



March 10, 2025 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 2:02 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.

Darlene Reza Rossi motioned to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2025 Coordinating Council meeting with one change, noting that she had been in attendance. Lorna Oinonen seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Modified minutes were approved.

Representative Lauren Carson then gave an overview of the Rhode Island Older Adults Commission. Launched in September 2023, the 17-member commission is responsible for preparing a multi-sector aging plan with technical assistance from the Center for Healthcare Strategies. A core planning team has looked at policies from other states and identified seven key focus areas, including transportation. The final report will include a set of objectives which may lead to proposed legislation and improved nonprofit program coordination. Coventry Human Services Director Bob Robillard, who serves as a commissioner, said he appreciates the cross-sector collaborations already in place that help Rhode Islanders of all abilities age successfully in their communities. The commission aims to understand the good work that's happening, where the gaps are, and how groups can collaborate more effectively. This planning effort is participatory, and the commission has worked closely with the state's Office of Healthy Aging and other departments to ensure that it's inclusive. Representative Carson will start a mailing list and will follow up to refine ideas and recommendations for the transportation domain.

RIPTA project updates followed:

- Ride Anywhere Study: RIPTA is preparing a report on the pilot program that allows Ride paratransit customers to request trips anywhere in the state. It will include ridership data, program expenses, and feedback gathered through interviews and surveys. The pilot launched in January 2024 and was expected to last for a year, but RIPTA's board of directors agreed to extend it.



- Travel training program: RIPTA is continuing to develop new travel training materials and will encourage partners across the state to utilize them to help their clients ride fixed route buses independently.
- Transit Master Plan update: RIPTA is beginning work on a limited update of the Transit Master Plan to incorporate changes since 2020 related to shifting travel patterns, funding sources, and priorities. A draft State of the System report should be available for review soon.
- Low-income program: Partner organizations may apply for RIPTA's low-income program if they fund transportation for riders experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. If approved, the organizations receive a discount on specific fare products through their institutional Wave accounts.
- Rides Toward Work: This collaboration between RIPTA and the Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP) utilizes funding from the Federal Transit Administration's Human Services Coordination Research discretionary grant program and a match from the RI Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide on-demand trips to participants in the CCAP RI Works program. Patricia Rivera, CCAP, described the challenges clients face with accessing RI Works program-related activities, particularly if they're traveling with children to day care or live far from RIPTA bus routes. By removing transportation barriers, this program has helped clients complete vocational training and prepare for job readiness. Meghan Nhar, CCAP, shared trip data, noting that clients took 269 trips in January, 301 trips in February, and 132 to date in March. They both noted several success stories credited to the program.

Agency project updates followed:

- Donna Rook, RI Department of Human Services, connected transportation challenges to other issues affecting families. She reported that statistics on homelessness in Rhode Island show an increase in older adults, people with disabilities, and families with children. DHS is focused on upstream preventions to keep people from being evicted. She also mentioned an opportunity for grandparents who are caretakers for their grandchildren to receive cash assistance.
- Mario Olivieri, RI EOHHS, noted a change in eligible destinations for people enrolled in the state's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program. Medicaid typically requires the patient to be inside the vehicle, but now, a parent or guardian may take a trip to consultation appointments on medical care without that individual.
- Benny Bergantino, RI Division of Statewide Planning, said that the Long Range Transportation Plan update is due in December 2025. The final phase of engagement will take place in the spring. Projects



for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) are due in March, with the STIP due in September.

Other partner updates:

- Deb Burton, RI Elder Info, reminded the group about the opportunity to be interviewed about programs for older adults during her Friday Friends program. She also has a networking group, the Community Collaboration for Seniors, on the second Wednesday morning of each month.
- Ritchell Chery, AAA Northeast, announced a senior summit about aging successfully on May 13th. More details are forthcoming.

The meeting adjourned at 3:06 PM.



**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
March 10, 2025 Attendance List (in person and Teams)**

Name	Organization
Benny Bergantino	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Deb Burton	RI Elder Info
Rep. Lauren Carson	House of Representatives: District 75, Newport
Anita Chase	RI Department of Human Services
Ritchell Chery	AAA Northeast
Laurie Diorio	RI Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (DHS/ORS)
Tiffany Johnson	House Policy Analyst
Peter Joly	RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Joelle Kanter	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Estephany Matrille	RI Association of Community Action Agencies
Meghan Nhar	Comprehensive Community Action Program
Amethys Nieves	RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Lorna Oinonen	AARP RI
Mario Olivieri	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Darlene Reza Rossi	AARP RI
Patricia Rivera	Comprehensive Community Action Program
Bob Robillard	Coventry Human Services and RI Senior Center Directors Association
Donna Rook	RI Department of Human Services
Holly Snyder	AARP RI