

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 5, 2026

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Chairperson Christopher Bove, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Myles Brawn-Husband, Laurie Diorio, Casey Gartland, Barbara Henry, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Raymond Lemerick, Crystal Martin, Grace Pires, Jenaya Smith, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Heather Schey, Marie John Susa, Nick Lett, Liza B, Dylan Giles, Chris Richard Monroe, Benny Bergantino, Justin Henry Cartwright, Zachary Gauthier.

RIPTA: Nate Hannon, Joelle Kanter, Brooks Almonte, Nancy Michaud, Sarah Ingle.

Call to Order: Chairperson Christopher Bove called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:05 PM. Then presented hybrid meeting guidelines.

Preparation for ATAC Officer Election:

Nate Hannon, RIPTA, read the names of current ATAC members. These individuals have participated in at least five of the past twelve meetings and are eligible to vote for officers and run for election. Members are: Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Justin Cartright, Kerry Clark, Vincent DeJesus, Rachel Ferreira, Deanne Gagne, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, Barbara Henry, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Diane LeSuer, Raymond Lemerick, Nick Lett, Olivia Lozier, Crystal Martin, Jeff Mello, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Brian Rice, Heather Schey, Christie Seymour, Jenaya Smith, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, and Paula Vinacco.

Chairperson Christopher Bove introduced Nate Hannon as the new acting ATAC Liaison

Nate recognized Joelle Kanter's work as the previous ATAC Liaison. Nate is the Director of Customer Experience at RIPTA. He has been with RIPTA for 12 years and manages a staff of 14 which include Photo ID and the Ticket office in Kennedy Plaza, Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center, Newport Transit Center (Seasonal), and Fixed Route Call Center. The Fixed Route call center is open seven days a week and resolves complaints and provides information to riders on a daily basis. As the ATAC Liaison my goal is to support and assist the Chairman, the Vice Chairman and all members of this advisory committee which involves resolving complaints and sharing valuable feedback with CEO, Department Directors and Deputy Chiefs. I want to improve the overall customer experience for members of this committee.

Open for Question to Nate:

- Is Nate Responsible for both Fixed Route and Paratransit complaints?
 - Nate responded that any Fixed Route complaints would be handled by his department and Brooks Almonte confirmed that Paratransit complaints would be handled by him or Diane Chappell.
- Status of previously submitted complaint issues on scheduling rides incorrectly as a Wave trip
 - Brooks responded that they received approval to replace the current booking system similar to the Facebook site
 - Adding open-fare payments for Paratransit. Can now use debit, Wave, and all types of credit cards. Currently approved and funded. As of yet, no timeline has been issued for implementation
 - Will be able to use one Wave card for both Paratransit and Fixed Routes
 - Open ended questions on Fare tapping for cards, those are questions that the Software provider will offer the best solution on how that will work
 - Joelle noted that disability wave cards are used for fixed routes only, and cannot be used for paratransit

RIDE Call Center wait times:

Christopher Bove noted that at the last meeting there were discussions on wait times for the Paratransit customer service call center. Although there are exciting new things on the horizon for customer service, how will issues be handled in the interim going forward. Everyone has struggled to get through to the Call Center especially toward the end of the day. Requested Brooks give update as to why the wait times are so long and if any of our suggestions have been evaluated for making it better in the immediate term.

Q&A discussion followed.

- Brooks responded that they are working with software company with a solution to capture calls that come in prior to 4:30 to ensure rides are being booked.
- Rider had an incident in which they called at 3:45 and saw 40 minutes wait time and was not able to book trip
- Suggestions have been made many times before when the rider is calling for an issue with the current trip in real time and needs immediate response are getting stuck in the queue behind riders who are calling for reservations. Is there a possibility of having “Where’s my RIDE” line open during the day and have a separate line for booking rides – Brooks noted that the current call system is not sophisticated enough to do that, but hoping the new system will have those tools available to be implemented in the future.
- If rider calls after 4:30 and presses 4 they are connected to dispatch, wondering why the system cannot use “4” button for the hours of 8-4:30. Brooks responded that the current call system cannot distinguish at this time and noting that the call center does not have the manpower needed at this time.

