

# RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS WORKSHOP

### MINUTES OF Wednesday, March 9, 2016

**Board Members Present:** Mayor Scott Avedisian; Stephen Durkee; Maureen Martin; Margaret Holland McDuff and Stephanie Ogidan Preston

**Absent:** Princess Sirleaf Bomba; Mark Susa and Director Peter Alviti

**Also Present:** Raymond Studley, CEO; Benjamin Salzillo, In-House Legal; Christian Capizzo, Outside Counsel; Marie DiToro, Recording Secretary; and other members of RIPTA's staff, and members of the public whose names are on the sign-in sheet.

**Agenda Item 1:**      Public Comment

*(Board members take public comments under advisement, but do not respond except for clarifications. Members may follow-up on public comments in writing post-meeting as permitted by applicable law.)*

Mr. Durkee calls the meeting to order and asks if there is anyone who would like to speak under public comment. Mr. Capizzo states that since it is a workshop and no action is being taken a quorum does not have to be present to hold the meeting. Mr. Durkee continues with the meeting.

Mr. Rose is welcomed to speak. He states that a couple of weeks ago Brown University newspaper wrote an editorial on RIPTA. They noted that a lot of people were refusing to use RIPTA and using Uber instead despite the extra expense of using Uber. They found Uber was more convenient because RIPTA does not have frequent enough runs and easier to get where they want to go. The tone of the editorial was supporting RIPTA. They said that RIPTA should have more routes and more frequent service and it shouldn't just be a couple of stops per town. The editorial does make mention that the senior/disabled fare increase should be undone. There are competitors of RIPTA out there. There is a lot of demand for services, RIPTA should be growing more. Mr. Rose states that there should be a section of the strategic plan that deals with safety records. Safety for both people inside and outside the bus should be addressed. He feels it is important to maintain and improve safety. He feels there should be more funds to have street supervisors in plain clothes on the buses. He feels agencies should be transparent about safety because it shows that they take these things seriously.

He feels RIPTA needs to grow with more marketing efforts to encourage people to use RIPTA. He would like to see more state agencies and businesses to list RIPTA directions alongside driving directions.

He states that the people at RIPTA Riders Alliance would work together with RIPTA to help fix the cash crunch issue. The funding formula at RIPTA is obsolete and needs to be changed.

Strategic plan should lay out a vision of what RIPTA could do with more adequate funding.

Thank you.

Mr. Rhodes is welcomed to speak next. He states that he rides a lot and speaks to passengers and drivers. The feedback he gets is educational. He feels that the makeup of the Board of Directors for RIPTA is important. There is a hearing this afternoon which would set guidelines of how the RIPTA board is made up. The Governor would have to seek recommendations from a number of groups and include a fixed rider and one fixed rider that is elderly/handicapped.

Safety issues are a big concern of riders. He knows that RIPTA takes this seriously, however when something happens people are looking for a way to criticize RIPTA's operation. He feels it should be a part of the strategic plan. A benefit of riding RIPTA, in addition to saving time and the environment is the fact that it is safer than driving their own car.

Mr. Rhodes states that sustainable funding would be important so that each year other issues/concerns can be the primary focus.

Anything that the RIPTA Riders Alliance can do to make RIPTA's job easier they will.

## **Agenda Item 2: Current Strategic Plan Update**

Ms. Pettine introduces Ms. Sarah Ingle, a Principal Planner at RIPTA and she has been the lead on this Strategic Plan. Ms. Pettine asks the senior staff in the room to please introduce themselves.

The current Strategic Plan was adopted in March of 2011 and Ms. Pettine states that today they will discuss it and then how the process has been re-started for the next strategic plan.

Mr. Durkee would like to note that the plan put into place in 2011 was the first ever strategic plan put into place at RIPTA. Mr. Durkee feels that this plan may be even more important than the first one because that laid the ground work. RIPTA is in great moment to grow.

Ms. Pettine states that the first plan was really documenting good things RIPTA was already doing and asking for funding, it was not reaching into the departments and asking staff for new ideas.

Mayor Avedisian states that he is excited to have discussions of the future instead of fixing problems of the past.

Mr. Studley states that they have been speaking about this internally within the departments of RIPTA for a few months now and Mr. Durkee adds that the previous plan was Board driven and it is great to see the staff really invested in the new plan.

