

Newport
Thursday, September 9, 2004
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

On Thursday, September 9, 2004 at Noon, at the Newport City Hall - Council Chambers, forty-six (46) members of the public attended, including three (3) public officials. Twenty (20) made oral comments, and one (1) gave written comments.

Oral comments were provided as follows:

Senator Theresa Paiva Weed echoed the sentiments of previous speakers to support maintaining public transit services, especially **Route 64** Newport -URI. She is concerned about the costs that we are going to incur if transit service is cut. Public housing residents, especially the elderly and disabled, would lose access to jobs, school and socializing. Senator Paiva-Weed also asked that RIPTA give earliest warning if cuts are implemented.

Representative Bruce Long supports **Route 64**; without this service Jamestown would be isolated. The people who will suffer from service cuts are the most vulnerable members of the community. He observed that RIPTA has improved more than most state agencies in the last five years and is doing a good job.

Representative Maxine Shavers opted not to speak.

Jim Anderson relies on public transportation and moved to Jamestown because of available bus service. He uses the **Route 64** bus to get to the grocery and rehabilitation services. Mr. Anderson observed that the buses are cleaner and the drivers courteous, but he thinks that there are areas where RIPTA can save money, such as the number of staff that attended the public hearing.

Ann Sherman, a daily rider with failing vision, commented on service operations problems. She also said that cutting **Route 64** would keep people who use this route to get where they are going. She and others she knows are willing to pay more; "what else can we do" to save bus service?

Lily Hudfield uses **Route 64** to go from Jamestown to Wakefield and Newport. It is an important route for her.

Elizabeth Hoffnagle, a disabled rider, needs transit service to get around. Cab fares are too expensive for her.

Coffee Bell, Vice President of the State Independent Living Council, is concerned that the people most affected by cuts in transit service are the low income, elderly and disabled. Jamestown is a town with many disabled residents but no cab

service; cutting the **Route 64** bus service will cut access to jobs for these people. Cutting the 64 will also eliminate ADA service for Jamestown.

Eileen Spillane of Middletown has used transit a lot, including going to URI for classes on route 64. This saves money and the problems of parking around the campus. She loves transit and opposes all cuts in service.

Cynthia Hamillton, a wheelchair bound Newport resident, said that it is very important for disabled people to support public transit. She works at URI and thinks that there should be an interrelation between two public agencies.

Yvonne Virgadamo, a mother, student and bus rider, uses RIPTA because car ownership is too expensive. Ms. Virgadamo said that additional expenses to passengers offset the total savings to RIPTA when service is cut, for example when route 61 doesn't travel in the winter anymore, people pay \$10 cab fares to get to medical appointments. She is also concerned that cutting Sunday and holiday service will not allow people to get to work.

David Brown, a member of DOT Watch, spoke on his own behalf to support equitable access to transportation, which benefits affordable housing, healthcare and the environment. He suggested that RIPTA look for alternatives for service that is cut and look for options for passengers who lose service.

Anthony L. Shaw, a resident of the Bristol Veterans Home, said that the veterans and their families need transit and don't have service on Saturdays or Sundays. Mark Therrien reported that the Flex service to the Veterans Home is not being cut.

Brian Stevens, a Bristol Veterans Home resident, who is reliant on public transit, feels that cuts are not acceptable and that Rhode Island should be able to find the necessary funding. RIPTA should improve service, and in this way increase the number of riders and the amount of revenue.

R. L. Hollis said that the state funds all sorts of expenditures and should be able to find enough money for RIPTA. He thinks that RIPTA is a good statewide system.

Gene Parsons, a resident of the Bristol Veterans home, has been a bus rider for six years wants the primary focus of RIPTA to be service to passengers.

Barry Schiller of the Sierra Club said that we should save transit service for those who do not drive. Transit improves the environment and helps prevent sprawl. Mr. Schiller recommended that we seek a state supplemental budget and seek funding that increases with inflation, possibly a gas tax that is indexed to the inflation rate. He also identified potentials for cost savings—controlling overtime, saving RIde for those who really need it and cutting beach bus services.

Jim Reed, executive director of Newport Housing Authority, advocated for the residents of 100 affordable housing units in Newport who would be affected by eliminating **Route 64**. Transit is vital to the residents.

Annette Bourbonniere, a disabled resident of Newport, stated her opposition to all any service cuts. She supports providing accessibility to the transit system.

George Levesque, a candidate for office and manager of a paratransit service provider, expressed concern for cutting service on **Route 64** which would hurt low-income people. He anticipates that the new CCRI in Newport will encourage ridership between Newport and URI.

Ned Drapper, Administrative Services Newport, reported that RIPTA riders validate 3-4,000 parking tickets at the Gateway Center. This reduces congestion on city streets. RIPTA was also a good partner during the Tall Ships event in Newport, where the combination of RIPTA and charter buses brought about one quarter of visitors to Newport by public transportation.

Written Comments were provided as follows:

Edward N. Day, Jr, a resident of Jamestown, drives an automobile but frequently rides the bus. With few exceptions he uses **Route 64** to come to Newport. As a senior citizen, he is aware of the large number of seniors, who ride the bus and would be disadvantaged by the elimination of route 64.

RIPTA staff in attendance were:

Alfred Moscola, Henry Kinch, Ed Scott, Mark Therrien, Karen Mensel, Harriet Holbrook, Peter Michaud, Erminio Conte and David Pearsall.

Newport
Thursday, September 9, 2004
2 pm

On Thursday, September 9, 2004 at 2 pm, RIPTA received comments on the Budget Deficit Reduction Proposal at a special location at the Newport Police Station to help accommodate some disabled individuals. Six (6) members of the public attended including one (1) public official. Six (6) made oral comments and none made written comment.

Oral Comments were provided as follows:

Senator June Gibbs asked about the possibility of buying hybrid buses. Is Route 64 being cut and what are the impacts on URI? **Henry Kinch** answered: Hybrids are expensive – around \$500,000 each. He also stated that our funding limitations keep us from going further than $\frac{3}{4}$ miles outside bus route. **Ed Scott** answered: productivity on Route 64 is low. He describes URI Flex service.

Annette Bourboniere stated that she believed in public transit, but thinks that we can do more to improve ridership. She stated that RIPTA is not safe, accessible or reliable. She felt that we should get the proper funding, but we should also be required to overhaul the transit system. Why not look for new types of vehicles? She also stated that $\frac{3}{4}$ mile rule is minimum. **Ed Scott** answered questions.

Manspuld Lyon asked how many people ride the bus versus passenger trips. What about increasing gas tax? What is the possibility of purchasing electric buses? **Henry Kinch** answered questions.

Stephen Pratt stated that he and his mother use Ride in Newport.

Mrs. Frecette, on behalf of her husband Jonathan Frecette, stated that many seniors could afford to pay for their transit services. Also, there are exceptions to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile rule. What about charging seniors over a certain income level? She also stated the need for new DEA guidelines. Also, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile rule means some customers are required to go up difficult roads without sidewalks. She also stated there must be other ways to find revenue. She stated that access to transit services dictated where she can live. She asked how people on Jamestown are expected to get around. Why are paratransit vans left half empty? **Ed Scott** answered questions.

Jacquelyn Dubell asked if buses can take over trolley routes. Is hybrid the same as LNG? **Ed Scott** answered: There is some duplicate service in Providence and that only the Southside – CCRI specifically – would be left uncovered. **Senator Gibbs** explains the difference between hybrid and LNG.

No Written Comments were submitted.

RIPTA staff in attendance:

Henry Kinch, Ed Scott, and Nicole Langlois

Newport
Thursday, September 9, 2004
6 pm - 8 pm

On Thursday, September 9, 2004 at 6 pm, at the Newport City Hall - Council Chambers, forty-one (41) members of the public attended, including one (1) public official. Thirteen (13) made oral comments, and four (4) gave written comments.

