

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, October 5, 2023

MEETING MINUTES

Participants (Teams and in-person): Heather Schey (chairperson), Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Tracy Clossick, Kyle Degre, Laurie Diorio, Olivia Lozier, Grace Pires, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile, Mark Susa, Tina Guenette Pedersen.

RIPTA: Nate Hannon, Joelle Kanter, Maribeth Pacillo, Joe Solomon, Nicole Yee.

Call to Order: Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Approval of minutes: Angie Stabile made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 7, 2023 ATAC meeting. Jean Bousquet seconded the motion. All were in favor, and minutes were approved.

A discussion followed to reflect on the MBTA Mobility Center's presentation in September. Participants appreciated the opportunity to hear from the MBTA team, and they emphasized how important it is for everyone to feel comfortable boarding at the commuter rail station.

Jean Bousquet asked for clarification about the renewal process for the MBTA Blind Access Pass and said she'd like to have the RIdE application process streamlined for people who are blind in Rhode Island. Others agreed that it's cumbersome to fill out a 9 page application and visit the eye doctor every 5 years, and they'd prefer to simply call RIdE to verify their contact information.

RIPTA Project Updates

- RIPTA has started work on the FTA Innovative Coordinated Access & Mobility (ICAM) grant-funded project to create a statewide travel training network. Organizations that provide travel training to older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income groups in Rhode Island are encouraged to complete an online survey which will remain open until Tuesday. Some survey respondents will then be selected for follow-up interviews.
- Next month, the architects who are designing the building at the Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Hub will present the project to ATAC.
- RIPTA staff continues to work on a statewide bus stop inventory to evaluate conditions.
- Following guidance from the state budget to develop an expanded paratransit pilot program, RIPTA has issued a Request for Qualifications to vendors to supplement RIdE service. Responses are due in early November.

Plans for Next ATAC Officer Election

According to ATAC bylaws, the committee shall elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from among its voting members who have a disability at the last regular meeting every other year, which is scheduled on December 7th. The November ATAC meeting will include a discussion about election

plans and an announcement of committee members who have attended 5 of the last 12 meetings. ATAC bylaws and officer descriptions will also be circulated by email.

Heather also announced that Monica Dzialo, the current ATAC vice-chair, is stepping down from that role for personal reasons, and the position will remain vacant until the election. She thanked Monica for serving the committee as a dynamic vice-chair and wishes her all the best.

Discussion:

- A participant noted that RIde tickets are not available at several Shaws and Stop & Shops in East Providence and Pawtucket. Until tickets are restocked, she recommends updating the recorded RIde customer service message that describes retail locations for RIPTA fare products.
- Participants requested regular updates on the RIde/Wave software integration.
- A rider with a visual impairment described a helpful fixed route driver on Route 87 last Saturday who assisted him with finding a McDonald's entrance.
- A paratransit customer with a visual impairment said that when taxis are assigned to pick her up at work, it can be difficult to identify the vehicles. Heather suggested calling RIde to request a note for taxi drivers to ask for her. Others recommended developing relationships with cab companies and making sure drivers know riders on a first name basis. The customer also praised the driver for a new company, Direct Medical Transport.

Announcements:

- White Cane Day is scheduled on Sunday, October 15 from 1—3:30 PM in the Crowne Plaza atrium. RIDes should drop people off at the main entrance.
- October is Blind Equality Achievement Month.
- National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island is hosting a convention on November 10/11 at the Crowne Plaza. The program includes a free resource fair and workshops on Friday followed by a speaking program and evening banquet on Saturday.
- RAMP has rescheduled its Accessibility is Beautiful event because of weather.

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 PM.