



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 25, 2024
1:30 p.m.
Transportation Conference Room
269 Melrose Street, Providence, RI

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

Absent Members: Marcy Reyes

Also Present: Scott Avedisian, CEO; Christopher Fragomeni, Esq., Board Counsel; Christopher Durand, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security; Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel; Kathy Nadeau, Chief of Human Resources; Roy Rivers, Executive Paralegal; members of RIPTA's staff; and members of the public.

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

Agenda Item 1: **To Consider for Approval the Draft Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of November 29, 2023.**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2023, meeting. Mr. Leach seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Kells; Mr. Benoit; Ms. Schey; Mr. Lombardi; and Mr. Masino.

Agenda Item 2: **Public Comment / Board Discussion**

1. Thomas Cute: States that RIPTA is a great part of RI's economy and a lifeline to many Rhode Islanders and that RIPTA has made great strides to improve ridership. Asks Director Alviti to ask government for a reprieve of the \$8 million and to please do everything possible at the Statehouse to get funding.
2. Daria Brashear: States that service cuts will be a disaster for riders and asks the Board to advocate for RIPTA.
3. Patricia Raub: Discusses issues from riders. 1. Dissatisfaction with the state of Kennedy Plaza, specifically security and upkeep. 2. The number of #92 buses as they are overcrowded, and students are being turned away. Ms. Raub states that she is appalled and frustrated with the amount money the governor allocated RIPTA.

4. Matty Pena: States that RIPTA is a lifeline and service cuts will not allow riders to meet their needs; and that the new hub is against the general interest of the state.
5. Peter Brassard: States that the Governor's allocation is short. States that RIPTA has already made cuts and the government has done nothing to help. Further states that electrifying the fleet is not the answer and the Board needs to advocate for money for RIPTA.
6. John Flaherty: Welcomes new Board members and expresses concerns that the Governor will allow service cuts due to underfunding. Expresses hope that the Board will appeal to the General Assembly without further cuts in service. Calls attention to the delay in the transit master plan and reiterates that RIPTA is managed well.
7. Sam Butler: Echoes many previous comments and states that he relies on RIPTA for transportation. Expresses concern about the fiscal cliff and the bus hub being moved from Kennedy Plaza. Asks the Board to continue to lobby for RIPTA.
8. Joe Cole: States concern about the future of public transportation and that people need buses. Proposes changes to weekend night routes and urges more usage of the park and rides. States that run and recovery times are already tight.
9. Dexter Vincent: States that driver shortage and sparse service does not allow students to participate in extra-curricular activities or get to class on time. States that the Governor's budget is not adequate and urges the Board to lobby for RIPTA and delay service cuts.
10. Elizabeth Goodspeed: States that she does not drive and uses public transit daily. States that service cuts affect the low-income community, and more people will take the bus if service is added, not subtracted. States that if service cuts continue, she may have to move.
11. Michael Tillinghast: Expresses opposition to the Governor's budget and states that he has a bill ready for the General Assembly regarding funding and a letter to Congress regarding ARPA funds. States RIPTA should be free and opposes relocation of the bus hub.
12. Marck Makuch: Supports funding issues and discusses an issue he experienced regarding service problems. States that Customer Service is great, but Street Supervisors failed to return calls. States that it is not possible to talk to someone when there is a complaint.
13. Enrique Sanchez: Expresses concern regarding money being held by RIDOT for RIPTA. States that constituents complain about how government is handling RIPTA and its employees. States that moving the hub is not a good idea. Further mentions comment made by Cardi Corp regarding the Washington Bridge.
14. Walter Melillo (President Local ATU 618): Comments on fiscal cliff and states that the ATU does not support service cuts as they burden the drivers and negatively affect their physical and mental health. States that it is difficult to attract new drivers and many current drivers are eligible for retirement.

15. Randall Rose: Expresses service cut complaints as they create a mini recession for the transit community. He acknowledges that service cuts are not RIPTA's fault. States that RIPTA needs to adapt to make sure transit increases post covid. States that RI is attractive because public transit is reasonably functionable. Mentions that one great thing about RIPTA is that it reduces the number of vehicle miles traveled. Expresses concern regarding the Paratransit Pilot and urges the Board to be wary to avoid privatization.
16. Amber Ma: States that she is a working professional and is car free by choice. States the availability of RIPTA is adequate, but services need to be expanded and not cut. Further states that tax dollars should fully fund RIPTA and RIPTA should work with the State Legislature.
17. Arthur Flanders: States that service should be increased, not decreased and RIPTA needs to ask for money from the Legislature. States that cutting service and building a new hub are irresponsible.
18. Bethany David: States there is no need for a new hub and RIPTA should spend money on service. Stated that she has been using RIPTA for ten years and chooses not to have a car.
19. Ed Soares: States that service cuts will not allow him to use Ride and that RIPTA needs to get rid of the fiscal cliff.
20. Grant Dulgarian: Clarifies and corrects his public comments regarding the festival, his offer regarding Director Alвити and Pat Connelly and his comments regarding shelters from the previous meeting. States that he has not received information from RIPTA regarding the cost of shelter heaters in Kennedy Plaza. Suggests one additional phone operator regarding bus schedules and suggests making East Bay bus service free during the Washington Bridge issue.
21. Archana Ramanujam: States that the Governor's budget did not address the fiscal cliff. Asks the Board to reach out to the General Assembly for funding to avoid service cuts.
22. Pat Ford: Thanks the Board for having public comment and states that RIPTA's shortfall is de minimis to the State Budget.
23. Nicole O'Loughin: Urges for no service cuts. States that the Governor's budget is unacceptable. States that the quality of life for drivers needs to improve and pay needs to increase.

