

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**RIPTA Transportation Conference Room
705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island 02907
Thursday, December 5, 2019**

Attendees: Rui Cabral (Chair), Robert Beauregard, Benny Bergantino, John Carvalho, Vincent DeJesus, Monica Dzialo, Deanne Gagne, Barbara Henry, Barry Humphries, Janice Musco, Jeanne Ouellette, Grace Pires, Randall Rose, Angela Stabile, Lisa Stamp, and Mark Susa.

RIPTA Staff in attendance: Joelle Kanter, Gregory Nordin, and Lillian Picchione.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Rui Cabral called the ATAC meeting to order at 4:11 PM.

II. RIPTA project update: Electric buses

Lillian Picchione, Director of RIPTA's Zero Emission Vehicle program gave a presentation describing the program's goals, current status, challenges with implementation, and opportunities for data collection. RIPTA received funding through the VW settlement to lease three battery electric buses and is currently testing deployments. Each bus has two securements for wheelchairs including a Q'Straint, which was described in a video. In phase two of the program, RIPTA anticipates buying 17 additional electric buses.

Committee members expressed some concerns about the wheelchair securements, noting challenges with the angles of lining up their wheels. Other questions involved concerns about securement malfunctions, such as someone accidentally hitting a button or a bus having power failure. Lilly noted that drivers must physically turn the securements on and off, and she would follow up about power failure concerns.

Lilly suggested that the committee should put their thoughts together and share them with RIPTA's maintenance department. She is also interested in giving ATAC members an opportunity to test a vehicle.

III. Review and approval of meeting minutes

Angie Stabile motioned to accept the November 7, 2019 meeting minutes, and John Carvalho seconded. All were in favor.

IV. Additional RIPTA project updates

- WAVE account-based options for Ride system: Greg Nordin, RIPTA's executive director of planning, said that he met with CEO Scott Avedisian and Brooks Almonte, who runs the paratransit division about options for incorporating WAVE into the Ride system. Rui's

letter stating ATAC's position was helpful in working toward a resolution, and RIPTA plans to respond to the committee formally within the next few weeks. Greg also clarified that RIPTA's current app for fixed route service will be replaced by the new WAVE system in early 2020.

- Transit Forward RI 2040: RIPTA planning staff held a meeting in West Warwick in November to discuss strategies for improving transit service outside the core metro area. Rui was pleased to hear that underserved rural areas of the state are addressed in the plan. Public comments are still accepted through the transit master plan project website, transitforwardri.com, and additional public meetings will be scheduled in early 2020.
- Downtown Transit Connector: On January 18th, a new RIPTA schedule will go into effect with additional service on 7 routes: 1, 3, 4, 51, 54, 58 and 72, serving Rhode Island Hospital every 5 minutes. On routes with a longer span of service, paratransit will also offer later service.
- Bus hub grant: RIPTA received \$10 million to build two new hubs at URI and CCRI's Warwick campus. These larger facilities will accommodate more vehicles, improve service around Route 2, and provide better connections to Westerly.

V. ATAC election planning

Bi-annual elections are scheduled in early 2020, and the positions of chairperson and vice-chair will open.

Angie Stabile motioned to cancel the January ATAC meeting and postpone the election until February 6th. John Carvalho seconded, and all were in favor. RIPTA staff will share a description of duties for each position, and nominations should go to Joelle Kanter by close of business on January 23rd. A slate of nominees will be announced before the election, and ballots will be prepared in advance. Rather than appointing the person who receives the second highest number of votes as vice-chair, RIPTA plans to run to separate elections.

A question arose about whether email votes would be accepted, and RIPTA staff will follow up with a response.

At the meeting, Rui Cabral and Barbara Henry expressed their interest in running for chairperson.

Revision: After reviewing the ATAC by-laws carefully in consultation with RIPTA's attorney in the weeks following this meeting, staff agreed on a different process, outlined below. Details were shared with the committee by email on January 10th.

