



**GET MORE**  
**OUT OF YOUR CAREER**  
**\$25.33 PER HOUR**

With van drivers **starting at \$25<sup>33</sup> per hour plus benefits**, there's more to love about your job.

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*With RIPTA van drivers now starting at \$25.33 per hour PLUS benefits, there's more to love about your job!*

**Get More Out of Your Career!**

## **With RIPTA van drivers now starting at \$25.33 per hour PLUS benefits, there's more to love about your job!**

Last month, RIPTA's Board of Directors voted to approve a collective bargaining agreement with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Division 618 that would increase the starting driver wage from \$21.71 to \$25.33 per hour. In addition, the top pay step of existing ATU salaries, other than Van Operators, will increase by \$1.00, with lower pay steps adjusted accordingly. ATU 618 represents RIPTA's 488 current fixed-route and paratransit drivers.

"This crucial wage increase benefits not only our drivers, but our passengers as well," said Scott Avedisian, RIPTA's Chief Executive Officer. "This will enable us to attract and retain drivers, ensuring that the public can rely on RIPTA to be there when the bus schedule says we are going to be there."

### **JOB FAIR**

As part of the initiative to recruit new drivers, RIPTA is hosting a job fair on **Friday, March 15, 2024, from 10am to 3pm** at RIPTA headquarters located at 705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence. Interested applicants are encouraged to stop by or apply online at *[\\*RIPTA.com/careers\\*](https://www.ripta.com/careers)*. All new bus operators receive up to 8 weeks of paid training, including commercial driver license (CDL) education and certification.

#### **RIPTA Offers:**

- Competitive Wages
- Pension Plan
- Health Benefits
- 457 Deferred Comp
- Dental Coverage
- Optional Life Insurance
- Vision Coverage
- Paid Vacation and Personal Time
- Flexible Spending Account
- Paid Sick Time
- Uniform Allowance

Visit [RIPTA.com/careers](https://www.ripta.com/careers) for more information.

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## **Historic East Side Tunnel to Close This Month for Renovations**



Starting Monday, March 25, 2024, the East Side Tunnel will be closed for repairs and renovations through mid-September. Routes 1, 32, 33, 34, 40 and 61x will be on detour beginning Monday, March 25, 2024 through mid-September to

accommodate East Side Tunnel construction.

This critical piece of transit infrastructure was built in 1914 to help former trolley lines reach the top of College Hill as they traveled from downtown Providence to the East Side and beyond. The tunnel is still a vital connector today, allowing buses to avoid the steep incline of College Hill.

[Click here](#) to view a map of the temporary bus stops and to learn more about this project.

**Starting Monday, March 25, 2024, the following detours will be in place:**

**Routes 32, 33, 34, 40 and 61x**

Inbound trips heading towards Downtown Providence will travel regular route to the intersection of Angell and Thayer Streets, continue onto Angell Street through to Steeple Street and then resume regular route. Passengers will utilize the bus stop on Angell Street at Hope Street.

Outbound trips will travel regular route to North Main Street and the East Side Tunnel, continue up the hill along Waterman Street and then resume regular route. Passengers will utilize the bus stop on Waterman Street at Hope Street.

**Route 1**

Inbound trips towards Downtown Providence will travel regular route to Thayer Street, left onto Waterman Street, left onto Brook Street, left onto Angell Street, continue onto Angell Street through to Steeple Street and then resume regular route toward downtown Providence.

Outbound trips will travel regular route to North Main Street and the East Side Tunnel, continue up the hill along Waterman Street, turn left onto Brook Street

and then resume regular route.

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## Proposed Service Changes Update

Last month, RIPTA held public hearings regarding proposed service changes which are the direct result of a critical workforce shortage.

Over 200 members of the public attended the statewide hearings. All input from the public at the hearings will go to RIPTA's Board of Directors along with RIPTA staff recommendations. The Board will vote on the proposed service changes at its next Board meeting. If approved, service changes would go into effect on Saturday, April 6, 2024. For more information on these changes, passengers can visit [RIPTA.com/PublicHearings](https://ripta.com/PublicHearings).

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## Employee Spotlight

### Art Poulin, Body Shop Worker

It's the parts that make up the whole. That's the world that Art Poulin and his colleagues in RIPTA's in-house body shop work inhabit.



Whether it's rebuilding the entire exterior of a bus, fixing seats, or replacing sideview mirrors, his job is to put vehicles back together again no matter what mishap has befallen them.