The following public comments were sent via email.

24. Will Masse: Asks the Board to take all necessary steps to secure funding to avoid service cuts. Urges the Board to be advocates for RIPTA and not entertain the budget as it is and ask Legislature for more money. States that RIPTA should not be moving the bus hub during fiscally challenging times.
25. Jillian Winters: Uses RIPTA daily for all needs. States that RIPTA is a critical and crucial service. Expresses issue with the Governor's budget. Urges the Board to work with the General Assembly to expand service and avoid service cuts.

26. Maxwell Carnevale: Expresses concern regarding the 40 Bus Line as it is the only bus to Butler Hospital and many Rhode Islanders would lose access to mental health services.
27. Dylan Giles: Asks the Board to reconsider the Board Meeting schedule as it is inconvenient for riders who work during the day. Voices concerns over service cuts. States RIPTA is a lifeline and cutting service would be catastrophic for those who depend on RIPTA. Calls for increased funding for RIPTA and urges the Board to advocate for funding to avoid the fiscal cliff and implement the Transit Master Plan.
28. Amber Ma: States that she is a working professional and is car free by choice. States the availability of RIPTA is adequate, but services need to be expanded and not cut. Further states that tax dollars should fully fund RIPTA and RIPTA should work with the State Legislature.
29. Daishawn Ellerbe: Expresses concern about the future of RIPTA and hopes that RIPTA gets the funding it deserves.
30. Victor Martelle: Expresses frustration with the Board Chair. Requests that meetings that involve critical public input be moved from the working day. Suggests that RIPTA be more aggressive with the General Assembly.
31. Kathryn Richard: Urges not to cut service as she relies on RIPTA for transportation. Expresses need for further service. States concern about the movement of the bus hub in Kennedy Plaza as the RT 95 location is dangerous for pedestrians. States the location of the current hub makes more sense. Calls for further investment in RIPTA services and proper funding for public transit is the biggest investment in ensuring addressing climate change.
32. Christopher Bove: Expresses concern with RIPTA's proposal to contract with Uber as a vendor for the Paratransit Pilot Program. States that RIPTA is his only means of independent transportation. States that Uber is a poor choice and expresses the following concerns. 1. Uber's current business model will not support the need in rural communities. 2. RIPTA is underutilizing existing trip capacity with local taxi companies that are already contracted vendors. 3. Many advocacy organizations have reported numerous instances of issues with Uber drivers refusing service to riders with disabilities due to their service animals. 4. The differences in the fare riders will have to pay to use the service. Applauds RIPTA for making meaningful progress in making transportation more accessible.

Agenda Item 3: Public Comment / Board Discussion

Scott Avedisian advises that the CEO Report was provided in the meeting materials. No vote is taken.

Agenda Item 4: Request for Approval of the 2024 Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the 2024 Meeting Schedule. Ms. Schey seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alвити; Mr. Kells; Mr. Benoit; Mr. Leach; Mr. Lombardi; and Mr. Masino.

Agenda Item 5: Request for Approval of the Paratransit Expansion Pilot Service Procurement.

James Canty, Deputy Chief of Planning and Project Management and Brooks Almonte, Executive Director of Paratransit make the request.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to move this agenda item to the Special Board of Directors Meeting of January 30, 2024. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Kells; Mr. Benoit; Mr. Leach; Mr. Lombardi; and Ms. Schey.

Agenda Item 6: Request for Approval of the Safe Streets for All Project Consultant Agreement.

Sarah Ingle, Executive Director of Planning makes the request.

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

Agenda Item 7: Request for Approval of the Supervisor Vehicle Procurement

John Chadwick, Executive Director of Procurement and Inventory, makes the request.

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

Agenda Item 8: Request for Approval of the Change Order, Towing Bill

John Chadwick, Executive Director of Procurement and Inventory, makes the request.

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

Agenda Item 9: Request for Approval of the MTM/Reveal Software Contract (Renewal)

Christopher McKenna, Superintendent, Demand Response Division makes the request.

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

Agenda Item 10: Spring Service Adjustments

Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security and Operations and Edward Brown, Director of Service Planning and Scheduling presents the Board with the proposed service adjustments. No vote is taken.

Agenda Item 11: Request for Approval of Insurance for Electric Buses

James O'Brien, Director of Claims, makes the request.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to move this agenda item to the Special Board of Directors Meeting of January 30, 2024. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Kells; Mr. Benoit; Mr. Leach; Mr. Lombardi; and Ms. Schey.

Agenda Item 12: Board Questions and Answers

The Board discusses RIPTA's lobbying efforts. The Board requests that Lobby Efforts be placed on the agenda for the Special Board of Directors Meeting of January 30, 2024.

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 collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation).

Mr. Crowley motions to enter executive session. Mr. Benoit seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti; Mr. Kells; Mr. Leach; Ms. Schey; Mr. Lombardi; and Mr. Masino. 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 4:43 p.m.

The Board, Staff and Counsel enter public session at 4:53 p.m.

Attorney Fragomeni reports that three votes were taken during Executive Session: The first, regarding a claim, the second, sealing the first vote and the third, to adjourn Executive Session.

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

Agenda Item 14: Adjournment – 4:58 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Crowley, Secretary