

**ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF JUNE 17, 2010 MEETING**

Board Members Present: Thomas Deller, Chair; Edward Field; Steve Durkee;

Other Committee Members Present: Stephen Devine; Everett Stuart; John Flaherty; Christopher Long; Karen Scott (for Kevin Flynn);

Absent: William Kennedy; Stephen Farrell and Kevin Flynn.

Also Present: Mark Therrien; Amy Pettine; Anne Galbraith; and Ellen Mandly and members of the public whose names are on the meeting sign-in sheet.

Mr. Deller called the meeting to order at 8:33 and asked if the Committee had an opportunity to review the minutes of the meeting held May 6, 2010. The members indicated they had and Mr. Devine made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting as presented. Mr. Stuart seconded the motion and the minutes of the meeting were unanimously approved.

Mr. Deller opened the meeting and Amy Pettine said she would begin with the PowerPoint presentation entitled A Blueprint for RIPTA's Future, Summary of Needs Analysis and Proposed Goals &

Objectives. Ms. Pettine began by reading the agenda items on page 1 of the PowerPoint: 1) Summarize Needs Assessment, 2) get Subcommittee Input on Critical Needs, 3) Present Draft Goals & Objectives, 4) Review Capital Budget plan, and 5) Discuss Next Steps.

She said the Committee's input today will assist staff in moving forward to finalize the Goals and Objectives document.

Ms. Pettine said the focus today will be the Needs Analysis and what is missing from the system and what needs to be improved. She also will ask for input on the Goals and Objectives and achieving measurable future results. She said that when finalized the Goals and Objectives document will assist staff in developing specific actions and strategies and an implementation plan with concrete timelines and dollar amounts.

Ms. Pettine discussed page 3, a recap of the key challenges facing RIPTA today and read the bullets summarizing topics of discussion from the last meeting. These topics included ridership growth, demand for more and new modes of service, the growing demand for service for the elderly and disabled, negative perceptions about transit and RIPTA's current unsustainable funding method.

Next she discussed key opportunities such as RIPTA being designated as the State's Mobility Manager, federal funding priorities shifting to support sustainability and livability initiatives with a growing role for transit, growing recognition for RIPTA within the

State and recognition of RIPTA's competency, the need for greater financial support, and improved RIPTA partnerships and a growing constituency of transit advocates.

She read the bullets on page 5 and 6 identifying transit needs and said these were identified using information from recent studies and listed the various studies. She discussed the key issues bulleted on page 7 and said each of the bullets is discussed in further detail on pages 8 – 15. She will spend time discussing each key issue today and ask for Committee input which will be used to shape RIPTA's new direction.

Anne Galbraith took over outlining the key issues on pages 8 – 15 and said she would take notes on the Committee's comments. The key issues were developed using recent reports prepared by RIPTA and various outside entities and she described the process staff used to identify needs and develop strategies for addressing them.

Mr. Devine asked what was meant by making transit "faster" and Ms. Galbraith explained this meant making buses more competitive with cars by implementing signal and intersection improvements, by speeding passenger boarding through new swipe technologies or other measures. She said the strongest comments and opinions revolve around RIPTA's image, and how to make bus stops and vehicles clean, comfortable and convenient. RIPTA should have a consistent and cohesive image. Also important is better information

on schedules and the website using real time information and improved technology. Fare convenience is important as is the ability to use technology such as debit & credit cards which speeds up boarding. Better and more creative marketing is also needed.

Ms. Galbraith discussed what it means to be the State's Mobility Manager and elaborated on page 10 regarding the role RIPTA should play to support commuter rail. She said as commuter rail moves forward in the State it is important to understand and define RIPTA's role and how we will help RIDOT grow and maintain the system.

Mr. Devine said the major items were summarized well but noted we need to be aware of the Rhode Island Public Rail Corporation which is becoming more of a player. He explained that RI Public Rail was started in the 80's as a holding company to own the old east side rail tunnel and by virtue of the General Assembly it has the authority to be involved in new rail initiatives. RI Public Rail is made up of the Director of RIDOT, the Chairman of RIPTA and the Director of the Department of Administration.

Mr. Devine said that due to unusual liability and indemnification issues that arose when dealing with Amtrak, the RI Public Rail entity is being used as the signatory for rail initiatives. He said RI Public Rail has no staff, just the 3 directors listed above and he then briefly described the entity further and answered questions.

