



Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
COMPREHENSIVE OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

September 24, 2012





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Appendix A: Stakeholders Interviewed



1 INTRODUCTION

RIPTA recognizes that public and stakeholder opinions are critical inputs to the Comprehensive Operational Analysis. This input will help identify which parts of RIPTA's system are working best today, and determine if there are changes that could be made to make the system more effective.

Major stakeholders include RIPTA itself, state agencies and leaders, local municipalities, RIPTA riders and representatives from business, tourism, non-profit, and student groups. More than 20 stakeholders were invited to be interviewed in June/July 2012, as identified in Appendix A.

Stakeholders were selected to represent a range of perspectives, including geographical diversity. Some interviews were conducted with one individual and in other cases, several interested parties joined in a "focus group" interview. Participants were asked to provide input and opinions on service needs and other transit opportunities.

Interviewees were asked to identify what they believe RIPTA does well today, and how they might improve the effectiveness of their services. RIPTA staff was not present at these interviews and results have been summarized by theme, rather than by specific respondent. The most commonly expressed themes are summarized below, with further detail provided in the remainder of this document.

WHAT DOES RIPTA DO WELL?

Nearly all stakeholders recognized the challenges involved with providing attractive, convenient transit service, while also meeting the critical needs of RI's transit dependent populations and working with limited resources. Most view RIPTA as a well-run, organized entity that meets these challenges in an effective manner.

RIPTA is seen as being most successful in bringing daily commuters from the Providence metro area into downtown for the 9 AM to 5 PM workday. Newport and Pawtucket services are viewed as effectively meeting the needs of local residents, and Park-Ride services are viewed as successes which should be built upon. All in all, the existing system is seen as providing a strong framework of statewide service upon which to build and improve.

It was noted that RIPTA is not given proper credit for meeting a variety of "unfunded mandates" imposed by the state, including administering the RIDE program and providing free bus passes for low income riders who are either elderly or have disabilities.

Many stakeholders also serve as partners with RIPTA in some capacity and spoke highly of RIPTA's willingness and responsiveness to meet their organizational needs. This responsive has paid off, as many believe attitudes about transit use are changing, as reflected in ridership growth over the last decade.



A few commended RIPTA on advancing planning initiatives that will bring other benefits to the state, and there was much interest in further focusing services and other investments around key hubs and within established growth districts to help generate desired economic activity.

RIPTA was also commended for increasing energy efficiency with their new hybrid bus fleet, and for their efforts to improve the customer environment both on the buses and at Kennedy Plaza. Bus Operators are a vital part of the system and several noted that drivers do a good job handling unruly passengers, a critical factor in making sure passengers are comfortable and attracting new riders.

HOW MIGHT RIPTA IMPROVE?

Stakeholders provided a variety of comments and suggestions on existing RIPTA routes, as well as on other RIPTA program areas. These comments are organized by specific themes in the sections below. Key issues and themes that emerged from the stakeholder interview process include:

- **Overcrowding/Bus Frequency:** Buses are overcrowded today, which makes for an uncomfortable and displeasing rider experience. Customers are routinely passed by, and often must stand – even on long routes to Woonsocket and South County.
- **Longer Spans of Service:** RIPTA does a great job of getting commuters to work, but more service is desired in the off-peak hours, particularly in the evening.
- **Better coordination of service:** Stakeholders saw an opportunity to better coordinate bus schedules for routes that operate within the same corridor, and to better time transfers between routes at key outlying destinations. Once established, schedule changes should be minimized.
- **Crosstown/Feeder Service:** Many expressed interest in the ability to travel between key destinations without having to go through downtown Providence. Feeder service is desired in outlying areas to facilitate trips to local shopping, commuter rail and other services.
- **Manage Seasonal Demand:** Many spoke of the need to manage seasonal demand, whether serving tourists in locations such as Newport or dealing with the impact of the school calendar on individual routes.
- **Flex Services:** Those who are aware of RIPTA’s Flex services generally think the program works well. But, by in large, most stakeholders were unfamiliar with how Flex works or believe that few of their constituents are aware of how Flex might benefit them.
- **Fares:** People are pleased with RIPTA’s variety of fare products and recent efforts to make fare products easier to purchase. Many felt that the “one state: one rate” policy should be reviewed and that premium express services might attract new riders.
- **Marketing:** Most stakeholders interviewed recognized how RIPTA has improved over the last 10 years or so, but felt that RIPTA should do a more pro-active job to promote specific routes and destinations, but also to create more positive perceptions about transit and transit riders in RI.
- **Transit Hubs/Bus Shelters:** The concept of bus hubs is very popular and people recognize the benefits (in terms of visibility and ridership experience) that a transit hub or attractive shelter can bring to a community. On the other hand, there were a significant comments expressing unhappiness with the appearance of the existing Lamar shelters.



2 STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

SUGGESTED SERVICE STANDARDS & GOALS

- **Identify a Clear Purpose & Mission**
 - Develop service goals and standards, then schedule buses to meet these goals.
- **Use Resources Wisely and Effectively**
 - Resources should be directed to serve the most people at the least cost.
 - Low performing routes should be eliminated. RIPTA should look to see which route segments are the most productive and offer the most service in these locations.
 - RIPTA should not run service all day to low-ridership destinations. However, it is recognized that rural routes serve people with limited transportation options. This is a challenge.
 - If only limited Sunday/holiday service can be offered, RIPTA should ensure fair geographic coverage (e.g. some routes to the north, some to south, etc.)
 - It is better to offer *better* service, than *more* service
- **Make Transit More Competitive with the Automobile**
 - Goal should be to reduce travel times for transit users. RIPTA needs to be faster and more competitive with the auto to attract new riders.
 - Transit needs to be cost competitive. As a state, we must provide incentives to ride (to overcome the relatively low cost of parking and manageable congestion levels).
- **Provide More Bus Service**
 - Concerns about overcrowding were expressed more than any other issue.
 - Many people are being left behind due to overcrowding. This situation gets worse if a bus is late going into Kennedy Plaza where many people are waiting.
 - Need more mid-day and evening service, outside the 9 AM – 5 PM window. Those who are dependent on RIPTA need service in non-working hours.
 - Evening and weekend service to malls and retail centers (e.g. Warwick, Shoppers Plaza in E. Providence) is too infrequent and stops too early for workers to get home.
 - RIPTA serves RI Hospital well, but needs to provide good service to all hospitals, including the 3 PM to 11 PM shift.
 - The Affordable Care Act will increase demand for fixed route and RIDE services
- **Recognize Some Tradeoffs are Needed to Operate Effectively**
 - Willing to lose some service on local routes to have a few express runs on long lines
 - RIPTA shouldn't duplicate commuter rail service, but complement it (e.g. offer feeder service to commuter rail, and buses to Providence when train isn't running).



- **Design Service with the Customer in mind**
 - Bus schedules should be coordinated at transfer points. Current transfers add a tremendous amount of time to each trip.
 - If two routes come together on a trunk line, schedules should be coordinated to better space buses (e.g. Westminster Street or Charles Avenue).
 - Make service more predictable. Clock-face scheduling would make it easier for customers to remember time.
 - Better coordinate bus departures to prevent gaps in service.
 - Some RIPTA trips are too long and slow. Try overlaying express or skip-stop services on key routes (e.g. Route 42 or 60).
 - Allow for travel between key destinations without going through Kennedy Plaza.
 - Routes that are overcrowded, prone to congestion or on narrow streets should not be paired as through routes – it compounds delays, leaves little cushion to deal with traffic and other issues, and means drivers never get a break.
- **Consider Smart Growth Concepts and Other Concerns**
 - Put transit investments in existing village centers and development areas, and serve older suburban centers, before bringing new service to new areas.

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC RIPTA SERVICES

FIXED ROUTE SERVICES

- Routes 1 and/or 3: Need for very early AM trips from Johnson & Wales Harborside campus to the Radisson Hotel on Post Road in Warwick. Also late night service between Harborside and the airport.
- Route 3: used to deviate into Johnson & Wales Harborside Campus, but high student demand in-between classes overwhelmed the service. Also, students typically prefer to take quicker, non-stop University shuttles into Providence. However RIPTA still deviates Route 3 on weekends.
- Route 8: More service should be provided to the United Cerebral Palsy group home at 115 Claypool Drive off Buttonwood Drive in Warwick. There is currently no night or weekend service. Four to five people live here.
- Route 9: Design service to simply hit shift changes and visiting hours at Zambarano Hospital in Burrillville (i.e. don't run service all day).
- Rapid Route 11/99:
 - 11/99 is overcrowded and not necessarily the best pairing. Crowding is worst in summer when school is out.
 - There is no reasonably priced grocery store on route; extend 11 down Warwick Avenue to the Stop & Shop or Shaw's, providing access to good food.
 - Suggested R Line routing in Pawtucket: Goff-Dexter-Andrew Furland-Broad
- Route 13 seems to work well in W. Warwick, serving areas with low auto ownership.
- Route 14 should serve Narragansett Town beach at Ocean Rd (1A) during summer.
- Coordinate trunk line service on Elmwood Avenue (Routes 20, 21, 22)
- Routes 27/28 - frequency is great.



- Coordinate trunk line service where Routes 35 and 78 overlap
- Routes 31/56 shouldn't be paired, they are both too overcrowded and both easily get tied up in traffic, compounding delays.
- Routes 50 and 55
 - These routes are overcrowded, particularly late night service on Route 55 (back to colleges).
 - Coordinate service on Routes 50 and 55, which overlap
- Need more mid-day service on Routes 51 and 73 along Mineral Spring Avenue
- Route 54
 - Overcrowded around 7:30 PM, need more evening buses.
 - Can be a long ride (1+ hour), particularly if you need to stand the whole way
 - There used to be a Route 51 on Charles Avenue, allowing the Route 54 to go express to Mineral Spring. Now 51 is gone and 54 is overcrowded (partly because everyone still thinks of it as express and ignores other possible routes on Charles St.)
- Routes 56 and 57: Coordinate trunk line service on Smith St.
- Route 60
 - Route is very successful and should not be changed.
 - Offer more frequent service (several comments) and extended span of service
 - Implement Rapid Bus type service and enhance the attractiveness of service with branded buses/stops and more frequent service. Implement transit signal priority along West Main Road and East Main Road, with queue jump lanes where possible.
 - Reduce travel times by consolidating or eliminating closely spaced stops.
 - Consider skip-stop service
 - Skip-stop service would be too confusing to riders, and it is hard to avoid stopping when customers are waiting. Route 60 used to run express from the Mt.Hope Bridge, but customers got confused.
 - Route 60 is now making two inbound deviations to serve Anthony House (off E. Main Rd.). This is in response to a request.
- Route 63 deviates after Stop & Shop to serve Oxbow housing complex which works well.
- Route 64:
 - Ridership is low, but it is important to connect two hubs (URI and Newport). Ridership would likely grow if more service added. Greater frequency? More evening service?
 - Service in Jamestown is lifeline service (only option for those in senior housing)
 - RIPTA uses the Route 64 bus (at the end of its run) to run an express route around URI campus in the AM.
- Routes 64 and 66: Better coordinate with Amtrak schedules at Kingston station
- Route 66:
 - Overcrowded on weekends and hot summer days. Beach-goers crowd out regular commuters (several comments)
 - Buses arriving at URI are almost fully subscribed by URI commuters, many of whom live in Providence metro suburbs such as Cranston and Warwick. The morning peak demands for this service extend beyond traditional commuting hours.



