



September 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes for the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

The Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) meeting was held in RIPTA's board room, 705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, and was called to order at 2:02 PM. An attendance sheet is attached to these minutes.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, began by announcing the Council's vision: accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders. Jean Bousquet motioned to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2022 Coordinating Council meeting. Benny Bergantino seconded the motion, and all others were in favor with the exception of Tina Pedersen, who abstained. Minutes were approved.

Joelle then introduced several projects:

- RI Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan: Bill Schwartz, project manager from Nelson\Nygaard, reported on work completed since the last Coordinating Council meeting. The Coordinated Plan focuses on projects that utilize Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 funding for seniors and people with disabilities, and FTA requires an update every five years. In July, public meetings focused on a few key areas: mobility management, travel training, sensitivity training, and vehicles/infrastructure. The team also received 48 responses to a strategy prioritization survey. Next steps involve the completion of interviews with managers of exemplary programs in other regions that relate to the recommended strategies. Once the draft plan is ready for review, RIPTA will circulate it to the Coordinating Council for feedback. The final plan should be presented at the next meeting in November.

Following Bill's presentation, Maureen Maigret suggested that a separate map labeling bus stop locations and their accessible features would be valuable for older adults and people with disabilities. Tina Pedersen added that this would be helpful for out-of-state visitors as well. Sarah Ingle, RIPTA's director of long range planning, responded that RIPTA will focus on bus stop improvements in the near future.



- Statewide paratransit study: Sarah then reported on the provision within the state budget directing RIPTA to study a potential expansion of ADA/paratransit service, which currently operates within ¾ mile of fixed routes. The investigation just launched, led by the Nelson\Nygaard consulting team, and is on a fast track for completion by the end of the year. The team will look closely at Census data, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) and Elderly Transportation Program (ETP) utilization, and current paratransit data to better understand the population that needs transportation and where they are traveling. Several scenarios and related cost estimates will be incorporated into the final report to the General Assembly. Virtual public meetings are scheduled on September 20th and 21st.

Following the update, participants shared suggestions such as utilizing the Executive Office of Health & Human Services' data ecosystem and the municipal Code Red program data that feeds into the Rhode Island Special Needs Emergency Registry.

- NADTC vehicle sharing study: Age-Friendly Rhode Island and RIPTA received a 6-month planning grant through the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center for a study that launched in April. The team hosted focus groups in Glocester and Westerly before shifting its attention to Newport County, where a local organization, Looking Upwards, has committed to designing a pilot program utilizing one of its vehicles to serve additional riders. Age-Friendly RI is getting ready to submit a new proposal to NADTC to fund implementation through June 2023.
- Flex on Demand pilot project: RIPTA currently operates Flex service in several zones throughout the state, requiring people to call a day in advance to schedule trips or meet the Flex van at designated stops. A new project will test on-demand technology within the West Warwick/Coventry Flex zone, enabling riders to download a phone app and schedule trips directly. The project is expected to launch in January, and community outreach will start soon.
- Community transportation webpages: Joelle presented development pages that remain under construction on RIPTA's website featuring community transportation information from providers across the state. Several changes have been incorporated since the group provided feedback at the last Coordinating Council meeting, including the use of higher contrast colors and general layout



improvements. Suggestions were made to alphabetize the transportation categories and identify wheelchair accessible taxis.

- Community van program: Last week, RIPTA and partners welcomed a new 16-passenger community van to the Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket, purchased through a grant secured by Senator Jack Reed and additional funding. Other recipients are the towns of Westerly, Foster, and Cumberland, and the Comprehensive Community Action Program, which will operate 12-passenger vans.

Member agency updates followed:

- Mario Olivieri shared that the state plans to complete procurement for a new Medicaid/Elderly Transportation Program broker by July 1, 2023. Since Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program clients receive bus passes through the current broker (MTM), Elisabeth Weber, RI Department of Human Services, stressed the importance of a seamless transition.
- Nicole Arias, RI Office of Healthy Aging, said that the Get Set Up program will launch in October, creating an online community for older adult learners.
- Jean Bousquet, RI Office of Rehabilitation Services, announced White Cane Day on October 15th at Garden City Center, recognizing services for people with visual impairments.
- Benny Bergantino, RI Division of Statewide Planning, said that his team is calling together a working group to focus on integrating social equity practices into planning.
- Julie Oakley, RI Department of Transportation, announced the opening of the Pawtucket/Central Falls Transit Center later this year.
- Chris Ausura, Health Equity Institute, RI Department of Health, said that the Newport Health Equity Zone released the North End Equitable Development Strategy through a partnership with Smart Growth America, including a section on transportation and accessibility. Chris also plans to transition from his role with the Coordinating Council, and Lauren Nocera will begin participating.

Following those updates, Heidi Showstead, a paratransit rider, expressed concern about Ride wait times and other issues related to system-wide van and driver shortages.

Tina Pedersen, RAMP, then reported on the Accessibility is Beautiful outdoor festival that she organized at the Steel Yard on Saturday, attracting 3,000 attendees. The next event will be on September 16, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 3:34 PM.



**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
September 12, 2022 Attendance List**

Council Members	Organization
Nicole Arias	RI Office of Healthy Aging
Chris Ausura	RI Department of Health
Benny Bergantino	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Jean Bousquet	RI Office of Rehabilitation Services
Sarah Ingle	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Joelle Kanter	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Jennifer Marquis-Caruso	RI Office of Veterans Services
Julie Oakley	Rhode Island Department of Transportation
Mario Olivieri	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Elisabeth Weber	RI Department of Human Services

Others Present

Name	Organization
Sophia Colantuono	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Grant Dulgarian	RIPTA rider
Julia Evelyn	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Maureen Maigret	Long Term Care Coordinating Council
Tina Pedersen	RAMP
Heidi Showstead	ATAC, disability advocate
Katherine Tennett	East Bay Community Action Program

Online

Name	Organization
Bill Schwartz	Nelson\Nygaard