

RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



Better Transit for a Better Rhode Island



"This year, RIPTA has taken bold steps to redefine public transit in Rhode Island. By leveraging federal and state funds and investing in workforce development, sustainable technology, infrastructure improvements, and new rider-focused services, we are building a transit system that will meet the evolving needs of our communities, reduce environmental impacts, and connect more Rhode Islanders to the opportunities they deserve."

A Message from the CEO

Dear Fellow Rhode Islanders,

As I reflect on 2024, I'm filled with gratitude and optimism. RIPTA has been my home for many years, and serving as Chief Executive Officer is both an honor and a privilege. Together, we've faced challenges head-on and made tremendous progress toward a brighter future for public transit in our state.

At the start of the year, RIPTA grappled with a critical driver shortage that threatened statewide service reductions. Thanks to forward-thinking investments in workforce development, we not only overcame this hurdle but also strengthened our organization for the future.

This year, we expanded service to enhance access to job opportunities, achieved key environmental milestones, and improved the passenger experience, reinforcing our commitment to providing reliable, efficient, and customer-focused transit services.

As we look ahead, I'm excited about the opportunities before us. With your continued support, RIPTA will build on these successes to create a transit system that serves as a cornerstone of Rhode Island's future.

Thank you for riding with us.

Sincerely,

Christopher Durand
Chief Executive Officer, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)

Workforce Development

Like other transit agencies nationwide, RIPTA entered 2024 with a critical driver shortage and had planned on reducing service statewide. Through forward-thinking investments in its workforce, RIPTA has significantly improved its hiring process and workforce development, positioning the agency to address its labor shortage while enhancing statewide transit service and reliability. Additionally, RIPTA expanded its team of trainers to support the growing number of new hires.

New initiatives have increased RIPTA's workforce by 44 drivers, with many more currently in training.

New Starting Wage for Drivers

RIPTA reopened the contract with Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) 618/A to raise starting wages to \$25.33 per hour for drivers. By making transit careers more attractive and accessible, RIPTA experienced a substantial increase in applications. ***On July 1, 2024, the wage increased again to \$25.84 per hour.***

New CDL Permit Test Training Program

RIPTA partnered with the Rhode Island Institute for Labor Studies & Research (ILSR) to launch a new Commercial Driver's License (CDL) prep course program, designed to attract and prepare new transit drivers in obtaining their CDL permit. This innovative program offers participants a paid opportunity as they prepare for their CDL permit test in an instructor-led classroom.



Passenger Experience

In 2024, RIPTA made significant strides in enhancing the passenger experience, starting with the expansion of its Customer Service Call Center hours to include weekends, ensuring riders can access assistance when they need it most. RIPTA is dedicated to delivering efficient, reliable, and customer-focused transit services that meet the evolving needs of its community. By prioritizing accessibility and modernization, RIPTA continues to pave the way for a brighter future in public transit.

Expanded Customer Service Hours

In July, the Customer Service Call Center opened on weekends to better serve its passengers. The new hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, and Saturday and Sunday from 8 AM to 12 PM and 1 PM to 4 PM.

This expansion aims to provide more comprehensive support to the transit agency's passengers, ensuring that they have access to the information and assistance they need, even on weekends.



Passenger Experience

Bus Stop Improvements

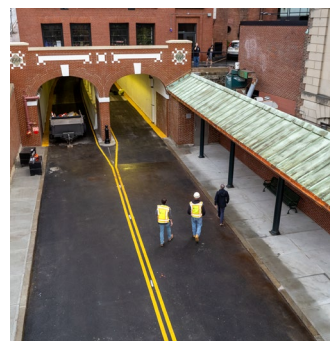
RIPTA continued to focus on bus stop improvements with the goal of creating safer, more accessible, and more welcoming transit spaces for riders. With emphasis on bus shelter cleanliness, repairs to existing shelters, addition of new shelters, and enhancement of ADA accessibility, this initiative includes new funding partnerships with municipalities, community-based organizations, and private developers.

