



Board of Directors
Minutes of Wednesday, October 19, 2022 Meeting
5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Normand Benoit, Board Chair; Robert Kells, Board Vice Chair; Patrick Crowley, Board Secretary; James Leach; Marcy Reyes (arrived at 5:11 p.m.); and Peter Alviti.

Absent Members: Michelle Wilcox, Board Treasurer; and Heather Schey.

Also Present: Scott Avedisian, CEO; Christopher Fragomeni, Esq., Board Counsel; Courtney Marciano, Senior Executive Officer; Chris Durand, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security; Kathy Nadeau, Chief of Human Resources; Greg Nordin, Chief of Advancement; members of RIPTA's staff; and members of the public.

Call to Order: Mr. Benoit called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., indicating that quorum was present.

Agenda Item 1: **To Consider for Approval the Draft Regular Meeting Minutes of the September 28, 2022 Meeting.**

Mr. Kells makes a motion to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2022 meeting. Mr. Crowley seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Alviti; Mr. Leach; and Mr. Benoit.

Ms. Reyes was not present for this vote.

Agenda Item 2: **Public Comment**

1.) John Flaherty:

- a. Discussed agenda item #8: Bus Pass Program Follow Up: Be creative and swift in responding to the immediate transportation needs of our neighbors who are unhoused. Encouraged the Board to review and adjust the entire reduced fare bus pass program for low-income people, people with disabilities, and seniors.
- b. Members of the transit advocacy world were shocked to hear of Greg Nordin's departure. He's been an integral part of many large initiatives across the agency and the State. Thanked Greg for his work and for his efforts to proactively communicate with the public during his tenure at RIPTA.

- c. Long-range budget for RIPTA. Mr. Flaherty expressed concern that there's no evidence that the Transit Master Plan has begun being implemented. Hoping to see more a commitment from RIPTA on the State-match.

2.) Kevin Simon: Mathewson Street Church

- a. Thanked RIPTA employees who came to Sunday morning breakfast at Mathewson Street Church. Greg Nordin, Nate Hannon and Patrick Crowley— thanked them for their efforts in getting people signed up for bus passes. 12 people were able to successfully sign up for a pass. 63 people spoke with RIPTA staff about obtaining a pass. Average of 1 in 5 people were able to get a pass. Upwards of 200 people attended breakfast, but didn't attempt to get a pass because they know they don't qualify. Respectfully asks the RIPTA Board to issue free bus passes for anyone who is experiencing homelessness.

3.) Reverend Duane Clinker: Mathewson Street Church

- a. Gives example of how bus passes for the homeless community could work. Offers what the pass could look like, explains that he feels the lift to get these passes out the door is not challenging.
- b. Mathewson Street Church and its organizing committee meet twice a week to discuss how to get help their community.
- c. Offered a short parable about being just and fair to one another neighbors and believes that it's RIPTA's time to be fair and equitable to their homeless neighbors.

4.) Randall Rose:

- a. Rhode Island Transit Rides supports the free bus passes pilot for homeless and gives their full support to the program.

Agenda Item 8: Bus Pass Program Follow Up

Greg Nordin, Chief of Advancement, reviews the proposed memo drafted specifically to address the free bus pass pilot program. Greg highlights the three fundamental issues he sees with the current the program.

- 1. RIPTA's "Free Bus Pass Program" leaves a significant gap in low-income individuals.**
 - a. He explains that an applicant who is does not dually qualify (applicants must have an income of less than 200% of the poverty threshold and must either be disabled or older than 65) are not qualified under the current program.
- 2. RIPTA's "Free Bus Pass Program" is underfunded.**
 - a. Two funding sources that help pay for the program. The first is \$3.4 million of revenue through vehicle registration fees and an additional \$2.5 million from gas tax revenue. Total is \$5.9 million. There is an inherent financial perspective to make the guidelines stringent as to not overspend the budget.
- 3. RIPTA's "Free Bus Pass Program" is administered by an agency whose core competency is delivering transportation, not vetting individuals for benefits.**
 - a. Our core competency is not in vetting individuals. The program is required under state law with very little guidance, making it RIPTA's sole responsibility to set the criteria and deciding which tools and documentation will be used to enroll people into the program.

