



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 28, 2025

1:30 p.m.

**269 Melrose Street, Providence
Transportation Board Room**

Members Present: Director Peter Alviti, Board Chair; James Lombardi, Board Vice Chair; James Leach, Board Treasurer; Patrick Crowley, Board Secretary; Normand Benoit; Vincent Masino; Heather Schey; and Bernard Georges.

Absent Members: Marcy Reyes.

Also Present: Christopher Durand, CEO; Ed Pare, III, Esq., Board Counsel; Roy Rivers, Executive Paralegal; members of RIPTA's staff; and members of the public.

Call to Order: Director Alviti calls the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m., indicating that quorum was present.

Agenda Item 1: **Approval of the Regular Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of July 24, 2025**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2025, meeting. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Leach, Mr. Benoit, and Ms. Schey. Mr. Georges is absent from the vote.

Agenda Item 2: **Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of July 24, 2025**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the executive session minutes of the July 24, 2025, meeting. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Leach, Mr. Benoit, and Ms. Schey. Mr. Georges is absent from the vote.

Agenda Item 3: **Approval of the Regular Minutes of the Special Board of Directors Meeting of August 7, 2025**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2025, special meeting. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Leach, Mr. Benoit, and Ms. Schey. Mr. Georges is absent from the vote.

Bernard Georges enters the meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Public Comment

Daria Phoebe Brashear – Provides an emailed comment stating that she was in Columbus, a city rejected as a peer because it was too inefficient and they are currently expanding service due to an investment from the area they serve. She also states that she was in Albany, a city considered a peer, one RIPTA outperformed, and they have three lines the approximate equivalent of the R-Line, with frequent and later service.

Walter Melillo, Local ATU 618 President – Is not in support of any reductions as they will have negative consequences for riders and operators. Hopes leaders realize how important transit is and without funding, we will be in the same place next year. Urges the Board to advocate for RIPTA.

Teresa Tanzi, State Representative – States she has been in office for 15 years and always hears that businesses want predictability and all people deserve some sense of certainty. Proposed cuts put riders on a rollercoaster. The Efficiency Report shows RIPTA is not the problem. The State needs to determine if it will invest in transit. Hopes the Board will advocate in the future and attend hearings.

John Flaherty, Grow Smart – Thanks the Board for their service. States that proposed cuts remain among the largest in history and will inflict hardship. Cutting service will further reduce income and force RIPTA into a transit death spiral. There are fewer trips and less revenue since the last service cuts. States that the letter from the Governor was not well received. Asks the Board to reject cuts and ask Governor McKee for money from the surplus.

David Morales, State Representative – Represents Providence, many of whom would be negatively impacted by cuts. RIPTA has been dealt with a hard hand but there are other opportunities to avoid cuts. Urges the Board to delay the vote and call on the General Assembly to reconvene in order to address budget issues for RIPTA. States that there are dozens of General Assembly Members receiving calls and would welcome the opportunity to pass a supplemental budget.

Liza Burkin – States that the current plan is less bad - instead of murdering RIPTA, Governor McKee has placed it on life support. This is not a rightsizing but will rather cripple the agency. States that fare increases will have a negative effect and we cannot afford to shrink public transit. Asks the Board to reject the Governor's plan and any cuts.

Janelle Wheeler – States that she appreciates that the new proposed cuts are better, but still cruel. Daily RIPTA users cannot afford to have weekend frequency reduced. It would not enable her to get to work on time. The community is worried about transit. Urges the Board to reject cuts.

Nicholas Rutter - States that public transit complements society. The State Legislature is not funding RIPTA and RIPTA is at this point due to constant underfunding. States that no other state agency is under such restraints. No cuts are truly temporary and RIPTA is still recovering from cuts in 2008. Calls upon the Board to reject cuts and calls upon the Legislature to fund RIPTA.

Lammis Vargas, State Senator – States that she has pushed hard for fully funding RIPTA. States that she does not believe in increasing fares as that places a burden on riders. She reaffirms her commitment to work with RIPTA to move in the right direction. States that increasing fares will decrease revenue. Public transit is not a luxury, but rather a lifeline.

Sumner Stone – States that he is a regular rider and the proposal on cuts is not the way to go. Cuts will not do the job and cause hardship to riders and the State. Cutting weekend and holiday service cuts service which is the sole way to travel for daily life. States that there appears to be no one in upper management that has transit experience. Proposed cuts will disrupt life. States that there has been no opportunity for the public to discuss the cuts in detail.

Barry Schiller – Is angry he has to witness the downward spiral of the agency. States he understands the need for a balanced budget. Provides steps to minimize damage: 1-clock face scheduling, 2-more through lines, and 3-use contacts to promote transit and contact the Governor and General Assembly to avoid cuts. Discusses a study provided prior to the meeting.

Jason Victoria O’Conaill – Providence resident. Would like to appeal to common sense as RIPTA is a necessary and essential service. People should not have to beg and plead to the Legislature for essential services. Urges the Board to demand full funding for RIPTA. States that the money is there but going to the wrong places. Mentions the Governor’s letter and is happy to have tax dollars go to RIPTA.

Jane Arnold – States that she wonders how many Board Members came to the meeting by bus, take it daily, and if not, why. Would prefer to take a bus in lieu of a car for daily activities. States that some buses are unreliable and cuts will make buses more unreliable and people with alternative transportation will use it instead. States that people who make the decisions do not use it.

