



January 8, 2024 Meeting Minutes for the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

The Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM in the RIPTA board room, 705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, and online through Microsoft Teams. An attendance sheet is attached to these minutes.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, began by announcing the Coordinating Council's vision: accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders.

Tina Guenette motioned to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2023 Coordinating Council meeting. Katie Tennett seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Kevin Simon and Pam Jennings, Mathewson Street Church, then presented an overview of their partnership with RIPTA on the low-income pilot program. They described the church as a safe, supportive space downtown for people who are unsheltered, and said that during COVID, needs shifted, with access to transportation becoming a barrier for those seeking services, employment, and connections. Through their advocacy, RIPTA established a 6-month pilot program that provided free trips to 775 participants who were not eligible for other transportation benefit programs. They helped to enroll many participants at outreach events, and they are continuing conversations with RIPTA about the next phase. In January, they will start managing participants through their own Wave account, with RIPTA covering all costs through the end of April. In May and June, RIPTA will offer selected pilot partners fare products at a 50% discount. In order to sustain this program, they said that funding is needed.

Member agencies then followed with updates:

- Mario Olivieri, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services, reported on the state's non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) program which contracts with MTM as a broker. They hire 80-90 companies to provide an average of 6,000 trips for Medicaid clients per day using 400 vehicles. MTM also provides trips through the state's Elderly Transportation Program (ETP) for residents age 60+ and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. EOHHS is in its second contract with MTM and is conducting outreach to enhance access in the corners of the state.



- George Andoscia, RI Department of Health, gave an update on the Healthy Eating & Active Living (HEAL) program, which is convening two large workgroups: one focused on coordinated efforts around nutrition and physical activity, and the other as a community facing group focused on increasing access to active transportation.
- Jennifer Papagolos, Tri-County Community Action, is a partner in RIPTA's low-income pilot program. When applying for grants, she is often asked to outline strategies to address transportation barriers.
- Jacques Dextradeur, RI Office of Veterans Services, administers monthly RIPTA passes to an average of 38-42 veterans each month, totaling about 700 per year. He is looking to grow the program in the next fiscal year.
- Peter Joly, RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals, requested links for information about available programs. Amethys Nieves added that funding for services has changed, and clients with developmental disabilities now have more customized options.

RIPTA then provided project updates:

- RIPTA's Ride Anywhere pilot program had a soft launch this month, enabling qualified paratransit customers with disabilities to request a trip anywhere in the state without being restricted to traveling within ¼-mile of a fixed-bus route, as required by ADA. Participants must enroll in the Ride program before participating in this pilot.
- RIPTA has a grant from FTA to create a statewide travel training network to coordinate activities and ensure that information remains up to date. The consulting team recommends new supporting materials, including a checklist of skills, and will present to this group in March.

Discussion: Opportunities for collaboration and fundraising

RIPTA announced the opportunity to apply for competitive Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Grants through the Federal Transit Administration to improve access to public transportation. Proposals are due on Feb. 13, 2024, and potential projects should meet needs outlined in the Coordinated Plan. Participants mentioned other funding opportunities as well:



- Charon Rose, RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, described the process of applying for the US Economic Development Administration’s Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program with several partners including the RI Department of Labor & Training, the Rhode Island Foundation, and Skills for Rhode Island’s Future. Although the submission was unsuccessful, she learned about non-academic barriers to work and training, such as transportation, childcare and housing. Conversations are ongoing with potential funders at education centers.
- Lorna Oinonen, AARP Rhode Island, announced the AARP Community Challenge Grant program. Applications are due in March, and projects must be completed in November 2024.
- Kim Rauch, RI Department of Human Services, noted that 80,000 Rhode Islanders are engaged in the SNAP Employment & Training program through 10 different agencies. She is interested in finding centralized funding streams to support transportation.

The next meeting is scheduled on March 11, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM.



**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
January 8, 2024 Attendance List (in person and Teams)**

Name	Organization
Ella Ackerman	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
George Andoscia	RI Department of Health
Benny Bergantino	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Susan Biagioni	RI Department of Labor & Training
Elizabeth Bioteau	RI Housing
James Canty	RIPTA
Melissa Cocroft	RI Primary Care Physicians
Jacques Dextrateur	RI Office of Veterans Services
Sherry Diaz	Comprehensive Community Action
Grant Dulgarian	advocate
Kim Einloth	Town of New Shoreham
Ishaa Gatkari	RI Department of Health
Tina Guenette	RAMP
Sarah Ingle	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Peter Joly	RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Amethys Nieves	RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Maude Nimely	Community Action Partnership of Providence
Joelle Kanter	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Estephany Matrille	RI Community Action Association
Lorna Oinonen	AARP
Mario Olivieri	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Kim Rauch	RI Department of Human Services
Darlene Reza Rossi	AARP RI
Charon Rose	RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner
Pam Jennings	Mathewson Street Church
Jennifer Papagolos	Tri-County Community Action
Sarah Prak	RIVETS
Kevin Simon	Mathewson Street Church



Katherine Tennett	East Bay Community Action Program
Jihtaveya Witter	RI Department of Human Services