- When riders are placed on hold for 6 minutes wait time, as they are waiting on hold the time increases instead of decreasing. Brooks responded that this could be due to call center rep being logged out or a call that lasts longer than anticipated.
- Rider suggested that when booking a ride, can a special telephone number be used to distinguish calls. Brooks responded that more manpower is needed.
- Can Technology be used to screen calls in queue. Brooks answered that currently system does not have those technical capabilities.
- Suggestion is made that since Flex Service uses RIDE call center can RIDE call center borrow other customer service agents. Due to different software being utilized by RIDE and Fixed Route call centers both teams will need to be cross trained on different systems. No timeline available currently.

Christopher Bove made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2026, meeting. Myles Brawn-Husband seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Taxi Cabs:

General Assembly passed law in 2022 that Taxi cabs that are non-emergency Medical, similar to MTM are no longer to be used for public/private use. RIPTA currently requires Taxi's will need to have to have 1.5 million in Insurance which is prohibitively expensive and currently there is only one insurer in the country.

General Discussion:

- Taxicabs provide similar services as RIDE vehicles.
- Taxicab contractors have expressed how expensive insurance costs are prohibitive. According to the taxicab providers, liability is \$18,000 per year (coverage for sexual abuse must also be included). It would be helpful if insurance could be reduced to one million, like in Massachusetts.
- Taxicab contractors inquire if RIPTA is willing to accept one-million-dollar insurance coverage, so that they can expand the number of taxis and provide consistent, quality service with more service.
- Christopher Bove made a motion on behalf of the ATAC Committee to request RIPTA's General Counsel review RIPTA and state policies to determine if amount can be changed. Motion passed.
- Christopher requested Nate follow up with Legal Services
- As for the selection process for Taxi Cabs, rider believes they might be getting worse. Brooks responded that when complaints are received, they are investigated and monitored. The following are current requirements:
 - Insurance
 - Drug Testing
 - Follow-up complaints on Vendors
- Rider stated that Taxis are consistently late. She also stated she had reported these late issues. Rider questioned what would happen if they didn't have funds available at time of ride. Brooks stated RIDE would not deny the ride and Nate stated that on Fixed Route we have courtesy rides available and will not strand any person

- Rider wanted to know how many cab companies we currently have and why they are late, is RIDE overscheduling or mismanaging their time.
- The scheduling software treats Taxi's differently. The software assumes that the cab company is going to be there at the beginning of your pickup window
- Flex on Demand Information on website regarding Flex zones and schedules. Customer service staff also provide information to callers.
- Will Flex on demand be extended – Brooks stated this is in process
- It would be great to geographically expand. Currently there are some changes to existing flex zones but not new flex zones
- Uber/Lifts are not acceptable for disabled riders so the flex rides would grow ridership.
- More training is being put in place on Flex Zones by using training modules, partner with Organizations for their customers
- When getting RIDE during day cab drivers still calls dispatch to check your wave account, this takes so long and is wasted time which causes delay for drivers.
- Why is it necessary to show wave card again if it's already been validated when RIDE was reserved
- Not all wheel chairs can use Uber
- Questioned snow removal and clearing path for RIDE/Fixed Route drop offs. RIPTA has a contract company that is responsible for clearing bus shelters. There are over 3600 bus stops, and we are unable to clear them during a winter storm. Local ordinance states property owners and businesses are too clear sidewalks but sometimes they do not and rely on the city

Motion to offer Next month Meeting

- Further Discussion of REVEAL app and associated issues and moreover MTM services being sub-par
- RIPTA to engage in bidding process and seek more information prior to going out for bids for a better software provider. In last month's meeting it was reported RIPTA had 3-year extension renewal but with the objection of Heather Schey the contract with REVEAL was extended for only a year. RIPTA will continue to use REVEAL for the next year until new app is selected.

Virtual Format for this Meeting:

- Could hear better
- Difficult to hear with echo using virtual format

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 PM.