East Side Tunnel Bus Shelter Restoration

As part of RIPTA's East Side Bus Tunnel improvement project, RIPTA engaged neighborhood stakeholders and learned that the historic shelter at the tunnel's North Main Street entrance was a well-loved landmark, although in need of some care and attention. With assistance from the artisans at the Rhode Island School of Design, the 110-year-old bus shelter has been meticulously restored to its original condition, preserving its historical significance while strengthening it for the next 100 years.

New Customer-Facing Technology

At transit centers and mobility hubs across the state, real-time information screens are making their debut, most recently at RIPTA's new West Bay hub at CCRI Warwick. These screens provide up-to-the-minute updates on bus arrivals and departures, helping riders plan their trips with greater ease and accuracy. In 2025, RIPTA will install new real-time information screens in each of the Kennedy Plaza shelters inside the transit center. These investments demonstrate RIPTA's commitment to leveraging technology to make public transit more convenient and reliable for its customers.

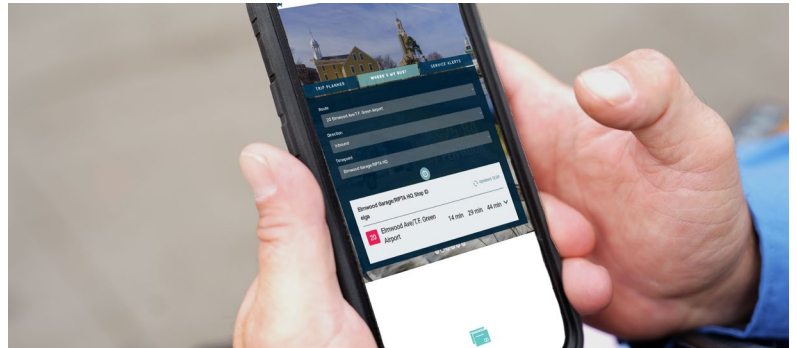


Rider Survey

In October, RIPTA conducted an onboard passenger survey across all fixed-route and Flex service to learn more about our riders' travel patterns and needs. These findings will complement our automatic passenger counter (APC) and farebox data, which track rider numbers but do not capture specific origins, destinations, or demographic insights. Over 5,000 riders participated in the survey, providing RIPTA with a more comprehensive understanding of our ridership and enabling us to ensure equity while better planning future programs, service changes, and capital projects.

33.6%

of survey respondents have been riding RIPTA for 10 or more years

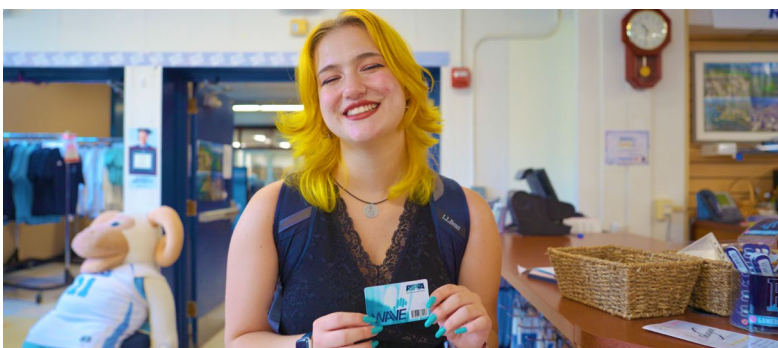
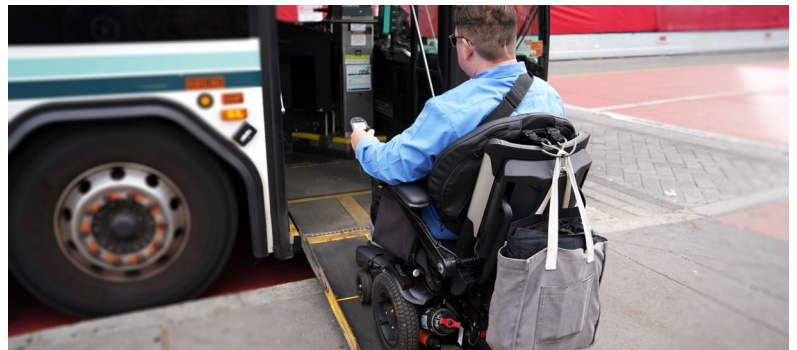


