

# **RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **MINUTES OF September 30, 2008 MEETING**

**Board Members Present: John Rupp, Chair; Thomas Deller, Vice-Chair; Edward Field; William Kennedy; Rochelle Bates Lee; Chuck Alves; and John MacDonald.**

**Also Present: Alfred J. Moscola (General Manager); Lori Caron Silveira (Outside General Counsel); Deborah Dawson; Maureen Neira; Mark Therrien; Ellen Mandly, and other members of RIPTA's senior staff and members of the public whose names are listed on the meeting sign-in sheet.**

#### **Agenda Item 1: Approval of Minutes of August 21, 2008 Meeting**

**Mr. Rupp took up the first agenda item, requesting comments on the August 21, 2008 meeting minutes. Mr. Kennedy made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Deller seconded the motion; the minutes were unanimously approved.**

#### **Agenda Item 2: General Manager's Report**

**Mr. Moscola began with a monthly fuel update, indicating that the high for the current fiscal year begun in July is \$4.51 per gallon, the low is \$3.40 and the average is \$3.80; the budgeted price is \$4.50. On September 29th we paid \$3.51 per gallon, which demonstrates a downward trend in fuel prices.**

**Mr. Moscola reported on the trolley conversion program and said work on trolley 16 and 18 is complete and trolley 20 is 65% complete. He said a letter had been sent to State Fleet Operations requesting the removal of the CNG fueling station located at Newport effective October 31st. Finishing this topic, he notified the Board that there would be a press event held in Newport at 10:00 a.m. on October 15th at the Gateway Center to publicize and celebrate the trolley renewals and he invited the Board members to attend.**

**Next Mr. Moscola discussed a fuel consortium project instituted at the behest of the Board Chair. The General Manager and staff are researching the feasibility of partnering with cities, towns and school departments across the State to purchase diesel fuel and save money for the State.**

**Finally, Mr. Moscola discussed the public hearings and public forums already begun and continuing afternoons and evenings over the next two weeks. The hearings are being held to inform the public on the details of the proposed service cuts and to record the public**

**comment on the issue. Mr. Moscola said we've gotten a lot of great comments from the public hearings held thus far and he invited the Board members to attend the hearings and forums. He said staff would report the results of the hearings to the Board when they have concluded. Mr. Rupp asked about the level of attendance and Mr. Moscola responded that about 70 people attended the Westerly public forum and over 150 people attended the Warwick hearings.**

**Mr. Rupp said he had discussed with the General Manager the failure of the bailout of Wall Street to pass the House of Representatives yesterday, the drop in the stock market and the impact this might have on State investments and State entities and said the Board needs to look at this issue as it has the potential to be a cash drain on the State and municipalities.**

**Agenda Item 3: FY 2008 Auditor's Report – Presentation by Braver, PC**

**Mr. Rupp asked for the Auditor's Report and Mr. MacDonald said the Finance Committee met on September 26th and heard a presentation by Braver, PC who conducted the audit of RIPTA. He said there were satisfied with RIPTA's accounting practices and no discrepancies in the financial statements. Mr. MacDonald reported that the Finance Committee had authorized the filing of the audit with the State Auditor General, which had to be submitted by today. Mr. MacDonald asked that the full Board ratify the filing of the auditor's report with the State**

## **Auditor General.**

**Mr. Deller interjected that the actual audited deficit amount for last year had been lowered to \$1,580,092, then Mr. Deller moved for approval of the auditor's report and Bill Kennedy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Rupp asked if a copy of the Audit Report had been given to the Governor's Panel and Ms. Neira responded that it is posted on RIPTA's website, it has been submitted to the Auditor General and Department of Administration. Mr. Rupp asked that she send it to the member's of the panel and she said she would.**

## **Agenda Item 4: Finance Committee Report**

## **Agenda Item 6: Non-Represented Wages & Benefits**

**Mr. Rupp moved on to agenda item # 4 and Mr. MacDonald continued giving his Finance Committee Report. Mr. MacDonald said that the Finance Committee had considered staff recommendations on non-represented wages and benefits changes and in fact this topic is listed as an item for discussion on today's agenda, however on the advice of labor counsel Andrew Prescott, Mr. MacDonald recommended on behalf of the Finance Committee that the discussion of non-represented wages and benefits be tabled at this time. Mr. MacDonald began to discuss the issue in more detail, but was stopped by Lori Silveira RIPTA's General Counsel who said the discussion should take place in executive session to protect the**

