



YEAR IN REVIEW



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

2021

Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority

2021 was a year of renewal and rebuilding. While ridership is still down about a third, it is steadily recovering. Throughout the pandemic, the men and women of RIPTA took pride in not having to cut or reduce any levels of service. Because of their dedication and commitment to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders, we are continuing to surge forward. I know this next year will be filled with many new and innovative ways to improve service for all of our riders.

- **Scott Avedisian, CEO**
Rhode Island Public Transit Authority



RIPTA is moving forward

Public transit will be dealing with the impact of the global pandemic for years to come. As the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) re-emerges from the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are motivated to empower our drivers, front-line employees, and our entire workforce with the training, tools, and support needed to grow into a true leader in the transit industry. By employing smart, decision-making, we will provide increasingly high quality, customer-responsive transit service and will provide the mobility our state's economy and communities rely on, affordably and sustainably. We will come to work every day believing in our ability to make our vision a reality:



BETTER TRANSIT for a **BETTER RHODE ISLAND**

Moving forward: Focus areas



Sustainable funding

RIPTA is leading the call for a sufficient and sustainable funding pool for public transit and equitable statewide mobility in Rhode Island – with a fully-implemented Transit Master Plan as the cornerstone.



Community impact

RIPTA's vision – Better Transit for a Better Rhode Island – means strengthening our state's economy and quality of life by providing excellent, affordable, environmentally-friendly statewide mobility services.



RIPTA workforce

We are committed to empowering each RIPTA employee to reach their full potential as a RIPTA team member, together building RIPTA into a world class transit agency.



Technology

Through smart use of data, technical systems, and best practices, RIPTA is optimizing its ability to effectively deliver quality public transit services, while strengthening technical safeguards to protect data-sensitive information. This includes implementing stricter policies, a new firewall and multi-factor authentication protocols.



Moving forward with sustainable funding

Competitive Grant Awards

RIPTA received more than \$6 million in federal discretionary grants in 2021, including **\$5,150,000** in *Low/No Emissions Vehicle Program* funds to support the electrification of bus operations on Aquidneck Island and **\$900,000** in *Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity* (RAISE) funds for an alternatives analysis and feasibility study focusing on a Transit Master Plan-proposed high capacity transit corridor linking five cities in the Metro Providence area.

Long-Term Transit Funding

RIPTA is partnering with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), transit riders, and public transportation advocates to identify sources of long-term transit funding to fully implement the Transit Master Plan, expand rural and human services transportation, and transition to a zero-emission transit fleet. Without new and sustainable funding sources for multimodal transportation, Rhode Island will fall short of its climate and mobility goals, and miss out on important economic opportunities.

Sustainable funding

Strategic Plan

Capping the year of COVID recovery, reflection, and direction setting, RIPTA adopted a strategic plan articulating its goals and objectives for the coming five years. Interwoven with its capital and operating budgets, the strategic plan is organized around themes of sustainable funding, community impact, RIPTA workforce, and management and technology. Each department has identified objectives and tasks, with quarterly updates to be provided throughout the coming year.



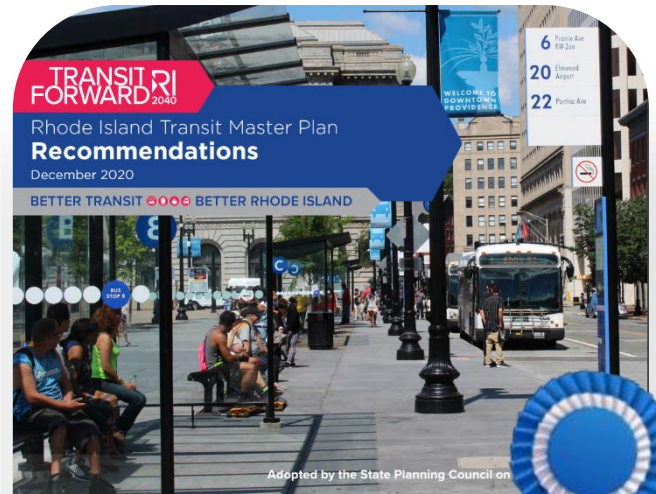
Moving forward with **community impact**

Transit Forward RI 2040 Year 1 Implementation

Adopted in December 2020, Rhode Island's Transit Master Plan presents a bold and ambitious slate of projects designed to help make Rhode Island a better and more prosperous place to live, work, and play. This year, in addition to enhancing service, RIPTA secured grant funds to begin developing a High Capacity Transit corridor linking Central Falls to Warwick via Pawtucket, Providence, and Cranston. Requests for discretionary grants for maintenance facility modernization, bus stop improvements, bus electrification, and mobility hub planning are pending.

Downtown Transit Connector Service Launch

June 2021 saw the formal service launch of the Downtown Transit Connector (DTC), a \$17 million project which created a high-frequency bus corridor running from Providence Station to Rhode Island Hospital through the Jewelry District. Buses run between the six paired stops along the way every five minutes. Each stop features shelters, real-time information screens, and other passenger amenities.



*Winner: Best Transportation
Plan of 2021 (APA-RI)*

Transit Forward RI

In 2021, RIPTA began implementing the Transit Master Plan with frequency and span improvements on Routes 20, 31, and 56, bringing better service to more than 90,000 riders each month.

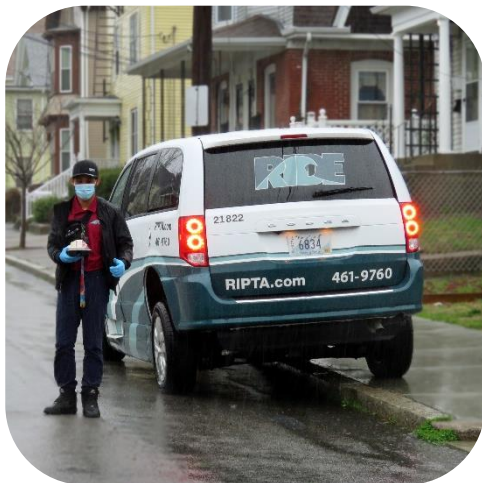


DTC

As COVID-19 vaccination ramped up during the late spring and early summer, ridership on routes connected to the DTC saw some of the highest increases system wide.

Community impact

RIPTA has always been sensitive to the fact that, despite the challenges it is facing, it has resources to help our state and its communities.



Meals on Wheels

14,029 trips

Ride paratransit vehicles were deployed to help Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island make their deliveries as more people were not able to leave their homes during the pandemic.



Honeywell

19,930 trips

After Honeywell retrofitted its Smithfield manufacturing site to begin production of much-needed N95 protective masks, RIPTA assisted by providing transportation to some of their employees.



Newport Beach Pilot

250+ trips

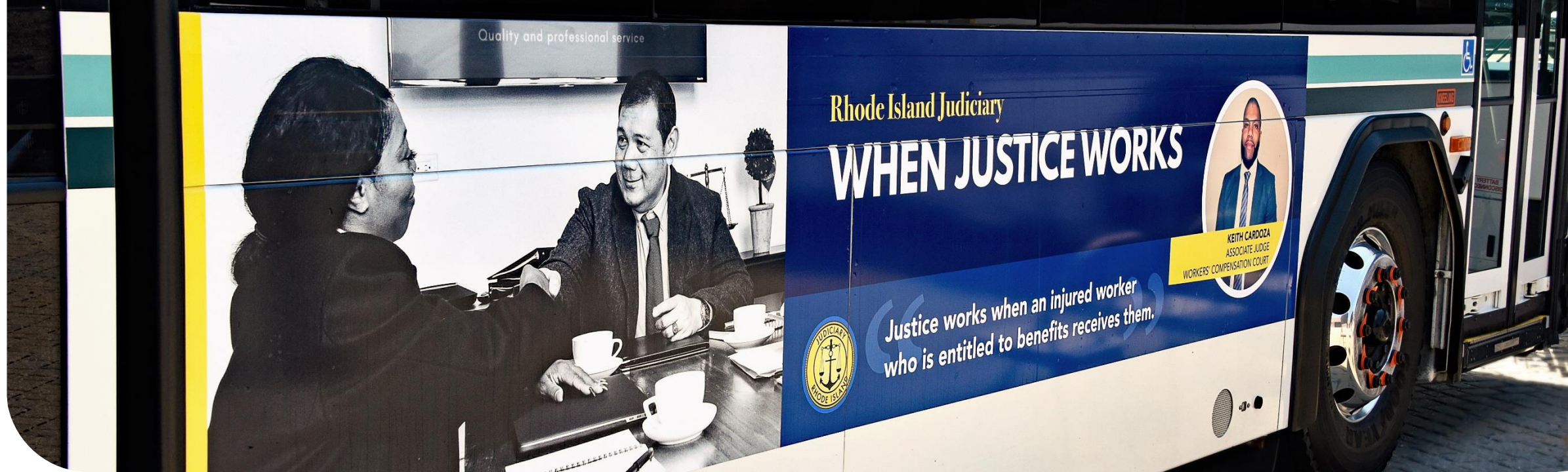
After listening to community concerns about access to local beaches, RIPTA partnered with the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island to offer a local beach shuttle that connected neighborhoods in north Newport to Easton's Beach in Newport and Second Beach in Middletown.



Pineapple Pass

12,537 trips to date

The Rhode Island Hospitality Association (RIHA) secured funding to offer free transit to hospitality employees in order to make getting to work easier for people in this industry. Employees received Wave smart cards preloaded with fare value valid for unlimited rides through the end of 2021.



Community impact

RIPTA continually partners with local organizations in an effort to advance racial equity and inclusion. In June, RIPTA and the Rhode Island Judiciary marked the launch of a new bus advertisement campaign intended to encourage a statewide conversation on justice and what it means in the day-to-day lives of Rhode Islanders. The announcement took place at RIPTA, in recognition of the vital role buses play in transporting many court users.

Called "When Justice Works," the campaign – organized by the Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts in partnership with the Center for Health and Justice Transformation – reaffirms the Judiciary's commitment to justice, fairness, and equal treatment throughout Rhode Island..



Moving forward with community impact



Advancing Equity

In 2021, RIPTA updated its Title VI Program, a federally-required set of policies and practices designed to protect against unfair impacts to minority and low-income populations. RIPTA conducts equity analyses of all major service and fare changes and is committed to conducting inclusive public engagement as it plans for future system improvements.

Supporting Statewide Mobility

RIPTA hosts Rhode Island's Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council, bringing state agencies together with community based organizations to support the coordination and integration of transportation programs for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and others who need specialized assistance, whether in metro Providence or in rural communities.

Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee

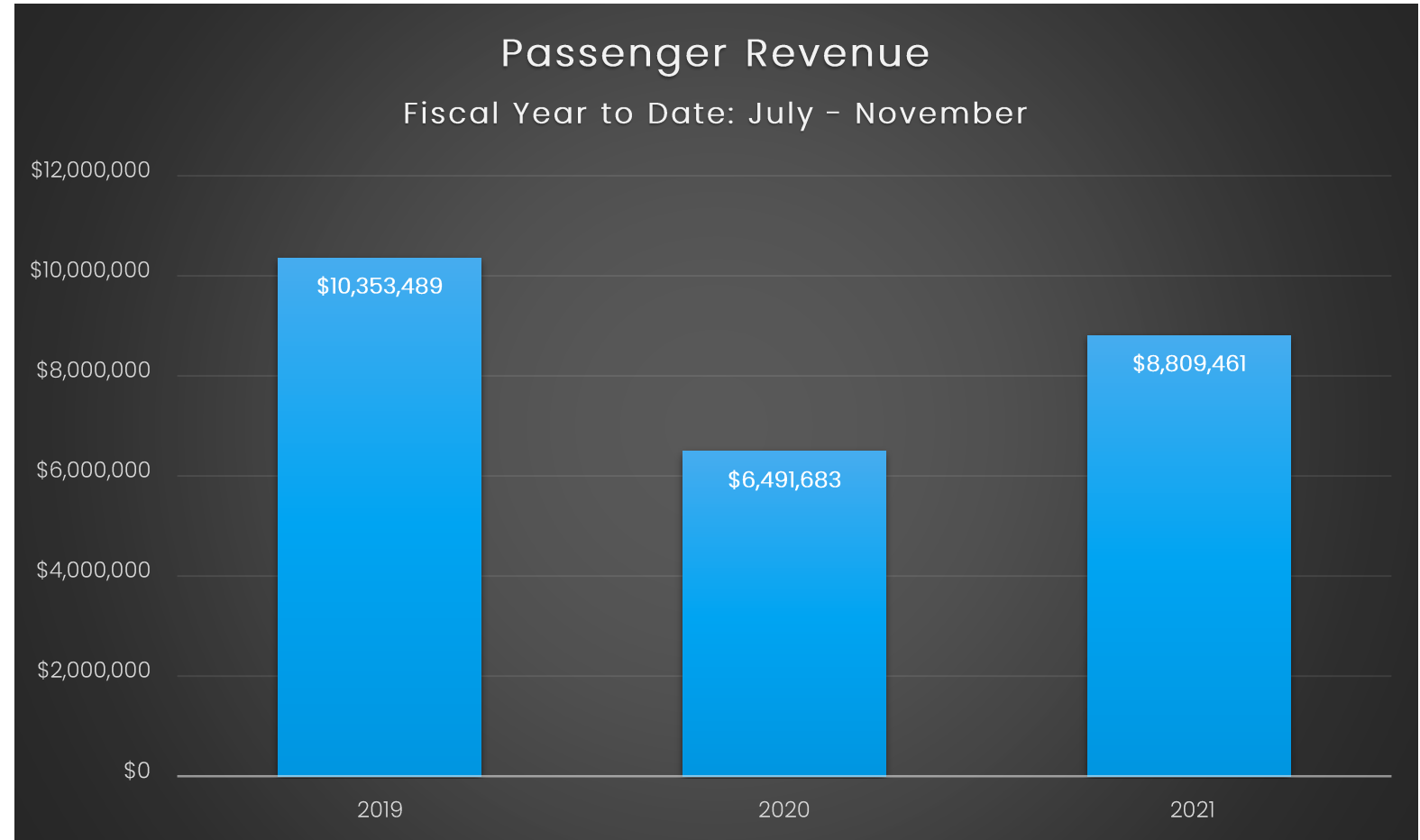
Throughout the pandemic, RIPTA has continued to rely on input from the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) to better understand and address transportation-related issues affecting people with disabilities. Meeting monthly, ATAC participants provide service feedback, learn about ongoing projects from RIPTA staff, and engage in meaningful discussions about their travel experiences.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Over the course of 2021, both ridership and passenger revenue continued to recover, with monthly revenue losses growing smaller and Federal Emergency Relief funding continuing to flow in. These emergency funds enabled RIPTA to maintain a balanced budget and also to maintain full service levels at a time when riders needed this urgently. RIPTA was one of few transit agencies nationwide not to cut service as a result of COVID-19.

The return of many schools and colleges to in-person learning and businesses to in-person work provided a revenue boost in the form of bulk fare purchases, while direct farebox revenue recovered more modestly. With COVID numbers rising once again, it is expected that ridership and passenger revenue will continue to recover only modestly into the new year.

During this time, the Authority also saw its pension plan improve from 66% funded to 78% funded due to strong market performance. RIPTA also addressed a long-standing payable to the plan and is fully current with its pension obligations. Better management of our liabilities has been a focus as we work to strengthen RIPTA's foundation for growth.



Moving forward with RIPTA's workforce



Workforce winners

Hospitality Heroes Award

Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau awarded RIPTA's Ride program a Hospitality Heroes award, acknowledging the essential role of Ride's paratransit drivers in keeping Rhode Islanders healthy and safe during the pandemic, delivering food through Meals on Wheels and other programs, and providing transportation for Honeywell employees charged with making N95 masks.

Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement

For each of the past nine years, RIPTA has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Always striving to incorporate best practices into its work, RIPTA enhanced its budgeting process in 2021 and, as a result, has now applied for the GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. Additional best practices incorporated in 2021 include bringing RIPTA's pension plan current, conducting a financial risk assessment, and developing a short-term investment policy.