Mr. Field asked if goals 1 – 5 were listed in order of importance and Ms. Pettine said no. He said staff had not missed anything in terms of the goals and corresponding bullets explaining same. He suggested the Committee check off those bullets they are satisfied with and the bulleted questions which for various reasons will resolve themselves such as the reference to the ATMS system which will improve customer communications. He said these issues will be handled by changing staff attitude, adding a marketing person and changing the marketing attitude at RIPTA. He said whatever the ATMS system improvements don't correct should be addressed through other means.

Mr. Field said everything boils down to number 5 on the proposed strategic goals (page 17) pursuing a strategy for long term sustainability. If we get more people riding the buses, we'll need more buses and that means we'll need more money. Ms. Pettine said staff needed this discussion today because they need the Committee's input and direction as to how to proceed with certain issues.

Anne Galbraith directed everyone's attention to page 25 and the last slide entitled Sample Strategies/Action Steps and elaborated on same and suggested that staff proceed by identifying specific actions with costs. Mr. Field agreed with this suggestion. Mr. Deller said his intent was for staff to have thorough discussions with the Committee today and then have the Committee go on hiatus until September

allowing staff to proceed with finalizing the documents. He then gave his impressions of the five goals saying there are two types: 1, 2 and 5 are the ongoing areas to improve and 3 and 4 are more long-term.

Mr. Deller said that the rail question needs much more discussion and at some point discussion should be held with the full Board. He added that land use and development is another issue that needs vetting and we may need to be more involved in this area and work with the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

Mr. Field asked the Directors to comment if they see anything missing and also suggested that it might behoove the Committee to invite someone from the EDC to join.

Everett Stuart said it's important that there be coordination between bus and rail, particularly in the areas of schedules and signage. He suggested that RIPTA add Amtrak information to its website and information for both are added to the Chamber of Commerce website.

Finally, the Mobility Manager, perhaps RIPTA should play a larger role with RIDOT in facility management.

Mr. Deller said that as the Mobility Manager we need a plan that talks about an integrated system, what that is and how the pieces will come together to form a complete system and rail must be a part of that. Mr. Durkee agreed and Mr. Devine said in his mind the goal is to make RIPTA the ultimate transit authority and the operator of all

modes of transportation, but this won't happen overnight. He believes RIDOT has led the commuter rail initiative thus far because it is a capital project and a capital based service and he gave a brief history of how this came about. Messrs Devine and Deller opined that as commuter rail expands further RIPTA must get into the operating side and the new strategic plan must have a component addressing rail. Mr. Deller added that RIPTA needs to have an understanding of the MBTA and RIDOT operating agreements. Mr. Deller said there needs to be an understanding as to RIPTA's role as it pertains to rail over the next 3 – 5 years as the Mobility Manager.

Mr. Devine said RIDOT's long term goals are to build infrastructure, not to operate transit. Mr. Flaherty said the issue is to identify funding to sustain operations and Mr. Devine said funding for the next 3 years is from CMAC and other sources such as FTA rail mod funds. He said this Committee and other groups within the State system need to work to prioritize. Mr. Field said he'd like to see a monorail initiative added to the list.

Ms. Galbraith resumed the discussion of critical needs assessment on page 11 and read the bullets discussing RIPTA's role in water transportation. Mr. Field said someone from Quonset Ferry has been asked to speak at the next Board meeting and share his expertise and opinions regarding water transportation. All agreed water transportation should be on the list, but a low priority. Karen Scott interjected that Statewide Planning is updating and condensing their

waterborne transportation plan for inclusion in Transportation 2030. She said there is a very vocal constituency that wants waterborne transportation in Rhode Island. A brief discussion of waterborne transportation ensued. Mr. Deller said at this point in our strategic plan waterborne transportation will be included but it will be privately driven.

Ms. Galbraith continued on page 12 discussing how to meet the growing needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. She said this is a growing segment of the population particularly in rural and suburban areas and RIPTA needs to pay attention to how to make this service more efficient and cost effective.

