

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 2, 2022
MEETING MINUTES

Participants: Heather Schey (Chair), Robert Beauregard, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Kerry Clark, Grant Dulgarian, Monica Dzialo, Janice Musco, Angie Stabile, Mark Susa.

By phone: Rui Cabral, Frank Cummings

RIPTA Staff: Brooks Almonte, James Canty, Julia Evelyn, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Chris McKenna, Greg Nordin, Maribeth Pacillo, Jack Plouffe, Joe Solomon.

By phone: Nate Hannon

- I. **Call to Order:** Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:08 PM.
- II. **VOTE:** Monica Dzialo motioned to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2022 ATAC meeting. Robert Beauregard seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

III. RIPTA Project Updates

- Introduction to the East Side Tunnel Planning Project: Julia Evelyn, RIPTA, welcomed Geoffrey Morrison-Logan, AECOM, to talk about planned improvements to the East Side bus tunnel and gather feedback from the committee on accessibility issues. The scope of work involves enhancing bus tunnel entrances on Thayer Street (between Waterman and Angell streets) and on South Main Street (at Waterman Street) while taking into consideration the historic nature of the sites, user needs, neighborhood safety, and other demands.

This phase of the project will wrap up by the end of September, and there will be 3 rounds of stakeholder outreach to help determine the preferred direction for implementation. AECOM plans to come back to ATAC when plans are further along.

Suggestions from the group included:

- Taking visual and hearing impairments into account.
- Confirming that Braille signage is up to date.
- Adding an audio component to signage.
- Using chips and sensors in signage.
- Identifying where stops are located.
- Shortening travel distances for passengers departing buses.
- Adding rails for people to grab onto.

- Improving lighting at night.
 - Incorporating tactile strips.
 - Ensuring wheelchair accessibility by placing bus stops in areas where sidewalks are wide enough for wheelchairs to turn around.
 - Looking at transit systems in other places that have well-marked signage and ground details, such as Japan.
- Coordinated Plan: Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, described the process of updating the Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan, which focuses on transportation services that receive funding through FTA's Section 5310 program for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities. It will include a statewide inventory of transportation services, a transportation needs assessment, strategies and activities to address those needs, and recommendations for priorities. At the last ATAC meeting, the project team shared an update after completing a series of 4 online focus groups. Since then, they have been organizing recommendations by themes and are starting to focus on the needs assessment and research into best practices. A second round of focus groups will be scheduled in July, and the draft plan should be ready for review in September.
 - Transportation Survey: The [survey](#) created by the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council is still open, and ATAC members are encouraged to participate. Several people commented that the survey was not mobile friendly with voice over technology, and they found the checkboxes difficult to access with an iPhone. Others suggested trying different web browsers.
 - Service changes: Greg Nordin, RIPTA's chief of strategic advancement, announced that several changes will go into effect on June 18th. As directed by the Transit Forward RI master plan, RIPTA is adding service, including 3 new routes:
 - Route 68 will travel from the North End of Newport to the Gateway Center and First Beach, then north to the Dept. of Human Services office. It will operate hourly service 7 days/week and will be free for passengers until Halloween through a funding partnership with the Episcopal Diocese. The Route 67 hop on/hop off service will also be free through Halloween.
 - Route 16 will start at the Community College of Rhode Island in Warwick and travel to Bald Hill Road, into Market Basket, and south to East Greenwich and over to Quonset. Eventually the route will expand to also serve URI. For now, it opens the paratransit corridor to serve medical offices on Route 2.
 - Another new route, 23, will travel from CCRI Warwick to the Center of New England shopping center in Coventry.

IV. Discussion

- A Ride passenger said that the Reveal app doesn't always indicate when a scheduled vehicle changes from a Ride van to a taxi. Chris McKenna, Ride, responded that the app should update in real time when changes are made.
- Chris added that he is working with Reveal and Init software programmers to integrate the Wave smart fare payment system into Ride, but there have been some unforeseen challenges. He will ask ATAC to assist with service testing soon. Once Wave is available, Ride passengers will provide their Wave account numbers to customer service. When they call to schedule their trips, they'll decide whether to pay with Wave, cash, or Ride tickets.
- A fixed-route passenger described a bus stop on Route 116 near Lincoln Mall as unsafe. Greg responded that RIPTA tries to locate bus stops in areas that are safe and accessible, but they must coordinate with RI Dept. of Transportation.
- Another fixed-route passenger said that the announcement volume is too low outside some older buses. Greg will follow up with the programmer in RIPTA's IT department about this.
- A passenger with a visual impairment described confusion about where to wait for an inbound bus to Providence from Garden City. Greg said that RIPTA will revisit this messaging when working on bus stop sign improvements.
- She also said that drivers on Route 54 are often in a hurry leaving the Lincoln Mall, and they don't wait for passengers. This is a driver training issue, and ATAC should invite Ken Vinacco, RIPTA's director of training, to the next meeting to allow committee members to share their experiences with him firsthand.

ATAC will not meet in July.

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 PM.