I. PURPOSE:

Rhode Island general law requires RIPTA to provide a no-fare and half-fare bus pass program for seniors and for people with disabilities. This policy outlines the program that RIPTA has developed to comply with the state law.

II. POLICY OVERVIEW:

A. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is enacted consistent with RIPTA’s powers under RI General Laws 39-18-4(7).

All persons age 65 and over are eligible for the RIPTA Bus Pass Program for Seniors. All persons with qualifying disabilities are eligible for the RIPTA Bus Pass Program for Individuals with Disabilities.

Individuals in either group who are below the income requirements are eligible for the No-Fare program. Individuals in either group who are above the income requirements are eligible for the Half-Fare program.

RIPTA reserves the right to waive the income requirements for special programs, or to enter into contracts that may provide bus passes but deviate from this policy. No contracts or waivers may affect the provisions regarding use of bus passes.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF PROCEDURES

Throughout this policy there are references to procedures, lists, and public information that will be developed and maintained to support the implementation of this policy. RIPTA will work with the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) to review the procedures supporting this policy.
III. POLICY:

A. REQUIREMENTS FOR SENIORS TO OBTAIN A RIPTA BUS PASS

1. Eligibility Requirement: All persons age 65 and over

2. Valid identification that includes proof of age must be presented. A photo ID is also required, such as a driver’s license, state identification card, or passport. If an individual does not have a photo ID, a parent, guardian, family member, caseworker or other staff from an approved agency may present their photo ID and confirm the identity of the individual. RIPTA will provide a list of acceptable forms of identification. This list will be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that the methods of identification listed are still valid and that the list is complete.

3. Satisfying the above requirements will allow a senior to obtain approval for Half-Fare status. See the No-Fare status requirements below.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO OBTAIN A RIPTA BUS PASS

1. Eligibility Requirement: All persons certified as being disabled in accordance with this policy shall be deemed eligible for this program.

   This policy does not attempt to apply a single definition of disability, which is described differently in various federal and state programs. Instead, this policy will accept the qualifications of approved partner agencies, either by utilizing the program’s documentation or by allowing an agency to provide a certification letter.

2. A photo ID is required, such as a driver’s license, state identification card, passport, or student ID card. If an individual does not have a photo ID, a parent, guardian, family member, caseworker or other staff from an approved agency may present their photo ID and confirm the identity of the individual.

3. Certification of disability must be presented. RIPTA will provide a list of acceptable methods of certification. The list of acceptable methods of certification will be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that the methods of certification listed are still valid and that the list is complete. This list may be modified at any time at RIPTA’s discretion.

4. As an option for certification of disability, RIPTA will work with agencies that provide services to people with disabilities and approve selected partner agencies to provide a letter of certification of disability. RIPTA reserves the right to add or remove agencies from this list at any time, or to remove this option from the list of acceptable methods of certification.
5. Satisfying the above requirements will allow a person with a disability to obtain approval for Half-Fare status. See the No-Fare status requirements below.

6. Individuals who have been found eligible for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service by RIPTA can show their current ADA Class I or Class II certification letter to receive a Bus Pass. Class III certification is for temporary disabilities and is excluded. The ADA certification letter provides proof of disability.

C. REQUIREMENTS FOR NO-FARE STATUS

1. Once a person has provided proof of age or disability as stated above, proof of income must also be provided in order to obtain approval for No-Fare status.

2. The means test criteria as defined by the Rhode Island Division of Elderly Affairs will be used to qualify for No-Fare status. (Rhode Island General Laws 39-18-4 (7)(i))

3. Valid proof of income eligibility must be presented. RIPTA will provide a list of acceptable forms of proof of income eligibility. This list will be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that the methods of proof of income eligibility listed are still valid and that the list is complete.

4. If an applicant for a bus pass is under age 18, the income of the child’s parent or guardian will be considered for determination of no-fare or half-fare status.

D. REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL TO TRAVEL WITH AN ASSISTANT

1. As defined in the State Law, an “Attendant” is any person who accompanies and is assisting a person with a disability when the person with a disability uses a wheelchair or any person who accompanies and is assisting a passenger who is blind or visually impaired (RI General Laws 39-18-4(7)(ii) and (iii)). In this policy, “Assistant” is used in place of “Attendant”.

2. Any person who qualifies for the Bus Pass Program who uses a wheelchair or who is blind or visually impaired automatically qualifies for use of an Assistant. A Bus Pass Program ID Card indicating approval for an Assistant will be issued automatically. (Rhode Island General Laws 39-18-4 (7)(ii)-(iii))

3. Qualifying persons can have an Assistant travel with them with no fare for the Assistant. This applies only to Assistants; someone who is not the Assistant for a qualified person must pay the regular fare.