Mr. Field asked about the cost effectiveness of Flex, and Mr. Therrien said in some markets where fixed service was replaced with Flex, RIPTA saved money, however in other areas like Westerly it's not particularly efficient, but allows us to serve that community. A brief discussion of RIde, ADA and the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile rule ensued and following this discussion Mr. Therrien said we're working with DHS on the Human Services Transportation Study which may change the transportation model.

Ms. Galbraith moved on to page 13, how to address new ridership growth and demands for new modes and said it ties into goal # 3 which is to add more capacity to Rhode Island's transportation network. She has heard Michael Lewis speak at recent public events

and say RIDOT is no longer adding capacity to the transportation network, meaning no new roads, so the only growth will be public transportation. Ms. Pettine said the bulleted suggestions came from the Metro Transit Study and read them aloud along with the bullets on page 14 regarding RIPTA's role in supporting smart growth and economic development.

Mr. Flaherty said the Metro Transit Study was a very valuable tool and wondered whether gathering more data and doing additional studies would be useful. Mr. Deller said there is data out there, but the priority now is to finalize the strategic plan and once that is done we'll have a better idea of what additional data is needed.

At this point Christopher Long had to leave the meeting, but before going he offered to assist in getting EDC involved with the Strategic Planning Committee. At this point a discussion regarding information sharing among the various State agencies and transit advocate organizations ensued. The members agreed that as this Committee moves forward with its initiatives many of the divergent groups will begin interfacing.

Ms. Galbraith continued on page 15 dealing with the key question which is sustainable funding. She said the CTC and the legislature are working on the issue of developing a sustainable funding strategy for RIPTA and the question for this group is what RIPTA can add to that discussion and what outcomes does the Committee desire. She

incorporated Mr. Field's comments from the last meeting into this slide which she read aloud with the other bullets.

Mr. Field suggested looking into available grants to fund research on the per passenger revenue expectations for rail, bus and Ride to clearly illustrate RIPTA's exact costs to provide service. Mark Therrien said this information could be quickly compiled by the Planning Department.

At this point Mr. Deller left the meeting.

Mr. Flaherty announced that in the fall there will be a Senate study commission on sustainable transportation funding that will look at transit as well as roads and bridges. The study will begin in the fall and the report is expected in January and will be used to again attempt to establish a transportation trust fund. A discussion of possible new federal funding ensued.

Ms. Galbraith wrapped up by reading the 5 goals on page 17 and briefly elaborating on each. After discussion on the order of the goals the Committee agreed that the goal # 1 drop to 3 # and goal # 2 move up # 1 and # 3 move up to # 2.

Mr. Field suggested that during the summer hiatus staff research marketing methods at other transit agencies. Mr. Durkee suggested a new system design and press campaign be initiated. Mr. Flaherty

suggested retooling the language for a broader audience and market the transit system as a win for the economy, a win for the environment and a win for people that are looking to reduce their household transportation costs. Mr. Therrien said he and his staff would look into capital funds to pay for some of these initiatives. Mr. Field told Mr. Therrien to come back with capital funding suggestions that can be vetted by the Committee then moved along to the Board for discussion and approval.

Mr. Devine reminded all that we need a total package that includes roads and bridges in good repair and a solid infrastructure. Ms. Pettine responded that she and Ms. Galbraith will talk to RIDOT, CTC, the environmental community and others over the summer to ensure that they capture all aspects of transit.

Lilly Picchione addressed the Committee next to discuss the capital budget process outlined on page 23 and in detail on the handout entitled Capital Budget FY 2012 – 2016 Assumptions and said the 10 projects are listed in priority order and invited comment on same. She said the first priority is always bus replacement and in FY 2010 – FY 2011 we will use all available bond funds to purchase 73 vehicles and she listed the various funding mechanisms for the purchase, but noted that in most cases the federal side pays 80% and 20% comes from a local match.

Ms. Picchione then went over each of the ten projects outlined in the

capital assumptions document and quickly elaborated on same. Following her remarks she answered questions. At this point Mr. Durkee left the meeting and Ms. Pettine briefly outlined the next steps listed on page 24.

Mr. Field asked Ms. Mandly to adjust the public meeting records and notify the Board that the Committee will be on hiatus until the regularly scheduled September 2, 2010 meeting. He then asked if there was any public comment or old business and hearing none Mr. Field asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Devine made a motion to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Mr. Stuart and the meeting was unanimously adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen M. Mandly
Recording Secretary