Ms. Pettine goes into the five goals of the original strategic plan:

- Serve as Rhode Island's Mobility Manager
- Increase Ridership
- Grow our Transit Network
- Realize the Environmental, Economic, and Quality of Life Benefits of Transit
- Identify a Sustainable Funding Strategy

Sampling of Plan Accomplishments

- R-Line
- Kennedy Plaza Redesign
- ATMS System Implementation
- Comprehensive Operational Analysis
- Security Program
- Multiple Fiscal Process Improvements
- Fare Products Online
- More Public Information in Spanish

### **Agenda Item 3: New Strategic Plan Discussion**

Ms. Pettine moves on to the New Strategic Plan in Context

- What this plan is
  - RIPTA Program of Work for the next five years (policies, investments, initiatives, etc)
  - For and by RIPTA
  - No Federal or state mandate
  - Do we have the resources needed to take RIPTA to the next level
- What it isn't
  - RIPTA Capital Plan
  - MPO Transportation Improvements Plan or Long Range Transportation Plan
  - Transit System Master Plan
  - Human Services Transportation Plan

Ms. Ogidan Preston states that what she does not see is people in the plan. Any five year strategic plan should have a workforce development component. Also, a component for the public or external customers. Information from the public is needed. How RIPTA goes about to gather this information would be up to the staff, however, receiving feedback from what the public thinks should be included.

Mr. Durkee states that RIPTA should be ambitious on where it wants to go.

Ms. Pettine states that the highlights of the planning process, it is not to say that RIPTA will not do more, however they have held two rounds of workshops, Board workshop today, generate a draft plan, key partner input and then a final plan.

Ms. Martin asks if the key partners have been worked out in the plan. Ms. Pettine responds that they have thought about passengers/customers, key partner agencies and drivers are the big ones.

Ms. Ingle states that each of the department meetings she held she asked the question who the staff work with outside of RIPTA.

Ms. Ogidan Preston suggests asking RIPTA's vendors for feedback.

Ms. Pettine moves on to the SWOT analysis that was completed. This is the high-level feedback they received from the departments.

- Strengths
  - Leadership
  - Vision, focus on core mission
  - Forward momentum
  - Teamwork within departments
  - Commitment to the public
  - Experience, extensive knowledge of bus system
  - Good partnerships
- Weaknesses
  - Heavy workload, juggling priorities
  - Some key skill sets underrepresented
  - Limited administrative support
  - Union constraints
  - Absenteeism
  - Coordination (across departments)
  - Project management resources
  - IT systems obsolescence

- Threats
  - Lack of sustainable state funding support
  - Competing statewide transportation priorities
  - Balancing transit vs. other community concerns
  - Succession planning, 40% of workforce is nearing retirement
  - Recruitment challenges for drivers, maintenance workers
  - Negative messaging from media, poor public image
  - Backlog of deferred maintenance
- Opportunities
  - Training
  - Cross-department partnerships
  - Unified customer service function
  - Data integrity protections
  - Fixed & Flex real-time apps
  - Peer agency coordination, best practices
  - Potential to grow contract business, economic development partnerships
  - Asset management focus at federal and local level

Mr. Durkee asks Ms. Ingle for her feedback from meeting with all the departments. She states that there was an over whelming sense of optimism. People started to think outside the box.

Ms. Pettine states that safety and customer focus was identified as the essential values at RIPTA. Technology, professionalism, efficiency and reliability were also considered essential. The key values were

- responsible management
- fiscal responsibility
- innovation
- mobility/connectivity
- community focus
- asset management
- environmental responsibility
- sustainability
- branding/image

The supporting values

- Key partner relationships
- Business Development
- Quality of Life
- Workforce
- Mode Share/Ridership
- Accessibility
- Diversity
- Capital Infrastructure
- Equity
- Economic Development/Prosperity

As a result of all the departmental meeting, a companywide workshop was held. As a result of this the following proposed plan was created.

The five goals are

- Customer Focus
- Innovation

- Safety
- Management Excellence
- System Investment

The cross cutting lines of technology, workforce investment and collaboration should be seen across all five goals.

#### Goal # 1: Customer Focus

Vision: Satisfied customers spreading the word about RIPTA's quality service

- Proactive customer communications plan
- Deliver a great product
- Farebox upgrade and smart payment technology
- Drivers as ambassadors
- Bottom-up, "grass roots" approach
- Customer-oriented culture, agency-wide
- Customer service excellence incentive program

Mr. Studley states that it is important to get the drivers to understand that they are the face of this agency. RIPTA gets compliments about the drivers and this needs to get out there. Drivers have a tough job and RIPTA is investing in the training of the drivers, including Diversity/Sensitivity training.

Ms. Ogidan Preston states that this is reflective of the process that has been done. She sees this as organization goals and trying to translate this into strategies. She suggests that the staff allow other groups to help them identify strategies for which RIPTA would then translate into action plans. This is great. The organization should look to see how to improve.

