



July 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes for the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

The Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) meeting was held at United Way of Rhode Island, 50 Valley Street, Providence, and called to order at 2:14 PM. An attendance sheet is attached to these minutes, indicating that some participants met in person and others joined online.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, began by announcing the Coordinating Council's vision: accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders. Maureen Maigret then motioned to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2023 Coordinating Council meeting. Benny Bergantino seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Mark Kraics, RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services then presented on the 2023 Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) procurement. NEMT is a mandatory benefit through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that includes programs for eligible and enrolled Medicaid beneficiaries, participants in the Elderly Transportation Program (ETP), and participants in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. CMS requires EOHHS to contract with a broker to receive requests and assign trips in a cost-effective and medically appropriate manner. After meeting with stakeholders in April and May 2022, EOHHS issued an RFQ for brokers last December. In April, the agency made a formal recommendation to the Dept. of Administration, and on July 1, 2023, the new NEMT contract with MTM started for 3 base years and 4 one-year options. Mark described significant areas of change from the previous contract related to enhanced quality and safety, EOHHS oversight, and financial oversight.

Following Mark's presentation, Joelle Kanter gave a brief update on the vehicle sharing partnership with Looking Upwards and Age-Friendly Rhode Island, which was presented in-depth at the last Coordinating Council meeting. With funding from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC), Looking Upwards hired a driver, Ricardo, and dedicated one of the accessible vehicles from its fleet to serving low-income older adults and people with disabilities at three Newport hubs: Donovan Manor, the Paramount Building, and AHEPA. On-demand trips started in March, and although NADTC grant funding ended on June 30th, the goal is to use additional resources to continue the program with slightly different parameters.

Joelle also shared a few RIPTA project updates:



- R-Line free-fare pilot: In September 2022, RIPTA began piloting fare-free service on the R-Line, which is its most heavily used route. RIPTA's consulting team from Nelson\Nygaard gave a detailed update to the Coordinating Council in March, highlighting metrics and survey results. Quarterly reports are available on RIPTA's website and a final report will be compiled at the end of the pilot.
- Low-income pilot: RIPTA's board has extended the free program for all 775 participants through the end of September 2023. Enrollment was capped in March 2023, and since then, RIPTA has been analyzing data by tracking pass usage, top routes, and top stops.
- Community van program: RIPTA is getting ready to purchase vans for use in rural communities through a combination of FTA Section 5311 rural formula funds and CARES Act funds. Communities and organizations will be responsible for hiring drivers, operating the vans, insuring them, and maintaining them. In the future, RIPTA hopes to offer opportunities to other rural communities with a requirement for a 20% match on the vehicle purchase price.
- Travel training network: RIPTA received funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to create a Rhode Island travel training network which will bring partners together to offer customized transportation support to the state's older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income groups. The project will kick off within the next few weeks, and RIPTA will work with a facilitator to review existing training programs in Rhode Island and look at best practices from other agencies.

During the discussion, David Schultz, Senate Fiscal Office, asked about the paratransit expansion pilot program, which is expected to launch in January 2024. While planning is underway, Joelle agreed to share a link to a map on RIPTA's website showing the current RIde paratransit service area with the group.

Partner organizations gave the following updates:

- Darlene Reza Rossi, AARP Rhode Island, invited people to hear presentations from Gil Penalosa, founder of 8 80 Cities, in Providence on July 19th and in Newport on July 20th. Registration is required.
- Elisabeth Hubbard announced that the RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities is hosting its annual public forums on Zoom on July 25th, at the Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket on July 26th, and at the Sockanosset Cross Library in Cranston on July 27th.

The meeting adjourned at 3:32 PM.



**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
July 10, 2023 Attendance List (in person and Teams)**

Council Members	Organization
Benny Bergantino	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Jacques Dextrateur	RI Office of Veterans Services
Laurie Diorio	RI Office of Rehabilitation Services
Ryan Harty	RI Office of Veterans Services
Sarah Ingle	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Mary Inglis	RI Department of Human Services
Joelle Kanter	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Mark Kraics	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Amethyst Nieves	RI Dept. of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Joanna Pallini	RI Office of Veterans Services

Others Present

Name	Organization
Denise Abreu	Integra Community Care
Cristina Amedeo	United Way/2-1-1
Kim Einloth	Block Island Human Services
Elisabeth Hubbard	RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Jenell Lopez	The Point/United Way of RI
Maureen Maignet	Senior Agenda Coalition (Teams)
Bob Marshall	RI Developmental Disabilities Council
Mariana Moore	The Point/United Way of RI
Patricia Miller	The Point/United Way of RI
Lorna Oinonen	AARP volunteer
Marleny Perez	The Point/United Way of RI
Darlene Reza Rossi	AARP Rhode Island
Carla Sabotino	The Point/United Way of RI
David Schultz	Senate Fiscal Office
Holly Snyder	AARP volunteer



Maria Sol Cuesta	The Point/United Way of RI
Nicole Yee	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority