

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 4, 2022
MEETING MINUTES

Participants: Robert Beauregard, Benny Bergantino, Monica Dzialo (Vice-chairperson), Barbara Henry, Janice Musco, Heidi Showstead, Ed Soares, Grace Pires.

RIPTA Staff: Tom Arsenault, Nate Hannon, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Chris McKenna, Greg Nordin, Maribeth Pacillo, Ken Vinacco.

Consultant: Anne Galbraith

- I. **Call to Order:** Vice-chairperson Monica Dzialo called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:14 PM.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, then confirmed ATAC membership status based on participation in 5 of the last 12 meetings. Current members are: Robert Beauregard, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Frank Cummings, Vincent DeJesus, Laurie Diorio, Monica Dzialo, Elisabeth Hubbard, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Heather Schey, Angie Stabile, and Mark Susa.

- II. **VOTE:** Robert Beauregard motioned to approve the minutes from the June 2, 2022 ATAC meeting. Grace Pires seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

- III. **Understanding Transit Needs:** While Deanne Gagne's planned presentation about the experience of transit riders who use wheelchairs was postponed until the next meeting, Monica Dzialo invited participants to describe their own experiences. Heidi Showstead noted that some Ride drivers are patient when tying down wheelchairs, but she suggested that others need sensitivity training. She recommended involving people with disabilities in driver training.

IV. Feedback on RIPTA Projects

- Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan: Anne Galbraith, ASG Planning, represented the Nelson\Nygaard consulting team in describing the update of the Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan which focuses on transportation services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Since the team completed four listening sessions in May, they have been working on the inventory of services and mapping data. They also organized the recommendations into seven strategy areas, which were presented at two public meetings in July, and started looking at best practices to help advance the strategies.

Anne requested feedback from the committee on several key strategies including mobility management, travel training and sensitivity training. Participants shared the

following suggestions:

- Provide travel training to people aging out of DCYF care to help them prepare to live independently.
- Offer training to people with disabilities delivered by others who have disabilities. Training should also match their specific needs.
- Consider whether caregivers and advocates should be able to make travel decisions on others' behalf. It may not be appropriate in every case.
- Consult with local resources including the Sherlock Center, and review current training materials from the Dept. of Human Services, the Office of Rehabilitation Services, CAP agencies, and other organizations.
- Make sure training is accessible by offering materials in large print and providing ASL interpretation at meetings.
- Start training young people. Independence can start early!
- Sensitivity training would be valuable for staff at many organizations in addition to RIPTA fixed-route and paratransit drivers.
- Form a subcommittee to act as a working group on travel training.
- Encourage staff to participate in sensitivity training opportunities every year.

These suggestions may be incorporated into the draft Coordinated Plan which should be ready for review this fall.

- Community transportation webpages: Joelle Kanter shared community transportation information demonstration pages that will soon appear on RIPTA's website. These pages will provide information about all transportation services available in each Rhode Island municipality in addition to the ones provided by RIPTA. Before finalizing the layouts, she offered to email links to anyone interested in reviewing them.
- Other projects: Chris McKenna, RIde, said that RIPTA wants to give ATAC members an opportunity to test using Wave payment on RIde paratransit trips before other riders. Feedback from ATAC will help RIPTA understand what works well and what issues may need to be resolved.

V. RIPTA department presentation: Ken Vinacco, RIPTA's director of training and Tom Arsenault, lead trainer, presented an overview of the training that they provide on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. They train RIPTA fixed-route drivers, RIde paratransit drivers, Flex drivers, CDL trainees, utility workers, and mechanics, and they also provide retraining as needed. The ADA training includes information about proper boarding, operating a lift, tying down wheelchairs, using people-first language, safety, etiquette, sensitivity, and other topics. Greg Nordin, RIPTA's chief of strategic advancement, reminded the group that training is done proactively to set up drivers for success. Unless issues are reported by supervisors, the training department will not be aware of them. Participants were encouraged to share suggestions to improve the training based on their experiences as riders.

VI. Discussion

- Heidi Showstead recommended holding future ATAC meetings online to allow more people with disabilities to participate. Greg Nordin explained that RIPTA follows state guidelines for hosting public meetings. To advocate for change, participants were advised to contact their state representatives.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.