



**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 15, 2023**  
**1:30 p.m.**  
**269 Melrose Street, Providence**  
**Transportation Board Room**

**Members Present:** Normand Benoit, Board Chair; Patrick Crowley, Board Secretary; James Leach; and Heather Schey

**Absent Members:** Michelle Wilcox, Board Treasurer; Robert Kells, Board Vice Chair; Peter Alviti; and Marcy Reyes

**Also Present:** Scott Avedisian, CEO; Edward Pare III, Esq., Board Counsel; Courtney Marciano, Senior Executive Officer; Chris Durand, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security; Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel; Kathy Nadeau, Chief Human Resources Officer; members of RIPTA's staff; and members of the public.

**Call to Order:** Mr. Benoit called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m., indicating that quorum was present.

**Agenda Item 1:** **To Consider for Approval the Draft Regular Meeting Minutes of the February 15, 2023 Meeting.**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2023, meeting. Mr. Kells seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Ms. Schey; and Mr. Benoit.

**Agenda Item 2:** **Public Comment**

**1.) Patricia Raub:**

- a. Enthusiastically supports the resolution to fully fund RIPTA. Feels this will plan will ensure that deficit is covered, as well as fund and implement the Transit Master Plan.
- b. Would like to also see the continuation of the free fare pilot provided that RIPTA is able to pursue fulfilling the Transit Master Plan and expand service as well. They don't want one without the other.

**2.) Joe Cole:**

- a. The lobbyist contract is more of a Mr. Fung issue because back in 2014 when he was running for Governor, had wanted to explore privatizing RIPTA.
- b. Pawtucket/Central Falls Transit Center is doing very well. It's been a great job by RIPTA and DOT. However, he feels that when Mr. Alviti alluded to RIPTA dropping the ball regarding the bathrooms at the center. Mr. Cole states that he has emails

dating back to 2016 from Mr. Alviti and the RIDOT team stating that they were on board and moving ahead with the bathrooms. Mr. Cole feels it wasn't RIPTA who dropped the ball on getting the facilities built. Urges the Board to explore and understand the whole picture.

- c. Mr. Cole expresses that a "few" years ago (2-3) Mr. Alviti tried to take over RIPTA and have it full under RIDOT's jurisdiction. Mr. Cole feels he's trying to do it again now. Mr. Cole also expresses that it's a conflict of interest to have Mr. Alviti sitting and voting as a RIPTA board member because he may be making choices/voting in what's the best interest of DOT and not what's in RIPTA's best interest. Mr. Cole asks that Mr. Alviti recuse himself as a board member. Mr. Cole expresses that even when he and Scott don't see eye-to-eye on things he knows that both have the best interest of RIPTA at the forefront.

**Agenda Item 3: CEO Report**

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

- 1. RIPTA At a Glance
- 2. RIPTA In The News
- 3. Commendations
- 4. Financial Update:
  - a. Christopher Durand, RIPTA's Chief Financial Officer, reviews monthly financials for the Authority.
- 5. Dorrance Street Transit Center Update

**Agenda Item 4: Request for Approval of: Resolution for Fully Funding RIPTA**

Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel and Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer for RIPTA, present the request.

Mr. Durand offers an extensive overview of the Resolution that was presented to the Board. He explains that the resolution is intended to be a starting point for the Board to review and take part in the larger discussion as it relates to the priorities for funding and what the exact ask should be. Mr. Durand expresses that RIPTA has been communicating all along with "anyone who will listen" that we need funding for the fiscal cliff and that it's a nationwide issue with transit agencies not specific only to RIPTA. There does not appear to be a federal solution insight as it was with the CARES Act.

Mr. Colantuono offers that what the resolution is trying to establish is to give a broad scope and a general idea of the financial priorities and how to go about funding those priorities on a legislative level. It is not meant to be used a specific tool to ensure every single thing is listed in the resolution, but a more broad approach to the critical level of funding needed.

Mr. Crowley asks what the dollar amount is for fully funding.

Mr. Durand explains that the number depends on what is included in "fully funding" RIPTA and addressing the fiscal cliff. Mr. Durand continues that the fiscal cliff is approximately \$40 million dollars; the Transit Master Plan \$260 million; if we do some free fares it's more; if we do complete electrification it could be multiple times more.

Mr. Avedisian explains that there are many components that will go into the final dollar amount ask –

based on necessities, buses (specifically electrification along with infrastructure and charging stations) and long-term goals of the Authority.

Mr. Crowley continues re-addressing his concern that it will be difficult to ask for “full funding” from the Governor and General Assembly if we aren’t sure what constitutes being fully funded. He questions as the Governor was preparing his budget for this year, he wonders what the dollar amount ask was from RIPTA.

Mr. Durand expresses that he will confirm but believes it was in the vicinity of being upwards of \$300 million. Mr. Crowley thinks it would be helpful to know what the ask was.

Mr. Durand explains that part of the reason determining a figure for fully funding RIPTA is partially due to the fact that when the Transit Master Plan was adopted, we weren’t aware of the \$40 million fiscal cliff which he feels changes everything.

Mr. Crowley continues with his concerns over defining what exactly RIPTA is looking to fund with the ask. He is concerned over the wording in the resolution and feels it’s premature to make such a broad ask without defining what the number really is to accomplish our goals.

Mr. Crowley suggests that instead of voting and/or passing the resolution today it makes more sense to table it for further discussion so we can try and get some of the financial questions answered. He would like to know what the exact number is before making an ask of the General Assembly.

Mr. Crowley feels that we need to have specific coffers with dollar amounts.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to table the discussion for the next Board Meeting and work on the wording of the resolution.

Mr. Benoit expresses that he believes the resolution is the first step and that we might consider adding the entire General Assembly to the ask. He continues that Mr. Crowley is correct, that RIPTA does not have a number for what fully funded means, however Mr. Benoit feels that we’re looking at a two-year process to get to the point of being fully funded and that the resolution is the first step in starting the conversation. Mr. Benoit reiterates that if we hit the fiscal cliff severe cuts across the board will be unavoidable.

Mr. Benoit references that both GrowSmart and Providence Street Coalition among others are fully supportive of this resolution.

Mr. Crowley acknowledges that Mr. Benoit has a point, but his concerns revolve around the number of advocates who have seen this resolution prior to the Board being able to review and discuss it. He is concerned that because advocates have seen it prior to the Board reviewing it, it appears that the Board is in agreement with the contents when that may not actually be the case.

Mr. Crowley continues that he had a conversation with Director Alviti and that Director Alviti asked him to express that he, too, shares the same concerns over the wording and the funding. Both Mr. Crowley and Director Alviti feel that we need to know exactly what we’re looking for.

Mr. Durand explains that we’re obligated to submit a balanced budget. He expresses that time is running out and that we need to take steps to address the issue.

Mr. Colantuono states that he'd like to assure Mr. Crowley and the entire Board that no one saw the resolution prior to it being posted to the Secretary of State's website. He also expressed that they took great care to ensure that they weren't offensive with any of the wording included in the resolution.

Mr. Colantuono states that while it is difficult to capture a firm, hard number, we are working tirelessly to firm up the number we're going to ask for. Additionally, he expresses that the funding ask as it relates to the Transit Master Plan is specifically related to transit and not the other modes of transportation included in the plan.

Mr. Colantuono makes the suggestion that if the Board feels the entire Master Plan should be fully funded with this ask, that we can change the language for it to be all encompassing of the plan.

Mr. Crowley outlines that he is willing and able to work with RIPTA staff and members of the Board to rework the wording and re-suggests tabling the resolution.

Sarah Ingle adds two pieces of information to the conversation. The first is reference to the original funding plan that was set to fund the Transit Master Plan is now falling out of date (drafted back in 2021) because of how quickly things are changing. Ms. Ingle states that the plan itself supplied a detailed list of potential funding sources – and that information is still available to the Board and general public through the transit website. Secondly, in terms of RIPTA's portion of full funding—specific to the Transit Master Plan – she outlines that the key distinction for RIPTA is that our funding is mostly to cover operating costs. The operating dollars are key for us right now in order to implement the plan.

Mr. Avedisian reiterates that we can amend the resolution to include all members of the General Assembly.

Mr. Benoit states that he feels that in addition to the Governor, the Speaker and the Senate President, we should include all members of the General Assembly to consider the resolution.

**Mr. Crowley suggested the amendment to the motion:**

**Mr. Crowley moves to the table the resolution until the next meeting until the Board can come to a consensus on the final wording of the resolution.**

Mr. Leach seconds, and the motion, as amended, passes with favorable votes by Ms. Schey and Mr. Kells. Mr. Benoit opposed the motion, as amended.

**Agenda Item 5: Request for Approval of: Route 10x Extension to Foster**

Ed Brown, Director of Service Planning and Scheduling for RIPTA, presents the request.

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

**Agenda Item 6: Update: Free Fare Pilot Program**

Update was given during CEO Report. Item held for further discussion until April's meeting.

**Agenda Item 7:**            **Update: Legal Department Policy Renewals**

James O'Brien, Executive Director of Claims for RIPTA presents the update.

**Agenda Item 8:**            **Presentation of NTD AUP Report and Single Audit**

Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer for RIPTA presents the update.

**Agenda Item 9:**            **Update: Lobbyist Contract**

Scott Avedisian, Chief Executive Officer, and Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel, present the update.

Mr. Avedisian advises the board that he and Mr. Colantuono had a discussion with Matty Lopes and Brian Jordan from PLDO and going forward only Mr. Lopes and/or Mr. Jordan would be working on behalf of RIPTA, with Mr. Jordan being RIPTA's primary contact. PLDO understands the board's position and is excited to move forward.

**Agenda Item 10:**        **Adjournment – 3:15 p.m.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

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Patrick Crowley, Secretary