



2025 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.

Pass General Assembly Legislation to Expand the OmniRide Service Area

- PRTC Commissioners appointed by the General Assembly have agreed to draft a bill in both chambers to amend the Virginia code that limits the operational area for **OmniRide** services. We are seeking language to codify our ability to deliver broader regional services to Front Royal, Warrenton, and beyond, expanding on the permission in the 2024 budget amendment.
- This opens doors for **OmniRide** to support policy-makers by delivering services and policy programs within an already approved budget to build the local and regional economy, ease congestion, and preserve or improve regional air quality, without seeking additional funding.

Action:

- Support Senator Jeremy McPike and Delegate Josh Thomas as they advance their yet-to-be-filed bills, including support at hearings, discussions with committee members, and communications that will help build bipartisan support for services that lower the costs to workers living in outlying areas by simultaneously increasing access to jobs and reducing congestion along US 29 & I-66.
- Seek support from local business and higher education communities because service expansion creates opportunities to connect major employers in Western Prince William's Innovation District to the University Park & Ride (Micron, George Mason, etc.).

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...the impacts of great transit service.

Action:

- Continue extensive and immersive work with NVTC and regional peers in the ongoing SJ-28, VA General Assembly Subcommittee to Study Transit Funding Options in Northern Virginia by helping identify revenue streams, research into potential earnings, and building coalitions to ensure long-term sustainability for **OmniRide** services.
- Work with the business community, key local stakeholders, and elected leaders to establish new revenue sources *by jurisdiction* to fund current or future operational demands, whether from new sources of funding or general fund set-asides (ex: data center revenues to build local routes; property tax for express services).

Protect Existing Transit Programs and Funding

- **OmniRide** opposes redirection of funds from public transportation, especially in the area of toll revenues and operating assistance for local communities. We support efforts to enhance the funding of existing state transit programs and revenue sources that benefit local transit systems, especially for **OmniRide** and VRE.

Action:

- Oppose efforts of any state or regional bodies to attempt to take funds from hard-fought sources such as I-95/395/66 tolls, NVTA, or any other programs. Oppose efforts to sacrifice local service and their unique ability to provide lower-cost and flexible service for the sake of large transit programs which may have fiscal challenges and would be less responsive to the needs of our community.
- Support DRPT programs or legislative packages that maximize resources provided. Raise awareness and highlight **OmniRide's** excellent post-pandemic recovery and success. Oppose any reductions to existing and

codified funding levels, as this provides guardrails and relative consistency in revenue streams for state-level operational and capital support.

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 in future years.
 - PRTC and NVTC have evaluated the federal policy climate to determine if seeking a policy reversal is appropriate, but it is not likely as of now.
 - 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 the 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 to fill budget holes either within the state or for other agencies. Support solution-oriented policy making especially with elected legislators.
- Federal Transit SmartBenefits for the ongoing Federal Return-To-Work. Maintain and expand existing transit subsidies for federal workers and tax credits for private employers, as **OmniRide** is very reliant on express route fares and passes to offset expenses. **OmniRide** has seen double-digit ridership increases the last two years on express routes and growth month-over-month for nearly a year.
- Continue to support flexibility in remote public meetings. Monitor legislation that provides flexibility for public bodies to conduct virtual public meetings, greater access for 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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