4. Other circumstances may lead to the approval to travel with an Assistant. RIPTA will work with the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee to define which circumstances, if any, will allow approval for an Assistant.
E. **RENEWAL OF BUS PASS**

Appropriate documentation must be presented in person in order to renew a bus pass.

F. **COST AND EXPIRATION DATE OF BUS PASS ID CARDS**

The cost of the bus pass identification cards, including replacement cards, will be publicly posted each year. Approval for the Bus Pass Program will be for 5 years. Replacement cards will be issued with the same end date as the original approval. All those receiving a bus pass, including ADA-eligible individuals, must pay the processing fee in accordance with RIPTA’s payment schedule for the Bus Pass card.

The bus pass ID, as a fare product, is covered under RIPTA’s Fare Policy for any changes to the cost or duration of the bus pass ID.

G. **PROGRAM EXEMPTIONS (Rhode Island General Laws 39-18-4(7))**:  

The following services are not covered under the Bus Pass Program:

1. Special Service Routes
2. During periods and routes of overcrowded conditions

H. **USE OF THE RIPTA BUS PASS**

1. The RIPTA Bus Pass can be used on RIPTA regular fixed route and Flex Service.

2. The RIPTA Bus Pass must be kept in the possession of the qualifying person at all times while riding RIPTA fixed route or Flex services.

3. The RIPTA Bus Pass must be presented when boarding RIPTA fixed route or Flex Service buses. The cards are electronic and must register on the farebox to be accepted. Drivers have the right to verify the photo ID is that of the user.

4. Any person approved for a RIPTA No-Fare Bus Pass can ride free on all regular fixed route and Flex service by presenting the Bus Pass. Any person approved for a Half-Fare Bus Pass is required to pay half fare during off-peak hours and full fare during peak hours on all regular fixed route and Flex service.

   **Peak Hours:**
   7AM to 9AM and 3PM to 6PM on weekdays.
   8AM to 10AM and 3PM to 6PM on weekends.

   **Off-peak Hours:**
   Before 7AM, between 9AM-3PM, and after 6PM on weekdays; all day on weekends and holidays.

5. The Bus Pass will indicate whether a passenger is approved to have an accompanying Assistant. Assistants ride free. Other guests or escorts must pay the regular fare.
I. **IMPROPER USE OF THE RIPTA BUS PASS**

RIPTA reserves the right to confiscate or recall any Bus Pass Program ID Card that has been used improperly. Improper use includes use of an expired pass, use of the pass by an individual other than the eligible cardholder, any pass that is defaced, any pass that is shared or sold by the cardholder, or any other violation of this policy.

Improperly obtained passes are included in this category. If an application is found to have been fraudulent after a pass has been issued, the pass will be recalled.

A confiscated or recalled card, due to improper use, will not be returned or replaced for a period of one year. After a period of one year, the individual or holder of a confiscated Bus Pass Program ID Card may reapply to the Bus Pass Program for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities.

Customers who have had passes confiscated because they were inadvertently used past the expiration date may renew immediately.

Any passenger that has a pass confiscated or recalled must pay the regular cost of a new or replacement card. Passes that are returned after the improper use has been rectified will incur a processing fee in accordance with RIPTA’s payment schedule for the Bus Pass card.

J. **UNRULY, DISRUPTIVE, OR ILLEGAL BEHAVIOR**

RIPTA reserves the right to revoke the Bus Pass for a period up to one year for unruly, disruptive, or illegal behavior on RIPTA buses or at RIPTA hubs. Removal of a passenger from a bus or hub by the police or RIPTA street supervisor will result in immediate confiscation of a Bus Pass.

K. **APPEALS**

A person may choose to file an appeal if their application is denied or their pass is confiscated, revoked, or recalled. If the person chooses to file an appeal, the person must submit his or her appeal in writing to the attention of RIPTA’s Customer Service Manager. As part of the appeal, the appellant may supply additional information or any extenuating circumstances.

The Customer Service Manager will review all relevant materials, investigate the matter, consult with other parties as necessary, and render a decision within fifteen (15) work days of receiving the letter of appeal.
IV. RELATED REGULATIONS:

United States Code, Title 49, Section 5307
Agencies receiving grants under this section “will ensure that elderly and handicapped individuals, or an individual presenting a Medicare card issued to that individual under title II or XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq., 1395 et seq.), will be charged during non-peak hours for transportation using or involving a facility or equipment of a project financed under this section not more than 50 percent of the peak hour fare”. (49USC5307(d)(1)(D))

V. POLICIES SUPERSEDED:
This policy supersedes any and all policies, and practices previously promulgated and or followed with regard to the Bus Pass Program or the issuance of Bus Cards and Bus Card fees for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities.