

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 6, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Chairperson Heather Schey, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Vice-chairperson Rui Cabral, Justin Cartwright, Kerry Clark, Vincent DeJesus, Mark Fields, Deanne Gagne, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, John Harwood, Barbara Henry, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Diane LeSuer, Nick Lett, Olivia Lozier, Ryan Lukowicz, Crystal Martin, Brian Rice, Jenaya Smith, Molly Smith, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

RIPTA: Ella Ackerman, Zachary Agush, Steve Fiorentini, Joelle Kanter, Joseph Solomon.

Presenters: Bill Schwartz, Nelson\Nygaard; Julia Spande, Nelson\Nygaard.

Call to Order: Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

Myles Brawn-Husband made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2, 2025 ATAC meeting. Angelina Stabile seconded the motion. Zachary Gauthier abstained, and all others were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Ride Anywhere pilot study update: Bill Schwartz and Julia Spande, Nelson\Nygaard, reported on the study goals: to evaluate the pilot program, suggest options, and outline their funding requirements. Findings will be summarized in a report to the General Assembly by the end of May.

Bill described the differences between Ride ADA paratransit service and the premium Ride Anywhere service before presenting detailed monthly ridership data from January through December 2024. Some key points were:

- Of the 357 customers who used the Ride Anywhere program at least once, 19 people were frequent riders, taking half of all trips.
- 62% of all Ride Anywhere trips went to destinations within 1 mile of the Ride ADA service area.
- Clusters of destinations were apparent in places such as Bristol, Westerly, and northern Rhode Island.
- When comparing sample weeks, the net service delivery cost was \$5,071 for a week in April and \$12,690 for a week in October 2024, noting a marked increase.

Julia then summarized the feedback gathered during nine individual interviews and a focus group session with six participants. Common themes emerged including the desire to keep the program going, an appreciation for the independence and quality of life improvements gained through the program, and constructive feedback about experiences with taxis. Of the 80 survey respondents, 55 had taken at

least one Ride Anywhere trip.

Christopher Bove then commented on the study, noting that for Ride Anywhere pilot trips, RIPTA would already be expending resources for the portion that falls within the ADA service area. He suggested that the program should only subsidize the portion of each trip outside the corridor before making a motion to formally request trip costs broken down this way in the report to the Legislature. Rui Cabral seconded the motion, and after a discussion, it was approved. RIPTA staff agreed to take this into consideration and respond to ATAC if there were any challenges with getting those figures.

Next steps for the study are to continue estimating future demand, refine the cost analysis, and develop recommendations. A draft report will be presented at the April ATAC meeting before going to the legislature in May.

RIPTA key performance indicators: In December 2024, RIPTA had approximately 970,000 trips systemwide including 940,000 fixed route bus trips; 4,300 Flex trips; and 25,400 Ride paratransit trips. On-time performance was 76.4%.

Project update: Ride Reveal app testing: The new Reveal app is still being tested, and it must be fully accessible before its public launch. Members of the test group shared feedback including a desire for better flow for the trip booking process, an improved label for the trip cancel option, text mode instead of a dial for selecting time, improvements to GPS, and solutions for color contrast and font issues. One volunteer said he wasn't able to add an attendant directly through the app, and he also had trouble with scheduling trips by pickup time instead of drop-off time.

Another volunteer questioned whether 48-hour notice was necessary for requesting trips. One suggestion was to set an earlier cutoff on the day before the trip, such as 12 PM or 2 PM, to allow Ride customer service agents enough time to review requests. Heather Schey then asked about requesting return trips to a different location. In those cases, the rider would have to request each leg as a separate trip through the app.

The group discussed priorities, with some people suggesting that Reveal should take the time to fix issues upfront instead of launching the app and addressing them later. Christopher Bove said that RIPTA management needs to know what riders want, and he was frustrated that RIPTA shared information with ATAC after decisions were made instead of consulting with the committee while the app was in development. He expected the new app to be ready by November 2024 based on RIPTA's contract with Reveal/MTM which he obtained through an APRA request. He then asked RIPTA how it plans to hold Reveal/MTM accountable for failing to meet that obligation.

Volunteers and Ride staff will continue working with Reveal to prepare for the launch and ensure that the app is functional, accessible, and user-friendly.

Discussion:

- One Ride customer said she recently learned that she's able to register to use GATRA and SRTA service in neighboring Massachusetts for up to 21 days a year. She wants others to know about

this reciprocal paratransit policy.

- A customer mentioned that she received a notification for a Ride Anywhere trip the next morning with a scheduled pickup time about 15 minutes earlier than usual. Someone from Ride will follow up with her about this.
- One rider who uses a mobility device suggested that he would like a few extra minutes added to his ready time window for Ride trips.
- Another said that Ride customer service agents often ask her if she needs an extra time cushion for her trips, and she doesn't want them making that assumption. Instead, she likes to be specific with her requested times.

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 PM.