63.1%

of survey respondents use RIPTA 5 or more days per week

31.9%

of respondents are students, including middle school, high school, college, and trade school students



61.1%

of survey respondents paid their fare using Wave

Green Transportation for a Greener Rhode Island

R-Line Electrification

The R-Line, Rhode Island's first rapid bus service, celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. The buses on this route efficiently transport large numbers of riders, carrying approximately 9,000 riders each day. These specially branded vehicles run RIPTA's busiest and most frequent service, connecting the cities of Providence, Cranston, and Pawtucket.

By fully electrifying this route, RIPTA has converted **20% of all passenger trips to zero-emissions and lowered emissions on a key corridor**, where many low-income and diverse communities have been affected by air pollution and experience high asthma rates.

Electric Bus In-Line Charging Station

Making the electrified R-Line possible is the Northeast region's first ever electric bus in-line charging station. This cutting-edge charging station powers RIPTA's fleet of fourteen New Flyer Xcelsior XE40 battery electric buses, all of which exclusively serve the R-Line. Together, these state-of-the-art chargers and vehicles are making it possible for RIPTA to lead by example when it comes to battling climate change.



Green Transportation for a Greener Rhode Island

Whether you're biking to work or riding on one of our electric buses, you're doing your part to create a greener Rhode Island.

No Pollute Commute

This year, RIPTA's Commuter Resource RI team launched a "No Commute Pollute" challenge in recognition of National Bike Month, with 67 new commuters signing up to swap their car ride for a ride on two wheels. Biking and taking the bus can be a winning combination for people who want to bicycle part of the way to work and then take public transportation. This approach not only helps commuters save money on fuel and parking costs but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to a cleaner environment. All fixed-route buses are equipped with bicycle racks, making it easy for riders to combine biking with public transit for an eco-friendly commute.

 *reduced carbon emissions*
4.14 tons

 *gas saved*
423 gallons

 *miles bicycled instead of driving*
9,650 miles

 *money saved*
\$6,466



Transit Master Plan

RIPTA's transit network is finding new anchors across the state, including:

CCRI Warwick

RIPTA and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) completed the \$1.8 Million Bus Stop Enhancement Project at the Knight Campus in Warwick, improving transit accessibility and enhancing the rider experience. The campus now features upgraded bus stops with real-time information screens, ADA-accessible seating, and enhanced lighting for safety and visibility. This project sets a new standard for transit infrastructure and anchors RIPTA's growing West Bay service network.

Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center

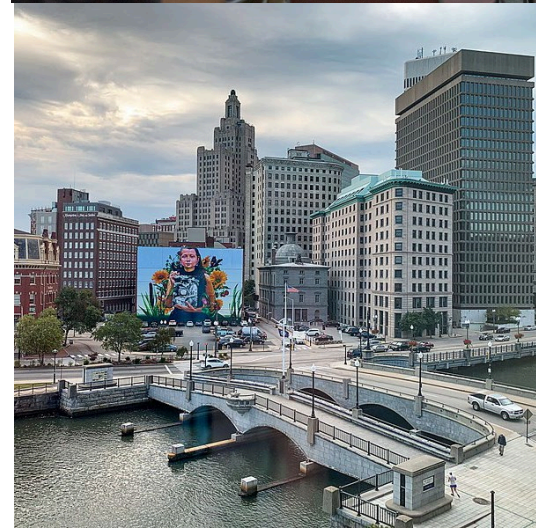
Construction began this fall on a new intermodal passenger facility that will include a staffed customer service window, indoor waiting area with real-time information screens, public and driver restrooms, and a Pawtucket Police substation, all designed to enhance the experience for both bus and rail passengers.

South County Transit Center

In November, RIPTA asked the community to weigh in on proposed improvements to the transit hub at Kingston Station. This upcoming project will enhance bus facilities, passenger amenities, and connections between Amtrak rail service and RIPTA, bus, paratransit, and Flex On Demand service, as well as access to the William C. O'Neill Bike Path. South County's transportation needs are growing, so RIPTA's presence in South County is growing, too.

Providence Transit Center

RIPTA embarked on an intensive site selection process for a new transit center this year, exploring multiple locations and engaging the public through meetings and surveys, gathering input from hundreds of Rhode Islanders. This state-of-the-art transit center will feature temperature-controlled access to bus berths, multi-modal accommodations, and staff facilities. With a potential location near the Providence train station, the center will serve RIPTA's growing ridership with improved connectivity while supporting economic development opportunities and expanding federal funding opportunities.



Transit Master Plan

Service Improvements

Thanks to RIPTA's workforce initiatives, a growing team of bus operators means opportunities for better service levels in the community. In 2024 RIPTA not only averted planned service reductions but also was able to expand service to new locations such as Amazon and restore service coverage that was reduced in 2022. Riders can expect more service improvements in 2025, including increases in service frequency.

Metro Connector Study

Public transit is critical to supporting Rhode Island's economy by improving access to key job centers, while attracting and retaining businesses that rely on efficient transit for both workforce and customer access. This year, RIPTA launched the Metro Connector Study to plan for high-capacity transit routes in key corridors along Central Falls, Pawtucket, Cranston, Providence, and Warwick. The project aims to develop fast, reliable, and frequent transit that connects regional activity centers, neighborhoods, and major transportation hubs in the Providence area while achieving other state goals related to climate, sustainable housing growth, public health, and boosting the economy in a fair way. Commencement of a high-capacity corridor study is a key objective set out in the Transit Forward RI Plan. This allows us to lay the groundwork to expand service and to make bigger investments in public transit.

Coming Up : Rapid Bus Planning Effort

A key recommendation of the Transit Forward RI plan is creation of a Rapid Bus network, building on the success of the R-Line by upgrading seven additional routes to the fast, frequent ten-minute service that R-Line riders have come to rely on. With a \$8,492,00 grant through USDOT's RAISE program, RIPTA will begin laying the groundwork for these improvements in 2025.



Growing Ridership

Service and fare partnerships enable RIPTA to offer more transit service to more people and are a key recommendation of the Transit Forward RI plan.

Ride Anywhere Pilot Program

In January, RIPTA launched Ride Anywhere, a pilot program offering unrestricted, statewide curb-to-curb service for qualified passengers with disabilities who were previously limited to traveling within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from fixed bus routes, as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the pilot, qualified passengers can travel anywhere in the state without restriction of either service area or time of day. From January through November, riders took 5,974 trips through the program, including 895 trips scheduled by new users. While the pilot is ongoing, RIPTA will conduct a study to analyze program outcomes and provide recommendations for its sustainability.



Flex On Demand Pilot Program

RIPTA debuted a new microtransit pilot program called Flex On Demand, designed to revolutionize how Rhode Islanders experience public transit. This innovative service brings the convenience of rideshare apps to public transportation, allowing passengers to book a trip from wherever they are within the 203 Flex Zone, which includes Narragansett, South Kingstown, University of Rhode Island and the Kingston Train Station. Riders can easily use this new on demand curb-to-curb service by downloading the mobile app.

Community Transportation Program

RIPTA strives to bring transportation resources to the table to get all Rhode Islanders where they need to go. Through this program, RIPTA has been able to purchase passenger vans in partnership with local municipalities and not-for-profit organizations in rural areas throughout Rhode Island. This year, New Shoreham and Little Compton received vans that will be used to transport older adults and people with disabilities to essential activities. Additionally, RIPTA worked with the ATU to identify retired drivers to help staff the van at Benjamin Church Senior Center in Bristol.



Growing Ridership

Next Stop: Amazon

In late October, RIPTA launched a new pilot bus service to the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Johnston. This new service aims to provide Amazon employees with convenient, reliable transit options that align with shift schedules, reinforcing RIPTA's mission to expand access to employment centers across the state as part of Transit Forward RI 2040, Rhode Island's comprehensive transit master plan. Additionally, Amazon has committed to purchasing up to \$90,000 in fare products annually for the next 10 years.

