

May 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes for the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council meeting was held via Webex, a video conferencing platform, and was called to order at 2:05 PM. An attendance sheet is attached to these minutes.

Seena Franklin motioned to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2020 Coordinating Council meeting. Maria Cimini seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Sarah Ingle, RIPTA's long range planning manager, and Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, shared updates on several projects identified within the 2020 program of work:

- One of the primary recommendations within the Coordinated Plan, the One-Call/One-Click trip planning resource, has federal funding through the state's Unified Planning Work Program. RIPTA is nearing the end of the procurement process and should begin putting together a project framework within the next few months.
- The WAVE account-based fare technology project is still in a beta testing phase. RIPTA will distribute a copy of the WAVE presentation from the March meeting and will continue to communicate with organizations that purchase RIPTA fare products in bulk.
- Several ongoing projects are fostering partnerships at the statewide and local levels. In addition, RIPTA and the RI Dept. of Human Services have participated in transportation focused meetings and conference calls organized by the federal Administration for Children & Families. With all New England states represented, the meetings provide an opportunity to learn from our neighbors about different approaches to meeting families' transportation needs.
- In April, the Coordinating Council sent its most recent e-newsletter which included a link to the 2019 annual report. The next newsletter is scheduled to go out in June.

During a discussion about COVID-19, participants relayed concerns about RIPTA passengers missing their buses as a result of the new guidelines that limit capacity. A RIPTA rider also requested more frequent announcements reminding passengers about the face mask requirement on buses. Others inquired about transportation options to and from COVID-19 testing sites and isolation places. Additional questions related to protective supplies for drivers, opportunities to share information about resources with passengers, passenger screening, and bus pass usage during the pandemic. RIPTA staff agreed to send out information about the agency's protocols and relevant ridership data.

Members shared other important updates:

- Maureen Maigret reported on Project HELLO, an initiative of the RI Office of Healthy Aging that connects volunteers with isolated older adults by phone.
- Catherine Taylor announced that Age-Friendly Rhode Island is partnering on projects that help address social isolation among older adults. It plans to launch a virtual community center on its website featuring a calendar of online events.
- Meg Underwood, RI Senior Center Directors Association, noted that each senior center is unique and transportation options vary by center. According to a recent Age-Friendly RI transportation working group survey, some centers are still providing limited trips on their shuttles, but many have shifted their focus to meal distribution.
- Kristina Fox reported on advocacy issues supported by the RI Coalition for the Homeless for additional stimulus funding, including rental assistance.
- Maria Cimini said that the RI Department of Human Services is working to improve benefit access by addressing gaps in existing programs. For example, SNAP recipients are not currently eligible to have food delivered, but a pilot project will allow them to request a waiver to purchase food online through three stores. DHS is also partnering with Farm Fresh RI and the RI Food Policy Council to encourage more farmers to become authorized to accept SNAP benefits.
- Eric Carroll, United Way of RI/2-1-1, said that the RV has not been used since COVID-19 began, but they continue to take calls every day. The Point has also been able to offer people a limited number of Uber ride sharing opportunities.
- Tamara Burman, Woonsocket Health Equity Zone (HEZ), noted the correlation between food access and transportation. She expressed concern about people not using their SNAP/EBT benefits because they are reluctant to take public transportation to supermarkets, and she suggested shifting resources to use vans for food delivery.
- Cathy Schultz, West Warwick Health Equity Zone (HEZ) shared that the West Bay CAP and West Warwick Senior Center are managing food deliveries. There is also a special effort to support people in a homeless encampment in the community.
- Seena Franklin, CCAP, said that her agency has vans available to assist with food delivery, but most recipients prefer to pick up their meals. A COVID-19 testing site is located at the health center, 1090 Cranston Street, and is open to the public.

The meeting adjourned at 3:36 PM.



**Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
May 11, 2020 Attendance List**

| Council Members | Organization | Present? |
|------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Kwang Baek | Woonsocket HEZ | By phone |
| Tamara Burman | Woonsocket HEZ | By phone |
| Rui Cabral | Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee | By phone |
| Eric Carroll | United Way of Rhode Island/2-1-1 | By phone |
| Maria Cimini | RI Department of Human Services | By phone |
| Brady Dunklee | Integra | By phone |
| Kristina Contreras Fox | RI Coalition for the Homeless | By phone |
| Seena Franklin | CCAP | By phone |
| Barbara Henry | Rhode Island Transit Riders | By phone |
| Sarah Ingle | Rhode Island Public Transit Authority | By phone |
| Joelle Kanter | Rhode Island Public Transit Authority | By phone |
| Maureen Maignet | Long Term Care Coordinating Council | By phone |
| Darlene Reza Rossi | AARP | By phone |
| Heidi Ross | Community member | By phone |
| Paul Salera | Westbay CAP | By phone |
| Cathy Schultz | West Warwick HEZ | By phone |
| Catherine Taylor | Age-Friendly RI | By phone |
| Meg Underwood | RI Senior Center Directors' Association | By phone |