

## RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 7, 2024

### MEETING MINUTES

**In attendance:** Chairperson Heather Schey, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Frank Cummings, Vincent DeJesus, Grant Dulgarian, Rachel Ferreira, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Raymond Lemerick, Nick Lett, Diane LeSuer, Crystal Martin, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

**RIPTA:** Brooks Almonte, Zachary Agush, Steve Fiorentini, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Chris McKenna, Joseph Solomon.

**Consultant:** Bill Schwartz, Nelson\Nygaard.

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

Frank Cummings made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 10, 2024 ATAC meeting. Myles Brawn-Husband seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

**Ride Anywhere pilot program update:** Joe Solomon reported on the Ride Anywhere pilot program which allows Ride paratransit customers to request trips anywhere in the state. Trips were steady throughout the summer months but increased in the fall, with a 7.3% growth in ridership between September and October. In October, customers took 1,106 pilot trips including 919 trips on taxis and 187 trips on Ride vans. From January through the end of October, pilot expenses totaled \$286,045.32.

RIPTA is now engaging Nelson\Nygaard to study the Ride Anywhere pilot program and make sustainable policy recommendations. This will involve synthesizing estimates from an earlier statewide paratransit study completed in 2022 with data collected during the twelve-month pilot period. The consulting team is recruiting people for interviews, specifically seeking regular users, occasional users, people who might use the program and those who tried it but didn't continue. Several people volunteered to participate.

**Ride vehicle demonstration follow up:** Patrick Claffey, Model1, described the low-floor cutaway bus with a custom frame that riders checked out before the meeting. It can accommodate 14 ambulatory passengers with a three-wheelchair configuration. Riders shared their feedback, describing the van as spacious and comfortable. A few people said they liked the ramp but noted that the step leading to the seats in the back could be challenging for riders who use walkers or passengers with service dogs. Depending on the budget, Ride hopes to purchase 25 new vans.

**Ride Reveal app update:** A Reveal representative did an app demonstration for the Ride team last

month, and another one is scheduled next week. Upgrades should be ready in late November, and then ATAC will be able to start testing the app. Ride customers also discussed issues with the current app including inconsistent trip updates and requirements to edit payment information.

**Wave payment for Ride:** A Ride customer requested assistance with connecting a credit card to her Wave account. Others mentioned concerns about getting double charged or being charged unnecessarily for Ride trips they didn't take. RIPTA will provide riders with more direction and will give customer service staff more support to address these issues.

**RIPTA project updates:**

- Metro Connector Study: Zachary Agush shared an update on the Metro Connector study which will introduce high-capacity transit (HCT) between Cumberland and Warwick. An existing conditions analysis should be completed by Thanksgiving, and a future conditions report should be done by the end of the year. Documents will be posted on RIPTA's website, and project questions can be emailed to metroconnector@ripta.com.
- Travel training project: Joelle Kanter reported that the working group met last month to review draft training modules. RIPTA staff is now working on video scripts and content for new rider pocket guides. When the materials are finalized next spring, RIPTA will present them to partner organizations who train their clients to use public transportation.
- Seasonal services: RIPTA's free hop-on hop-off bus service on routes 67 and 68 in Newport ended on October 31<sup>st</sup>. The customer service kiosk and public bathrooms in the Newport Transportation Center will remain open every day through the end of the year.

**Discussion:**

- A Ride customer asked for clarification on the expiration of the Ride Anywhere pilot program, suggesting that RIPTA should stop collecting data on December 31, 2024 but continue operating the pilot while funds are available. RIPTA staff will consider this and report back on a decision at the next ATAC meeting, taking resource constraints into account.
- A rider acknowledged recent improvements made by RIPTA throughout the past year.
- RIPTA staff announced that the November board meeting was scheduled a week early, on November 21<sup>st</sup>, due to Thanksgiving.

The meeting adjourned at 5:29 PM.