

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 3, 2022

MEETING MINUTES

Participants: Rui Cabral (Chair), Robert Beauregard, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Kerry Clark, Earnest Covington, Frank Cummings, Laurie DiOrio, Monica Dzialo, Elisabeth Hubbard, Barry Humphries, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Heather Schey, Angie Stabile, Mark Susa.

RIPTA Staff: Brooks Almonte, James Canty, John Chadwick, Marc Ebuña, Nate Hannon, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Michael McGrane, Chris McKenna, Greg Nordin, Maribeth Pacillo, Joe Solomon.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Rui Cabral called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order on Zoom at 4:06 PM. He announced that this would be his last meeting as chair, but he knows the group will be in good hands and he plans to continue participating.

Following the presentation of the draft minutes from the November 4, 2021 meeting, Jean Bousquet requested clarification. The minutes reference that for the free/reduced fare bus pass program, "In the past, more than a dozen organizations, including the RI Office of Rehabilitation Services, were able to authorize an individual's disability, but that option has been discontinued." RIPTA staff will revise the minutes to note that ORS can refer clients to a primary care provider or licensed social worker to authorize their disability.

Angie Stabile motioned to approve the minutes from the November 4, 2021 meeting with the suggested modification. Robert Beauregard seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

II. ATAC Election

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, reported on the votes collected from ATAC members by mail before the meeting for the two officer positions:

- Chairperson: Heather Schey: 11 votes
- Vice-chairperson: Monica Dzialo: 10 votes
- Vice-chairperson: Mark Susa: 2 votes

Members accepted the votes and named Heather Schey as ATAC chairperson and Monica Dzialo as vice-chairperson, with their terms commencing at the next meeting.

III. ATAC Membership

Joelle reported that ATAC membership has not changed since it was last established in November. She will email a list to the group.

IV. RIPTA Reports

- Key performance indicators:
 - Joe Solomon shared Ride data for the 3 month period from October through December 2021. Ride provided 13,103 trips in October, 17,266 trips in November, and 16,944 in December. On-time performance was 93% in October, 92% in November, and 93% in December. Ride had 821 active passengers in October, 831 in November, and 807 in December. Ride also transported 18 people to vaccine trips in October, 12 people in November, and 33 people in December.
 - Joelle also shared fixed route on-time performance data over the same three month period. On-time performance was 78.6% in October, 79.3% in November, and 80.9% in December.

- Project updates:
 - On January 15th, RIPTA implemented winter service changes and stopped accepting paper fare products on board fixed route buses. The launch of Route 16 was postponed due to resource constraints, and the team now expects a full rollout as a longer route in June 2022.
 - Marc Ebuña, RIPTA planner, shared an update on his previous presentation on destination signs, announcing that he changed the messaging on Routes 14, 20, and 1 to give the greatest benefit to the most riders. He appreciates the group's feedback and will continue his effort to update signage on more routes.

V. Presentation

John Chadwick, RIPTA's Director of Procurement, spoke to the group about getting involved with procurement of Ride vehicles. His department handles issues with all RIPTA contractors beyond vehicle purchases, providing support for the entire agency.

RIPTA has a 5 year contract with Turtle Top. John announced that RIPTA has a current order for 25 new paratransit shuttles, similar to the 16-2 style cutaway models ordered in 2011, 2012 and 2015. The new shuttles are expected to arrive in June, allowing Ride to retire some older vans.

He expects another order for 50 additional Ride vehicles to arrive a few months after the first order, although supply shortages might cause delays. The next window for another contract will

be in 2025, and John plans to reach out to ATAC for feedback before putting the specs together.

A discussion followed John's presentation. Rui asked whether the new shuttles have an uneven top step, like the 2015 Turtle Top models, which ATAC members described as a tripping hazard. John agreed to follow up with technical specs, including details about the seatbelts, which were also requested.

In response to a question from the group, Mike McGrane, RIPTA contracts manager, outlined the timeline from issuing a bid to gaining board approval, which typically takes 120 days altogether. Approval from the state's Equal Opportunity Office takes another 30 days. John added that RIPTA works out final issues with the vendor during a pre-production meeting. Then, RIPTA issues a purchase order (PO) to put a spot on the line for vehicle production. The vendors determine the manufacturing schedule, and they are currently experiencing a chip shortage.

John also described the process of converting RIPTA facilities to handle gas powered vehicles. In the next 5 years, RIPTA may consider going out to bid for electric vehicles if the battery technology makes them a viable option.

Rui suggested that quiet electric vehicles could be difficult to find for Ride customers who have limited vision. The group discussed the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act (2010) which should require new electric vehicles to have a sound system that alerts people. RIPTA will confirm whether this applies to larger commercial vehicles. Marc also suggested looking into door sound indicators to assist passengers with finding quieter vehicles. MBTA's RTAG (advisory group) may have useful information.

Robert Beauregard also mentioned an accessibility concern on some of the newer buses on Route 87. In the front section with seats facing sideways on a platform, only one side opens. These buses are narrow, and it can be difficult for people using wheelchairs to maneuver into the spots up front. John will take this feedback into consideration for technical specs.

Greg Nordin, RIPTA's Chief of Strategic Advancement, thanked John and Mike for the discussion, and asked about how accessibility is addressed through procurement. Mike uses boilerplate language, requiring all projects to meet ADA codes. The project management team can also highlight this in their forthcoming presentation.

VI. Discussion/Chat

- General Q&A
 - Monica asked whether meetings would continue to be hosted on Zoom moving forward. Per the governor's executive orders, when meetings are scheduled in person, members are required to attend to count towards a vote and quorum.
 - The group discussed their preferences for in-person or online meetings.
 - Heather suggested looking into larger off-site spaces for in-person meetings, such as libraries in Cranston, Warwick, and East Providence.

- Joelle said that RIPTA will plan to be as safe as possible. When meetings resume in person, she will confirm whether RIPTA's COVID screening sheet has been updated, and whether it is applicable off-site.
- RIPTA service feedback
 - Robert suggested adding a bus stop sign at the Lincoln Senior Center. Marc expressed concern about the street, which doesn't have a sidewalk and would not be ADA compliant. He suggested partnering with the town to find a solution. Bob pointed out that Route 246 has several stops without sidewalks, but Marc said that the road is straight and has better sight lines. Marc will visit the spot to check it out, and also look for a spot higher on the pole to place a northbound bus sign.

Heather thanked Rui for his service to the committee as chairperson.

The meeting adjourned at 5:48 PM.