Representative Paul Crowley observed that Newport's transit service has turned around for the better. He supports both routes with good ridership and low ridership. He implored the RIPTA Board to defer making service cuts until the legislature is back in session.

Susan Long of the Newport Residents Council told of the importance of Ride to her. **Route 64** is also important for getting to shopping and employment in Jamestown.

Yvonne Virgadamo, a mother, rides the bus daily to higher education and even church. She opposes cuts in service on Sundays and holidays because that would affect passengers' ability to keep jobs that require working on these days. She supports keeping service between Newport and URI, **Route 64**. She wants RIPTA to have a long-term solution to funding problems.

Michael Lopes has worked for twenty years at Quonset/Davisville using **Route 64** to get to work. He opposes cutting service on this route.

Judy Steven asked questions about ways to cut costs at RIPTA, including employees paying a portion of health care costs and reduction of CMAQ projects, which would lower local match.

Peter Ritchie introduced the Newport Daily News editorial, "RIPTA cuts would cause real hardship" in support of keeping transit service. He supports expansion of Newport area transit and maintaining **Route 64** to avoid isolating Jamestown. **Route 67** is a showcase route, but it would be affected by cuts in other parts of the bus system.

Steven C. Aten said that he is mad that we have to have these hearings. RIPTA is regularly challenged by service cuts to good services. Transit reduces congestion and pollution and provides affordable transportation. There should be no cuts in Newport of South County and we should plan for increased services.

Alexandra LaPlant, Rhode Island Disability Law Center, submitted a written statement, which is attached. She emphasized the impact of cuts in transit service on people with disabilities. Without RIPTA's services there are additional barriers to employment, education and healthcare. Ms. LaPlant identified monetary and social costs of decreases access for disabled people.

Skye Stone, a high school student from Jamestown, rides to work on the bus. Cutting route 64 will isolate Jamestown.

Gina Bang attends Rogers High School and uses the bus to visit family on holidays. Cutting evening service could cause loss of jobs for people who no longer have transportation. Ms. Bang is concerned about keeping route 64 as a way to get to URI.

Carol Morris, Child and Family Services residential program, explained that people in this program attend URI and cannot get to Kingston without **Route 64**. She also said that she has used the bus since her car broke down and enjoys it.

Lisa Sanders, a bus rider, can't afford a car and uses the bus as an alternative. Her mother, a resident of Coddington Manor, uses RIde to go to appointments. Ms. Sanders thinks that trip purpose shouldn't matter in evaluating the importance of transit service.

Lisa Adams, a URI student, uses the bus for economic reasons. She urged "don't cut us out"; RIPTA should grow and succeed.

Written Comments were provided as follows:

Alexandra LaPlant, Rhode Island Disability Law Center: as an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, RIDLC believes that cutting fixed and paratransit service will be a significant adverse effect on Rhode Islanders. It will also have indirect costs from lost employment, education, health care, and quality of life. Without transportation, people cannot get to services that they need.

Peter Ritchie, Newport, submitted a Newport Daily News editorial: The editorial listed cuts in service between Newport and Quonset Point and URI, cuts to the towns of Scituate, Foster, Glocester, and Burrillville, which would be the first time that RIPTA did not offer statewide bus service, and reductions in RIde transportation. These cuts would affect the neediest people in the state. The editorial advocates finding cost savings within RIPTA and additional state funding.

Emily Titon, Jamestown, rides RIPTA to work, social events, recreation, medical appointments and school. She lives in housing for disabled people in Jamestown. She supports keeping route 64 and increasing how often it operates. If cuts are needed, consider routes that are close to other routes that people could use.

Yvonne Virgadamo, Newport, expressed concern for the impact of service cuts on educational institutions, the poor, disabled, and elderly. She thinks that expanding route 61 into Aquidneck Island Industrial Park would meet transportation needs.

Steven C. Aten supports route 64, especially recognizing increased ridership in the few years.

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