- **The committee will vote on membership at the February 6th meeting.**
- **The committee will review the proposed position descriptions (outlined below and**

attached), and will vote to amend or approve them.

- The current chairperson will accept nominations for officers from members at the meeting, and will conduct separate votes for each position by secret ballot.

In addition, RIPTA staff stated that it would not accept nominations in advance of the meeting.

VI. RIPTA Reports: Key performance indicators

RIPTA staff reported on fixed route KPIs. Bus monitoring ADA reports were shared for services between October 1st and November 16th, but the vendor's contract has been terminated, and this will be the last report. In October, 69 trips were monitored including 59 from Providence and 10 from Newport. 66 of those trips were in full compliance. 523 announcements were required, and 493 were made. 64 operators were monitored altogether. Between November 1st and 16th, 35 trips were monitored including 33 from Providence and 2 from Newport. 35 of those trips were in full compliance. 233 announcements were required, and 233 were made. 34 operators were monitored altogether.

RIPTA's fixed-route weekday on-time performance rate was 77.9%. Its total rate was 78.7% on-time including weekdays, weekends, and holidays.

Ride data will be available at the next meeting.

VII. Ride/RIPTA service feedback

- The committee discussed issues with drivers lowering ramps at bus stops because of snow. Property owners are responsible for their own snow removal, and committee members asked who to contact to address problem spots. Each municipality is responsible for enforcing its own ordinances, and RIPTA will share more information.
- A driver on a #54 bus leaving Woonsocket refused to let on a second wheelchair yesterday. RIPTA staff will follow up on this.
- Randall Rose asked about potential changes to hubs in downtown Providence, and wanted clarity about the number of hubs planned altogether. RIPTA responded that it currently has hubs in Kennedy Plaza, Pawtucket, Warwick, Newport, and East Providence, but the master plan includes a proposal for every interested municipality to have hubs. Within downtown Providence, development is expanding to the south, and RIPTA will continue to offer multiple options for riders to get around. Many parties are interested in Kennedy Plaza and RIPTA operations, and RIPTA will continue to work with them to guarantee positive outcomes for all passengers.

Committee members want to ensure that passengers with disabilities are considered in

any plans to break up the central hub in downtown Providence, and ATAC members should have a voice in this.

Members also asked about how to get involved in advocating for hubs in their own municipalities, particularly East Providence. The city is interested in developing a more substantial hub, and advocates can start by contacting the mayor, planning director, and city council.

- Mark Susa inquired about digital signage announcing bus routes and destinations on the left side of buses. Vincent DeJesus also noted that the smaller route numbers do not always appear on the back of buses. Greg Nordin said that drivers may have to manually enter the information, and they may experience connectivity issues.
- Barbara Henry commended Desiree, a driver at Wampanoag Plaza, for excellent service.
- Angie Stabile mentioned that bus announcements are inaudible at Wampanoag Plaza when multiple buses arrive at the same time.
- Committee members complained that the Ride Reveal app does not work well. When they schedule multiple trips on the same day, the first trip appears but later trips do not. People often have to sign in and out when using the system, and the app automatically logs them out when they are inactive. RIPTA staff will follow up with Ride and respond by the February meeting.
- The committee shared feedback about riding the Ford Transits. In general, they like the nice, quiet ride. However, the vans do not have grab bars, and it seems difficult for drivers to lift some riders. Ropes might be a good solution, given the space constraints. Others said that the steps have a lip, and their feet can get caught, leading them to lose balance. There is also some concern about the lack of space for wheelchairs. Greg responded that vehicle orders can be challenging because they are not completely customized, and RIPTA is trying to make some modifications to vehicles that are already here. RIPTA's planning department plays a smaller role in vehicle procurement, and it will be important to continue this dialogue with the paratransit division.

VIII. Other reports

- Monica Dzialo made a motion for the committee to send Mark Therrien a letter thanking him for his years of service before he retires. Jeanne Ouellette seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Rui Cabral will write the letter.
- The committee made a request for RIPTA's paratransit division to have regular representation at meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 5:59 PM.