

## RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 1, 2024  
MEETING MINUTES

**In attendance:** Chairperson Heather Schey, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Frank Cummings, Grant Dulgarian, Liza Farr, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, Tina Guenette, Devin Guirales, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Olivia Lozier, Crystal Martin, Grace Pires, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile, Cedric Yee.

**RIPTA:** Ella Ackerman, Brooks Almonte, Zachary Agush, James Canty, Morgan Dethlefsen, Chris Durand, Armie Erban, Julia Evelyn, Steve Fiorentini, Nate Hannon, Paul Harrington, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Krissy Kleamovich, Chris McKenna, Jamie Pereira, Joseph Solomon.

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:02 PM. After taking attendance, she presented hybrid meeting guidelines, reminding those who attend in person that they must be able to participate independently or bring a personal care attendant for assistance.

Jean Bousquet made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 6, 2024 meeting. Zachary Gauthier seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

**Presentation on Moving Forward RI 2050: An update to Rhode Island's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):** Liza Farr, RI Division of Statewide Planning, gave a project overview on the LRTP update which will set up an actionable blueprint for the next 25 years. While it is not a full rewrite, she expects the impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and new legislation to be incorporated along with current ridership estimates and progress updates on the Transit Master Plan.

After describing how the project fits into broader transportation processes, she outlined next steps. Public engagement will continue through the fall, and the plan will be written over the winter. Next spring, Liza hopes to come back to ATAC to solicit feedback on a draft. Once the plan is finalized, Statewide Planning will post an accessible version online with maps and dashboards.

Liza also presented statewide data on RIPTA services, bike paths, and pedestrian crashes before leading a discussion about current transportation challenges and priorities for changes over the next 25 years. To follow up, RIPTA staff will send a link to the [project website](#) along with an online survey and information about upcoming community events.

**Update from Christopher Durand, Interim Chief Executive Officer, RIPTA:** Chris Durand said he is working to strengthen RIPTA's foundation and attract more riders who feel they can rely on the system. He shared an update on RIPTA's main areas of focus, highlighting the effort to hire drivers to cover all trips and ultimately expand service. He announced that new RIDE vans will start arriving this fall to replace the aging fleet and improve reliability. After he spoke, participants had a chance to

share feedback.

- Rui Cabral said that riders have given RIPTA the benefit of the doubt, but he expressed concern about the lack of transparency around the Wave fare payment rollout for RIde paratransit service.
- Christopher Bove expressed frustration with RIde's lack of flexibility to serve locations beyond the paratransit service area before the pilot program started. He also wants RIPTA to be more accountable and willing to try new things.
- Devin Guirales thanked Chris Durand for coming to the group and being visible and approachable. He then asked about the timeline for completing improvements to the East Side bus tunnel, which RIPTA staff said would likely be in mid-October.
- Grant Dulgarian recommended changes to the temporary bus stops near the tunnel and suggested a new traffic circulation pattern in Kennedy Plaza.

### **RIde updates**

- RIde key performance indicators: Joe Solomon, RIPTA, shared RIde ridership and on-time performance data from January through the end of June. During that period, ridership was highest in May (19,886 trips) and lowest in January (17,236 trips). He also noted an expected seasonal dip of 11% between May and June due to vacations. On-time performance was at 93% in April and May and 92% in June. RIde recorded 4 complaints in July which Dianne Chappel received and shared with a street supervisor for resolution. Currently, 3,770 customers are approved to use RIde, and 965 customers actively used the service in the past 90 days.
- RIde Anywhere pilot program: Joe Solomon described RIPTA's approach to measuring costs for the statewide paratransit pilot program using the standard formula for National Transit Database (NTD) reporting. Applying a model that calculates taxi trips at \$91.67 per service hour, the total cost for taxi trips between January and June 2024 was \$104,687.14. Paratransit van trips are calculated at \$115.14 per service hour and totaled \$21,761.46 during that six-month period. Altogether, the program cost was \$126,448.60 at the midpoint of the year.

A brief discussion followed with Christopher Bove asking about the discrepancies between the actual pilot program costs and the projections outlined in the statewide paratransit study completed in 2022. Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, referenced the study's recommendations to bring in more resources by procuring new paratransit vehicles, hiring new drivers and support staff, and securing storage space to accommodate an expanded program. For now, the agency is managing the pilot on a limited scale.

- Wave payment testing for RIde program: Chris McKenna thanked participants who assisted with Wave payment testing over the past eight weeks. He expects a marketing push for broad implementation to begin soon. He also highlighted a few issues that RIPTA is correcting, such as the blocking of fixed route fare products and the drawing down of payment in low service areas.

During a discussion, Angie Stabile said that drivers had been getting logged out of their tablets, but Chris said this has since been resolved. She also mentioned that some paratransit drivers are hesitant to use Wave on their tablets, and Chris acknowledged that it's new, but he expects them to become more comfortable with the system soon.

**Presentation on RIPTA's Bus Stop Inventory by RIPTA summer interns:** Morgan Dethlefsen and Armie Erban presented on their work on RIPTA's bus stop inventory with Avery Kolenski, who was not at the meeting. To date, over 2/3 of RIPTA's more than 3,000 stops have been surveyed. Using an online mapping tool to evaluate stops, shelters, and sidewalks, the interns compile information in a spreadsheet and submit requests to RIPTA's service planning and maintenance departments as needed to request improvements such as trimming trees, replacing signs, or clearing broken glass. They shared photos of specific bus stops to describe accessibility indicators such as seating, sidewalk condition, and stop visibility. Julia Evelyn, RIPTA planner, thanked the interns for their hard work and said that RIPTA will continue building out the database to keep it up to date.

**RIPTA Updates:** Due to time constraints, Joelle Kanter agreed to email information about fall service changes and other RIPTA information.

The meeting adjourned at 6:14 PM.