

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 3, 2022

MEETING MINUTES

Participants: Heather Schey (chairperson), Robert Beauregard, Jean Bousquet, Liza Burkin, Tracy Clossick, Monica Dzialo (vice-chairperson), Casey Gartland, Devin Guirales, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile

RIPTA: Ed Brown, James Canty, Steve Colantuono, Nate Hannon, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Maribeth Pacillo, Joe Solomon

CCRI Project Team: Jake Corbett, David Snow

Call to Order: Heather Schey called the ATAC meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

Approval of minutes: Angie Stabile motioned to approve the October 6th meeting minutes. Grace seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Department presentation: Steve Colantuono, RIPTA Chief Legal Counsel

Steve Colantuono shared his excitement about participating in ATAC meetings going forward. He announced that Greg Nordin recently resigned as RIPTA's Chief of Strategic Advancement and said that he will temporarily take on some of Greg's responsibilities. RIPTA's commitment to this committee will continue.

Steve has served as RIPTA's chief legal counsel for a few years, and he manages three staff members. His office deals with claims, contracts, workers compensation issues, accidents, and injuries. RIPTA's other attorney, Jenny Williford, serves as the legal compliance officer and reports directly to the CEO, Scott Avedisian. Steve's goal is to prevent problems from happening while keeping operations moving. He acknowledged recent challenges--including Covid, the driver shortage, the cyber problem, and recent service changes—and said that his office addresses each of them in some capacity.

After his presentation, Grace Pires asked whether ATAC meetings could resume on Zoom, since online participation had been active. Steve explained that in order to comply with state regulations, groups must continue to meet in public.

Monica Dzialo then asked about the status of the data breach. Steve said that there are two active investigations through the Office of Civil Rights and the Attorney General's office. RIPTA has offered credit monitoring for one year to impacted employees.

RIPTA project update: CCRI hub

RIPTA's Executive Director of Project Management, James Canty, shared an update on the enhanced bus stops at the Community College of RI (CCRI) Warwick. Engineers at Michael Baker should be at 90% design in December in order for construction to start in the spring.

Jake Corbett, Michael Baker, gave a presentation highlighting CCRI's current site conditions and the preliminary project design. Sawtooth berths will make it easier for buses to pull into the curb, and there will also be a formal separation between bus and car traffic. The site has a grading challenge, and a ramp will be added to assist pedestrians with steep slopes. New amenities should include dedicated shelters, passenger seating, real-time information screens with audio capabilities, waste receptacles, tactile strips, and solar powered lighting, and will be in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Ed Brown, RIPTA's Director of Service Planning and Scheduling, described the routes that stop at CCRI Warwick. These improvements are part of a larger plan to make it easier for people in South County and Kent County to get around without having to travel into Providence. The Warwick system map will be posted at the hub, and QR codes will allow people to scan to get schedules.

Meeting participants shared feedback after the presentation, including suggestions to move a bus stop on Route 2 near the Olive Garden to a safer location and to consider improvements at other CCRI locations.

James noted that the project has a webpage for those who want to review it in more detail: <https://www.ripta.com/projects/ccri-warwick-transit-center/>.

Other RIPTA project updates:

- Paratransit expansion study: Sarah Ingle, RIPTA's director of long range planning, said that in September, RIPTA launched a study on expanding paratransit service statewide, following direction from the General Assembly. In addition to hosting public meetings to get input about the trips people want to make, the consulting team has looked at demographics, studied existing services, and conducted a cost analysis for providing longer trips.

Two more public meetings have been announced later this month, and additional feedback will be included in a report to the General Assembly in early January, outlining challenges and the cost of expanding service. This group will have a chance to advocate.

Grace Pires is glad that RIPTA is looking into this, and she asked whether RIPTA would consider subcontracting with a TNC, like Uber or Lyft, for certain trips. Sarah said that would be a consideration, although it might present some challenges.

Another consideration is expanding NEMT to serve people with disabilities, although there are some concerns about the accountability of those services.

- Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan: The Coordinated Plan determines priority projects utilizing FTA Section 5310 funds (for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), and must be updated every 5 years. The draft is almost ready for review, and RIPTA staff will circulate a link when it's available.
- Wave/Ride integration: Joelle Kanter shared an update from Ride Quality Assurance Manager Chris McKenna, who is managing the project. Last week, the new Reveal Wave application was updated on computers in the office, but due to a bug, the software team wasn't able to update the drivers' tablets. Once RIPTA gets the new driver tablet file, testing can begin.
- Community transportation webpages: Joelle shared development pages for the community transportation section of the website on screen for the group to review. Meeting participants suggested including an index showing classifications of RIPTA routes on each page. RIPTA staff will continue to review the pages carefully before they post and publicize this new resource.

Discussion:

- Devin Guirales described his experience as a rider and said that he budgets, plans, and adjusts his trips according to the weather. He is excited for the new Pawtucket bus hub.
- Riders said that they have had longer trips on Ride vans lately. To address issues related to driver shortages, RIPTA is actively hosting job fairs onsite and is participating at events hosted by schools and other organizations. The agency is also looking at increasing the starting salary for drivers.
- Angie Stabile asked about how Ride complaints are logged and tracked. Nate Hannon said that Dianne Chappel follows the complaint procedure by entering the information into AS400 and using a specific Ride code. A supervisor follows up, documents it, and closes it. When the person who initially made the complaint asks about the resolution, Nate calls the street supervisor for follow up. In the future, RIPTA can give a presentation about this process.

The next ATAC meeting is scheduled on December 1st.

The meeting adjourned at 5:38 PM.