



## **May 13, 2024 Meeting Minutes for the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council**

The Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) meeting was called to order at 2:01 PM in the RIPTA board room, 705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, and online through Microsoft Teams. An attendance sheet is attached to these minutes.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, began by announcing the Coordinating Council's vision: accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders.

Mario Olivieri motioned to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2024 Coordinating Council meeting. Holly Snyder seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Joelle Kanter then introduced RIPTA's community van program. The Rhode Island Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan (Coordinated Plan), adopted in March 2023, includes a recommended strategy to increase transportation service offerings through partnerships and by providing resources to others.

Representatives of communities and organizations that received vans through a RIPTA partnership in 2022 were invited to talk about their transportation programs.

- Seena Franklin, Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP), said that the intent was to increase access to integrated health services. CCAP's new 12 passenger van picks up residents at Harrington Hall, a men's shelter, and takes them to health centers and specialists, primarily in Warwick, Cranston, and Coventry, to care for substance abuse, diabetes, and other chronic medical situations. The van operates Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM.
- Allison Bouchard, Foster, said the van has been beneficial for seniors, but she wants to increase capacity in the rural community. On Mondays the van takes seniors to the Scituate Senior Center for activities and meals, and on Wednesdays it operates a planned route to Smithfield Plaza for shopping. Trips are door to door, and people must sign up in advance. She advertises the service through the *Foster Home Journal* and has reached out to several groups including Young at Heart, Hemlock Village residents, and the Foster Churches Association. Thanks to funding from the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging, trips are free for riders.



- Mary Lou Moran, Pawtucket, said that transportation has been a strong element of the services offered at the Leon Mathieu Senior Center, and that has continued with this program. Community development block grant funding provided the match for the vehicle which replaced a very old van. They currently use two vehicles and have one available as a backup. Free trips are for any Pawtucket residents—age 55 and over or with a disability—whether they are senior center members or not. People can be picked up where they live, Monday through Friday, for grocery shopping, banking, pharmacy trips, and trips to the senior center for programming and social services until 2 PM. Pawtucket also offers specialty trips for a fee. Drivers play an active role in planning and executing the service by managing scheduling through an Excel spreadsheet and navigating the routes. Relationship building is part of the program’s success! The most recent figures show 23,000 annual rides, but last year, the numbers may have surpassed that.
- Bob Robillard reported on plans for three new vans, procured through a RIPTA partnership, which are expected in Coventry soon. Town hall is located a mile from the nearest bus route, but as the site of an expanded community learning center, it needs transportation access within a ¼ mile. The municipality currently has four vans including one that is beyond its useful life. Trips run five days a week, Monday through Friday, from 8 AM to 3:30 PM, taking people to the center, which offers programming for adults with disabilities and employment support; to municipal departments; and from housing to recreational activities. Two days a week, they offer trips to shopping and pharmacies. Altogether, they serve about 80 people. Coventry’s older population is growing and transportation needs are expected to increase.

They also shared the following about their experiences with hiring drivers:

- Seena mentioned that CCAP found a driver by posting on regular job boards. Because drivers are part of the healthcare system, they must meet other requirements for immunization and testing.
- Allison said it’s been challenging to find drivers in Foster, with the town requiring a chauffeur license, background check, first aid certification, and a clean driving record. Through the hiring process, she found retirees who were looking for side jobs to bring in extra income.
- Mary Lou reported that two drivers work regularly in Pawtucket, and it’s been difficult to get a temporary driver to fill in as needed. Drivers go through the city’s normal hiring process which includes CPR training and a background check. When one driver is on vacation, the other driver doubles up on trips.



- According to Bob, Coventry had three van drivers, but one retired, and they need to hire another.

Project updates followed.

- Sarah Ingle, RIPTA, reported on plans for a new central transit hub in Providence with associated transit-oriented development. Public meetings are scheduled to introduce the planning process, describe the partners, and share information about seven potential sites under consideration. The first meeting starts at 4 PM today at the AMP in Providence, and a second meeting is scheduled at 4 PM on May 30<sup>th</sup> at CCRI in Warwick. A survey will also be available, and virtual meetings and pop ups will be announced soon. By the end of August, the team should have more information.
- Mario Olivieri reported on RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) contracts with MTM for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation and the Elderly Transportation Program. A new contract went into effect on July 1, 2023, and more sanctions will be added on July 1, 2024. The contract primarily covers medical appointments for substance use treatment, dialysis, adult daycare, and other purposes. The trip volume is steady, providing about 6,000 trips/day.
- Joelle Kanter reported that RIPTA has a new interim Chief Executive Officer, Chris Durand. She then discussed plans for RIPTA's current low-income pilot program which enabled seven selected partner organizations to provide participants with monthly passes. All 775 low-income pilot participants who received photo ID Wave cards in Fall 2022 remained active through the end of February. In March and April, 174 participants continued in the pilot, requesting renewals from supporting organizations, while RIPTA covered the cost. In May and June, RIPTA is offering selected partners a 50% discount on fare products for pilot participants that they want to continue supporting.
- Joelle also reported on another RIPTA pilot, the Ride Anywhere Program, which has expanded paratransit service beyond the current service area for one year. Ride vans are being used for wheelchair service while taxis are used for ambulatory service. RIPTA will report back to the General Assembly in June 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM.



**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council  
May 13, 2024 Attendance List (in person and Teams)**

Name	Organization
Benny Bergantino	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Allison Bouchard	Foster Dept. of Social Services
Jean Bousquet	RI Office of Rehabilitation Services
Melissa Cocroft	RI Primary Care Physicians Corp.
Vincent DeJesus	Advocates in Action RI
Jacques Dextrateur	RI Office of Veterans Services
Seena Franklin	Comprehensive Community Action Program
Ishaa Gatkari	RI Department of Health
Barbara Henry	Advocate
Sarah Ingle	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Joelle Kanter	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Brandon Lehman	RI Department of Transportation
Estephany Matrille	RI Community Action Association
Mary Lou Moran	Leon Mathieu Senior Center
Janice Musco	Advocate: RI Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee/Lyons Club
Amethys Nieves	RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Mario Olivieri	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Kimberly Rauch	RI Department of Human Services
Bob Robillard	Coventry Resource and Senior Center
Kimberly Rauch	RI Department of Human Services
Donna Rook	RI Department of Human Services
Holly Snyder	AARP RI
Herb Weiss	Leon Mathieu Senior Center