**attorney client privilege.**

**Mr. Rupp said that since the Board was touching on the subject of agenda item # 6 he would move ahead on the agenda to that topic and he asked Mr. Moscola if any discussion of non-represented wages and benefits had been discussed at public hearings. Mr. Moscola replied that there are 26 non-represented employees at RIPTA, including himself, that run the entire organization. He and staff have met with the Finance Committee and reduced the \$12.2 million dollar deficit by \$1.4 million dollars, which included deferring non-represented wage increase, which should have taken place on July 1, 2008. In addition, staff is continuing to work with the Finance Committee to find other ways to reduce the budget.**

**Mr. Rupp noted that Mr. MacDonald has requested that agenda item #6 be tabled until the Finance Committee has an opportunity to discuss certain issues with counsel and asked for a motion to this effect. Mr. MacDonald made a motion to table discussion of non-represented wages and benefits and Mr. Deller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Continuing with his Finance Committee report, Mr. MacDonald said the Finance Committee had discussed not funding GASB 45 in this budget as a cost saving measure, which is allowed as long as we recognize GASB 45 as a liability. He said this would represent a savings of \$500,000 dollars in this fiscal year and the next. Mr. Deller**

**commented that it is important to recognize that if we don't fund post retirement benefits, as GASB 45 allows that we have to carry what we owe as a deficit on our financial statements. Mr. Deller said that this year our overall deficit liability is over \$9 million and \$7 million of that amount is GASB 45, which will increase going forward in FY 2009. Mr. Rupp agreed with Mr. Deller's comment but said taking this step will get us through the short-term.**

**Mr. MacDonald made a motion to defer GASB 45 funding until FY 2010. Mr. Deller stated that this motion should be made during the agenda item dealing with budget discussions and Mr. MacDonald agreed and said his Finance Committee report was complete. Mr. Rupp moved on to the next agenda item.**

#### **Agenda Item 5: FY 2009 & FY 2010 Operation Budget**

**Ms. Neira addressed this agenda item and discussed the staff summary entitled FY 2009 approved budget updates. She said this staff summary addresses the Board's actions over the past few months relative to the FY 09 budget including the \$1.4 million deficit reduction options approved at the August meeting. Ms. Neira noted the deficit reduction items on page two require Board approval because they represent a reduction in the amount of the Budget deficit carried forward from FY 08. She said that based on the audited financials the deficit was reduced from \$2 million dollars to \$1.6 million representing a \$411,000 reduction in the deficit carried over**

from the FY 09 budget, which in turn reduces the overall deficit to approximately \$10.5 million dollars.

Ms. Neira continued saying the third and fourth pages incorporate all the revenue assumptions and the expense assumptions approved by the Board over the last few months and the final pages give the details of the FY 08 actuals and the FY 09 budget as approved with the deficit of approximately \$10.5 million dollars.

Ms. Neira handed out several one-page reference sheets for discussion, the first an analysis of GASB 45 OPEB Liability, which illustrates what GASB 45 actually is, a recognition of future retiree benefits over the employee's working life. GASB 45 took effect in FY 08 and while we are not required to fund it, we are required to report a financial statement liability. Currently the State of Rhode Island is looking to create an irrevocable OPEB trust, of which RIPTA will be a part. We will not be required to fund our GASB 45 liability at 100%, but the State would like us to do a memorandum of understanding stating our funding level in the future. Ms. Neira said several months ago after discussion with the Board staff proposed a \$500,000 contribution for FY 2009, but there is a question today of whether we should do that, or pull back and reduce the deficit by \$500,000 to approximately \$9.9 million.

Ms. Neira moved on to the next discussion item, diesel fuel. She said in FY 2008 we budgeted \$2.40 per gallon and planned on spending

**\$6.3 million, but towards the end of FY 08 fuel prices rose considerably and we spent close to \$8.5 million for the year and at one point in July were paying \$4.52 per gallon. In March she stated that fuel costs increased from the previous month by 17%. She said the average fuel cost in March was \$3.49, in April it was \$3.77, \$4.04 in May and \$4.16 June, finally reaching \$4.52 in July. Ms. Neira said when we ended FY 08 we were paying very high fuel prices, which we never anticipated, and trying to finalize the FY 09 budget with several issues still outstanding. It was at this point that the Board approved \$4.50, which is an 87.5% increase over our FY 08 budget. Ms. Neira said \$4.50 per gallon represents \$11.9 million dollars for fuel.**

**Mr. Rupp interjected and asked what the spread is between diesel fuel and gasoline and Mr. Moscola said he did not have exact amounts because RIPTA doesn't use much gasoline, but diesel is much higher.**

**Mr. Rupp asked how much higher and Mr. Moscola estimated 40 – 50 cents higher. Mr. MacDonald asked how much we paid for fuel yesterday and Mr. Moscola replied \$3.51 per gallon and noted that last night the price of diesel fuel dropped \$10 per barrel putting it below a \$100 per barrel. Mr. Moscola recommended that we pay attention to this because while we are currently averaging \$3.80 we started the fiscal year at a higher number. Ms. Neira stated that the average fuel price to date is about 70 cents less than budgeted and the Board may want to reconsider the fuel budget.**

**Ms. Neira addressed the final issue, understanding the gas tax**

subsidy, which she explains in a 3-page document she passed out to the Board members and she cautioned that her explanation might sound like an accounting lesson. Ms. Neira said the gas tax subsidiary is collected on a monthly basis and while it's received over the entire month, it is due by the 20th of the month for the previous month. The Division of Taxation prepares their statements on the collections and transfers the money to RIPTA by the 25th. Unfortunately, they do collect money after the 20th of the month so what they report in their statements is a cash basis of what they have actually collected for the month, not necessarily what they have transferred to RIPTA. RIPTA operates on an accrual basis and when we receive the revenue for a particular month, it's booked for the previous month.

She then explained the discrepancies between what the Division of Taxation is reflecting and what we are showing due to the Revenue Estimating Conference and the Division of Accounts and Controls, which are technically paper entries, not money in hand. She explained that because of this process, the receivable she books for 2008 affects 2009 because the revenue for 2008 is no longer available and that is exactly what happened this year in the amount of \$700,000.

Mr. Rupp said the Board needs an analysis of the revenue stream, the outflows and the cash on hand because we need to know how much cash we are burning, where it is going and how fast the deficit is

mounting. He added that this information would affect potential service cuts and other issues.

Mr. MacDonald said a representative from Braver is working to determine the answer to Mr. Rupp's question and we'll have the answer soon. Mr. Rupp said at some point the money will run out and we need to answer this question for the Governor's Panel.

Ms. Neira continued discussing page 3 of the document, which explains the yield on the gas tax penny. She said for FY 05 it was \$4.8 million, for FY 06 it was \$4.8, for FY 07 it was \$4.7, for FY 08 it was \$4.5 after the audited adjustment and the budget for FY 09 is \$4.3. Mr. Rupp asked if the FY 2010 budget took in to account the projected growth in ridership, or if the revenues were based on stagnant ridership. Ms. Neira said it is based on current ridership levels.

Ms. Neira noted that the \$4.3 million dollar yield on the penny was not the figure set by the Revenue Estimating Conference. They set the yield at \$4,630,000 but at the time the RIPTA Board was uncomfortable with that number and after discussions with the State Budget office, RIPTA was allowed to make an adjustment on our financials and the Board approved a \$2 million dollar reduction adjustment to the yield set by the Revenue Estimating Conference. In July Ms. Neira said she received \$3 million dollars, although her actual budget was \$2.8 million resulting in a surplus of \$250,000, but

because of the receivable from the previous fiscal year her financials are showing a \$450,000 shortfall in gasoline tax. Her collections were in fact higher than budgeted. The lower yield was set for the FY 2009 budget because RIPTA spent the last 5 months of FY 2008 with a lower yield than was anticipated and went into FY 2009 thinking we would receive less gasoline tax. Ms. Neira noted that the Revenue Estimating Conference would meet again in November.

Mr. Deller noted the Revenue Conference told RIPTA to use \$4.6 million per penny and we actually budgeted at less, but had we budgeted at what we got last year we would still be below what got for July. Ms. Neira said Mr. Deller was correct because they budgeted \$4.6 we received \$4.5 million per penny for FY 08 and right now we are budgeted at \$4.35.

Mr. Deller summarized saying there are three budget items to be addressed 1) GASB 45 2) the \$4.50 budgeted amount for diesel and 3) the gas tax yield. Mr. Deller said he would prefer to wait on the gas tax yield until after the November Estimating Conference, but given what's happened with fuel we can adjust fuel somewhat, but not too radically, maybe \$4.00 per gallon.

Mr. Rupp said he would like to wait to receive the burn analysis before making any adjustments. Mr. Moscola said he could do a fuel analysis and make a recommendation to the Board. Mr. Rupp asked him to wait until after we receive the burn analysis from Braver. Ms.

**Neira clarified that the analysis he was asked to perform was what amount of cash are we going to be short from October 1st to March 31st. Following this discussion Mr. Deller clarified that the Board's decision was to hold off on making a decision on the 3 outstanding items and Mr. Rupp said that was correct.**

**Ms. Lee noted that the budget is predicated upon level ridership and asked what would happen if ridership increased. Ms. Neira replied that increased ridership would reduce revenue from the gasoline yield. Mr. Deller commented that this is the irony of how RIPTA is funded, the more people who drive cars, the more money RIPTA makes, but fewer drivers results in less revenue for RIPTA from gasoline tax.**

**Mr. Deller asked if there was any other action needed other than the reduction in the deficit amount and Ms. Neira said there was not. Mr. Deller asked what would happen if we continued to operate under this budget next month knowing there may be changes coming and Ms. Neira replied nothing would happen. Hearing this Mr. Deller made a motion that we continue this item until we receive an analysis on the cash flow. Mr. MacDonald seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**Ms. Neira noted that the Board needed to approve the reduction in the deficit carryover as a result of the audit and Mr. Deller amended his motion to say that the Board will recognize the \$411,193 dollar**

reduction in the FY 2008 deficit, but would continue the rest of the budget items until the cash flow analysis is complete. Mr. MacDonald seconded the amended motion and it passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 7: Governor's Panel**

Mr. Rupp addressed the next agenda item on the newly formed Governor's Panel. He said a press release had been issued by the Governor saying he had asked the Directors of Administration, Revenue and Transportation to work with the RIPTA Board and staff to review RIPTA's income streams, outflows and other opportunities to independently determine the best way to move forward and work with the legislature to find the funding RIPTA needs to avoid service cuts.

Mr. Rupp said a preliminary meeting is scheduled for October 3rd and several discussions have already taken place. He said its clear if we are going to get assistance from the Governor's office we cannot sit back and wait, we must get the data on the table and begin to work hard. He stated that at a recent Grow Smart Rhode Island meeting the Governor expressed his support for RIPTA. The Governor said he does not want RIPTA to implement service cuts pending this review and he made a strong commitment to growing RIPTA and developing a system suited to the State of Rhode Island, not just the Providence/East Providence area. Mr. Rupp said so far we have the commitment, but no money.

**Mr. Rupp asked if there were questions and Mr. Moscola stated that staff has been working to compile the information for the October 3rd meeting and we would be ready. Ms. Lee asked how many working sessions would be scheduled and Mr. Rupp replied as many as needed before the House Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Deller asked for clarification on the House Finance Committee meeting date and Mr. Moscola said that the Committee is scheduled to meet from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 14th.**

### **Agenda Item 8: Ride Update**

**Mark Therrien provided an update on the Ride Program. He said things were going well and complaints have declined significantly and most complaints that are received are to do with issues other than the new software. Mr. Therrien said small GPS computer devices called Rangers have been installed on 70% of Ride vehicles and the two outside vendors, Northwest and Maher have been trained on them. The IVR voice response system is tentatively scheduled to be up and running before November 1st, which will bring relief to the long phone waits, previously a big area of complaint. Mr. Therrien said riders have been sent a newsletter informing them of how to use the new system and staff will be meeting with the Senior Directors Association and the Daycare Directors Association to inform them of the changes. He said he has already met with the Dialysis Association and much effort has been made to keep all the major**

**players informed of the coming changes.**

**Mr. Therrien reported the Department of Elderly affairs would begin charging what they term a "co-pay" on October 1st. RIPTA communicated this to the riders in a newsletter and the DEA notified participating agencies. Mr. Deller asked where the money would go and Mr. Therrien said RIPTA would retain the funds and bill DEA and subtract the amount from their bill. He said RIPTA had to determine the best way to collect the co-pay and account for it. He said the amount would be deducted from their services rendered invoice. The DEA anticipates collecting \$200,000 and under the terms of the contract, the DEA has the right to ask RIPTA to implement the collection. Mr. Therrien said there have been many complaints from seniors and senior associations, but RIPTA has been clear that this is a DEA rule.**

