

RI ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 15, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Benny Bergantino, Jean Bousquet, Chairperson Christopher Bove, Myles Brawn-Husband, Kerry Clark, Joanne Craig, Zachary Gauthier, Dylan Giles, Tina Guenette, Barbara Henry, Justin Henry, Mona Hussein, Megan Johnston, Vice-Chair Melanie Lawhead, Crystal Martin, Jeff Mello, Richard Moreau, Janice Musco, Heather Schey, Christie Seymour, Angelina Stabile, Mark Susa, Paula Vinacco.

RIPTA: Zachary Agush, Brooks Almonte, Armando Ferreira, Nate Hannon, Paul Harrington, Sarah Ingle, Joelle Kanter, Jamie Pereira, Joe Solomon.

Call to Order: Chairperson Christopher Bove called the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting to order at 4:04 PM.

Angie Stabile made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2025 ATAC meeting. Melanie Lawhead seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Committee leadership transition: Christopher Bove introduced himself as the new ATAC chairperson and Melanie Lawhead as the new vice-chair. He outlined plans for the year ahead, starting with a move to fully virtual committee meetings beginning in February. He said he made the decision in conjunction with RIPTA leadership to make more effective use of time.

Some ATAC participants expressed their concerns, explaining that they don't have computers or the abilities needed to access them. Chris Bove said he understood those concerns, but he wanted to proceed this way and revisit as needed in a few months. He advised participants to consider meeting up at a library where staff could assist them. He also agreed to send committee members instructions for dialing into meetings.

Chris then asked for input on the meeting minutes, suggesting that comments should be attributed to the people who make them. The most recent practice has been to keep comments anonymous. A discussion followed, and Chris agreed to follow up on this in February.

He then announced that beginning in February, Nate Hannon, RIPTA's director of customer experience, would take over the role of staff liaison for ATAC. Nate will meet with officers regularly and send out meeting notices to the committee. Chris thanked Joelle Kanter, who had served as RIPTA's committee liaison for a few years.

RIPTA updates:

- RIPTA winter service changes will take effect on Saturday, January 17, 2026 to improve reliability and on-time performance. The impacted routes are: 12x, 21, 22, 24L, 31, 50, 56, 59x, 61x, 66, 69, 78, 95x and Qx.
- Mystery rider program summary: This program was designed to evaluate operator conduct, ADA compliance, schedule adherence, and customer service across all RIPTA services. In December 2025, 38 evaluations were completed, including 18 fixed route bus rides, 19 paratransit reservation audits, and 1 Flex bus evaluation. The overall score was 84% combined, with 17 of the 18 fixed route shops scoring 100%.
- The State Management Plan describes objectives, policies and procedures for administering several Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding programs including the Section 5310 program for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities. The public comment period on the draft plan ended on Friday, and an updated version of the plan will be posted on RIPTA's website soon.

Discussion:

- Ride call center wait times
 - A Ride customer mentioned that wait times can be between one to two hours when calling Ride. She has also been cut off after waiting a long time. Deputy Chief of Paratransit Brooks Almonte responded that Ride is working on staffing changes to address these issues.
 - Someone else asked why Ride has only one staff person available to answer the phone on Saturdays. Others agreed and suggested that two CSAs would be helpful.
 - Another customer said he called Ride at 3:45 PM and was on hold for 45 minutes. When the dispatcher answered at 4:32 PM, they said it was too late to request a trip.
- RIPTA Ride—MTM Go app
 - A rider said that the Ride app doesn't inform her when her assigned vehicle changes from a Ride van to a cab.
 - Another rider asked whether all the tablets on Ride vans have been updated. Brooks said that they are now working as expected without a GPS lag.
 - A customer then commented that the app's trip tracking feature is working, but making reservations through the app can still be challenging.
 - For other customers, trip tracking is difficult, and the time doesn't refresh. Brooks will look into this. He also explained that GPS goes live when a trip is initiated.
- Wave payment for Ride
 - A customer asked when Wave card readers would be installed on Ride vans. Brooks responded that he should have a solid update in a month or two.

- Christopher Bove asked whether Wave issues would persist until the card readers are installed. He is concerned about RIde staff telling customers that they can't confirm their trips unless they have money in their Wave accounts. He gifted his grandmother a Wave card and scheduled a ride for her to his house on Christmas Eve, but RIde told her she couldn't take the trip without adding money to her Wave card first.
- Other riders shared similar experiences. One person was worried about a RIde customer service agent hanging up on him before booking his trip if he didn't have money in his Wave app.
- Another rider had an issue two weeks ago when RIde customer service cancelled her trip because they didn't see the funding in her Wave account, even though it was there. She said the RIde staff belittled her about this.
- Brooks said that RIde should make customers aware that they need another form of payment if they don't have money on their Wave cards, but they shouldn't cancel their trips. Chris asked Brooks to follow up about this policy.

- Holiday RIde scheduling
 - A rider said he scheduled a trip to TopGolf on a holiday. He thought RIde wanted customers with standing orders to rebook them, but he didn't expect his trip to be cancelled. Brooks said cancellations should only be for standing orders on holidays, and he will look into it.
 - Another customer said something similar happened to her friend. She called to verify her RIde trip on a holiday, but RIde cancelled it.
 - Another rider said she called early to request a trip on Christmas, and she confirmed the trip, but it never came. She called the next day and was told that she had to rebook it. This was very upsetting.
- General service feedback
 - One rider said her RIde trips either arrive too early or too late. She suggested that RIPTA staff should take the RIde service on weekends to understand riders' frustration.
 - Brooks reminded the group about RIde's process for resolving issues. He suggested that riders should call RIPTA with formal complaints to make sure they are logged into the system, sent to the right department, investigated, and resolved. Nate Hannon added that customer service staff asks people if they want to hear back from a supervisor about their findings. Without that request, a supervisor may not call back. Nate suggested noting the bus number, specific time, and other details about incidents to help resolve them faster. In response, Chris Bove said that even when RIPTA receives complaints, they aren't proactive about preventing similar situations from happening again.
 - Another rider raised an issue she mentioned at the last ATAC meeting about a bus stop on Pawtucket Avenue inbound in front of a cemetery (near Newman Avenue). She wanted to know whether RIPTA had looked into the stop location where a driver had trouble lowering the ramp.

- A rider mentioned that the automatic door in Kennedy Plaza doesn't work. He added that the push-to-talk buttons on bus shelters have trash cans in front of them, so people can't reach them. He said that RIPTA maintenance should move the cans to different locations.
- Christopher Bove asked when the new Ride vans would be on the road. Brooks said that once a minor manufacturing issue is resolved, RIPTA will be able to use them.

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 PM.