Joanne Rich – Rides the bus and has a car but is testifying that we live in scary times. A lack of funding for RIPTA is a failure on the part of the Governor and Legislature. Proposed cuts make no sense. Asks Director Alviti to allow RIDOT to fund RIPTA. States that RI deserves public transit that serves RI. Urges the Board to postpone cuts and call upon the General Assembly to pass a supplemental budget.

Enrique Sanchez, State Representative – Appreciates the opportunity to speak. States that proposed cuts are not adequate for users. Asks that proposals be altered to better fit needs. States that transit is imperative for people who can’t afford their own transit such as students. States that he knows RIPTA is in a tough spot and damage must be controlled at a state level.

Daniel Blanchette – Wants to thank RIPTA for eliminating any route eliminations, but the 76 and 35 eliminates weekend service. He states that he works irregular hours, and these cuts would not allow him to get to and from work or church.

Clarence Kettell – Asks the Board to not eliminate weekend service as it benefits many people. Please improve service, not cut it.

Ray Gagne – Urges Board to reject service cuts. States that the last time RIPTA raised fares people were not able to use the service. States that most people are living paycheck to paycheck. Asks Board to go back to the Governor and ask for more money.

Jonathan Coppe – Would like to speak out against service cuts. States that DOT has a healthy budget and budgets for other agencies demonstrate what is important. States that public transit is important, especially to low-income households. States that people are getting harmed from the removal of a benefit.

Angela Lima – Thanks the Board for listening to the community. States that at one point she relied on public transit to get to work as parking in Providence was too expensive. States that Routes 68 and 63 in Newport are critical and impact 5,000 passengers who are the most economically disadvantaged.

Davina DeLuz – States that cuts will not only effect people personally, but interpersonally. States that RIPTA is not designed to commute and not designed in the best way for the people of RI. Cuts will affect work and revenue and people's way of life.

Hector Perez Aponte – States that the Economic Progress Institute is deeply concerned with cuts. Commuters should not have to be burdened with decreased service and fare increases. If we are going to subsidize car amenities, then we should subsidize non-car amenities. Urges the Governor and General Assembly to make appropriate amendments to the budget to fund RIPTA.

Janice Douglas – States that she takes 10 buses per month. Taking away buses on the weekend makes people prisoners. States that the proposed transit center is the biggest waste of money and RIPTA should take money away from that to fund the budget gap.

Amy Glidden – States that the Governor's proposal is a scam as it's a loan and not a solution. The cuts will push the agency into a death spiral. States that the proposed cuts are some of the worst in the history of the agency. States that RIPTA fares are some of the costliest in the region. The new transit hub is a waste of money. States that RIPTA is a public good and its budget is pocket change compared to the State's budget.

Emily Cribas – States that this is her first testimony and she has moved here from Philadelphia for a job at URI. States that she took two buses to her first job. When she was in Philadelphia she did not worry about transit. States that she has strong connections with indigenous people and the Narragansett Reservation and it is difficult to access them. Asks the Board to postpone votes as RIPTA needs more funding, not less.

Wren Phang – Asks if RIDOT had to do an efficiency study. States that RIPTA is the most scrutinized agency. States that funding cars leaves behind those who ride the bus. Cuts throw aside those who cannot take a car. The State has the money for RIPTA.

Pat Ford – Speaks regarding the RI Commerce Corporation's budget and list out money allocated to them by the State. States that lots of money is thrown around there and maybe RIPTA should go to them for money. States that the \$10 million budget shortfall should be taken from RI Commerce and invested in the people of RI.

Grant Dulgarian – Thanks the Board for their service. Talks about the George Washington Bridge and its original price compared to its current proposed price for replacement. States that an economic impact study should be performed. Inquires as to the cost of installing light rail from Providence to Newport. States that RIPTA should ask the State to perform an EIS and involve the RI Commerce Corporation.

Agenda Item 5: **CEO Report**

Christopher Durand provides an overview of the CEO Report.

No vote is taken.

Agenda Item 6: **Service Changes**

Christopher Durand states that the Governor intervened to delay the previous vote at the August 7th meeting. He stated that the Governor did not want routes eliminated, wanted to preserve jobs, and avoid any layoffs therefore, he made a one-time appropriation of \$3 million dollars. Mr. Durand further states that he appreciates the support of the Governor and the General Assembly, and the changes are necessary in order to balance the budget.

Director Alviti commends RIPTA staff for their hard work. Mr. Georges urges the Board to postpone cuts. Mr. Benoit and Mr. Lombardi both state that although they are not happy with cutting service, they cannot support an unbalanced budget. Mr. Crowley states that no one supports cuts, and he would gladly vote to undue cuts if additional funding is provided. Mr. Masino states that the Board needs to reduce service due to budget restraints.

Mr. Benoit makes a motion to approve the service changes, subject to the receipt or promise of additional funding in the amount of \$5 million prior to September 11, 2025. If the additional funding is obtained, then the service changes would not go into effect. The motion was not seconded and failed.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to approve the service changes. Mr. Masino seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes from Director Alviti, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Leach, and Ms. Schey. Mr. Benoit and Mr. Georges opposed the motion.

Agenda Item 7: **Board Questions and Answers**

None. No vote is taken.

Agenda Item 8: **Adjournment – 3:41 p.m.**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to adjourn. Mr. Masino seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Director Alviti, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Leach, Mr. Benoit, Ms. Schey, and Mr. Georges.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Crowley, Secretary