**Next Mr. Therrien discussed the billing system. He said that at the time of the September 22nd Board meeting, the billing system was working fine, however since that time the vendor made a software update which caused some problems. Mr. Therrien said the billing system is the key to data collection because it tracks miles, hours, customers etc., therefore the billing system must be working properly in order to determine performance data. The bugs should be worked out by Friday and once we verify that the billing program is working correctly we will begin to compile the monthly performance report for the Board.**

**Mr. Rupp commented that the RIde program is being evaluated with great scrutiny and while improvements have been made resulting in better data, at times the data is still skewed. Mr. Rupp then asked Mr. Deller to make a motion creating a new subcommittee of the Board consisting of he, Ms. Lee and Mr. Kennedy. He said he'd like the committee to meet weekly or biweekly with Mr. Therrien to address this issue. He added that this issue impacts route considerations and he'd like the data to be as fresh as possible. Mr. Deller made the motion to form a RIde subcommittee consisting of Mr. Rupp, Ms. Lee and Mr. Kennedy to work with Mr. Therrien. Ms. Lee seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**Following the vote Mr. Field asked Mr. Therrien what the cost is to RIPTA to operate under the month-to-month contract to provide RIde services. Mr. Therrien responded that under the current contract conditions, we lose approximately \$200,000 annually. Ms. Lee asked the reason for the loss and Mr. Therrien responded that the pricing of the original 5-year contract, which expired but was extended until December 2008, relied on old pricing is no longer enough to cover RIPTA's costs. Mr. Deller stressed this issue saying RIPTA is subsidizing the RIde Program as the result of the inability of the State to move forward with the bid process, which would result in a new contract with a new rate. He said that continuing to operate under the old contact is also unfair to Maher and Northwest.**

**Mr. Alves asked who had the lead on the RFP and Mr. Therrien replied OHHS headed by Adelita Orefice. Mr. Field suggested this issue be added to the agenda when the Governor's panel meets. Mr. Moscola said a letter had been drafted to Director Williams asking for a meeting on this issue and he agreed that this should be discussed when the Governor's Panel meets on October 3rd. Mr. Rupp also agreed. Mr. Alves said Director William's agency is not the funding agency and the next step should be the development of the RFP, which should be then sent to Director Williams. A brief discussion of the RFP process ensued.**

**Following the discussion Mr. Alves asked Mr. Therrien to prepare a brief document outlining the issues and said he would use this document to follow up with Governor's office. Mr. Rupp stated we should inform Director Williams that if this project doesn't proceed in a timely fashion, RIPTA should receive a one-year contract extension with a fee increase. Mr. Therrien agreed to prepare the document for Mr. Alves and Mr. Alves agreed to get the ball rolling on our behalf.**

**Mr. Kennedy asked what would happen if this process remains stagnant and Mr. Therrien said that unfortunately, nothing would happen. He said there are no fines or ramifications if the process stalls. Mr. Field noted that RIPTA authored the original RFP and suggested we give that document to Mr. Alves to use as a benchmark. Mr. Alves agreed saying the RFP outlines the services needed and he would use it to be the project champion.**

## **Agenda Item 9: Paratransit Workers' Compensation**

**Mr. Mencarini addressed the Board and discussed the next agenda item, Paratransit Workers Compensation. He explained the staff summary saying that the coverage is mandated by the paratransit provider contract and the insurance is for drivers and employees in that division. After consultation with RIPTA's insurance broker, staff recommends the award of the contract to Beacon Mutual insurance Company at an annual cost of \$303,548, which is a 4.5% increase over the expiring policy. Mr. Mencarini pointed out that our insurance broker Starkweather and Shepley solicited the bids and that Beacon Mutual was the only bidder.**

**Following Mr. Mencarini's discussion of the procurement, Mr. MacDonald moved to award the contract as recommended by staff. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

## **Agenda Item 10: RFP 09-01 Gas Detection System Inspection Maintenance and Repair**

**Mr. Mencarini discussed the next procurement, an award to provide inspection, calibration maintenance and repairs on the gas detection systems at RIPTA's Providence and Newport facilities. Mr. Mencarini outlined the costs of the proposed contract and recommended that the contract be awarded to U.S. Automation of Quaker Hill**

**Connecticut.**

**Following Mr. Mencarini's discussion of the proposed contract, Mr. MacDonald moved to award the contract as recommended by staff. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously**

**Following the vote Ms. Lee asked a question regarding the loss analysis, which Mr. Mencarini answered.**

### **Agenda Item 2: General Manager's Report (continued)**

**Mr. Rupp returned to the General Manager's report and asked Mr. Moscola to give an update on the construction of the new Paratransit Operations Center.**

**Mr. Moscola gave a brief background on the project and said construction is now under way and staff is monitoring the project with weekly meetings including the construction firm and the architects. The General Manager said thus far no problems have arisen. The General Manager said he has been contacted by many members of the community who expressed appreciation for the investment RIPTA is making in the community. He noted that previously, the property was abandoned, environmentally compromised and an eyesore.**

**He continued by discussing the uses for the new building including**

**maintenance, bus storage and operations. He said the building would house a beautiful one-stop customer service center where fare products will be sold and bus schedules will be available along with employment information.**

**Mr. Rupp asked about using the facility to assist other State agencies and Mr. Moscola said that currently RIPTA services 68 RIDOT vehicles and he hopes to increase that number and in the future assist other State agencies in the same way. Mr. Rupp noted that building is a big expenditure, especially with our current financial situation, but its important to note the short-term benefit to the community. Mr. Moscola agreed and said that for the first time RIPTA's customers, both fixed route and paratransit, will have one stop shopping and then he discussed the benefits of storing buses inside during inclement weather.**

**Ms. Lee asked about employment opportunities during the construction process and Mr. Moscola said he would ask the building contactor and get Ms. Lee the information. Ms. Lee noted that a list of Providence based individuals able to work on this project already exists.**

#### **Agenda Item 11: Service Standards**

**Mark Therrien discussed agenda item # 11 service standards. He said service standards guide our resource allocation, tell us how much**

money to spend and in what areas. He said they determine how close bus stops should be based on area demographics, determine population density, illustrate poverty, age and other factors and blended together tell us where to invest our services.

Mr. Therrien said our current service standards were adopted in 1995 according to the then prevailing national standard, which was very urban in focus and didn't recognize service in a system such as ours.

He said RIPTA staff considered changing the service standards in 2002, however other issues arose and the matter was tabled. He said at this time it might be prudent to establish new service standards that acknowledge the urban side, but also take into account our statewide responsibility. Mr. Therrien explained how the current service standards affect the ratings of routes and discussed alternative ways of classifying routes. He said that the issue of our 1995 service standards always arises when we discuss possible service reductions and he feels it's an important issue to address.

The Board members discussed the services standards with Mr. Therrien and were in agreement that the antiquated service standards under which RIPTA operates must be addressed. Mr. Rupp said learning how to grow a transportation system is very complex and updating the service standards is a predicate act to going forward.

Mr. Deller asked if there was a national service standard, or if the standards were created by the Planning Department based on Rhode

Island. Mr. Therrien said the standards came from the Transportation Research Report of 1988. Mr. Rupp suggested working with Grow Smart Rhode Island and the Sierra Club to determine systems that parallel ours and use that as one basis. Mr. Deller asked how this tied into the Transit 20/20 report and Mr. Moscola and Mr. Therrien both said we would have to change our standards before moving forward.

Mr. Rupp said it is important for the Board to determine the vision for RIPTA for the next 3 – 5 years and to develop the funding to make that vision happen. He said RIPTA should coordinate with Transit 20//20 and take immediate action to develop funding for the short-term. Mr. Deller asked if Transit 20/20 could help shape the direction of the standards because discussing reverse commutes and commuting from park and rides feeds into how transit works as a whole. Mr. Therrien agreed that they should blend together.

Mr. Field said it seemed we had put the cart before the horse and he didn't think we should be discussing cutting routes and making service changes based on 20 year-old service standards. He said we should, even if only temporarily, redesign the system to handle where the passengers are now and where they need to go. Mr. Kennedy agreed with Mr. Field's assessment and said we should straighten out the problems we currently have and not worry too far into the future.

Mr. Therrien answered more questions from the Board and after a lengthy discussion it was determined we would be receiving a great

deal of information at the public hearings and the Governor had already stated he did not want changes until after the hearings, therefore we should wait before making changes. Mr. Therrien said there are major areas he can address quickly, like ADA service and he could create a list of priorities for the Board to consider. Mr. Rupp agreed with this idea and asked that he create a list of the “holes” for the Board to consider and have it available at the October meeting.

Following this discussion, Mr. MacDonald moved that Mr. Therrien perform a preliminary examination of service standards and present his findings to the Board at the October meeting. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion and Ms. Silveira interjected that this item is listed on the agenda for discussion purposes only and no vote is needed. Mr. Therrien agreed to prepare the document as requested.

Ms. Lee asked if revising service standards at this point would affect the proposed service cuts. Mr. Therrien responded that the biggest consideration is determining if RIPTA is to be a statewide system, which would affect the proposed service cuts. Ms. Lee stated she thought RIPTA was a statewide system and Mr. Therrien said under the current service standards we are not, and agreed it is a dichotomy.

Mr. Moscola interjected that this is a very complex issue, one he intends to work on closely with Mr. Therrien, and the document may not be ready for the October Board meeting. Mr. Rupp acknowledged

that this issue will take time to address, and asked that Mr. Therrien begin by preparing a brief document highlighting the pertinent issues for the next meeting. He added that he does not want anyone arguing that RIPTA is a Providence/East Providence bus company; therefore he wants the facts on the table.

Mr. Therrien finished by thanking the Board members for their attendance at the public hearings and said Board members have been present at each meeting, which is impressive. Mr. Rupp asked Ellen Mandly to coordinate with the Board members to ensure that the remaining public hearing dates are on their respective calendars.

#### **Agenda Item 12: Public Comment**

Mr. Rupp asked for public comments and recognized a young woman attending as a member of the Students for a Democratic Society. The woman referred to a discussion of gas prices that had taken place earlier in the meeting and offered information on the price difference between regular and diesel gas.

Next, Chelsea Miller, from the SDS group spoke. Ms. Miller stated her opinion that the Board meeting process was undemocratic because the students were not allowed to speak at the start of the meeting, and were asked to wait until the public comment portion of the meeting noticed on the agenda. She added that the time of the meeting was also inconvenient for she and other members of her

**group.**

**Next Mr. Rupp recognized Evan Owens-Stively from SDS who said he has seen a commitment to public transit, but agreed with earlier comments that the meeting was undemocratic and asked that RIPTA Board members attend a public accountability session being presented by SDS on Sunday, October 5th, @ 1:00 p.m., at the DARE Offices, 340 Lockwood Street, Providence. Mr. Owens-Stively said in his opinion the Board is moving in the right direction and he thanked the Board for its commitment. He finished by again inviting the Board to the October 5th accountability session, which he said would broaden the Board's perspective.**

**Another young man from SDS spoke and said he was pleased that Mr. Deller had stressed the difficulties with how RIPTA is funded and he urged the Board to discuss this issue with the General Assembly and the House Finance Committee. He stated his opinion that funding public transportation with the gas tax is ridiculous. Mr. Rupp responded saying the irony of the situation is that this method of funding worked fine for a long time and it is difficult to now get the message out illustrating why it no longer works. He added that Mr. MacDonald, the Sierra Club and others are working hard to develop alternative strategies and suggested the SDS work with them if they have suggestions.**

**The young man concluded his remarks by stressing the importance**

of a 3 – 5 year vision for RIPTA and its growth and said the users of the system should be included in that process. He suggested that the public hearings be used as a format to solicit input on a vision for RIPTA.

Mr. Rupp recognized Jim Murphy a RIPTA bus operator. Mr. Murphy said he had attended the public hearing held the previous evening and he wanted to make a public comment that the Governor's office should be made aware of what the public is saying at the public hearings.

Chelsea Miller was recognized again. She asked that copies of the budget and other financial documents be made available to the students and others who attend the Board meetings. Ms. Lee responded that to do so would cost money and the budget is posted on the RIPTA website.

Mr. Kennedy thanked the students for their courteous demeanor at today's meeting, but disagreed with comments insinuating that the Board meetings are undemocratic. Mr. Rupp echoed Mr. Kennedy's thanks.

Another young women from SDS spoke and gave her definition of democracy and said that the RIPTA Board was undemocratic because its members were not RIPTA riders. Ms. Lee vehemently disagreed with her assumption, and said many of the Board members do use

**the system.**

**Finally, Mr. Rupp recognized Bill McGee a retired RIPTA employee who said the RIPTA Board does a good job and Rhode Island should have a transit system that is second to none.**

**Mr. Rupp thanked everyone for the comments.**

### **Agenda Item 13: Adjournment**

**A motion to adjourn was made Mr. Field. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**Ellen M. Mandly**

**Recording Secretary**