

## RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 5, 2024

### MEETING MINUTES

**In attendance:** Chairperson Heather Schey, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Frank Cummings, Laurie Diorio, Rachel Ferreira, Grant Dulgarian, Casey Gartland, Zachary Gauthier, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Raymond Lemerick, Diane Lesuer, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Mark Reis, Ed Soares, Angie Stabile, Paula Vinacco.

**RIPTA:** Ella Ackerman, Brooks Almonte, Zachary Agush, James Canty, Chris Durand, Steve Fiorentini, Nate Hannon, Paul Harrington, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Chris McKenna, Joseph Solomon.

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:03 PM. After taking attendance, she presented meeting guidelines, reminding in-person attendees that they must be able to participate independently or bring a personal care attendant with them for assistance. Participants should also stay home or wear a mask when not feeling well.

Heather announced that the October meeting would be rescheduled due to a conflict with a holiday. The new date is Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup>.

Myles Brawn-Husband made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 1, 2024 meeting. Jean Bousquet seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

#### Ride updates

- Wave payment testing for Ride: Chris McKenna, Ride, is coordinating with RIPTA's marketing team on a flyer to describe how Ride customers can use Wave payment for Ride trips. He invited all current Ride customers to download the app and set up a virtual Wave account. Riders may also purchase plastic Wave cards for \$5, but downloading the app is free. Customers should call Ride to have the card number connected to their customer account. Once that's in place, they can choose to pay for trips with Wave if they have enough value stored in their account. The Wave app has an autoload function that allows customers to add funding when the account reaches a low balance. Customers may also add fare value at stores within RIPTA's retail network.

In response to questions, Chris McKenna said that Ride drivers will continue to accept Ride tickets and exact change on board. Wave payment can also be accepted on taxi trips booked through Ride, but riders can expect a one-day delay in deducting payment.

Another customer asked about discounted rates for organizations. Joelle Kanter responded that RIPTA has a pilot program for organizations that support low-income riders facing housing insecurity, but the discounts are limited to specific fare products. However,

organizations may choose to support Ride customers by linking their Wave card numbers to their institutional Wave accounts and adding fare value.

- Ride Anywhere pilot program: Joe Solomon gave an update on pilot program data from January through August 2024. Using standard service hours to calculate program costs, he reported costs of \$35,578.26 for Ride van trips and \$158,680.77 for taxi trips, totaling \$194,259.03 during this period. The pilot program has dedicated funding through December 31, 2024, and RIPTA Interim CEO Chris Durand said that RIPTA is actively discussing its options. In response to a question about trip assignments, Chris McKenna said they are based on level of service needed, with customers who use wheelchairs assigned trips on Ride vehicles instead of taxis.

### **RIPTA Project Updates:**

- 2024 Origin/Destination Rider Survey: Planner Ella Ackerman reported that RIPTA will conduct a paper survey on board buses from October 2—22, 2024 with help from a consulting team. This survey is federally mandated and helps transit agencies collect data about where riders are coming from and going. A QR code is available for those who want to take the survey online, and riders may also complete the survey after their trip and return it by mail through a pre-paid envelope or by dropping it off in Kennedy Plaza.
- Kingston Station Mobility Hub Feasibility Study: Ella then reported on this study which originated in the Transit Forward RI 2040 master plan, adopted in 2020. RIPTA plans to create a regional hub with passenger amenities in South Kingstown that connects people to multiple transportation modes and resources. She described existing conditions at historic Kingston Station and shared an initial concept design, outlining recommendations to install new amenities that can accommodate an increased level of service including shelters, seating, screens with real-time information, bike racks, and green infrastructure. The project team is currently gathering feedback before moving forward with environmental and historic preservation compliance processes.
- Flex on Demand: Principal Planner Zachary Agush announced that the Flex on Demand app launched on August 26<sup>th</sup> in the 203 Flex Zone in Narragansett and South Kingstown. Through the app, riders can make same day reservations when space is available. The pilot program will run for a year to help RIPTA understand capacity. In response to feedback, RIPTA is working with the Spare team to mitigate an issue with the app's drag and drop map feature.

### **Discussion:**

- A Ride customer asked why she isn't allowed to request a specific taxi driver or company for trips. She said that other services like MTM offer that option. She also asked whether a taxi driver could call her when it arrives to pick her up at work. The Ride team responded that these would be fundamental changes to the way they operate service.
- Another customer asked for an update on the new Reveal app. Brooks Almonte, Ride, said that the provider is almost ready for a demo. The new app is due in January and should be released on time.
- A customer reported on a Ride trip with a driver who was unfamiliar with the Wave payment system.

- Another customer described a recent trip when the Reveal app reported a van almost arriving at his location. He called RIdе dispatch after waiting 15 minutes and was told the van would be there in 5 minutes, but it still wasn't near his town. He expressed his frustration with RIdе technology and communication.
- An ATAC member suggested that RIPTA is trying, and there are other factors to consider such as the bridge traffic. She hoped people would make concessions.
- Following a discussion about this, committee chairperson Heather Schey reminded the group that ATAC is a place to come to RIPTA with feedback, not to fight with each other. She urged participants to appreciate and respect other's opinions.

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 PM.