

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 6, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Chairperson Heather Schey, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Liza Burkin, Vice-chairperson Rui Cabral, Kerry Clark, Vincent DeJesus, Rachel Ferreira, Mark Fields, Deanne Gagne, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, John Harwood, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Nick Lett, Crystal Martin, Jeff Mello, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Jenaya Smith, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

RIPTA: Zachary Agush, Brooks Almonte, Steve Fiorentini, Joelle Kanter, Jamie Pereira, Cristy Raposo Perry, Joseph Solomon.

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

Christopher Bove requested a change to the draft minutes from the February 6, 2025 ATAC meeting. He asked to clarify that the new Reveal app was expected to roll out in November 2024 based on RIPTA's contract with MTM/Reveal, which he obtained through an APRA request. Angie Stabile made a motion to approve the minutes with that correction. Rachel Ferreira seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Modified minutes were approved.

ATAC By-laws review: To remind new participants about ATAC's purpose, Joelle Kanter, RIPTA, gave an overview of the by-laws. She described the advocacy organization as an independent body that strives to improve accessibility in public transportation in Rhode Island. ATAC represents the customer's point of view and provides a communication channel between people with disabilities and RIPTA staff. While the committee reviews policies, plans, and programs, and provides comments for RIPTA's consideration, it does not direct staff in any way.

Joelle serves as the staff liaison and prepares announcements, agendas, minutes, and related materials. During meetings, participants may make recommendations, but they should not be considered formal motions for a vote unless they appear that way on the agenda.

A discussion followed:

- Rachel Ferreira asked how other transit agencies coordinate with advisory groups. RIPTA staff will report back and include information from Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).
- Kerry Clark also asked whether ATAC meetings should focus on RIPTA's fixed route service, Ride paratransit service, or both.
- Chris Bove asked how ATAC members could propose motions if they can't do so during meetings. Chairperson Heather Schey has discretion over agendas and said that members can

contact her to recommend issues for consideration at the next meeting.

Transit Forward RI Master Plan update:

Zachary Agush, RIPTA, said that the agency is starting a limited update of the Transit Master Plan in alignment with the state's Long Range Transportation Plan. He gave an overview of the State of the System report which incorporates new data on shifting travel patterns since the plan's adoption in 2020. When key deliverables are ready, RIPTA will share them with the public for comment.

Questions followed about coordination with paratransit service. Since the Ride ADA service area is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from either side of fixed routes, any proposed route expansions would impact the ADA service area. Another question related to RIPTA's limited bus service to Fall River, which doesn't require adjacent paratransit service. RIPTA staff responded that they coordinate with neighbors at Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) and Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) on a shared regional vision for improved connectivity. To follow up on this discussion, RIPTA agreed to share information with ATAC about MBTA's new Fall River/New Bedford commuter rail service to Boston.

Project updates:

- Ride Anywhere pilot study: Nelson\Nygaard is drafting a report to the General Assembly on the one-year statewide paratransit pilot program, which has been extended. RIPTA staff is now reviewing the preliminary recommendations. They've discussed the data point requested by ATAC to calculate costs for the portions of each pilot trip within and outside the paratransit service area and determined that it can't easily be calculated. Meeting participants discussed whether they'd be open to paying a higher fare for premium paratransit service, with riders sharing different opinions. RIPTA's goal is to present a draft report to ATAC next month.
- Ride Reveal app upgrades: The test group met with Reveal last week, and they're waiting for their recommended changes to be rolled out in the demo app. In February, ATAC discussed the contract with Reveal, noting that the app wasn't delivered on time. The Ride team is eager to launch the app, but they're still taking comments from the test group to ensure that it's fully functional and accessible to everyone. They plan to create a tutorial guide for the app before it launches.
- Travel training network: RIPTA is continuing to develop materials for the travel training network launch to encourage people with disabilities and older adults to ride buses independently. The network of partners will reconvene to start accessing the materials later this spring.
- Other projects: RIPTA met with NaviLens, a technology company that assists people who have visual impairments with navigating their environments. Users can scan QR codes on bus stop signs and public buildings from a long distance to get information about their locations. NaviLens has pilot projects in Boston and cities around the world, and it may be worth exploring further.

The meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM.