

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 2, 2023
MEETING MINUTES

Participants (Teams and in-person): Heather Schey (chairperson), Robert Beauregard, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Kerry Clark, Tracy Clossick, Sheila Coyne, Frank Cummings, Monica Dzialo (vice-chairperson), Deanne Gagne, Casey Gartland, Devin Guirales, Crystal Martin, Tina Pedersen, Grace Pires, Heidi Showstead, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile, Mark Susa, Katherine Tennett, Val Reishuk.

RIPTA: James Canty, Nate Hannon, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Maribeth Pacillo, Joe Solomon.

Call to Order: Heather Schey called the ATAC meeting to order at 4:02 PM. Attendees introduced themselves on Teams and in-person at RIPTA's office, 705 Elmwood Avenue, room 107.

Approval of minutes: Monica Dzialo motioned to approve the January 5, 2023 meeting minutes. Devin Guirales seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Presentation: Understanding transit needs. Kerry Clark described his experiences using public transit, beginning with a field trip as a student going to Providence Place and then traveling to the YMCA in Pawtucket when he was involved with City Year. He hasn't received formal travel training, but when he started riding RIPTA regularly, he used technology such as the GPS Trekker Breeze to become more independent. Over time he has also used iPhone and Google Maps, the Moovit app, and occasionally the Be My Eyes app. He said that taking the bus can be challenging during the winter due to poor street and sidewalk conditions. He likes the Woonsocket Flex bus, which offers door to door service using fixed-route fares, but he acknowledged that availability can be limited during the week. Ride is not an everyday option for him because of the cost, but he has used it occasionally when traveling to new places or covering longer distances.

RIPTA reports

- **Key performance indicators:** Joe Solomon shared Ride statistics from December 2022. That month, Ride provided 15,763 trips including 13,791 on Ride vans (87%) and 1,972 trips on taxis (13%). 88% of trips were taken Monday through Friday, while 8% were on Saturday and 4% were on Sunday. 95% of trips were on time. 3,709 people were approved to use the service, and 944 active riders took trips. In future reports, Heather requested a breakdown of Ride van and taxi trips by weekday or weekend.
- **Project updates:**
 - Sarah Ingle updated the group on the **Dorrance Street Transit Center**. In January, Governor McKee and RIPTA released a request for proposals to design and build a new facility through a progressive public private partnership. Responses are due in April. Once a winning proposal is announced, the selected developer will begin the public engagement process, working with RIPTA and the community to determine the

right mix of transit and commercial components. This is an important part of the project, and ATAC will be involved.

- Joelle Kanter reported that **RIPTA winter service changes** went into effect on Monday, January 23rd. The new Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center opened at Pine Street and Goff Avenue where riders can now connect with MBTA Commuter Rail service to Boston. The R-Line, QX, and Routes 1, 50, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, and 80 moved to the new transit center, while Routes 1, 78, and the QX also continue to stop at Roosevelt Avenue.
- A draft of the updated **RI Coordinated Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Plan** should be ready for review in late February and will be presented to the state Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council for adoption at the March meeting.
- RIPTA continues to partner with organizations on a **pilot program** to distribute Wave cards to 600 low-income individuals who don't qualify for other fare programs. The cards offer participants free trips on fixed-route buses for 6 months.
- Internal testing is still underway on the **Wave/Reveal integration** to allow RIde paratransit customers to pay for trips with Wave. The RIde team will let everyone know when the system is ready for group testing.
- Flex system overview
 - Joelle shared a video and gave a presentation on RIPTA's Flex service, which provides local zone-based service and connects riders to the fixed-route network. Passengers can choose their own pick-up or drop-off point within the Flex zone by making reservations 24 hours in advance, and in most cases they can also pick up the van at scheduled stops. The Flex routes are:
 - 203: URI/Narragansett/South Kingstown
 - 204: Westerly
 - 231: South Aquidneck
 - 242: West Warwick /Coventry
 - 281: Woonsocket/Manville
 - 282: Pascoag/Slatersville

All Flex routes operate on weekdays, while Route 231 South Aquidneck also runs on Saturday, and Route 203 URI/Narragansett/South Kingstown also runs on Saturday and Sunday.

Discussion:

- RIPTA service feedback:
 - A participant commented that Flex service is helpful, but it ends early and covers limited areas. She said that people with disabilities need transportation options 24/7 that don't require reservations in advance.
 - Questions were asked about whether any Flex service would be offered in the upper East Bay, and whether the Woonsocket zone would expand into Cumberland in the future. These services are not currently planned.
 - Another participant mentioned that the Reveal app has had issues. He also said that RIde van access is challenging in the parking lot at the new Trader Joe's in Providence, requiring RIde vans to drop off passengers on the sidewalk near the truck delivery

area.

- A rider shared that on Tuesday, audio announcements at the Pawtucket Transit Center did not work. He also said that Route #54 recently skipped the stop at the CCRI Lincoln campus.
- Jean Bousquet, ORS, said that bus stop signs on Warwick Avenue don't show individual route information or RIPTA's phone number. During a training session with a new rider, she had to call RIPTA customer service to confirm the location. Nate Hannon suggested calling RIPTA customer service before taking trips to request help with identifying stops, times, and routes. RIPTA's plans for bus stop sign improvements are also underway.
- Another rider noted that several recent Ride trips have gone far out of their way on trips between Warwick and Johnston. Joe Solomon said that he would follow up with scheduling about this.
- A participant expressed concern about Ride trips arriving at appointments half an hour early and showing up half an hour late for pickups.
- Another participant had an issue with a Ride driver arriving too early to pick her up before the last RIPTA board meeting and then leaving. Ride was able to resolve this.
- Another Ride customer described an incident with a van picking her up half an hour late, which was nerve wracking. Joe suggested calling Ride about these situations.
- A Ride customer had an incident with a cab arriving half an hour early to pick her up from work. Heather advised her that passengers do not have to leave before the first minute of their pickup window. She also described situations where she would appreciate more sympathy and sensitivity from Ride customer service staff.
- Announcements:
 - Grace Pires serves as the president of the National Federation for the Blind in Rhode Island. She recently traveled to Washington, DC with a group that included Angie and Heather to speak to legislators about website/software accessibility, non-visual access for medical devices, and social security benefits.
 - Tina Pedersen encouraged everyone to use the Parking Mobility app to submit photos of blocked curbs, sidewalks, and parking spots. The data collected through the app will inform a new statewide educational program.

The next ATAC meeting is scheduled on March 2, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 5:58 PM.