

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, May 2, 2024

MEETING MINUTES

Participants (Teams and in-person): Chairperson Heather Schey, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Liza Burkin, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Tracy Clossick, Frank Cummings, Laurie Diorio, Rachel Ferreira, Mark Fields, Deanne Gagne, Devin Guirales, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Nick Lett, Crystal Martin, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile, Mark Susa.

RIPTA: Zachary Agush, James Canty, Steve Fiorentini, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Maribeth Pacillo, Joseph Solomon.

Call to Order: Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Angie Stabile made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 4, 2024 ATAC meeting. After a brief discussion, Rui Cabral seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Ride Updates:

- Ride paratransit data: In January 2024, on-time performance dipped slightly to 91.2%, which may be attributed to Washington Bridge traffic rerouting and the Ride Anywhere pilot program. On-time performance has since improved to 92.4% in February, 92.9% in March, and 92.7% in April. 82.1% of Ride trips are on Ride vans, while 17.9% are on taxis. Twelve companies now have contracts to operate paratransit service: Anytime Anywhere, Christie Seymour Transportation, City Express Cab, Deride Taxi, Direct Medical, Kay Dolly Taxi, PRL Taxi, R&C Caring, Samkay Taxi, Sin-cere Transportation, WT Better days Auto, and Zion Taxi. Taxis are assigned to ambulatory customers exclusively.
- Ride Anywhere pilot update: From January through the end of April 2024, the Ride Anywhere pilot provided 1,275 trips to 140 unique riders. An average trip costs \$44 on a Ride van and \$57 on a taxi. The most requested communities are Warwick, West Warwick, and Woonsocket for pick-ups, and Warwick and Providence for drop-offs.
- Wave payment testing for Ride program: Testing is on hold, and the Ride division will contact volunteers when ready.

RIPTA Updates:

- RIPTA has a new interim Chief Executive Officer Christopher Durand. He most recently served as Chief Financial Officer for the agency.
- Last month, RIPTA's Board of Directors decided not to vote on proposed service changes, following staff recommendations. The agency will focus on driver recruitment and will improve communication about cancelled trips through notifications sent via Transit app and Google Maps.
- RIPTA is asking riders to complete a customer satisfaction survey, available online through

May 5, 2024.

- Zachary Agush introduced RIPTA's High Capacity Transit project, which was identified as a priority in the Transit Forward RI 2040 Master Plan. This 16-month study involves an alternatives analysis for bus rapid transit (BRT) or light rail on two potential corridors and will evaluate the right of way, station locations, access, and other factors. RIPTA is starting to look at existing conditions and will announce public engagement opportunities this summer.
- James Canty said that RIPTA is actively working with the city to add temporary bus stops closer to Thayer Street during the East Side transit tunnel construction.
- James also said that new restroom trailers have been delivered to the Pawtucket/Central Falls Transit Center. RIPTA is currently out to bid on building construction which is expected to start in late summer 2024 and finish in late 2025.
- RIPTA hired a new project manager to focus on bus stops and shelters. He is identifying locations for new shelters and confirming that adjacent sidewalks are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- James also gave an update on RIPTA's meetings with downtown stakeholders on the progressive public-private partnership (P3) to develop a new transit hub in Providence.

RIPTA Transit Talks Public Engagement Session:

- The public is invited to meet with RIPTA and Next Wave Rhode Island Partners, learn about the Providence Transit Center project, and provide feedback. An open house is scheduled from 4-7 PM on Monday, May 13, 2024 in the lobby area at Amica Mutual Pavilion in Providence.

Discussion:

- A RIdE customer asked whether they'd be able to get text messages the evening before a scheduled trip naming the taxi company assigned to pick them up. Currently, riders currently must call RIdE customer service each morning if they wish to get this information. This request has been made several times at ATAC meetings, and it was raised as a safety issue. One person described this as a top priority for the Reveal app upgrades which are expected by the end of the year. This will be conveyed to the RIdE management team.
- RIdE customers asked how RIPTA is publicizing the RIdE Anywhere pilot program. Information appears on the RIdE program page on RIPTA's website. Also, when RIdE customer service agents get calls, they mention the pilot to customers.
- Another participant asked about the end date for the RIdE Anywhere pilot, which is expected at the end of the calendar year or when all dedicated funds are spent, whichever comes first. RIPTA will prepare a report for the General Assembly by June 2025.
- In response to a question, RIPTA staff said that RIdE does not limit pilot trips to specific purposes. However, all participants must be enrolled in the RIdE paratransit program.
- A RIdE consumer asked RIPTA to set a target date for Wave payment to be available for RIdE trips. He expressed frustration about several false starts with testing and asked RIPTA to share a sense of urgency about this. Chairperson Heather Schey noted that testing had started earlier this year, but an issue was identified, and funds weren't taken out of riders' accounts. She will communicate back to the RIdE division.

- In response to a question at the last meeting about specs for the RIdе vehicles on order, Joelle Kanter described them as Turtletop Odysseys with a 16/2 configuration, just like the vans delivered last year. They have three steps altogether with the lowest height of any cutaway configuration.
- A rider said the push-to-talk button was fixed at the Pawtucket Transit Center, but he wasn't able to obtain route information. James Canty said that stop B should be working and stop A should be fixed tomorrow.
- A rider mentioned a certain RIdе driver who's been consistently late and grumpy. She has already reported him to RIdе.
- A RIdе customer said he has been dropped off at CCRI Warwick by the bus stop at CCRI, and it's difficult to get from there to the main entrance. RIPTA staff suggested calling RIdе to indicate his preference.
- A question was asked about the construction timeline at CCRI Warwick. Construction is complete, but the screens were delayed. They should be installed in shelters tomorrow.
- Another rider asked about requirements for strapping in wheelchairs on fixed-route buses. RIPTA staff advised him that he should always be secured properly and should notify drivers if his wheelchair doesn't feel secure. Riders can also follow up with RIPTA customer service immediately about any concerns.
- Several participants are interested in the RIPTA board meeting schedule.
- Some riders noted that buses have been behind schedule due to construction on the Washington Bridge.
- A participant suggested inviting a representative from The Arc to participate in ATAC meetings.
- A RIdе customer repeated his request to simplify the RIdе recertification process for people with permanent disabilities. Heather Schey said she's starting to research options, as several ATAC members have suggested this.

The meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM.