

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Virtual meeting: RIPTA Webex Thursday, February 4, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Participants: Rui Cabral (Chair), Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Liza Burkin, Kerry Clark, Frank Cummings, Vincent DeJesus, Laurie Diorio, Monica Dzialo, Deanne Gagne, Elisabeth Hubbard, Grace Pires, Heidi Showstead, Angelina Stabile, Lisa Stamp.

RIPTA Staff: Nate Hannon, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Greg Nordin, Joe Solomon.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Rui Cabral called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:06 PM.

Angie Stabile motioned to approve the minutes from the January 7, 2021 meeting. Deanne Gagne seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

II. RIPTA Reports

- Annual report overview: Joelle Kanter described RIPTA's 2020 annual report, which is linked to RIPTA's homepage: www.ripta.com/2020-annual-report/. The report includes an overview of COVID-19 impacts on the agency, detailing new safety protocols, community initiatives, and projects that aim to rebuild ridership.
- Winter service changes: RIPTA's winter service changes went into effect on Saturday, January 16th and mainly consist of minor retiming of routes to improve their performance. The Quonset Express (QX) pilot now covers an expanded area west of Post Road. In addition, the 204 Westerly Flex Route now serves South County Health Express Care and the 210 Kingston Flex Route now serves the South Kingstown Housing Authority on Curtis Corner Road. RIPTA staff will inform the marketing department that the winter service document on the website is not currently accessible on all voice readers.
- Key performance indicators: Joe Solomon shared RIde data from November and December 2020. In November, RIde provided 9,548 trips including 6,735 recurring and 2,813 on-demand trips. 8,590 trips were for ambulatory service, and 958 involved wheelchairs. Of the 4,154 passengers approved to use RIde, 534 were active over a 90 day period. RIde performed 1,109 deliveries for Meals on Wheels and 1,435 trips for Honeywell employees.

In December 2020, RIde provided 12,451 trips including 8,843 recurring and 3,608 on-demand trips. 11,477 trips were for ambulatory service and 974 involved wheelchairs. Of the 4,154 customers approved to use RIde, 499 were active over a 90 day period. RIde performed 1,131 deliveries for Meals on Wheels and 1,336 trips for Honeywell employees.

RIPTA shared fixed-route on-time performance data as well. In November 2020, 363,029 time points were sampled. 81.5% were on time, 10.5% were early, and 7.9% were late. In December 2020, 387,756 time points were sampled. 81.1% were on time, 10.9% were early, and 7.9% were late.

The group requested RIde on-time performance data at future meetings.

III. RIPTA service feedback discussion

Chairman Rui Cabral reminded ATAC members that RIde paratransit renewal letters are sent out 90 days before they are set to expire.

The committee discussed several experiences related to snow at bus stops.

- In one case, when exiting a bus, Lisa Stamp said that there was a big drop to the curb and she needed more information from the driver about the distance. Greg Nordin, RIPTA's Chief of Strategic Advancement, noted that drivers are instructed to get to the curb whenever possible, but sometimes, curb access may be blocked.
- Kerry Clark also mentioned that the bus stop near Park Square in Woonsocket has not been cleared of snow and has been difficult to navigate. Greg said that RIPTA contracts for snow removal at shelter locations but relies on municipalities to enforce their snow removal ordinances at most stops. In those locations, abutting property owners are responsible for clearing the sidewalks. RIPTA does not have enforcement authority but can engage municipalities on this issue. This is an ongoing challenge, and RIPTA can address specific locations that the group identifies.

The group also discussed availability of RIPTA's Flex service in Woonsocket. It is an open door service that is available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis, using smaller vehicles. Flex trips are not limited by purpose, and the intention is to serve areas that may have challenges with supporting fixed route bus service. Due to COVID-19 capacity restrictions, some Flex vehicles fill to capacity more frequently than they did in the past.

The committee followed up on previous discussions about early arrivals for appointments on RIde trips. This has not been a consistent issue in recent weeks.

Angie Stabile complained about having trouble finding the railing on the RIde Ford Transit vans, although she likes the quiet, comfortable ride. Greg suggested that RIPTA would be able to

address this in future procurements.

Wave discussion:

- Angie has also had a great experience using a Wave card for fixed route travel. Greg said that RIPTA is actively working to bring Wave into the RIdE system through a software integration. Riders will soon be able to load cash onto their Wave cards at retail locations around the state and will also be able to continue paying with cash onboard.
- Angie noted that it can be difficult to get RIdE tickets now. RIPTA staff said that RIdE tickets are still available through RIPTA's website, and they later confirmed that mailing fees are currently waived.
- Grace Pires also asked whether passengers will still be able to use their RIdE passes once Wave is integrated with RIdE. Greg said that current RIPTA products will not expire, but RIPTA will stop selling them at a certain point. RIPTA may give credit for the remaining passes or allow people to continue using their RIdE tickets.
- Another question involved the process for agencies that currently fund their clients' transportation to and from appointments. Greg responded that those agencies will have access to a third-party Wave user portal that allows them to load money onto their clients' accounts remotely.

Other discussion items:

- A question was asked about subsidies for low-income individuals who use the RIdE program, since RIPTA's free/reduced fare bus program applies specifically to the fixed route system. Greg explained that without a funding mechanism in place, RIPTA does not have plans to expand the program.
- Chairman Rui Cabral will schedule a meeting and send a Zoom invite to people who are interested in drafting an ATAC letter in response to the multi-hub plans, detailing specific issues. Anyone who wants to dial in by phone will be included.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.