

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 4, 2025
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Chairperson Heather Schey, Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Rui Cabral, Justin Cartright, Zachary Gauthier, Barbara Henry, Mona Hussein, Nick Lett, Crystal Martin, Jeff Mello, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Grace Pires, Jenaya Smith, Angelina Stabile.

RIPTA: Zachary Agush, Brooks Almonte, James Canty, Meg Fay, Armando Ferreira, Steve Fiorentini, Paul Harrington, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Jamie Pereira, Matt Quider, Joseph Solomon.

Call to Order: Chairperson Heather Schey called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:06 PM. Joelle Kanter then presented hybrid meeting guidelines.

Myles Brawn-Husband made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 7, 2025 meeting. Jeff Mello seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

RIPTA Updates:

- Fall service changes: Chief of Security and Operations Jamie Pereira gave an update on service changes that will affect forty-five routes, starting on September 27, 2025. Information is available on RIPTA's website: www.ripta.com/servicechanges/. Following RIPTA's public hearings on potential cuts over the summer, the agency was able to secure additional funding to reduce the impact. The Ride Anywhere program will continue, and RIPTA will provide as much fixed-route service as it can. None of the routes were eliminated, but many buses will have reduced frequency. Fare increases will not happen now, and Jamie said that he hopes the changes are temporary.
- Pawtucket Transit Emphasis Corridor (TEC) bus stop improvements: Project Manager Matthew Quider reported on a project to install new shelters at bus stops near the Pawtucket transit hub. Each new stop will have a Tolar shelter, trash can, bike racks, and seating, but digital displays are not part of the current scope. RIPTA will keep riders informed about temporary stop relocations during the installation.

Ride ADA Paratransit User Guide updates

RIPTA is finalizing edits to the Ride ADA Paratransit User Guide, which Ride sends to all new eligible customers. Staff presented a few sections and requested volunteers to review the draft document and send feedback. Potential changes include defining the Ride Anywhere program, updating

information about the new RIPTA Ride—MTM Go app, and adding details about Wave fare payment.

Discussion

- A participant commented on the description of Ride Anywhere as a premium program in a recent press release. He would prefer to see it described as an extension service since it is now a state mandated program. Another participant pointed out the optics of calling Ride Anywhere a premium program while other services may be cut due to funding constraints. Someone else said that when she hears the term premium, she assumes a higher level of service, a nicer vehicle, and an individual trip instead of a shared ride.

RIPTA staff explained that the term premium was intentional to help distinguish between the Ride Anywhere program and Ride ADA service.

- A Ride customer mentioned that when she requests trips in advance and indicates Wave as her form of payment, she is required to have adequate funding on her Wave card. Otherwise, the trips are canceled. Brooks Almonte said that when riders call Ride to request trips, customer service agents can share their Wave balance with them as a courtesy. He recommends setting up the Wave autoloan option to ensure that cards have enough value to cover upcoming trips.
- Brooks said that RIPTA is planning to put Wave validators on Ride vans to facilitate payment on board. Heather requested an in-person training session for Ride customers before any changes roll out. Another participant asked about the timeline for installation.
- A participant said that his Ride driver asked him to pay \$4 for his trip even though RIPTA waives the fare for riders traveling to and from ATAC meetings. This happened to another customer as well. Brooks will follow up and add the funds back to their accounts, and he'll make sure Ride drivers are aware of the policy.
- Christopher Bove referenced a discussion at the last ATAC meeting about the new RIPTA Ride-MTM Go app. He said the app still doesn't tell riders whether they're assigned to Ride vans or taxis, and riders still can't track their vans. He asked whether Ride has discussed these issues with MTM.

Experiences with the new app were mixed. Some riders said they were able to track their vans through the new app. Another customer commented that the tracking system works visually on a map, but that isn't helpful for people who are blind. Others said they can see when the vans are doing pickups or drop-offs, but they can't track them in between. One rider said the app tells him when he's assigned to a taxi, but it doesn't specify which company is picking him up.

Christopher said that the previous app provided more information than the new one. Each morning, he wants to know if he's assigned a taxi or a van.

Grace Pires said the tracking piece works inconsistently. Sometimes the app tells her that the

van is ten minutes away, and then it's immediately outside. She stopped using it because it's not reliable.

Heather asked if someone from MTM would be able to come back to address these issues.

Christopher said he understands that the tablets are problematic because the old RIdE app had similar issues with inconsistent time projections. He compared the new app to the 'Where's My Bus' tracker for RIPTA's fixed-route buses, and he said that according to Section 504 (of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973), RIPTA should be obligated to provide equal access to a vehicle tracker for all services.

Participants also said that the new app doesn't notify them about delays or changes. Last week, Christopher was picked up from work with an estimated drop-off time between 4:30 and 5:00 PM. That same day, the drop-off time was pushed back to 6:10 PM, and he wasn't notified. He believes he should have been informed with a call or text. He understands that RIdE is a shared-ride service and other customers can be added to his trip, but he needs to know about changes in advance, and he expressed frustration about RIPTA's response. Angie Stabile added that people have obligations. She's responsible for caring for another person, and when she's late, that care doesn't happen.

Grace added that when people have plans, it would help to know when they're getting home so they can make other arrangements if needed. She wants the option to decide whether she wants to take a late RIdE trip or make another choice.

- Heather announced that ATAC would not meet in October. The next meeting is scheduled on Thursday, November 6th.
- Recognizing that, Christopher Bove made a motion to formally request a written response to ATAC questions about the RIPTA RIdE-MTM Go app by October 15th. Angie Stabile seconded the motion, and all were in favor.
- Grace announced the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island annual convention on October 3rd and 4th. Information is available online: nfbri.org.

The meeting adjourned at 5:07 PM.