Greg explains the best and most effective way to address the inconsistencies is to develop and institute a pilot program. He proposes for 4 categories for the action-plan:

1. In the short term would be to launch a pilot program that gets bus passes into the hands of those who need them most. Outlines that his memo states 100 passes for a 6-month period. Believes RIPTA could use this as an opportunity to understand the travel patterns, what would a free bus pass program do to the impacts to ridership, can the system support having more riders, what would service changes need to look like. He believes launching the pilot would help RIPTA more fully understand the issues and produce immediate help to the most vulnerable communities.
2. He also address that RIPTA should start to identify legislators who are interested in addressing this topic and who can help fix systemic funding issues.
3. The third step would be to engage the state's coordinating council that includes RIDOT, EOHHS, Office of Healthy Aging, etc. and work with them to understand how they are qualifying people into programs.
4. The fourth step would be to break up RIPTA's current "free bus pass program" into three distinct programs: 1. Age 65+; 2. Disability; and Low Income Individuals.

Mr. Crowley introduces the following motion to replace the proposed guidelines of the pilot program:

"It shall be the policy of RIPTA to provide free bus passes for the unhoused people of Rhode Island. The Board directs the agency to develop a practical program to implement this policy over the next six months. During this planning and implementation process, the Board directs the agency to supply to the Mathewson Street United Methodist Church ("Mathewson Street"), the home of the only free breakfast for the unhoused in Rhode Island on Sundays, up to 600 passes for distribution to unhoused people upon request. The Board further commends the staff at RIPTA who have already assisted the unhoused people attending the Mathewson Street Breakfast for their dedication to the Agency's goals and the unhoused community."

Ms. Reyes expresses concern over the language regarding the memo provided to the board, wanting to ensure that all low income, unhoused individuals are included in the "free bus pass program" pilot.

Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel, advises the Board they can only amend the agenda item in reference to the three action points outlined in Mr. Nordin's supplemental memo.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to amend the total number of bus passes from 100 to 600 and adopt the recommendations in Mr. Nordin's memo. Mr. Leach seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Kells; Mr. Alviti; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Benoit.

Agenda Item 3: CEO Report

Scott Avedisian, CEO, presents the CEO report. Topics included in his update were:

1. RIPTA At a Glance
2. RIPTA In The News
3. Commendations

Paul Harrington, Executive Director of Transportation, gave an update regarding bus service, specifically implementing the new Choose Up on October 22, 2022 and Providence School

children.

Agenda Item 4: Bus Shelter Cleaning Contract

Item was deferred.

Agenda Item 5: Request for Approval of Ford Parts Bid

Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer, presents the request.

Mr. Kells makes a motion to approve. Mr. Alviti seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Mr. Crowley; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Benoit.

Agenda Item 6: Request for Approval of GM Parts Bid

Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer, presents the request.

Mr. Alviti makes a motion to approve. Mr. Kells seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Mr. Crowley; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Benoit.

Agenda Item 7: Request for Approval of Maintenance's Uniform Rental and Cleaning

Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer, presents the request.

Mr. Alviti makes a motion to approve. Mr. Crowley seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Benoit.

Agenda Item 9: Request for Approval of /Discussion with Potential Vote: Adding Lost Service Information to Monthly CEO Report

Mr. Avedisian, CEO, gives an update on the additional slide included in the monthly CEO report.

Agenda Item 10: Update: Triennial Review Update

Mr. Avedisian, CEO, gives an update on the Triennial Review.

Agenda Item 11: Rider Survey Results

Item was deferred.

Agenda Item 12: Executive Session to consider, discuss and act upon such matters as may be closed to the public pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5 (a)(2) and to consider claims.

Upon motion by Mr. Crowley, which was seconded by Mr. Kells, the following vote was adopted and passed with favorable votes by Mr. Benoit; Ms. Reyes; Mr. Alviti; and Mr. Leach.

Voted: To enter into Executive Session pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws section §42-46-5(a)(2) to consider and discuss pending litigation and legal claims.

The Board, staff, and counsel entered into executive session at 7:26 p.m.

The Board, staff, and counsel exited public session at 7:38 p.m.

Attorney Fragomeni reports out that pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-4(b), the Board unanimously voted to keep all votes taken in Executive Session, except for the vote to adjourn executive session, sealed so as to not jeopardize any strategy or negotiation.

Mr. Alviti makes a motion to seal the minutes of the executive session. Mr. Crowley seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Benoit; Mr. Leach; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Kells.

Agenda Item 13: Adjournment - 7:40 p.m.

Mr. Alviti makes a motion to adjourn. Mr. Crowley seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Benoit; Mr. Leach; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Kells.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Crowley, Secretary