure and support. Provide financial incentives to transit systems and utilities which partner to ensure upgrades in power distribution methods are included when updating systems near transit facilities for future cost-management and expedited implementation.

Mitigate the Loss of Federal Funds as I-66 HOV Lanes are now HOT Lanes

- **OmniRide** lost federal funds in December 2015 when a new Federal Transit Administration (FTA) policy no longer gave credit to transit systems operating on HOT lanes, only HOV lanes.
 - When I-95 converted to HOT lanes **OmniRide lost \$1M in federal funds over the next five years on I-95 alone**. As I-66 is now converted from HOV lanes to HOT lanes, **OmniRide will see another loss of \$615K** in annual federal operating funds on existing routes.
 - PRTC and NVTC have evaluated the federal policy climate to determine if seeking a policy reversal is appropriate. There is no appetite.
 - When considering the future impacts of funding, this loss of revenues for operating high intensity motorbus services in these congested corridors is contradictory to policy goals.



Action:

- Preserve TRIP funding for commuter-driven regional routes, new travel patterns such as off-peak service (i.e., late morning and mid-day), or demand for service not funded by traditional toll-revenues. Use this funding stream to support routes for a more extended period, especially when connecting multiple transit systems or modes in a post-COVID commuter era.
- Watch for opportunities to address this long-standing HOT to HOV revenue loss. These revenues offset expenses that will be pushed from the federal to the local level due to the Commonwealth's P3 programs, an unintended consequence for the Commonwealth.
- Support a legislative effort within the TRIP program that increases the length of time for step-down in the state-supported portion of funding in the post-COVID commute/telework era.

Things to Watch

- State-level attempts to defund transit programs or redirect resources (i.e., toll revenues) to fill budget holes or fund other initiatives. Support solution-oriented policy making especially with newly elected legislators.
- Continue monitoring implementation and rulemaking of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA)*. Work to avoid burdensome and costly regulations and watch for competitive grant opportunities for direct federal funds as well as discretionary grants allocated to DRPT.
- Continue to support flexibility in remote public meetings. Monitor legislation that provides flexibility for public bodies to conduct virtual public meetings, greater access to the public, and opportunities to participate remotely beyond declared states of emergency.
- Collaborate on joint aspects of the PRTC and Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Annual Legislative Agendas. As statewide initiatives are proposed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) or the General Assembly, VTA members will work collectively to support or shape policy that will increase transit funding and expand or protect services. PRTC will coordinate with NVTC, VRE, and other transit systems to support commuter-based services that assist the Northern Virginia economy.



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