Officially, his work is that of a welder and a metal fabricator, but Poulin says that he and his co-workers pretty much have to be "Mr. Fix It." He started at RIPTA about 10 years ago and says, "If something's broken we have to find a way to put it back together again, and get the bus back on the road." He points to an older bus that is in for refurbishment and is stripped of all its exterior steel panels. "When we're done, that bus will look brand new again," he says. "You'll never know it was in here."

He says he loves the work because there are different challenges every day and because he's part of a great team with colleagues who have their own

specialties – whether it's painting vehicles or recreating parts that are no longer available from vendors.

He was first hired by RIPTA as an operator in the Ride paratransit division after working for years as a driver for FedEx. He came to RIPTA because he had heard it was a good place to work with excellent benefits for employees. He switched to the Utility Division for a while and spent time cleaning and fueling buses before an opening came up in the body shop, giving him the opportunity to utilize welding skills he learned years ago working at General Dynamics.

A native of West Warwick who now lives in Coventry, Poulin is known for his work ethic and creativity. "You have to be able to think outside the box," he says, recalling the assorted array of problems that pull into the body shop. For example, a Ride van recently had an air conditioning unit that wouldn't stay in place. No problem. Poulin figured out how to drill through the roof of the vehicle to safely secure the unit – and if all the parts weren't available, he made them.

When he's not working, Poulin enjoys riding motorcycles with his wife and spending lots of time with their four grandchildren. He's unabashed in his enthusiasm for his colleagues and his job.

"I tell everyone this is the best job I've ever had," he says.



## Kennedy Plaza Photo ID Office to Reopen Four Days a Week Starting TODAY!

Starting today, March 1, 2024, the Photo ID Office in Kennedy

Plaza will be open on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm. The Photo ID Office will be closed on Thursdays for **Community Site Visits**, also known as Photo ID Road Trips.

"The reopening of the Photo ID Office in Kennedy Plaza is in direct response to the valuable feedback we received from our riders," said Scott Avedisian, Chief Executive Officer. "Listening to our community is a top priority for RIPTA, and

the decision to reopen the office reflects our commitment to meeting the needs of our passengers.”

The Photo ID Office at RIPTA Headquarters (705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence) will be closed permanently as of Friday, March 1, 2024, in order to reallocate staffing resources to the Kennedy Plaza office.

Passengers who wish to process their bus pass applications online or via mail, can continue to do so. Visit [RIPTA.com/ReducedFare](https://www.ripta.com/ReducedFare) for details.

## RIPTA Photo ID Bus Pass Road Trips

RIPTA’s Photo Identification staff will travel to communities throughout the state to process bus pass applications for qualified seniors and individuals with disabilities who are unable to get to our office in Kennedy Plaza. Staff also provides travel training.

RIPTA staff will process Photo ID bus passes at the following location:

### PAWTUCKET

Thursday, March 7 • 9:30am-12pm  
Pawtucket Housing Authority  
483 Weeden Street

### WARWICK

Thursday, March 14 • 9:30am-11:30am  
Pilgrim Senior Center  
27 Pilgrim Parkway

### JAMESTOWN

Thursday, March 21 • 11:30am - 1:30pm  
Jamestown Housing Authority  
45 Pemberton Avenue

### PROVIDENCE

Thursday, March 28 • 10:30am-12:30pm  
Fox Point Manor  
575 Wickenden Street



Photo ID bus passes cost \$10 and are valid for two years.

[Click here](#) to view upcoming RIPTA Photo ID Road Trips.

For information on how to qualify for RIPTA's Bus Pass Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities, customers can call (401) 784-9500, ext. 2012 or visit [RIPTA.com/ReducedFare](https://ripta.com/ReducedFare).

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## DETOURS

**Pawtucket St. Patrick's Day Parade** - Saturday, March 2

Routes 1, 76, 78 and the R-Line will be on detour from 9 am to 1 pm; Roosevelt Avenue will be closed during this time.

**Providence St. Patrick's Day Parade** - Saturday, March 9

Routes 50, 56, and 57 will be on detour.

**Newport St. Patrick's Day Parade** - Saturday, March 16

Routes 60, 63 and 67 will be on detour.

**East Side Tunnel Closure:** Effective Monday, March 25

Routes 1, 32, 33, 34, 40 and 61x will be detoured for construction through mid-September.

Visit [RIPTA.com/alerts](https://ripta.com/alerts) for details on upcoming detours.



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