

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Thursday, August 7, 2025
MEETING MINUTES**

In attendance: Chairperson Heather Schey, Nancy Baker, Jean Bousquet, Chris Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Regina Connor, Vincent DeJesus, Rachel Ferreira, Deanne Gagne, Casey Gartland, Zachary Gauthier, Barbara Henry, Elisabeth Hubbard, Mona Hussein, Melanie Lawhead, Raymond Lemerick, Nick Lett, Crystal Martin, Jeff Mello, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Brian Rice, Christie Seymour, Adriana Smith, Jenaya Smith, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

RIPTA: Ella Ackerman, Brooks Almonte, Julia Evelyn, Armando Ferreira, Steve Fiorentini, Paul Harrington, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter.

Guests: Evelyn Arnette, Danielle Castro, Tores Smith and Giovanna West, ACP View

Call to Order: Vice-chairperson Rui Cabral called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:05 PM. Joelle Kanter then presented hybrid meeting guidelines.

Angie Stabile made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 5, 2025 meeting. Jeff Mello seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

ADA monitoring project overview:

RIPTA has hired A Customer's Point of View (ACP View), a national company that specializes in public transit and customer service audits, to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Danielle Castro and Giovanna West presented on the opportunity for riders to engage in this work, explaining that the goal is to assess the system's accessibility and improve transportation for all riders.

Monitors, known as secret shoppers, must be able to use a smartphone or computer. Within 24 hours, they should submit an accurate report on each 15-20 minute trip with the same driver, including their notes, observations, and photos. Reports on fixed route buses include a check on signage, a description of interactions with the driver, and verification that stops are announced. Riders who use wheelchairs should confirm that securements work properly and that space is available. On Ride paratransit trips, monitors note how they booked their trips and describe their interactions with the driver.

ACP View pays for each completed report and provides monitors with training and funding for trips using Wave cards. After the meeting, Joelle Kanter will share ACP View's contact information with the committee.

RIPTA Ride—MTM Go app marketing

RIPTA shared a video with step-by-step directions for using the new customer-facing Ride mobile app, RIPTA Ride—MTM Go, available on the Google Play and Apple App stores. The app enables Ride

paratransit customers to request new trips from common locations and monitor them once approved. Following a discussion about app features and issues, Brooks Almonte, Ride, said that he would check on the status of push notifications. He also confirmed that the app should show whether each trip will be provided by a Ride van or taxi and should provide taxi company names.

RIPTA plans to make a public announcement about the new app soon.

RIPTA updates

- RIPTA operational efficiency study: On Aug. 1st, RIPTA announced the completion of its independent operational efficiency study, requested by the Governor and General Assembly. The study is now available on RIPTA's website. Key findings show that RIPTA's costs per trip are in line with peer agencies and administrative costs are below average.
- RIPTA public hearings and Board of Directors meeting overview: Between July 28th and August 6th, RIPTA held public hearings throughout the state on proposed service reductions that were intended to manage the agency's deficit. They would have affected a total of 58 bus routes. This morning at the governor's request, RIPTA's Board of Directors delayed a decision to approve the proposed cuts and instead charged RIPTA with finding additional cost savings.

ATAC participants discussed the latest development, noting that the proposal was tabled but no alternatives were presented. One ATAC member suggested contacting constituent services at the governor's office about this.

- Ride Anywhere program: RIPTA's Ride Anywhere premium statewide paratransit program was made permanent in the state budget and is no longer considered a pilot program. Ride customers can continue scheduling trips outside the ¾ mile ADA service area, but if any capacity issues arise, Ride would prioritize the ADA trips.

ATAC participants expressed concern about fixed route service cuts potentially leading to an increase in Ride Anywhere trip requests. According to the Ride team, applications for the Ride program have been increasing steadily.

- Bus stop inventory: Julia Evelyn announced that RIPTA's planning team completed the bus stop inventory project last week. With help from several interns over three summers, the team surveyed more than 3,600 bus stops, documenting sidewalk conditions, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, shelters, and other amenities. The data will help RIPTA coordinate with RIDOT and municipalities to repair sidewalks and will identify the need for other improvements.
- Travel training network: RIPTA launched the statewide travel training network with a meeting for partner organizations in June. The presentation materials are intended for staff at day programs, senior centers, and other organizations to use to encourage people with disabilities and older adults to take public transit independently. Videos on planning a trip, paying for a

trip, and riding the bus will soon be available for these partners to share with their clients, and mini pocket guides are now ready for distribution.

Discussion:

- Christopher Bove expressed concern about RIPTA's intention to end contracts with taxi operators for Ride service. Rui Cabral added that the concept of bringing all Ride service in house looks promising on paper for retaining employees, but demand often fluctuates, and there may be room for third party contractors. Christopher Bove proposed a motion for the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) to advise RIPTA to retain its contracts with PRL Taxi and Christie Seymour. Zachary Gauthier seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The motion was approved.
- One rider noted that drivers have had difficulty with operating ramps.
- Another participant suggested that RIPTA's Flex on Demand program should expand into different areas.
- An ATAC member described potential negative consequences of cutting RIPTA service, expecting longer wait times, packed buses, and deteriorating service. He mentioned a recent call from Ride asking if he'd be able to take an earlier trip than the time he requested. He would anticipate that becoming a common practice.
- Another customer said that Ride customer service wait times are long, and they need help. She hung up and called back several times yesterday after waiting for over 13 minutes. Others said they've experienced similar issues, especially when calling around 4 PM. They can't use the new Ride app for every request, and they asked whether Ride could change its requirement to request trips at least two days ahead. Instead, they'd like to request trips by 3 PM the day before and schedule trips to new locations.
- A customer asked about selecting the auto-reload option for his personal Wave account. He said he has had trips denied through the app because his account didn't have enough funds.
- Joelle Kanter will follow up with information on the National Council on Disability's (NCD) virtual policy briefing series on Ground Transportation for People with Mobility Disabilities on Wednesday afternoons in August.
- The next ATAC meeting is scheduled on September 4, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM.