

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, May 4, 2023
MEETING MINUTES

Participants (Teams and in-person): Heather Schey (chairperson), Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Liza Burkin, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Tracy Clossick, Carney Coopwood, Frank Cummings, Laurie Diorio, Monica Dzialo (vice-chairperson), Devin Guirales, Barbara Henry, Crystal Martin, Janice Musco, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile, Mark Susa.

RIPTA: James Canty, Steve Fiorentini, Joelle Kanter, Maribeth Pacillo, Joe Solomon.

Consulting team: Anne Galbraith, Amy Pettine.

Media: Colleen Cronin.

Call to Order: Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:07 PM. Attendees introduced themselves on Teams and in-person at RIPTA's office, 705 Elmwood Avenue, room 107.

Approval of minutes: Monica Dzialo made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 13, 2023 ATAC meeting. Rui Cabral seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

RIPTA R-Line Fare-Free Impact Study Project Overview and Discussion: Amy Pettine, Nelson Nygaard, and Anne Galbraith, ASG Planning, gave a presentation representing the consulting team supporting RIPTA on the R-Line free fare pilot study. During the year-long study, which began last September, riders on fixed-route R-Line buses and RIDE shuttles within the related paratransit service area do not pay any fare. Amy described national trends for transit agencies conducting similar free-fare pilot studies including local programs in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and she outlined the trade-offs agencies must consider when developing long-term fare policies. She also listed other RIPTA fare programs and pilots, such as the senior/disabled bus pass program, the free summer shuttle in Newport, and the low-income pilot.

To evaluate the R-Line pilot project, the consulting team interviewed riders, drivers, neighboring residents and business owners about behavior, satisfaction, and RIPTA performance. Results are summarized in quarterly reports available on RIPTA's website.

Amy and Anne shared feedback from a rider survey and outreach to businesses and community organizations before presenting a series of questions to the committee. In response, they heard the following from ATAC participants:

- Some riders knew the R-Line was free but didn't realize RIDE trips are also free within the service area during the pilot.

- It can be difficult crossing North Main Street between Olney and Doyle (near Whole Foods) to catch the R-Line heading back to Kennedy Plaza.
- The R-Line bus is often packed, which can be difficult for passengers who use wheelchairs.
- There are concerns about the pilot ending in late August, and to minimize confusion, they recommend supplementing digital ads with press releases and messages to agencies that serve riders along the route.

During the discussion about tradeoffs:

- One participant suggested a means test for discount programs.
- Others agreed that fare discounts should be based on income, expressing concerns about the impact of free RIPTA fares on the quality of service.

RIPTA updates:

- Key performance indicators: Between January 1 and April 30, 2023, RIde provided 69,371 trips, averaging 17,343 trips per month. March was the busiest month with 19,306 trips. On-time performance was 94.1% in January, 94.9% in February, 93.5% in March, and 92.4% in April.
- Project updates:
 - Construction at CCRI Warwick: During construction on 4 new stops this summer, riders will temporarily board buses in the parking lot. Project managers and supervisors will be on site when the project begins. Completion is expected in August.
 - Pawtucket/Central Falls Transit Center: Routes 1, 50, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80, QX and the R-Line now travel to the Pawtucket/Central Falls Transit Center, which opened in January and connects to MBTA service. In response to an RFP, several architects submitted proposals for building design at the site. The selected architect will present conceptual designs to the public and will also engage with ATAC about amenities such as passenger bathrooms, the ticket window, and waiting area. One ATAC participant expressed interest in scheduling a site visit to the transit center, and RIPTA staff will start planning for it.
 - Community transportation webpages: RIPTA now has a landing page on its website that lists all transportation options available to the public in each municipality.

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 PM.