Ms. Preston states that customer satisfaction should be added in this.

#### Goal # 2: Innovation

Vision: Culture of creative solution-building for a more sustainable RIPTA

- Business development team
- New service models, vehicle types
- Grass-roots stakeholder communication(town halls)
- Real time feedback loops
- GovPass
- BHDDH initiative, economic development partnerships
- Branding initiative

Ms. Ogidan Preston would like to NOT see Innovation as a goal. Innovation would fall in each of the categories.

#### Goal # 3: Safety

Vision: Safer transit services for riders, drivers, and the community at large

- Safety features on vehicles
- Enhanced bus stop design, ADA compliance
- Driver responsibilities and training
- Incentives and rewards
- Transit police
- Facilities preventative maintenance program

Mr. Durkee states that there is actual safety and then there is the perception of feeling safe. These are two separate things and both are important.

Ms. Ogidan Preston feels this is the best one so far. She would like to see the vision is to reduce the number of accidents.

#### Goal # 4: Management Excellence

Vision: A professional RIPTA workforce making efficient use of resources to deliver reliable service

- System reliability, on time performance
- Transit Asset Management, State of Good Repair
- Transparent budgeting and financial reporting
- Environmental sustainability, green fleet transition
- Capital Project Management policy and team
- Comprehensive employee training program

Ms. Ogidan Preston states that she originally thought this was about management/leadership at RIPTA, however it is about management of operations.

Ms. Holland McDuff and Ms. Ogidan Preston brainstorm a different title to this goal. Operational Excellence is a suggested title of this goal, however still a work in progress.

Ms. Ogidan Preston suggests this is where you take away the tag line and leave the bullets and have someone else look at it and maybe they will be able to come up with a clear tag line.

#### Goal # 5: System Investment

Vision: A quality transit network rich in passenger amenities

- Family of services recalibration (Flex, Rural Ride)
- Passenger facilities enhancement program
- Long-range regional transit development plan
- Multi-hub system development (Providence and statewide)
- Transit signal priority, rapid bus service expansion
- Rail link (fare/schedule integration)

Mr. Durkee states the system is growing whether we try or not. It is complicated and challenging because without vesting in the system it will be very hard to provide the quality service we want because it is taxed in many areas.

Mr. Studley states that some of these investments must happen immediately.

Ms. Pettine states that the last plan had a dollar value assigned to it in order to take to the General Assembly, where this plan does not have a dollar value assigned to this.

Mayor Avedisian states that there have been talks about extra services they wanted to add and this is a great opportunity to put it out there. This plan can look to the future, instead of trying to justify the need for the system to begin with.

Mr. Studley discusses possible multi hub locations in the State with Mayor Avedisian. Mayor Avedisian states this is the time to make the pitch for RIPTA to do other services with regulatory reform.

Ms. Ogidan Preston states that she would change Innovate to Expand Ridership and then get creative under that. Change this one to Support Increasing Ridership.

Mr. Pereira states that there is so much RIPTA can do regarding safety. See Something, Say Something Programs are great. There are other programs out there similar to this that can be used within the transit community that they are looking into.

Mr. Durkee states that Providence Police are short staffed to begin with. They don't have the resources. He feels that with the right organization, there could be transit police utilizing the

airport police. He states part of the growth and perception of safety there needs to be a greater presence of police.

Ms. Pettine would like to know what the Board thinks of the frame work and is there anything the Board feels is missing and how long does the board think this process should be.

Mayor Avedisian states that he would like to use this as telling a story, however where are the places, RIPTA wants to go from here. If the state wants RIPTA to grow, these are the resources RIPTA needs to make that happen. He does not necessarily think a time frame can be assigned at this time.

Ms. Pettine agrees about telling the story and also includes bold initiatives on where to go from here.

Mayor Avedisian thinks asking people why they do not ride would provide more valuable information.

Ms. Martin asks for a copy of the PowerPoint.

Ms. Holland McDuff does like innovation as a goal for this organization. She feels it is a testament to where RIPTA was to where RIPTA is today. In five years from now, that would not be a goal because it will just be who RIPTA is and how RIPTA operates.

Ms. Ogidan Preston agrees with Ms. Holland McDuff' point about the developmental stage of innovation at RIPTA.

Conversation of who was part of the previous Strategic Plan Committee was had and where does RIPTA go from here. Should another committee be created and who would be part of that committee.

The Board is in agreement that the RIPTA staff will back before the Board at the April meeting regarding the Strategic Plan.

**Agenda Item 4:      Adjournment**

Mayor Avedisian adjourns the workshop.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marie DiToro  
Recording Secretary