- Route 67 frequency increases in the summer, from two to three vehicles on weekdays, and to four vehicles on weekends. Since the summer schedule doesn't start until late June and ends Labor Day, RIPTA runs this as "an extra" on May/June and September/October weekends. Peak time for tourists and cruise ships is Sept/October.
- Route 78 is too long of a run, it should stay in Pawtucket. Just add service to Route 35 in East Providence. Route 78 should go to Stop & Shop more often.
- Route 80 might need better service to serve new mixed use development planned for the American Wire Mill Complex in Pawtucket on Central Avenue (139 apartments, plus other uses under development).
- LINK 92
 - Route works well; it goes to grocery stores and frequency is good.
 - Hours of operation need to be improved. Link should serve East Side Market after 5 PM, rather than stopping at Fox Point, and should be able to go between Atwells Avenue restaurant area and downtown after 6 pm on weekends.
 - Consider Fox Point inbound routing from Fox Point via Wickenden/South Main St. and outbound routing via S. Water/George Cohen Blvd. (Wickenden seems too narrow for both directions?)

FLEX SERVICES

General Flex Service Comments

- RIPTA should try combining RId and Flex services in rural areas, as a way to offer more service. The Charlestown or Exeter areas might be good areas to pilot this.
- Allow for same day scheduling.
- Many stakeholders had no sense of how Flex operated, and some didn't seem to even know it existed in their area. There is generally no information about Flex at timepoint locations or where it connects to fixed route services.
- Market Flex to RId customers, since RIPTA Senior/Disabled passes can be used
- Flex needs a stronger policy on pick up locations. What about dead-ends? Parking lots?
- Flex riders complain that their trip times are not always confirmed. This is a problem if the van ends up arriving before they were expecting it.
- Many Flex riders have standing reservations. Often a new trip will be added that bumps these customers to a different time. Should existing trips or group trips have priority for that time slot?
- Flex vans get more easily delayed in winter conditions.

South County Flex Service Suggestions

- In South County, one Flex van is assigned to Westerly (Zone 204) one is assigned to Narragansett (Zone 203) and a third van runs between the two.
- More timepoints along Route 1 might be helpful. The South Shore Mental Health center in Charlestown is the only location along Route 1 where reservations can be made. However, sometimes requests are made to be dropped at other locations (e.g. the library, or hotels in Charlestown). The van is tightly scheduled and can easily be delayed if it has too many unscheduled drop-offs.



- This is particularly true in the afternoon. For example, there are usually about 8 unscheduled riders waiting at the Westerly train station to take Flex to the Wakefield Mall. The return trip is difficult, since these riders want to be dropped at various Westerly locations and they compete with reservations.
- Westerly riders ask about going to the beach, which is outside the Flex zone. The neighborhood of Bradford is also outside the Westerly Flex zone.
- The Westerly Flex waits at the Train Station in the PM to meet RIPTA Route 90, but there are not too many transfers.
- The Westerly-Narragansett Flex does not have many regular commuters (just two).
- Narragansett Flex has a fair number of daily commuters getting on and off at timepoints, working at the Wakefield Mall, or trying to connect with the Route 66.
- Narragansett/Westerly Flex timepoints are not well-coordinated with RIPTA Routes 66 or 14. Fixed route customers often end up walking to the Government Center since it is too long of a wait for Flex.
- Narragansett Flex is not supposed to go to Great Island, but reservations are accepted there, which adds a lot of time to trips.

Woonsocket Flex Service Suggestions

- Two Flex vans operate in Woonsocket, from 6 AM to 6 PM each weekday. There are no scheduled timepoints.
- The Woonsocket Flex zone works well. The service area is small and well-served by two vans. Most customers seem happy with the Woonsocket Flex service (e.g. not requesting to be taken to locations outside the zone).
- Most common customer request is probably to add weekend service.
- Most Woonsocket Flex riders are repeat customers (estimated 90%). Key destinations are Walmart/Shaws and Price-Rite off Route 146A; taking transfers from Route 54 to CVS for work; and Discovery House methodone treatment.

Newport Flex Service Comments

- Customers were happy with the switch from fixed route to Flex service.
- The Newport Flex works well and seems to be busier than Route 62 was.
- Expand the service area. Consider adding timepoints (e.g. new DHS office on Valley Rd. in Middletown) (Note: Route 63 was adjusted on 7/11/12 to serve this office).

Warwick/W. Warwick Flex Service Comments

- The Sparrows Point apartments off Hardig/Cowasset Roads in Warwick are subsidized apartments with many elderly and disabled residents. It is in the Flex Zone (and not far from Route 29), but hard to get to if you must transfer to the Flex from RIde vans originating outside the zone.



Park-Ride and Premium Services

- Offer express service to T.F. Green Airport with a premium fare.
- Consider a direct Providence to URI route (bypassing CCRI) to relieve overcrowding on Route 66.
- Park and Ride services are very successful and should be expanded (e.g. more parking capacity at lots and more frequent options for return trips).
- Might be worth extending rural routes in instances where routes could serve a new park-ride lot (e.g. extend from Wakefield into Charlestown).
- Park-ride trips from Westerly are too long, with too many stops. Service would be more attractive if it were faster.
- Provide more Park & Ride facilities on Aquidneck Island.
- Many believe RIPTA should charge a premium fare for Park-Ride services.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

RIPTA’s Customer Service Department receives, records and tracks all customer complaints. As part of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA), all service related complaints received over the last five years (July 2007 to July 2012) were reviewed.

The most frequent types of service-related complaints received are shown in Table 1 and all relate to schedule adherence. Other complaints, received at a much lower frequency, related to overcrowding, bus stop issues, transfer issues and changes in route. Of note, is the fact that less than 2% of the service-related complaints received over the last five years concerned overcrowding.

TABLE 1 | MOST FREQUENT SERVICE-RELATED COMPLAINTS

COMPLAINT	# OF COMPLAINTS (over 5 years)	% SERVICE-RELATED COMPLAINTS	MOST FREQUENT COMPLAINT
Bus Never Came	732	31%	Bus never came
Bus Came Too Early	536	23%	Bus never came
Bus Was Late	314	13%	Bus ahead of schedule

Source: Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, Service-related customer complaints, July 2007 to July 2012.

The five routes receiving the highest number of service-related complaints over the 5 year period are shown in Table 2.



TABLE 2 | ROUTES RECEIVING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF SERVICE-RELATED COMPLAINTS

ROUTE	# OF COMPLAINTS (over 5 years)	MOST FREQUENT COMPLAINT	OTHER FREQUENT COMPLAINTS
Route 60	191	Bus never came	Bus ahead of schedule, Bus late
Route 66	170	Bus never came	Bus ahead of schedule, Bus late, Bus overcrowded
Route 54	120	Bus ahead of schedule	Bus never came
Route 14	87	Bus never came	Bus ahead of schedule
Route 27	87	Bus never came	Bus ahead of schedule

Source: Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, Service-related customer complaints, July 2007 to July 2012.

LOCAL AREA TRANSIT NEEDS

PROVIDENCE METRO AREA TRANSIT NEEDS

- There is a need for frequent, visible shuttle service between Kennedy Plaza and the Providence train station. The proposed Rapid Route routing via the train station is seen as helping to enhance this connection.
- The schedules of different routes serving Kennedy Plaza, Providence Place Mall and the train station should be better coordinated.
- Service between the Mall and Kennedy Plaza could be more direct.
- The COA should evaluate whether the densely developed corridors of Providence are deserving of higher levels of transit service, when compared to other parts of the state. In other words, should higher (e.g. 15 minute) levels of service be provided on the urban end of a route, and lower (e.g. 30 minute) service on the outer ends of a route.
- Other high ridership bus corridors (e.g. Routes 20, 27 and 56) should receive Rapid Bus type of transit improvements.
- There is interest in the concept of trying to concentrate downtown Providence bus traffic on a few intensive transit corridors.
 - Washington Street functions as a transit corridor today, but stops could be enhanced with better customer amenities, better marketing, higher visibility, etc.
 - Empire Street or Weybosset streets could also be considered, but City is aware that Weybosset gets congested in front of Johnson & Wales with their shuttle vehicles.
 - Dorrance could be considered, but there is not much service on it today. More service would be located here if a Courthouse hub is pursued.
 - Charles Avenue is transit intensive, although not really downtown and not a very transit supportive corridor.
 - The Kennedy Plaza /Train Station/Mall corridor could serve as a key transit corridor.
- Service to India Point Park in Providence will be needed once new development occurs (note: Route 60 and other E. Providence routes now provide some service in this area).



NEWPORT TRANSIT NEEDS

- Newport has high transit demand. Despite its reputation, it has a large population of low income individuals who are dependent on transit services. Newport also gets 3 million visitors a year. It is a “tale of two cities.”
- Residents are well served by existing service. The most critical transit need is to serve seasonal visitors. RIPTA ridership numbers might not accurately portray seasonal ridership demand. September is the busiest month for sales and hotel visits in Newport.
- Other than Gateway Center, ridership locations in Newport are pretty well dispersed. Most local riders likely originate along Broadway, or in the neighborhood south of Coddington Highway. The two stops at the Town Center shopping center do well (WalMart and Stop & Shop).
- Prior RIPTA service (Route 62) on Thames St. helped serve needs of local residents, but it is understood why it was discontinued.
- Focus transit in identified redevelopment areas at the Pell Bridge ramps, at Tank Farms 1 and 2 in the Melville North area off West Main Road in Portsmouth and at Two Mile Corner (intersection of Routes 114/138). RIDOT is reconfiguring the Pell Bridge ramps next year. There will be satellite parking here and RIPTA may want to serve this site.
- Advance the Newport Chamber of Commerce’s concept for a Newport Jitney bus-trolley service from the Gateway Center to the beaches and Middletown hotels. Regular bus/shuttle service would be useful, particularly in summer months. Perhaps hotels would help support this service, or CMAQ could be used. Extend to Pell ramp area once redevelopment is finished.
- Improve access to major employers (Navy, NUWC, and Raytheon).
- About 60% of Naval Base/Raytheon workers come from off the island, but this is a difficult market to capture (as these workers are often on temporary assignment, have cars and are given free parking.)
- Consider service to Ft. Adams in Newport in the summertime. Private water shuttles serve Ft. Adams, but future plans to add a zip line, climbing wall and possible hotel at Ft. Adams might increase demand.
- Provide more limited-stop or express service between Newport and T.F. Green Airport/Kingston Amtrak Station.

WARWICK/WEST WARWICK TRANSIT NEEDS

- A loop circulator in Warwick would be helpful, serving the Warwick Mall, Route 2 retail, Kent County Hospital, Kent County Courthouse, CCRI, etc.
- A loop circulator could connect village areas in West Warwick (Natick, Arctic, Main Street) and downtown East Greenwich. These communities desire access to the Warwick Interlink rail station.
- Service on Route 2 in Warwick is needed. Route 29 “pops in and out”, but doesn’t properly serve Route 2.
- West Warwick is targeting increased development densities in the village center along Main Street in Arctic. The village of Natick (Wakefield and Providence streets) is also a desired location for increased density. Both are currently served by Route 13. Town aims to add several hundred residential units in Arctic over the next 5+ years.



- There is a large concentration of employment and industry near the intersection of Route 2 and I-95. Eight or nine large employers are located off James Murphy Highway, with more located across I-95 off Division Street, including New England Tech (which is planning on expanding with new dormitories and classroom space).
- Key destinations for local area residents were suggested to be: Providence, Interlink, business park on I-95, Warwick Mall, Route 2 retail/box stores and CCRI. Other suggestions for service included access to South County beaches in the summer.
- Specific destinations and service gaps mentioned include:
 - Met Life on Route 2 has 2,000 employees and might merit transit service
 - Kent County hospital needs better service
 - St. Elizabeth nursing home on Post Road (on Warwick/E. Greenwich line) shuttles employees from Elmwood Avenue each day. Could RIPTA help carry these people?
 - The Addiction Recovery Institute on 205 Hallene Road near the Airport
 - Jefferson Boulevard
- A Warwick Mall hub was acknowledged as a good idea by several area stakeholders. RI Mall might be an alternative location, as it is between Warwick Mall and CCRI.

PAWTUCKET/BLACKSTONE VALLEY TRANSIT NEEDS

- Key Pawtucket locations to be served include Memorial Hospital, Slater Park, McCoy Stadium and more direct service to So. Attleboro MBTA train station.
- New Blackstone community center at intersection of Main St., East Ave extension and High Street in Pawtucket should be served (note: this is across from current RIPTA hub).
- Routes 79/80 serving McCoy Stadium stop at 7 PM, meaning PawSox fans can't use bus. Consider shuttle to McCoy on game nights from Pawtucket hub?
- Kellaway Center at 461 Main St. in Pawtucket (across from the senior center and welfare office) is served by Routes 51, 73 and 99, but new development activity at Kellaway is anticipated in the coming year.
- A potential new commuter rail stop off Dexter St. should be served by RIPTA once open (several routes go by this location now, routes 72, 75, 71, and 99)
- There used to be a cross-town bus on Mineral Spring going all the way from Pawtucket to Centerville. This might be worth reinstating.
- Lincoln Mall must be well-served.
- More service is needed in the Route 54 corridor between Woonsocket and Providence, and in northern RI in general. Areas specifically mentioned as being in need of more service include the Burrillville/Chepacet area. Specific destinations mentioned include:
 - WellOne Medical Center on Bridge Way in Pascoag (Burrillville)

SOUTH COUNTY TRANSIT NEEDS

- Washington County is generally underserved, particularly for travel to destinations other than Providence. Areas mentioned as generally in need of more service include Westerly, Charlestown and Jamestown.
- Consider needs of Narragansett Tribe along Route 2 in Charlestown. What are tribe's travel needs?



- There are a few Ride vehicles assigned to operate in South County all day. Consider using extra capacity for local trips during downtime (if okay with Medicaid rules).
- Need to connect Quonset (8,000 jobs) with Wickford rail station and also provide feeder service to Quonset/Wickford from South Kingstown and other locations (e.g. Exeter, or the Browne & Sharpe Complex on Frenchtown Road – a 16 acre building).
- Should Wickford station replace the existing RIPTA park-ride at Routes 4/2?
- Town of Exeter is using a state grant to focus future development on Route 2 village centers (Route 66 serves this village area today).
- Consider coordinating with seasonal trolleys run by Chambers of Commerce and Wakefield hotels.
- Many URI students rent beach cottages over the winter (e.g. Eastwood Look in Narragansett near Scarborough Beach, Bonnet Shores and Sand Hill Cove, etc.). Ridership from Eastwood Look has been more successful than the other neighborhoods. How to increase ridership from other neighborhoods? Consider a direct Galilee to URI service.
- Not much demand for URI students to go to T.F. Green airport. Most students are from RI, NY and NJ, and are able to get home via car, bus or train.
- RIPTA and URI have tried offering weekend service to malls, but low ridership. The URI population drops off quite a bit on weekends, when many students go home.
- Few people use Amtrak for their daily commute since the fares are prohibitive, so there is not a great demand for connecting peak hour bus service to/from Kingston station. Some train riders do question why the Flex isn't always there to meet them, but it is not a long trip to URI and there are always taxis available.
- Specific unserved South County destinations mentioned include:
 - Scabrini Villa Retirement Home off N. Quidessett Road in North Kingstown
 - South County Mental Health in Charlestown
 - Richmond: approved 100 unit condo, plus proposals for 400 unit elderly housing and another 90 unit condo; many URI students/faculty live in area.
 - Shannock (Charlestown): 50 units of affordable housing were approved

EXISTING & FUTURE TRANSIT HUBS

- Many stakeholders expressed a desire to strengthen hubs and create new ones.
- Fight to keep space for transit users in Woonsocket, Pawtucket, and on Thayer Street. The hub in the Woonsocket train depot should be reopened
- Consider new outlying hubs. Locations specifically mentioned during interviews included: Olneyville Square, RI College, the Kingston Amtrak station, and Melville area in Portsmouth.
- Expand availability of fare media at hubs.
- Include complimentary non-transportation uses at hubs to help generate revenue and attract riders.
- Hub Maintenance: RIPTA provides capital investment, but does not maintain hubs. Burden falls to municipalities or others to clean restrooms, trash, etc. RIPTA should have a policy on who maintains hubs and end-of-line locations.