RIPTA workforce

Making History: Eileen Cioe

In March, RIPTA celebrated Women's History Month with a series of features highlighting the dynamic, dedicated women who have kept the agency running smoothly.

Leading the way was Eileen Cioe, RIPTA's first ever female General Manager. Her advice to any woman considering a career in public transportation? "No matter what you want to do, you can't be afraid of the challenges... Be true to yourself, face the challenges, and do your best."

Visit [RIPTA.com/WHM](https://www.ripta.com/WHM) for more Women's History profiles.

Today, 25.5% of RIPTA's workforce is female.



RIPTA workforce



Joseph Solomon
RIdE Data Analyst

Our staff includes many talented data analysts, and at RIPTA's November Board of Director's meeting, we recognized Joseph Solomon, a 4-year employee of the RIdE paratransit division responsible for developing and maintaining RIdE's business intelligence dashboards. Joseph is known as a valuable team member who is always ready to assist his co-workers with a smile.



Eldora Giblin
Fixed-Route Operator

Since a fateful Saturday in April, when Eldora "Ellie" Giblin stopped her Route 33 bus to help a man who seemed ready to jump off the Henderson Bridge, Ellie has received numerous commendations for her efforts.

"We are so proud that she is a RIPTA employee," said RIPTA CEO Scott Avedisian of Ellie, a RIPTA operator for 9 years. "Ellie is a reminder that there are many good people in the world and that acts of kindness can make a huge difference."



RIPTA workforce

Office of Project Management

Introducing RIPTA's new Project Management Department: with more than 80 years of construction experience, this powerhouse team is leading RIPTA capital infrastructure projects to on-time and on-budget completion. James Canty, PMP, and his crew have been hard at work this year providing direction and oversight of capital projects including modernization work at RIPTA's East Side Bus Tunnel and the John H. Chafee Maintenance Facility. Look for them next year bringing on-route electric bus charging to the R Line and passenger amenities to CCRI's Warwick campus.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

James Canty

Matthew Quider

Maribeth Pacillo

John Plouffe

Moving forward with Technology

Battery Electric Bus Pilot



Fast facts

22,724 EMISSIONS-FREE MILES

operated by RIPTA's three pilot battery-electric buses combined in 2021.

139.5 MILES

Longest ride on a single charge.

440 kWh OF ENERGY

per full charge. (Equivalent to the average daily electricity consumption rate of 15 homes)

208 DRIVERS

trained in battery electric bus operation. (51% of all RIPTA operators)

Electric buses will “provide Rhode Islanders with a quieter, cleaner, smoother, and healthier ride.” – U.S. Senator Jack Reed

Technology

Solar Partnership

Spring 2021 marked a turning point for RIPTA with the signing of a remote net energy agreement enabling over a quarter of million dollars of annual savings while accessing clean, sustainable solar power generated by partner Kearsarge Energy. Under the agreement, RIPTA receives credit for power generated by Kearsarge's 6,000-plus solar panel installation located on a brownfield site in East Providence, effectively offsetting 93% of RIPTA's energy consumption.

Wave Smart Fare Technology

[Wave.RIPTA.com](https://www.wave.ripta.com)

