

July 2009

OmniNews

Tysons Bus Service Will Start This Fall


PRTC plans to introduce a commuter bus route from eastern Prince William County to Tysons Corner this fall.

The new service is being funded entirely by the Virginia Department of Transportation to help mitigate congestion in the Tysons area during the construction of High Occupancy Toll lanes.

The start date and exact routing of PRTC's new service have not yet been finalized. However, we expect to offer four morning trips to Tysons and four afternoon trips

back to eastern Prince William. Passengers will be picked up at the Woodbridge VRE station and the Route 123/I-95 commuter lot. Buses will take HOV lanes to Franconia-Springfield and then travel on I-495 to Route 7.

The bus is expected to serve the Tysons Corner Transit Station at the mall and serve more than a dozen stops along Greensboro Drive and Jones Branch Drive.

Look for details on the new service this fall! 


Coming Soon: Customized RiderExpress Emails

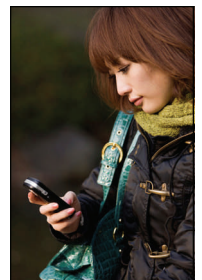
Upgrades to PRTC's email subscription service will soon allow passengers to specify the routes, time of day, and types of messages they want to receive and will enable them to receive text messages on their cell phones.

RiderExpress subscribers are notified about news that could impact their commutes. PRTC also uses the service to inform passengers about public hearings and other transportation news.

Anyone can register for the free service at PRTCtransit.org. Simply click on "Register RiderExpress" on the homepage.

If you're already signed up, soon you will be able to customize the service so you are notified only about the routes you use. You also will be able to specify if you want to receive messages around the clock or only during a certain time frame or day of the week.

The RiderExpress upgrade is expected to be in place later this summer. Look for notices on buses and on our website—and expect a RiderExpress email—when the new system is ready to launch. 



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Find PRTC on Social Networking Sites

Looking for an easy way to keep up with happenings at PRTC? Become a fan or friend of our pages on Facebook and MySpace!



This spring, PRTC created pages on the two popular social networking sites. There, our fans and friends can read our monthly Rider Spotlight feature, see fun photos, and participate in contests. In fact, we've been giving away prizes—including free ride coupons—to our contest winners!

There is also an assortment of bus-related trivia including a series of pictures showing how a bus is built and how the buses are washed – it's like a giant automated car wash! It's definitely worth a visit to our pages.

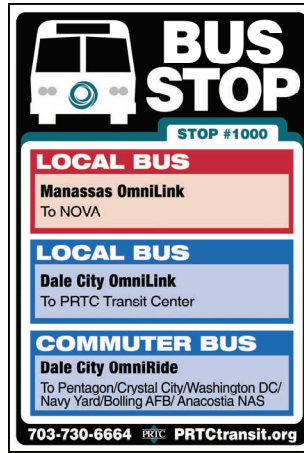
See what's new by going to www.facebook.com or www.myspace.com and typing Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission in the search engine. ■

OmniLink Appears Before Congress

Congressional transportation leaders saw a video in April to celebrate the release of a new report featuring innovative transit systems.

OmniLink was among the transit systems featured in both the video and the report, *Reinventing Transit: American Communities Finding Smarter, Cleaner, Faster Transportation Solutions*, authored by the Environmental Defense Fund.

OmniLink was recognized for its flexible routing which allows the local bus service to travel up to 3/4 mile off the standard route to meet passengers' needs. The report cited transit innovations that are already operating in 45 communities of all sizes in 30 states. ■



This mock-up shows the design of the new bus stop signs. Individual route signs indicate which routes serve that bus stop, and the route signs will be color coordinated to match schedule brochures.

Bus Stop Signs Get A New Look

The cartoon buses that have been featured on PRTC's bus stop signs for more than a decade are going away. As part of a redesign project, PRTC's new signs will feature the universal symbol for a bus stop—the front of a bus.

The current signs are green with white lettering. Over the years many of the signs have faded, making them hard to read, and some blend in with the foliage, making them difficult to notice.

The new signs will be black with white lettering. They also will have space for multiple route destinations, saving PRTC the cost of producing a separate sign for each route that serves a particular stop. Look for new signs this summer. ■

Etiquette Lessons Available Here

We've heard complaints about passengers who place their bags and briefcases on seats, forcing others to stand during their commute. This is poor bus etiquette. Bags should be placed on your lap, at your feet or in the overhead compartment so paying customers can have a seat.

We've also heard about customers who place their belongings in line at the bus stop as their stand-in so they can wait for the bus in the comfort of their vehicle. This also is poor bus etiquette—and is considered to be a security risk. It would be a shame for your trip to be delayed because of a report of an unattended bag.

So please keep your belongings with you and remember that seats are for people. Thanks! ■

Teen Bus Pass Is A Bargain

It's not too late for teens to get a great bargain this summer!

PRTC is still selling the OmniLink Teen Summer Pass, which costs \$25 and gives teens unlimited rides on OmniLink local buses and Cross County Connector buses through September 5.

With a Teen Pass, teens can get to their summer jobs, recreation centers and hang out with friends without having to borrow the family car or beg friends for rides.



Simply show your Teen Pass to the bus operator when boarding a bus, take a seat and be on your way to summer fun!

Still need more incentive? You'll receive a free gift with each Teen Pass purchase! Not only that, but show your Teen Pass at Friday night Potomac Nationals baseball home games, and you'll save \$1 on your admission!

Where can teens go on OmniLink and the Cross County Connector? How about Potomac Mills Mall, Manassas Mall, Chinn Recreation Center, Dale City Recreation Center,

the Prince William Ice Center, Signal Bay Waterpark, Andrew Leitch Park and area libraries!

Brochures like the one pictured above are available on PRTC buses. Or you can find information at PRTCtransit.org—just look for the image of the guy wearing snorkeling gear at the bottom of our homepage.

Passes are on sale now at the Transit Center on weekdays from 7 a.m.—7 p.m. So what are you waiting for?

Take OmniLink to Summer Fun! ▣

Outstanding Operators

First Transit, the contract provider for PRTC's bus services, chooses one outstanding operator each month for special recognition. If you have a compliment about your operator, please let us know.



Delphine Scott — February 2009

Ms. Scott is described by her colleagues as vivacious, cheerful and someone who enjoys her job. She always puts safety first and recognizes the importance of providing good customer service. She has worked at PRTC for nearly 4 years and now operates trips on the Woodbridge OmniLink route. ▣

Earl Marshall — March 2009

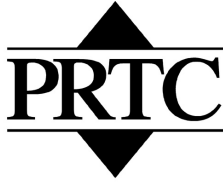
A relative newcomer, Mr. Marshall has worked at PRTC for 1 year. His co-workers enjoy spending time with him because he's calm, courteous, polite and simply pleasant to be around. He is currently an extra board operator—ready to fill in on any route when called upon. In his spare time he enjoys working on cars. ▣

Javid Iqbal — April 2009

A true family man, Mr. Iqbal has wonderful customer service skills—he always greets his passengers with a smile and is quick to offer a kind word. When he's not operating trips on the Woodbridge OmniLink route, he enjoys spending time with his family. He has worked at PRTC for 2 years. ▣

Craig Thompson — May 2009

Mr. Thompson has been at PRTC for 5 years and in that time has become very knowledgeable about his routes. He currently operates trips on the Woodbridge OmniLink. One reason he was recognized was his professional attitude toward his customers. When the weather is nice, he enjoys spending time on his motorcycle. ▣



Potomac and Rappahannock
Transportation Commission

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**Serving Prince William County,
Manassas and Manassas Park**

I Want to Know...

On the day of the shootings at the Holocaust Museum, PRTC implemented its Emergency Service Plan. Why? You could have served stops that were not downtown, including the Pentagon.—M.K. of Manassas

When there is an emergency situation that will impact PRTC's ability to serve its regular bus stops, the Emergency Service Plan (ESP) is implemented. Usually, bad weather and road conditions prompt the ESP, but it also can be implemented for general emergencies, such as when major roads are shut down.

On that day, 14th Street was shut down indefinitely in both directions for the investigation, causing extensive traffic delays in D.C. and onto I-395—the highway that PRTC uses to access the Pentagon.

Consistency and clear communi-

cation are the keys to ensuring that the ESP operates as smoothly as possible and that passengers know where they need to go to board the bus. When the ESP is implemented, our regular passengers know that OmniRide buses will not travel into D.C. and instead will serve only the Franconia-Springfield and West Falls Church Metro stations.

For example, if PRTC were to operate from the Pentagon during one emergency and from Crystal City for another emergency, passengers wouldn't know what to expect the next time PRTC operated on its Emergency Service Plan.

Rather than offering a range of alternatives that would be difficult to communicate to the public and our own staff, PRTC follows this standard operating procedure. Additionally, evaluating different options would mean it would take PRTC a longer time to determine which one to imple-

ment – and that would be a hindrance in situations when decisions must be made quickly.

Further, while information gathering and dissemination have improved greatly in recent years, we rarely have sufficiently detailed, accurate, and timely information about current conditions that are constantly changing.

By running service only to and from the two Metro stations, PRTC can maximize service to local bus stops with minimal equipment and operators.

When the ESP is implemented with no advance warning, PRTC buses do not charge fares.

Of course, our goal is to provide our passengers with full service whenever possible. But when emergencies occur, our aim changes a bit and instead we try to provide passengers with the safest, most efficient, and clearly communicated transportation possible under those challenging conditions. 