

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 2, 2023
MEETING MINUTES

Participants (Teams and in-person): Benny Bergantino, Laurie Diorio, Casey Gartland, Senator Victoria Gu, Ashley Kajileh, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Ed Soares, Mark Susa.

RIPTA: Zachary Agush, Steve Fiorentini, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Maribeth Pacillo, Matthew Quider, Joe Solomon, Jane Williams, Nicole Yee.

Design Team: Matt Colson, Christen Robbins, BL Companies.

Call to Order: Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Approval of minutes: The October 5, 2023 meeting minutes will be presented for approval at the next ATAC meeting in December.

Presentation and Discussion: Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center Building Design

Christen Robbins, BL Companies, presented a conceptual design for a new one-story brick and steel building at the Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center. The main public-facing building amenities are customer service ticketing areas and waiting spaces. Support spaces include a multi-use office that may be shared with the police department, a supervisors' office, and a break room for drivers. Discussions about space for vending and coffee shop services are ongoing, and RIPTA staff will connect with Laurie DiOrio about the Office of Rehabilitation Services' Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program.

The building design incorporates the following accessible features:

- A push button for automatic entry
- Doors that meet ADA requirements
- An accessible stall in each bathroom
- Accessible sinks, mirrors, and automatic soap dispensers

Meeting participants asked questions about additional features such as large format signage and audible announcements for both RIPTA and MBTA. Security concerns were raised as well. RIPTA Project Manager Matthew Quider also announced plans to identify a green space as a service animal relief area. The design team will notify ATAC about upcoming public meetings on the project.

Preparation for ATAC Officer Election

Joelle Kanter outlined the ATAC officer election process, starting by announcing the ATAC members who have participated in five or more of the past twelve meetings, making them eligible to vote and run for election. They are Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Tracy Clossick,

Frank Cummings, Monica Dzialo, Devin Guirales, Crystal Martin, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Heather Schey, Heidi Showstead, Ed Soares, Angelina Stabile, and Mark Susa.

According to the committee by-laws, a chairperson and vice-chairperson must be selected from this group, and officers are typically individuals who have disabilities. Terms are for two years, starting on January 1, with re-election possible for two additional consecutive terms.

Joelle will email active members, request nominations for chairperson and vice-chairperson, and set up an online survey for voting. Election results will be shared at the ATAC meeting on December 7th, and members should vote in the officers so that two-year terms can begin in January 2024.

RIPTA Project Updates

- RIPTA's consulting team will present an update on the grant-funded statewide travel training network project next month. To date, they have sent out a survey and conducted follow-up interviews, and they are now scheduling a series of working group meetings.
- RIPTA has issued a request for qualifications (RFP) for a vendor to support the paratransit expansion pilot program, which will supplement RIde service. Responses are due tomorrow, and staff will review them next week to bring a recommendation to the Board of Directors. Senator Gu noted that the Westerly area lacks viable taxi service, and she hopes to expand options there.
- RIPTA's Board of Directors authorized a Phase 2 low-income pilot program which will shift program management to partner agencies by February 1, 2024.

Discussion/RIPTA service feedback

- A participant recommended installing heaters at RIPTA bus shelters and adding customer service staff on evenings and weekends.
- A member asked for clarification on the RIde policy around drivers beeping to notify riders when they arrive. She said it was helpful when this was a common practice in the past.
- Another participant expressed concern about enforcement of RIde policies. She recognized the challenge of hiring new drivers, but she expects them to be professional and courteous and to prioritize safety.
- Participants asked whether they should call the main RIPTA customer service number with RIde complaints or if they should contact the paratransit division directly.

Announcements

- Grace Pires announced the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island convention on Friday, November 10th and Saturday, November 11th at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. The Friday program is free.

The meeting adjourned at 5:19 PM.