Building Residential Partnerships

Pennrose Companies, the developer of the new Tempo apartments in Providence's Fox Point neighborhood, is purchasing one year of RIPTA fare products for eligible residents. In exchange, RIPTA will deploy one new bus shelter near the new complex. This partnership is the first of its kind in Rhode Island with a housing development and will bring much-needed affordable transit-oriented development housing to the Providence market.

Hop-On Hop-Off Newport Returned for Third Season

The free Hop-On-Hop-Off bus service in Newport successfully reduced summer traffic congestion while providing key connections for both residents and tourists. Funded by Discover Newport and the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island, the promotion ran from Memorial Day through the end of October. RIPTA recorded 161,001 passenger trips on Route 67 and 15,974 passenger trips on Route 68 between May 24 and October 31, 2024.



Grants & Awards

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting

RIPTA has been awarded this certificate for its FY 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The Certificate of Achievement is “the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management,” the association stated in its letter to RIPTA.

\$7.4 Million Buses & Bus Facilities Grant

This Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant award will be used for the rehabilitation of the 102-year-old maintenance and office building located at 265 Melrose Street in Providence. This funding marks a significant milestone in RIPTA’s ongoing efforts to return this historical facility to a state of good repair and enhance its operational capacity. Originally built in 1922, the Melrose Street facility has served as a cornerstone of RIPTA’s operations for decades. However, the building has faced substantial deterioration over the years, necessitating repairs and upgrades.

This rehabilitation and modernization project will focus on critical improvements including repairing the building shell to eliminate water vulnerabilities, upgrading the HVAC system, and completing asbestos abatement. These efforts will prevent further deterioration, ensuring the building remains structurally sound and safe for future use.

\$5 Million Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant

Through the Federal Highway Administration’s Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program, RIPTA secured funding to support the state and participating communities in planning for roadway improvements that will prevent injuries and save lives. With substantial public involvement, the SS4A project is creating municipal Safety Action Plans for 31 participating communities, as well as a statewide Safety Action Plan. Plans include recommendations for roadway redesigns, intersection improvements, and community safety programs to establish a tangible version of the Safe Streets for All mission in a way that feels right for each community. As the Safety Action Plans are finalized in 2025, it will be the responsibility of each city and town to secure implementation funding and carry out the recommended improvements.

In the Community

RIPTA demonstrated its commitment to community and inclusivity through various initiatives and events throughout the year, emphasizing the vital role a transit agency plays in fostering connections and supporting the people it serves. Public transportation is more than just a means of getting from one place to another; it is a lifeline that brings people together and supports access to opportunities, resources, and services. As such, a transit agency's engagement with the community it serves is critical to building trust, inclusivity, and a shared sense of purpose.

Pride Illuminated Night Parade

RIPTA employees, wearing brightly colored 'The Bus is for ALL of Us' T-shirts, proudly marched alongside Governor McKee in the Rhode Island Pride Illuminated Night Parade. RIPTA remains committed to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and tolerant workplace.



Christmas in July Food Drive

Summer is the hardest time of the year for many individuals and families in Rhode Island. RIPTA held an agency-wide Christmas in July Food Drive to help alleviate this seasonal hardship for Rhode Islanders. Together, employees successfully collected 1,000 lbs. of food for the Rhode Island Food Bank.



Monster Dash 5K

RIPTA staff members had the chance to dash through RIPTA's historic East Side Tunnel alongside the CEO in this annual race. The tunnel, recently reopened after significant renovations, added a unique twist to the course, making the race both thrilling and memorable. Special congratulations to our Community Outreach Officer, Jim Vincent, for winning first place in his age bracket.



Buy Nothing Day Coat Exchange

RIPTA embraced the spirit of giving this holiday season by collecting 200 new and gently worn coats and warm items for the Buy Nothing Day Coat Exchange, held on the State House lawn. This annual event provides individuals and families with essential winter gear, often serving as their primary resource for staying warm during the colder months.





Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Board of Directors

Peter Alviti, Chairman

Robert Kells, Vice Chair

James Leach, Treasurer

Patrick Crowley, Secretary

Normand Benoit

Marcy Reyes

Heather Schey

James Lombardi

Vincent Masino