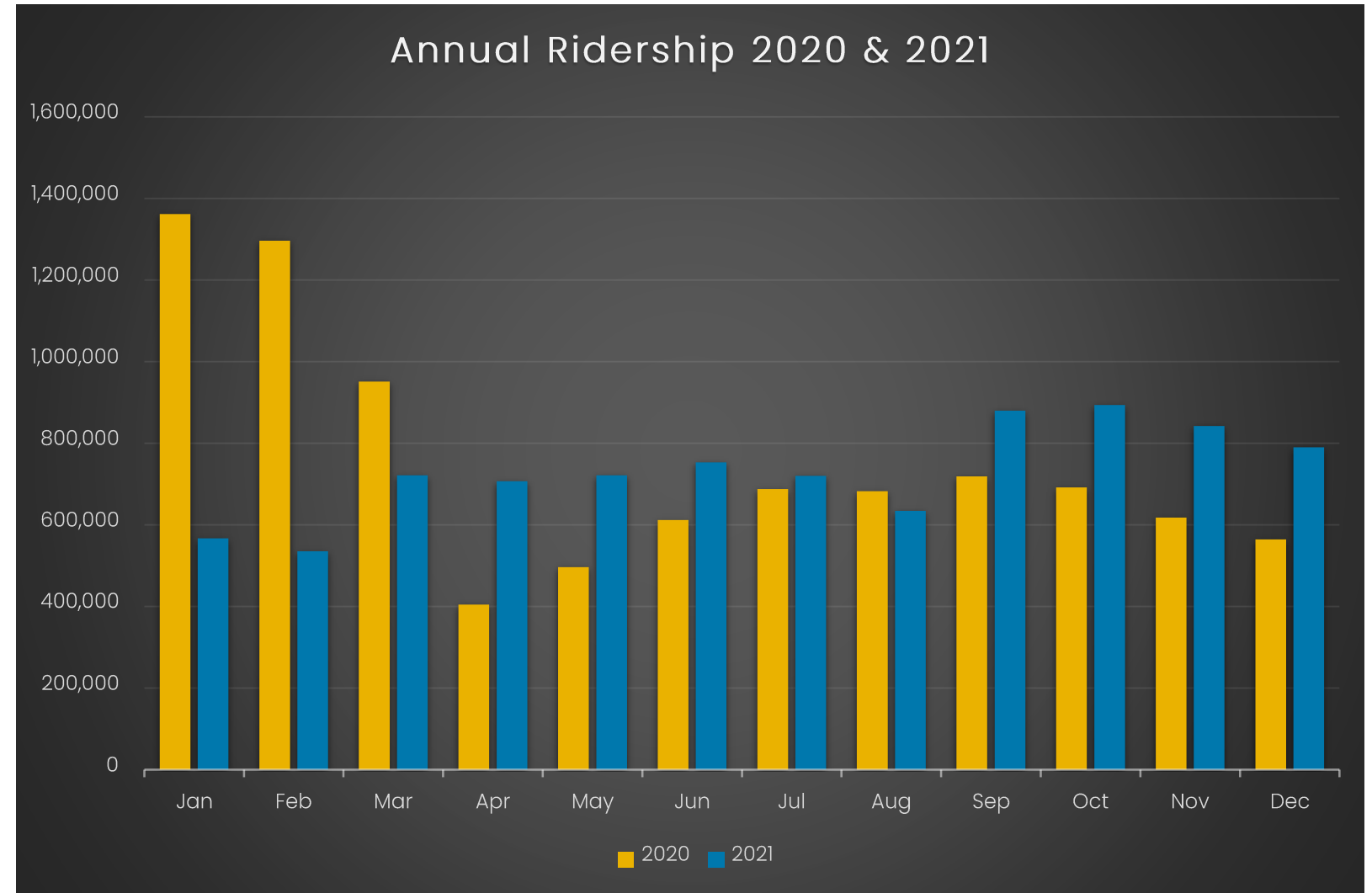
Following the September 2020 launch of RIPTA's Wave smart fare collection system, uptake grew rapidly throughout 2021. Wave utilization grew steadily from 3.4% to 48.2% of all fares, with system ridership growing from a low of 404,400 in April 2020 to a robust 877,634 trips in October 2021. RIPTA continues to assist partners including schools, businesses, and social service providers to fund trips for their clients, patients, and students through their own institutional Wave portals, and is now helping partners prepare for the elimination of paper fare products in January.



IMPACT ON RIDERSHIP

This chart shows the impact of COVID-19 on fixed-route service.

A year-over-year comparison of 2020 and 2021 shows that from the time COVID restrictions took full effect (in April 2020), RIPTA ridership was stronger each month in 2021 than in the previous year. Although COVID-19 persists and is now on the rise again, Rhode Islanders are growing more mobile and are riding the bus in greater numbers than in 2020. The recovery is far from complete, but RIPTA is committed to doing its part to support workforce mobility and the reemergence of Rhode Island from the grip of the pandemic. We anticipate that ridership will continue to recover, slowly but steadily, as we move into the new year.



Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

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