KENNEDY PLAZA

- There is a density problem at Kennedy Plaza: too many people and buses in a small space. There is a desire to decrease the number of buses passing through and laying over.
 - Remove inner berths off of Fulton and Washington, and square the area back out, allowing for other uses in this inner space.
 - Spread stops around downtown (spreads pedestrian activity and bring the City alive), although concern expressed about removing existing parking meters in an area where there is little short-term parking
 - Eliminate trolley stop on East Approach to allow Burnside Park to be connected to skating rink as part of one contiguous space
 - OR be able to close East Approach on weekends or for special events.
- Make changes so buses move through Kennedy Plaza faster
 - Four minute stop times at KP are necessary due to large volumes of boarding and alighting passengers.
 - Install Transit Signal Priority to speed buses getting out of Kennedy Plaza
- Reconfigure Kennedy Plaza to focus more on transit riders. Introduce other uses to enhance the transit experience.
 - Make Kennedy Plaza more pedestrian friendly, it is difficult to cross all the lanes of Fulton and Washington.
 - Improve pedestrian connections to the train station.
 - Provide more shelter space.
 - Keep berths in close proximity to each other to facilitate transfers.
 - Provide better signage or design transit hub so that RIPTA customers intuitively know where to stand for their buses.
 - RIPTA's Plaza building would be more inviting with outside windows for food/retail sales; could also open building up on both ends.
- Make Kennedy Plaza safer and introduce other uses to enhance the transit experience.
 - KP is a big "hang out. Up to 30% of people at KP are just loitering; many never ride a bus. The large crowds make it easy for troublemakers to "hide" within the crowds.
 - Many are the same people day in and day out. Problems are the worst in the AM.
 - Worst routes in terms of problems at Kennedy Plaza are 11, 20, 22, 27, 28, 56, 99. Worst berths in terms of problems are A, F, J, and L.
- Any concept to revitalize Kennedy Plaza must also allow for good downtown auto circulation.

POTENTIAL NEW DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE HUBS

- One or more secondary/peripheral downtown hubs could be used as a tool to relieve Kennedy Plaza. Location(s) need to work from the City's land use perspective and RIPTA's transit perspective.
- Reconsider the peripheral hubs that were proposed as part of the Metro Study
 - The Train Station should definitely be strengthened as a hub and part of a transit corridor.



- Thayer Street is seen as less of a hub (or transfer point) and more of a high ridership bus stop deserving of better customer amenities and visual treatment.
- Cahir Street is bordered by two high ridership corridors, serves the high schools, and has good space for layover.
- Consider other downtown Providence hubs. Locations specifically mentioned include: Parcel 12; along Washington Street; Knowledge District; Trinity Square (at the intersection of Cranston & Westminster Streets) and the Garrahy Courthouse
 - The state owns the parking lot at Garrahy courthouse and there has been a long outstanding desire to construct a parking garage there.
- Olneyville Square is seen as more of an outlying hub, but is a key destination where people could transfer between West Side locations without going to Kennedy Plaza. However, there are challenges inherent to locating a bus layover in this area, due to levels of congestion and narrow streets.
- Any changes to traffic flow to accommodate new or revitalized downtown hubs (e.g. bus contra-flow lane, etc.) needs to be proposed soon, as the City is quickly moving forward with Downtown Traffic Circulation Improvements - Phase III.

PAWTUCKET

- Pawtucket has identified the parking lots along Roosevelt Avenue, adjacent to the existing hub, as desired development sites. The wishes to eliminate bus layovers at this location to better attract development. Site is also future National Park.
- City is OK with the location of the bus stop across Roosevelt from the Visitor's Center on the Slater Mill side.
- The DLT Network RI office at the existing hub location is moving this year, meaning most people at the hub will be there only to transfer. In other words, this may not be the most appropriate location for the hub.
- Alternative locations suggested for a new Pawtucket hub include:
 - Andrew Furland Rd. off of Dexter. City is willing to allow layover on City owned parking lot and/or to make Andrew Furland one-way
 - Goff Avenue near where Mill burnt down last year
 - Need to consider traffic circulation changes (a preliminary downtown design plan has been done by McMahon Associates). East Ave extension will soon be a two-way street and other changes may be implemented after that.

NEWPORT

- Upgrade Newport Gateway Center
- Create new multimodal hub at Pell Bridge ramps in Newport

UNIVERSITY OF RI

- RIPTA has designed its services so that URI is now a hub for Washington County. URI believes the Student Union is the logical place for a hub.
- URI would be amenable to enhancing or increasing the presence of the RIPTA hub on campus. However, URI does not want to encourage on-campus park-ride for people who are not part of the URI community.



- RIPTA and URI have discussed the future possibility of providing some bus storage and/or light maintenance facility for RIPTA on campus.
- Kingston Amtrak Station should be an intermodal hub (and relocated closer to URI)

OTHER RIPTA FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

BUS STOPS

- Too many stops. RIPTA should not add stops simply because someone asks them to. Need bus stop spacing standards.
- Stops need to be consolidated. There are two stops on Newport Avenue near Ferris Avenue that are within about 150 feet, and people wait at both locations.
- Bus stop spacing recommendations being considered along the Rapid Bus route should be considered for other locations.
- Bus stops should be located with safety in mind. Consider bus pullouts and sidewalk/crosswalk upgrades.
- Stops on near side of intersections back up traffic, should be moved to far side and away from intersection so buses don't stick out into intersection when stopped.
- Many bus stop signs are on the same pole as handicapped parking signs
- All bus stops should be accessible (e.g. curb cut, paved waiting area). Stops should be plowed in the winter. No one claims responsibility for maintaining stops, a policy needs to be developed.
- Sometimes when buses can't pull over to the curb, they just stop in the street. This is a good thing and provides a safe zone for pedestrians in the street right-of-way. It is more dangerous for buses to pull out of the street, then back into traffic.
- Consider new stop on Route 66 to be located on Rte. 107 near the police station?

BUS SHELTERS

- Sheltered bus stops are great, but Lamar shelters are a huge eyesore. Lamar gets the benefits of free advertising, but does nothing to maintain the shelters. They are rapidly aging and getting worse.
- Shelters are in horrible shape, with graffiti, holes, etc.
- Shelter at Main/High Streets in Woonsocket is disgusting.
- Provide branded bus shelters that fit with the communities at major stops (underway).
- The signage violates city zoning laws. Would prefer to have no advertising at shelters.
- Local municipalities would like more input on where shelters are located.
- Need better shelter/bus stops at high ridership and high visibility locations (e.g. Providence Place Mall, Providence train station and State House). Install shelters in village areas that are attractive and visible, so that people realize there is access to transit.
- Sometimes shelters are placed in an area where few riders board. These are an unnecessary eyesore.
- Need some way to discourage people from hanging out in shelters – make them work for riders, but “appear less comfortable” to loiterers.



- Shelters don't always have space for wheelchairs to get under cover.

MARKETING

- RIPTA's web page is much improved
- The Google app works really well for telling me which bus to take when.
- Entire system needs better marketing. Many non-users have no idea of how RIPTA might meet their needs.
 - Specific routes should be selected for increased marketing (e.g. an airport express service with a premium fare; service between KP-Mall-Train; service to Newport)
 - Advertise in bars to attract more riders
 - Target college students (e.g. PC kids take Route 55, but many RIC students do not)
 - Information about through routes (e.g. the 11/99) and crosstown routes needs to be improved. I only ever find out about these accidentally.
- Local planners are willing to help with marketing if they had materials.
- Many comments were made about the need for better Flex marketing:
 - RIPTA did some marketing when Flex was first introduced to Newport, but not since.
 - Flex doesn't have enough service or visibility – it is definitely under the radar.
 - People don't know if they are eligible to take Flex, how to access it and where it goes.
 - Flex should be marketed to RIde patrons who might find it more convenient.
 - Social workers should be educated about the Flex services.
- RIPTA should work to change the negative perceptions about the agency and its clientele
 - Need to overcome the perception that RIPTA is for low-income people and other negative perceptions about who rides transit in RI
 - People think RIPTA is always late, and not convenient. Need to change perception.
 - RIPTA is perceived as serving those without cars, not as a convenience for everyone.
- RIPTA needs to enhance its presence at TF Green Airport in Warwick. There is little signage inside or outside of the terminal. Signs, kiosks or shelters would be helpful.
- Publicize the benefits of transit (e.g. better marketing of ozone alert days so people understand they will benefit from taking the bus that day).
- RIPTA or the State needs to do a better job of explaining why the discounted senior/disabled bus pass is important. People don't understand why it exists or how it benefits the community at large by providing access to employment, etc..
- Suggest "RIPTA Cares" campaign, to highlight all the good RIPTA does (e.g. provides wheelchair lifts, serves supermarkets, manages RIde program, etc.)
- There are lots of new market-rate units in downtown Pawtucket. Need to attract these new residents to transit and R Line.
- Improve marketing of Park & Rides program

ACCESSIBILITY & TRAVEL TRAINING

- The reliability of RIPTA's wheelchair lifts has greatly improved.



- RIPTA has failed to implement automated stop announcements according to schedule. This should be a priority.
- Bus shelters don't always have space for wheelchairs to get under cover, and need to be plowed and maintained to ensure accessibility.
- RIPTA should identify all fixed bus routes that serve the disabled community in some way, whether serving independent living services, medical centers, clinics, technology and equipment companies, etc. This data should be reviewed before any service cuts are proposed, to ensure service to these locations is maintained. Example is Insight on Jefferson Boulevard in Warwick.
- There is a need for more travel training
 - Encourage able users of paratransit to transition to fixed route services where and when appropriate. Human Services and RIPTA could partner on this.
 - Map out all medical centers, meal sites, social service agencies, etc. from the RIDE database to show where there is fixed route coverage
 - Show people how easy it is to use the bus, pay fare, etc.

SAFETY

- Overcrowding is a safety issue.
- Drivers should make standees move back to the bus.
- Focus on safety at bus hubs at night, particularly Kennedy Plaza. (Good lighting, etc.)
- It is hard to attract new riders when many individuals are just riding around on the bus all day.
- Abuse of the free fare policy adds to safety problem. Many individuals ride free to Kennedy Plaza to just to hang out there.
- Kennedy Plaza is "hell on earth!"
- There needs to be a greater police presence at Kennedy Plaza.

FARE STRUCTURE/FARES PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION

- Riptiks
 - Selling Riptiks on-line is great.
 - Issue Riptiks in packs of 12 so that they work for 3 RIDE trips (if two Riptiks are needed for a RIDE trip, four are needed for a roundtrip, meaning a pack of Riptiks only works for 2.5 trips).
 - Provide discounts for bulk purchase of Riptiks
- Expand the EcoPass program
- The one-day pass does very well in Newport. Many cruise ship visitors use this program.
- The distribution of bus passes and other fare products at grocery stores works well.
- Discounted senior/disabled pass card should be made available at more locations
- Base fares should not be raised. Perhaps base fare could be reduced for shorter trips?
- Provide a fare card that you could add value to at vending machines (several comments). Stored value fare products should be available to RIDE customers, too.
- Need a better system to collect fares on Ride vans
- It is difficult for drivers to know if passes are valid or fraudulent.



- Many people sell the discounted fare products they receive through Human Services. RIPTA should help track this, perhaps through an embedded number on fare products?
- Zone Fares/Premium Fares
 - Review the one-state one-rate fare policy, and perhaps charge higher fares for longer or express trips. Consider that long trips at the existing flat fare of \$2.00 also translate into longer ADA trips at a low fare.
 - One rate for the entire state is not appropriate
 - Charge higher fares for longer trips IF it would mean that RIPTA could add more service.
 - Use extra capacity/time on RIde vans in rural areas to transport other riders and charge a premium (e.g. more than \$2.00) for this option.
 - RIde customers might pay premium fares for out-of-state trips and other premium services.

Ozone Days

- Most of the increase in ridership on Ozone Days is in ridership to the beaches. Those buses are packed, and RIPTA needs to add service to handle the extra crowds.
- Do ozone alert days attract more non-beach riders? Would it be better to just offer more beach service on hot, ozone alert days?
- Too many people equate very hot days to Ozone Days. When it's very hot, they think it is an Ozone Day and they should be able to ride for free, and this causes many disputes.

PARTNERSHIPS

- RIPTA should work with private business to identify unique travel needs that could be met by transit (e.g. private businesses shuttling employees).
- Private water taxis in Newport terminate in Perrotti Park adjacent to the Gateway Center. There is an opportunity for joint marketing or joint fare products with (e.g. offer discount if ticket stub from other service is shown, just as mansions discount their tickets if a RIPTA stub is shown).

DRIVER TRAINING

- Drivers should announce stops even when automated announcements working. Some customers find it hard to understand the announcements.
- Driver sensitivity training should be improved.
- Not all drivers understand proper tie down procedures.
- Need a policy on how long a bus waits at a stop if the driver sees someone with disabilities slowly approaching.
- If drivers are not doing their jobs properly, they should be disciplined and/or fired. It shouldn't matter if they have seniority.
- More driver training is needed:
 - Sensivity training (service animals, how to handle specific types of disabilities, when buses passes are valid/expired, etc.)
 - Conflict avoidance, confidentiality, civil rights



MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS

- A major culture change is needed to get more state employees riding RIPTA (need to address free parking embedded into union contracts, and to have consistent policies at Pastore Center and State House).
- RIPTA should consider different vehicle types:
 - Smaller vehicles outside urban areas (e.g. Burrillville)
 - Accessible limos (or a higher class of vehicle) available to the disabled community at a premium fare.
 - Consider greater use of trolley vehicles in Pawtucket (e.g. linking condos, Slater Mill, train stations). These would be attractive to residents and visitors.
- RIPTA should take over yellow-bus school transportation in RI. There would be efficiencies in combining school transportation and transit.
- RIPTA should consider being operator of statewide commuter rail service (several comments).
- Reestablish Providence to Newport ferry service as a seasonal service, primarily marketed to tourists. Consider intra-island ferry service between Melville and Newport.
- Provide real-time bus information to mobile phones and at key bus stop locations.
- Implement transit-friendly strategies such as guaranteed ride home services, transit pass subsidies, on-site transit pass sales/Eco-pass sales, parking cash-out programs, and other employer driven benefits for regular transit users.
- RIPTA needs to appoint a new ADA coordinator. It is important to have a specific contact person for rights violations and to communicate with the community of disabled individuals.
- RIPTA customer complaint staff often take the side of drivers, e.g. “I know that driver, I’m sure he wouldn’t do that.”
- Implement a customer service incentive program, giving drivers rewards for positive comments received by customers.
- Make sure drivers get breaks as scheduled, otherwise drivers get grumpy.
- Maintenance needs to listen to driver comments about lifts and other equipment. Drivers say they reported faulty equipment on RIDE vans, but issues don’t seem to be resolved.
- RIPTA should organize inter-organizational collaboration to advocate for greater transportation funding
- Consider partnering with TimeBanks RI, non-profit organization that fosters the banking and exchange of human time and talent (e.g. people could volunteer to work for RIPTA, and in turn get a discount on fares)



APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

The individuals listed in Table 1 were asked to share their opinions and ideas in a COA stakeholder interview.

TABLE 1 | STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

STAKEHOLDER GROUP		INDIVIDUALS INVITED TO INTERVIEW
1.	RIPTA Board and City of Warwick	Scott Avedisian, RIPTA Board Chair and Mayor of Warwick
2.	Regional Planning Entities	Kevin Flynn, Associate Director, RI Statewide Planning
3.		Jeff Broadhead, Washington County Regional Planning Commission*
4.		Tina Dolen, Aquidneck Island Planning Commission*
5.	RI Dept. Human Services	Amy LaPierre, Chief of Family Health Systems
6.	Private Business	Blue Cross/Blue Shield* Warwick Mall*
7.	Municipalities serving as RIPTA hubs	Providence: Bob Azar Acting Director of Planning & Development
8.		Newport: Paige Bronk, Director of Planning
9.		Pawtucket: Michael Davolio, Director of Planning
10.		West Warwick: Fred Presley, Director of Planning
11.	University of RI	Vern Wyman, Assistant VP Business Services, URI
12.	UPass participant	Carol Chase, Johnson & Wales Transportation
13.	Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy	Chris Wood, Executive Director Frank LaTorre, Downtown Improvement District Lynne McCormack, City of Providence, Art Culture & Tourism
14.	Persons with Disabilities	Focus Group: Accessible Transit Advisory Committee
15.	RIPTA Riders Alliance	Focus Group
16.	RI Public Expenditure Council	John Simmons, Executive Director*
17.	RIPTA Administration	Charles Odimgbe, CEO
18.	RIPTA Bus Operators	Focus Group and Union representatives
19.	RIPTA Flex & Rlde Operators	Focus Group
20.	RIPTA Street Supervisors	Focus Group

**Note: Several of the stakeholders above were unable to participate in an interview. These include:*

- *Aquidneck Island Planning Commission: As an alternative, recommendations from the 2011 AIPC Transportation Study have been included herein.*
- *Washington County Regional Planning Commission: a fall 2012 meeting has been proposed to provide input to the COA study. However, this document includes comments provided to RIPTA at a meeting held at the Washington County Regional Planning Commission in the fall of 2010.*
- *Business Representatives: None of the invited business representatives were able to arrange an interview.*
- *RI Public Expenditure Council: Unable to arrange interview to-date.*