

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 1, 2022
MEETING MINUTES

Participants: Jean Bousquet, Rui Cabral, John Carvalho, Kerry Clark, Vincent DeJesus, Monica Dzialo (Vice-chairperson), Devin Guirales, Barry Humphries, Grace Pires, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa

RIPTA Staff: Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Chris McKenna

By Phone: Heather Schey (Chairperson)

Call to Order: Vice-chairperson Monica Dzialo called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:14 PM. After taking attendance, Monica reviewed meeting protocols.

Angelina Stabile motioned to approve the minutes from the August 4, 2022 ATAC meeting. John Carvalho seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Monica announced that Deanne Gagne's presentation on the experience of riders who use wheelchairs would be postponed.

Presentation on Wave/Ride integration: Chris McKenna described RIPTA's plans to enable Ride customers to use plastic or mobile Wave cards for paratransit trip payment. Once pilot testing begins, Ride customer service agents will enter the customer's Wave card number into their profile when they call to book trips. When they are picked up, they can ask the driver to select Wave as the payment type and deduct Ride fare from the linked card. The process will be similar for taxis.

Meeting participants asked about the process for adding funds to their Wave accounts. They can pre-load money using a credit or debit card, and when the balance dips below a certain amount, they may select an autoloading option to automatically add value to the card. They can also add cash to their cards at retail locations and link to organizations that provide funding through institutional Wave accounts.

Chris will be the point person for pilot testing, and he will email ATAC about this when it is ready to launch. He is looking for at least 10 people to test the system, and RIPTA will send them blank Wave cards for free. Those who opt in should let him know about their experience, especially when using Google talk back and iPhone voiceover settings.

Chris will send out the presentation after the meeting.

RIPTA Project Updates:

- Key performance indicators will be presented in October.

- Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan: Joelle Kanter reported that RIPTA's consulting team completed public outreach for the Coordinated Plan over the summer, and heard feedback from ATAC members at the last meeting. They are incorporating those ideas into implementation strategies, and they've created a survey asking respondents to help prioritize them. The team is also conducting best practice research and recently spoke with Easter Seals New Hampshire about the mobility management network, and Access Point RI about travel training and sensitivity training. The draft plan should be ready for review within the next few weeks, and comments will be incorporated into the final plan, to be completed in November. Rui Cabral recommended adding benchmarks to ensure that the plan is relevant and measurable.
- Community transportation webpages: Joelle presented sample development pages for RIPTA's website, showing a landing page for community transportation and an individual community page for South Kingstown. Compared to the previous drafts, these pages have more color contrast and a cleaner layout with lines separating information about different transportation services. The team plans to finalize the design and populate the pages with content soon.
- Other projects:
 - Sarah Ingle said that RIPTA is continuing to study potential improvements to the stops outside the East Side Bus Tunnel. She anticipates coming back to ATAC in October to get feedback on the design concepts.
 - The state budget, approved in June, included funding for RIPTA to conduct a study on expanding the ADA paratransit service area. RIPTA recently kicked off the project with assistance from consultants and will start analyzing data to understand paratransit demand in underserved areas. The team will hold public meetings online later this month, and ATAC will be informed about them. By the end of the year, RIPTA will submit a report to the General Assembly outlining several scenarios and the resources (including vehicles, drivers, and funding) required to support them.

Discussion:

- After Sarah's update on the paratransit study, Grace Pires noted the importance of paratransit service for people seeking employment. In her role at the Office of Rehabilitation Services, she said that clients sometimes have to turn down job offers when they are located outside the paratransit service area. This has an economic impact on families.
- Grace also asked whether RIPTA staff would attend the upcoming National Federation of the Blind—Rhode Island convention.
- Rui Cabral commented on the plans to develop community transportation pages on RIPTA's website, and asked about the RIPTA customer service staff role in answering questions about transportation services provided by other operators.
- Vincent DeJesus described an incident when another passenger's power wheelchair stopped working. He suggested that Ride drivers should be informed to use a switch to disengage the motors, set it to neutral, and push the chairs. He also said that fixed route drivers need more training to secure different wheelchair models. Chris McKenna explained that Ride drivers

should not lift more than 50 lbs., so when a customer's power wheelchair breaks, they should call dispatch and local rescue.

- Vince pointed out that a parent whose son has autism had difficulty renewing his bus pass.
- He also mentioned that it can be challenging to schedule RIde trips home from doctor's appointments because the timing is unpredictable. Monica pointed out that when she tells doctors she's using RIde, they'll make sure she gets out on time.
- Rui said that he used to receive notification letters reminding him when his 5-year ADA eligibility would expire in 90 days. Recently, people have not been receiving these letters.
- Jean Bousquet added that she fills out the paratransit application and renewal forms with her clients, and she doesn't get confirmations when customers are approved to use the service. Chris McKenna will look into this.
- Kerry Clark said that he has tried riding fixed-route buses over the summer, and they have been running late or not running at all. When he waits for the #54 bus by the train station, he wonders whether buses are skipping that stop altogether.
- Devin Guirales asked when the new Pawtucket hub will open. Joelle will ask RIPTA's project management team for an update.

The meeting adjourned at 5:58 PM.