

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RIPTA Transportation Conference Room
705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island 02907
Thursday, October 3, 2019

Attendees: Rui Cabral (Chair), Vincent DeJesus, Monica Dzialo, Elisabeth Hubbard, Barry Humphries, Mason Perrone, Heather Schey, Frank Susa, and Mark Susa.

RIPTA Staff in attendance: Joelle Kanter, Joseph Solomon, Mark Therrien.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Rui Cabral called the ATAC meeting to order at 4:07 PM.

Heather Schey motioned to accept the September 5, 2019 meeting minutes, and Monica Dzialo seconded. All were in favor.

II. RIPTA Reports: Key performance indicators

- Stop Announcement Compliance: Jim Vincent prepared a report on bus stop announcements. Of the 96 trips that RIPTA's vendor Professional Security Services monitored in August 2019, 95 were in full compliance. 675 announcements were required, and 665 were made. 91 operators were monitored altogether.

According to Mark Therrien, who now oversees Fixed Route Operations, RIPTA uses a global positioning system that pre-programs stop announcements automatically. Since the system works well and the monitoring statistics have not been used effectively to discipline drivers, he asked ATAC members to advise RIPTA on whether the monitoring contract adds value or should be terminated.

- Wheelchair Lift Failures: Wheelchair lifts failed 4 times in July, 4 times in August, and 7 times in September. Mark suggested that the failures indicate a problem with one fleet. He will follow up with more information.
- Ride key performance indicators: Joe Solomon, Ride data analyst, presented statistics for August 2019. In that month, 5,135 customers were approved to use Ride. Of that total, 1005 or 19.6% of eligible riders used the service in the last 90 days. Passengers took a total of 24,441 Ride trips, which was an increase from July. The on-time performance rate was 95.6%, exceeding the goal of 93%. The system averaged 2.20 passengers per revenue hour. Ride received a total of 9,206 calls in August, and the average connect time was 2 minutes, 40 seconds.

The committee also discussed the application process for Ride passengers, which has improved.

III. RIPTA Meeting Follow-Up

- Transit Forward RI: RIPTA held four workshops on the transit master plan in September, and an additional one is scheduled in Middletown on October 10th. The presentation is available on the Transit Forward website: transitforwardri.com, and RIPTA staff will also email it to the group. Over the next few weeks, RIPTA continues to seek public feedback on three scenarios that range from 1) addressing the most pressing needs to 2) improving and expanding transit and 3) developing a comprehensive statewide transit network. Many proposed changes to the fixed route system, such as extended hours of service, would impact paratransit operations as well.

The committee noted that the public meetings were effective overall, and the project team described information clearly. However, some participants with disabilities commented that the interactive stations were difficult to engage with, and the meeting room in Warwick was uncomfortable for those who use wheelchairs.

- RIPTA public hearings: In September, RIPTA held more than a dozen public hearings on the proposed new fare structure which offers daily and monthly riders an earn-as-you-go option. Other proposed changes include free transfers for passengers within the first hour of riding, and an end to passengers receiving exact change, although buses will continue accepting cash.

The proposal also includes a \$1 fare for trips within the Downtown Transit Connector (DTC) zone, which provides high frequency service by extending 7 routes from the Providence train station to Rhode Island Hospital. Passengers would pay the full \$2 fare when they enter the bus, and upon exiting, they would tap their cards on sensors in order to be reimbursed \$1.

ATAC members requested a DTC project update at the November meeting to discuss how people who have visual or hearing impairments will get real time information at DTC shelters.

IV. ATAC brochure distribution

RIPTA staff handed out new brochures for members to share with their networks.

V. Ride/RIPTA service feedback

- Mark Therrien described changes to RIPTA's training program, noting that drivers will be re-trained on using wheelchair restraints. Drivers who do not tie down passengers in wheelchairs properly will face suspension.

- RIPTA is planning to hire more drivers to support the Downtown Transit Connector (DTC), electric buses, and other projects. Training will be completed in-house by senior drivers.
- The group discussed the Ford Transit visit during the September ATAC meeting. Mark said that RIPTA is the first agency to use them for paratransit trips, and other members of the American Bus Benchmarking Group (ABBG) are interested in learning about Ride passengers' experiences. The vehicles can accommodate 8 passengers, but they have a 2 wheelchair limit. In future orders, the wheelchair tie-down holes will change to be better aligned.

The group discussed whether the vehicles should be marked in the Reveal app. ATAC members complimented the Transits' smooth, quiet ride and said that their guide dogs appreciate the carpeted floors. However, the stairs are challenging, and tall customers may hit their heads when they enter. The roofs on the vehicles do not have railings since they are expensive to install and drivers have said that passengers rarely use them.

The Transits require more work for drivers who must open the side door in order to assist passengers with entering and exiting. Moving forward, trips on the Transits may be scheduled differently to address the challenge of negotiating 2 chairs at the same time.

Before the paratransit division orders additional vehicles, ATAC members should share their comments with Ride staff. RIPTA's garage is currently limited to dispensing diesel fuel, so RIPTA might wait until gas is available on-site before buying additional Transits. The discussion should continue next month.

VI. Other Reports

- The Ocean State Center for Independent Living's (OSCIL) Executive Director Lorna Ricci has announced her plans for retirement.
- The group discussed ADA guidelines for service animals. Elisabeth Hubbard, RI Disability Law Center, described the requirement for individuals to have paperwork establishing that they have a "treating relationship" with their animals.
- RIPTA CEO Scott Avedisian will speak at two OSCIL lunch & learns on October 30th and 31st.
- In January, ATAC will hold elections for officers. The chair and vice-chair positions will be open, and current chair Rui Cabral intends to run again.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.