

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 5, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Chairperson Heather Schey, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Chris Bove, Liza Burkin, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Justin Cartright, Kerry Clark, Vincent DeJesus, Rachel Ferreira, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, Barbara Henry, Mona Hussein, Diane LeSuer, Nick Lett, Crystal Martin, Janice Musco, Brian Rice, Jenaya Smith, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

RIPTA: Ella Ackerman, Zachary Agush, Brooks Almonte, Armando Ferreira, Steve Fiorentini, Paul Harrington, Joelle Kanter, Nicky Mudryy, Jamie Pereira, Joseph Solomon, Harold Vemmer.

Call to Order: Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:11 PM.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, announced the list of current ATAC members based on their attendance at five of the previous twelve meetings, in accordance with committee by-laws. They are: Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Frank Cummings, Vincent DeJesus, Rachel Ferreira, Mark Fields, Deanne Gagne, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Diane LeSuer, Raymond Lemerick, Nick Lett, Olivia Lozier, Crystal Martin, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Heather Schey, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, and Paula Vinacco.

Angie Stabile made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 1, 2025 meeting. Myles Brawn-Husband seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Travel training launch plans:

The new travel training network, funded through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant, will encourage older adults and people with disabilities to ride fixed-route buses independently. Later this month, RIPTA will host a meeting with partners to review the training materials and present videos on planning a trip, paying for a trip, and riding the bus.

After previewing the first video, participants shared the following feedback:

- It's helpful to know that all fixed-route buses have ramps.
- In the video, the audio description of a blue button on RIPTA's website could be improved for people with visual impairments.
- The concept of inbound/outbound route schedules can be confusing for riders. It's important for them to confirm that their bus is going in the right direction.
- The Transit app is accessible on both Apple and Android phones, but some riders may not have phones.

Participants also named specific organizations that would benefit from the travel training information.

RIPTA Ride—MTM Go app marketing plans and feedback: RIPTA then announced the launch of the new Ride customer-facing mobile app, RIPTA Ride—MTM Go, available through the Google Play and Apple stores. It allows riders to request new trips, access details about their scheduled trips, and cancel existing trips.

Ride staff reminded riders about a few tips:

- They must request trips at least two days in advance with the app, up to two weeks ahead. When calling Ride, they don't have the same restrictions.
- Names must match Ride customer profiles exactly. The log-in information must be the same.

After watching an instructional video, participants made suggestions such as adding captions and incorporating instructions for downloading the app and logging into an account.

A discussion followed:

- A rider asked whether RIPTA plans to give Flex customers the option to book trips through the app. Staff explained that Flex on Demand currently has its own app for the 203 Flex Zone (URI/Narragansett/South Kingstown), but the other Flex Zones do not.
- A rider said that taxis were not showing up in the app yet, and the notifications weren't working. The Ride team will follow up with Reveal on the status.
- Riders asked about adding new trip locations through the app. For now, since this process isn't automated and only commonly used locations appear, they must call Ride customer service agents.
- A rider asked about how to request trips between three locations. They should request three one-way trips and call Ride to confirm.
- Another rider asked about saving his password in the app. People suggested using autofill options through Apple and Android phones.
- Someone else asked for mobility device preferences to populate automatically. The Ride team will talk to the app developer about this.

The Ride team suggested emailing ride@ripta.com with other questions about the app.

RIPTA updates:

- Ride Anywhere pilot evaluation: RIPTA completed its study of the statewide paratransit pilot program, incorporating feedback from ATAC. Meeting participants requested more information about Ride functional assessments which were mentioned in the report as a consideration.
- RIPTA operational efficiency study: Zach Agush, RIPTA, gave an update on the data collection and peer review work. He plans to follow up with more information later in the summer.
- Summer service changes: RIPTA's summer service changes go into effect on Saturday, June 21, 2025. They impact Routes Qx, 14, 20, 31, 51, 54, 56, 60, 66, 67, 69, 72, 87 and 95x. Select summer services also start on that date, including the free shuttle service to the Providence/Newport ferry and the Express Beach Bus. Routes 67 and 68 in Newport will also be free through October 31, 2025. RIPTA will email a link for more information online.

Discussion:

- A meeting participant asked about the potential for RIPTA service cuts due to funding challenges. Another participant recommended advocating for the agency by contacting their representatives and senators.
- A participant described an uncomfortably hot taxi trip with the driver refusing to turn on air conditioning. She doesn't want to take trips with that company again, so she called RIdE and left a message.
- Another participant mentioned several negative experiences with the same taxi company. She should call RIdE immediately in those situations.
- Another rider said that some fixed-route drivers are argumentative when she asks them to turn on the air conditioning on the bus. She also mentioned the poor condition of some RIdE vans and said that some buses need thorough cleaning.
- Others described similar hot conditions on RIdE vans. Chairperson Heather Schey suggested that vans without working air conditioning should not be on the road.

ATAC does not meet in July, and the next meeting is scheduled on August 7th.

The meeting adjourned at 5:24 PM.