ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RIPTA Transportation Conference Room
705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island 02907
Thursday, September 5, 2019

Attendees: Benny Bergantino, Rui Cabral (Chair), John Carvalho, Vincent DeJesus, Monica Dzialo, Michael Montanaro, Janice Musco, Jeanne Ouellette, Heather Schey, Angie Stabile, Lisa Stamp, and Mark Susa.

RIPTA Staff in attendance: Joelle Kanter, Greg Nordin.

I. **Call to Order**

Chairman Rui Cabral called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

Angie Stabile motioned to accept the August 1, 2019 meeting minutes, and John Carvalho seconded. All were in favor.

Meeting protocols were then discussed. Chairman Cabral apologized on behalf of the committee for the unacceptable behavior and uncomfortable atmosphere at the last Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting in August. RIPTA's Director of Planning, Greg Nordin, added that the agency has taken the incident very seriously. He acknowledged that ATAC meetings provide an open forum for RIPTA to get feedback from riders, and he reiterated that everyone should feel comfortable sharing suggestions for improvement, and the committee will not tolerate personal attacks.

II. **RIPTA Reports: Key performance indicators**

- Stop Announcement Compliance: Jim Vincent prepared a report from RIPTA's vendor, Professional Security Services. In July 2019, 111 trips were monitored, and 100% were in full compliance. 750 announcements were required, and all were made. 104 operators were monitored altogether.

- On-time performance: RIPTA staff reported on on-time performance. Buses are considered on-time when they depart between 1 minute early and 6 minutes late. The ABBG average is 79%, and RIPTA raised its goal from 79% to 80%. In July 2019, RIPTA's weekday on-time rate was 81.1%, while the complete monthly rate (including Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays) was 80.9%. In August 2019, the weekday on-time rate was 80.8%, while the complete monthly rate was 80.4%.

- RIde key performance indicators: In July 2019, 5,123 customers were approved to use RIde. Of that total, 955 or 18.6% used the service in the last 90 days. Total ridership was

24,308 in July and 19,744 in June. The on-time performance rate was 96.0%. The system averaged 2.12 passengers per revenue hour in July, 2.18 in June, 2.24 in May, and 2.22 in April. RIde received a total of 8,651 calls in July, and the average connect time was 2 minutes, 45 seconds.

III. Upcoming Meetings

- <u>Transit Forward RI</u>: Greg Nordin invited ATAC members to participate in Transit Forward RI 2040 public workshops scheduled on September 17th in Warwick and Providence and September 18th in Kingston and Pawtucket. At the meetings, the transit master plan project team will present low, medium and high level mode-neutral scenarios ranging from conservative improvements to more robust, expanded service requiring a significant investment. RIPTA staff also continues to hold pop-up events throughout the state to help familiarize people with the Transit Forward RI project.

- <u>RIPTA public hearings</u>: RIPTA is also holding several public hearings in September on the proposed new fare structure, which includes an earn-as-you-go option for daily and monthly riders. Ten ride and seven day passes will be discontinued.

  RIPTA recently started operating express service from Providence to Fall River and Newport, serving 5 stops during limited hours. A $4 base fare will be proposed.

  In addition, the proposed fare for trips within the Downtown Transit Connector zone will be $1. The DTC project involves extending 7 routes from the Providence train station to Rhode Island Hospital.

- <u>Little Roady</u>: RIPTA staff also shared an invitation to ATAC members from RIDOT to test the new wheelchair accessible autonomous shuttle on Friday, September 6th.

IV. RIde/RIPTA service feedback
- Angie Stabile asked about RIPTA's transfer policy. Currently, when riders board a bus, they can pay $2 and request a transfer for an additional $1, allowing them to swipe a printed ticket for unlimited trips within a two hour window. With the proposed new policy, people will board fixed route buses, tap the new WAVE cards, and transfer for free within a one hour window.

- John Carvalho asked about distribution of WAVE cards. RIPTA plans to distribute several thousand for free when the project launches, including free cards for ATAC members. If customers lose their cards, they will be required to pay $5 to replace them.

- The committee discussed the status of RIPTA's senior/disabled bus pass program. The state legislature set aside funding for the program in the budget this year, but advocacy may be needed moving forward. Bus pass program participants will still need photo

identification, but their cards will not distinguish between different programs.

- The group requested an update on plans to incorporate the new WAVE system into the paratransit fleet. RIPTA is currently considering 2 options and will resolve this soon.

- Angie Stabile mentioned a recent problem using the Reveal app. She didn't receive texts announcing her upcoming RIdes, and the trips didn't appear in the app. Others have experienced the same issues. Rui Cabral suggested a way around some of the interactive voice response (IVR) issues, noting that at 8 PM, the system jumps ahead to the following day, with upcoming rides scheduled 'today.' He encouraged people to hit #1 for today's rides instead of #2 for rides scheduled tomorrow. For those who have more than one trip scheduled at a time, he recommended using the Reveal website. Customers can also contact RIde to request texts instead of calls.

  To follow up, RIPTA planning staff will talk to the paratransit team about the IVR and Reveal website issues and will update the committee. They will also share a link to the site.

- RIde passengers also discussed the recent voice change on IVR, noting a preference for the voice heard in July.

V. Other reports
- Greg Nordin announced several staff changes at RIPTA. Mark Therrien, executive director of paratransit services has been reassigned to the transportation department, where he now oversees RIPTA's fixed route operations. He can still be reached at the same email address, and ATAC members should feel free to contact him. Brooks Almonte is now overseeing daily operations in RIPTA's paratransit division.
- Heather Schey announced that Lorna Ricci, executive director of the Ocean State Center for Independent Living, plans to retire at the end of the month. The committee will send her a letter of appreciation recognizing her decades of work as a champion for disability rights in Rhode Island.
- Greg Nordin described an accessible feature at stops within the new Downtown Transit Connector zone. Curbs will have bright yellow warning strips with raised bumps to help people recognize them as they approach.
- The committee discussed the status of RIPTA shelters, particularly in winter. RIPTA contracts with a company to clean and manage them, and they are responsible for snow removal from the most heavily used shelters.
- ATAC members commented on the requirement for paratransit riders to renew their RIde applications every 2 years, particularly if they have permanent disabilities. While the renewal process gives RIde an opportunity to update riders' contact information, committee members suggested that this section of the application form could be simplified. Greg Nordin will discuss this with the paratransit team and will share the committee's recommendation to send riders reminders 60 days in advance of their

renewal deadlines.
- The committee shared positive feedback on RIde drivers and described the characteristics that stand out. They suggested that riders should contact customer service to compliment drivers, and great drivers should be commended.
- Different RIPTA departments will be represented at upcoming ATAC meetings.

VI. New vehicle tour

The committee had a chance to tour a new Ford Transit used by the paratransit division.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.