



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 22, 2024
1:30 p.m.
269 Melrose Street, Providence
Transportation Board Room

Members Present: Director Peter Alviti, Board Chair; Board Treasurer; Patrick Crowley, Board Secretary; Normand Benoit; James Leach; James Lombardi; Vincent Masino; and Heather Schey.

Absent Members: Sen. Robert Kells, Board Vice Chair; and Marcy Reyes.

Also Present: Scott Avedisian, CEO; Edward Pare III Esq., Board Counsel; Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security; Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel; members of RIPTA's staff; and members of the public.

Call to Order: Director Alviti calls the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m., indicating that quorum was present.

Agenda Item 1: **To consider for approval the Draft Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of January 25, 2024.**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2024, meeting. Mr. Benoit seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Leach; Mr. Masino; and Ms. Schey.

Agenda Item 2: **To consider for approval the Draft Executive Session Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of January 25, 2024.**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2024, executive session. Mr. Benoit seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Leach; Mr. Masino; and Ms. Schey.

Agenda Item 3: **To consider for approval the Draft Meeting Minutes of the Special Board of Directors Meeting of January 30, 2024.**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2024, special board of directors meeting. Mr. Benoit seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Leach; Mr. Masino; and Ms. Schey.

Agenda Item 4: Public Comment

1. Walter Melillo:

- Describes the testimony heard from riders at recent service cut hearings. He believes these cuts will be a hardship for many and will affect the stability in their lives.
- Says that the union is not for these cuts. He notes that the transit industry has many challenges due to budgets and recruitment.
- Adds that the union has been at the table with the Authority and has come to a tentative agreement. He asks the board that when it is introduced, he would like it to be passed.
- Believes this will make RIPTA more attractive and competitive for employees around the state and help keep the hard-working members.
- Urges RIPTA to keep the service it currently has for riders and find a way to fund transit going forward.
- In response, Director Alviti comments that the Board supports the direction things are heading in with the union and says that the Board will work to try to resolve some of these issues.

2. Daria Phoebe Brashear:

- Speaks on the spring service changes, expressing hope that board members were able to listen to public testimony.
- Notes that giving people access to more job opportunities is critical to Governor McKee's effort to increase incomes. The service that RIPTA stewards is invaluable to ensuring that access.
- States that Massachusetts has gotten serious about funding new driver positions recently. Rhode Island needs to do the same.
- States that given today's news, no transit user has spoken in favor of using the I-195 land as a bus hub.

3. Randall Rose:

- Speaks on behalf of the Kennedy Plaza Resilience Coalition and the Rhode Island Transit Riders.
- States that no riders have spoken in favor of the Parcel 35 location for the bus hub that was announced today, but they have spoken against it repeatedly, including at service cut hearings. Mr. Rose thanks Mr. Leach for attending a hearing.
- Describes the site as extremely remote and not suitable for a hub. RIPTA riders want to go to the center of downtown.
- Calls this privatization of the bus hub. He says that transit advocates do not want this, and it is being put in by people who do not care about transit priorities.
- States that the service cuts are terrible. He urges the board to not approve them. He then agrees to provide the board with a written statement from Rhode Island Transit Riders about this by email.

4. **Patricia Raub:**

- Describes her recent experience traveling on five buses in a day with minimal wait times. She says this shows what public transit in Rhode Island could be like if Governor McKee and our General Assembly leaders regarded bus travel as more than a service that minimally provides rides for the poor and the disabled.
- Says that with full funding to cover the budget deficit and start implementing the Transit Master Plan, we could be on the road to a first-class transit system that would encourage people to take the bus, even if they have other options.
- Adds that the RIPTA board also bears some responsibility for pressuring the state leadership with an equitable share of transportation money.
- Also says that the electronic board for the 55 bus is still not working.
- Closes by saying that she is a member of the bus stops participation budgeting subcommittee which is also working on improving shelters in the 02908 area of Providence. They have funds available that they can leverage with the funds she hopes the board will approve today for bus stops. She says that improved bus stops are what riders really want, and they can help attract and retain additional riders.
- Says that riders do not want a bus hub that is isolated from the center of downtown Providence.

The following public comments were sent via email.

5. **Barry Schiller:**

- Mr. Schiller, North Providence, writes that he supports proposed Agenda Item #7 for bus shelters with amenities. As the rationale states, improved bus stops are what riders really want and they could help attract and retain additional riders.
- Mr. Schiller also suggests adding a shelter in the State House area where RIPTA is largely invisible.
- On Agenda item #9, Mr. Schiller recommends putting off the \$1.7 million High Capacity Transit study. He believes there is no possibility of our streets being dug up for any kind of light rail between Central Falls and Warwick, and it would be a waste of time, money, and resources to even study it. Instead of spending \$1.7 million on consultants, he suggests building incrementally from the R-line experience. Indeed even with a driver shortage we can start on that now by working on more signal priority implementation.
- He writes that the real heart of the Transit Master Plan is more frequent service, longer hours of service, some crosstown routes, better bus stops, and faster trips. Once we have the financing to start on all that, we can consider the high-capacity corridor.
- Mr. Schiller summarizes that we already have plenty of plans, but what we need is implementation. He writes that it would look bad for RIPTA to be seen as frivolously spending \$1.7 million for consultants for what is at best a far-off project when it is facing imminent service cuts and has further deficits looming.

Agenda Item 5: CEO Report

Scott Avedisian, RIPTA's CEO, points out the items included in the CEO report: Rhode to RIPTA, a commendation, a Tweet, an employee spotlight, a report on lost trips, the budget, monthly ridership,

and an update on the unhousted pilot program. He will send an update on the paratransit pilot program later along with a response to a comment at a meeting about a complaint to customer service.

Mr. Avedisian also mentions that he provided the board with a response to Grant Dulgarian's request for heaters in shelters at Kennedy Plaza.

Agenda Item 6: **Request for Approval: Insurance for Electric Buses**

James O'Brien, RIPTA's Claims Director, makes the request (that was tabled at the last meeting).

Mr. Benoit motions to approve the insurance for electric buses. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Crowley; Mr. Leach; and Ms. Schey.

Agenda Item 7: **Request for Approval: Bus Shelter/Amenities Procurement**

Sarah Ingle, RIPTA's Director of Planning, requests authorization to contract with Tolar Manufacturing Company for bus stop shelters, seating, and other bus stop amenities as needed for one year with four option years. The value of this contract will not exceed \$1 million annually for a total cost of \$5 million over the five-year period.

Mr. Crowley motions to approve the contract for bus shelters and amenities. Mr. Benoit seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Leach; Mr. Masino; and Ms. Schey.

At 1:56 PM, Director Alviti temporarily exits the meeting. In Vice-Chairman Kells' absence, Patrick Crowley, Secretary, temporarily assumes the role of chairperson.

Agenda Item 8: **Request for Approval: 705 Elmwood Avenue Garage Doors Procurement**

Maribeth Pacillo, Project Manager, presents the request to award a contract to Overhead Door Co. to install ten overhead doors in Building G.

At 1:59 PM, Mr. Lombardi enters the meeting.

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

Agenda Item 9: **Request for Approval: High-Capacity Transit Study Consultant Procurement**

Sarah Ingle, Director of Planning, presents the request to enter into a contract for planning services for the High-Capacity Transit Study. The study includes two corridors: Central Falls to CCRI Warwick and Downtown Providence to T.F. Green, and will identify the preferred routes, mode, and station locations for each corridor.

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

Agenda Item 10: Request for Approval: Exhaust Fans Procurement

John Chadwick, Executive Director of Procurement and Inventory, presents the request on behalf of the Building Maintenance Division to award a contract to Arden Engineering to furnish and install twenty exhaust fans in the Chafee Garage.

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

Agenda Item 11: Request for Approval: Environmental Compliance Procurement

Peter Ginaitt, RIPTA's Environmental Health and Safety Officer, presents the request to award a contract to Atlas Technical Consultants for environmental compliance services for an annual fee of \$125,200.00 with four additional option years.

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

At 2:12 PM, Director Alviti returns to the meeting.

Agenda Item 12: Board Questions and Answers

No questions were asked.

Agenda Item 13: Executive Session to consider, discuss and act upon such matters as may be closed to the public pursuant to: R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2) (Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining ..., or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining ...).

Mr. Crowley motions to enter executive session. Mr. Benoit seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Leach; Mr. Lombardi; Mr. Masino; and Ms. Schey. The Board enters into Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2) to discuss collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation.

The Board, Staff and Counsel enter into Executive Session at 2:14 p.m.

The Board, Staff and Counsel enter public session at 2:36 p.m.

Attorney Edward Pare III reports that two votes were taken during Executive Session; 1. to approve the collective bargaining agreement, and 2. to adjourn the Executive Session.

Mr. Lombardi makes a motion to seal the minutes of the Executive Session. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Benoit; Mr. Crowley; Mr. Leach; and Ms. Schey.

Director Alviti announces that the Board voted on negotiations between the bus drivers' union and the RIPTA administration. The outcome will afford an increase in the starting salaries for new drivers and an increase for existing drivers.

Director Alviti thanks the members of the board, the administration, and the union for working cooperatively together to bring employees up to a level that they deserve. He welcomes this as a strong goal to move forward and create better paying jobs, and in turn, translate it into better service for transit riders.

Agenda Item 14: Adjournment - 2:40 p.m.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to adjourn. Mr. Leach seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Benoit; Mr. Lombardi; Mr. Masino; and Ms. Schey.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Crowley, Secretary