

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, December 5, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Chairperson Heather Schey, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Deanne Gagne, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Raymond Lemerick, Nick Lett, Diane LeSuer, Olivia Lozier, Crystal Martin, Janice Musco, Christie Seymour, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

RIPTA: Ella Ackerman, Brooks Almonte, Fiorentini, Nate Hannon, Paul Harrington, Joelle Kanter, Chris McKenna, Joseph Solomon.

Presenter: Adam Jensen, Reveal Transit/MTM.

Call to Order: Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:06 PM.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, then announced ATAC membership based on participation in five of the past twelve meetings. Members are Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Liza Burkin, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Tracy Clossick, Frank Cummings, Laurie Diorio, Grant Dulgarian, Rachel Ferreira, Deanne Gagne, Casey Gartland, Zachary Gauthier, Devin Guirales, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Olivia Lozier, Crystal Martin, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Heather Schey, Angelina Stabile, and Mark Susa.

Myles Brawn-Husband made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 7, 2024 ATAC meeting. Christopher Bove seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

RIPTA Updates:

- Key performance indicators: Joe Solomon presented on the Ride Anywhere pilot program which enables Ride paratransit customers to request trips anywhere in the state. He reported a 6% seasonal dip in ridership from 503 service hours in October to 487 in November, which is typical for paratransit service. In November, the cost for taxi trips was approximately \$35,476, while the cost for van trips was \$11,514. Program expenses totaled \$333,035.61 from the beginning of January through the end of November.

Meeting participants asked about submitting written testimony to RIPTA's Board of Directors to request a program extension. Joelle Kanter also reminded the committee that a consulting team (Nelson\Nygaard) is preparing to interview a cross-section of riders about their experiences as part of a study on the pilot program. This spring, RIPTA will submit a report to the General Assembly comparing actual demand with prior forecasts and suggesting program alternatives.

Although the pilot was scheduled to last for a year, starting January 1, 2024, RIPTA staff is recommending an extension. ATAC will be notified once that's confirmed.

- Wave payment for RId: Riders are testing Wave payment for RId as RIPTA prepares for the official launch. Some participants said that RId drivers need more information about how to use the system. Others said that when drivers have issues with their tablets, they have to call dispatch to process payment. Brooks Almonte, RId, said they are aware of these issues and are working through them. In those cases, payment is deducted the next day. Trips on taxis are typically processed the following day as well.

Several participants mentioned experiences with taxi drivers requesting to see their plastic Wave cards on board. Chris McKenna, RId, said customers shouldn't be asked for verification, and he agreed to send companies a reminder about that. Christie Seymour, a taxi operator, said that customers often pay with cash when they have problems with Wave cards.

Christopher Bove then added that RIPTA CEO Christopher Durand directed staff to analyze Earn as You Go with Wave payment for RId customers. He asked when ATAC would expect an analysis, and Joelle Kanter said the team had a meeting scheduled the next day.

- RId Reveal app demonstration: Adam Jensen, account manager for Reveal, described plans for RId to roll out the new MTM Go app which will replace the current RId app. It uses a newer platform, has an improved 'where's my RId' feature, and gives users the ability to request their own trips. The app is currently in the process of getting approval from the Apple and Google Play stores.

Adam guided participants through the app on screen, starting with the login fields. When customers request trips, they appear as pending reservations. Push notifications then confirm whether the trips are valid or cancelled. There is also a monthly calendar that indicates the days when trips are scheduled. Users also have the option to cancel trips through the app.

During a discussion, Adam answered questions from participants, noting that during the initial app launch riders would only be able to request trips to and from locations they've already traveled to. Another participant asked about GPS tracking functionality, which has had issues on the current app. He also asked about screen reader testing, which has not been done yet. Adam confirmed that this will be a priority, and the app will have several accessibility features. He also explained that customers can't use the app to request recurring trips, known as standing orders. They can, however, add guests or personal care attendants to their requests.

- Sensitivity training: The Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) recently led cross-disability sensitivity training sessions for RIPTA staff. ATAC chairperson Heather Schey, who works at OSCIL, thanked RIPTA for making this a priority.

- Project updates:
 - Last month, RIPTA's Board of Directors named Christopher Durand as CEO.
 - The Metro Connector Study's existing conditions assessment is now posted on RIPTA's [website](#). It provides an overview of opportunities and constraints and sets the stage for evaluating rapid transit alternatives within the study area which includes the communities of Cumberland, Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Cranston, and Warwick.

Discussion: Heather Schey led an end-of-year review:

- Participants noted many improvements but said that they wanted answers to questions about Wave payment for RIdE and customer service support. Brooks Almonte recommended calling the phone number printed on the back of Wave cards or listed on the Wave app to have issues resolved.
- Another comment related to problems with the current Reveal app, especially when vehicle assignments change. Brooks responded that RIdE customer service staff should call riders to notify them in these situations.
- RIPTA shared the ATAC meeting calendar for 2025, noting that the next meeting is scheduled on Thursday, January 2, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 6:02 PM.