

**RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2010 MEETING**

Board Members Present: Thomas Deller, Chair; Edward Field; Steve Durkee; and William Kennedy.

Other Committee Members Present: Stephen Devine; Everett Stuart; John Flaherty; Christopher Long; and Kevin Flynn.

Absent: Stephen Farrell.

Also Present: Alfred Moscola; Henry Kinch; 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 8:31 and asked if the Committee had an opportunity to review the minutes of the meeting held June 17, 2010. The members indicated they had and Mr. Devine made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Durkee seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Therrien began by saying that the Blueprint document is a draft and has not yet been reviewed by the full Board. He thanked Amy Pettine and Anne Galbraith for their hard work on this document over the summer and said this document is a first for RIPTA and has made

some uneasy because of the scope and depth of the plan. He noted that the figures contained in the plan are good estimates but nothing is exact and that this document answers the question “what would RIPTA do with better funding”?

Ms. Pettine went over the meeting agenda and said she would begin with an overview of the timeline then get into details of the plan and the funding overview. She said review of the draft plan with senior RIPTA staff is underway and they will continue to refine the action steps under each objective and get stronger cost estimates. She briefly discussed the various RIPTA department heads consulted thus far and those she is scheduled to meet with. She said comments from the last Committee meeting had been incorporated into this draft, and they will continue to fine tune the plan to make the wording as simple as possible. She noted that the 5-year plan ends at the 50th Anniversary of RIPTA in 2016.

Ms. Pettine discussed the plan which had been laid out in PowerPoint slide format and began with the vision statement for RIPTA. She moved on to an overview of the draft plan and the five proposed strategic goals which had been reordered based on comments at the last meeting and noted the action steps relative to same were outlined in detail on page 18 of the Blueprint. She then discussed each slide which discussed the 5 goals in detail. Mr. Flynn commended staff on the plan saying it was well laid out.

Ms. Pettine answered questions regarding unifying fares for all modes of transit and on better statewide coordination. Mr. Flynn said there is a coordinated statewide process to evaluate and prioritize transportation projects, especially highway projects, but in the past RIPTA has not engaged that process with choices. He said RIPTA usually just gives a list of its needs, such as bus purchases. This process will need to be modified going forward. He noted that on page 21 the plan states: “coordinate with RIDOT on current commuter rail operations and develop RIPTA’s capacity for planning and managing rail operations” and this statement is in white indicating it is fully funded which he questioned. Ms. Pettine said this was not fully funded and actually represents more of a policy shift and that the lack of funding should be acknowledged. Mr. Devine suggested more coordination and discussion and said he would send further comments.

Ms. Pettine said they received a great deal of feedback on goal # 3 regarding making transit “convenient, attractive and easy to use” and she elaborated on the 6 objectives on same. Mr. Moscola discussed the safety and security aspects vis a vis RIPTA’s small security staff and said most agencies have a full security force. He asked that Planning staff meet with him to go over some of his suggestions in more detail and also discuss any additional security staff. Mr. Moscola answered questions about RIPTA’s present needs and issues concerning passenger safety and security and the current security staff.

Ms. Pettine continued with goal # 4 regarding livability and elaborated on those four objectives. Regarding the first objective, or “participating in the decision-making that affects the efficiency of transit”, Mr. Deller said this is where better coordination with Statewide Planning and RI Economic Development Corporation is needed. He said many decisions get made at these agencies that make it difficult to provide effective transit services and better interaction between agencies is needed. A brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Pettine discussed goal # 5 regarding sustainable funding and the three objectives associated with same, particularly objective # 3: “working proactively with the General Assembly, transit advocates and other partners to identify sustaining funding streams for transit”. She discussed page 30 of the Blueprint which deals with the action steps for implementation. She finished by saying these goals will be updated every five years.

Mr. Deller asked that everyone review the draft plan and get their comments back no later than September 17th. The Committee then discussed service to rural areas and improved connectivity between bus, rail, air, and water transportation. Mr. Flaherty suggested that a profile of rail service be developed. Mr. Deller said the draft plan should reference what we have now, but that train and ferry also be considered. Mr. Stuart suggested adding inter-city bus service like the Peter Pan service to Newport.

Mr. Devine noted the Northeast corridor, including Amtrak stations in Rhode island, is going to become a very prominent rail corridor in the future and it's important that high speed rail both locally and regionally be tied into the document. Mr. Field suggested creating a map of the State with overlays showing all modes of transit and said the overlay should include Statewide Planning initiatives. Mr. Field also likes the idea of a monorail. Mr. Flaherty described a Smart Zone initiative Grow Smart Rhode Island is working on with EDC. Mr. Moscola cautioned against RIPTA reaching out to assist other state agencies when we are already very loaded down.

Ms. Galbraith then addressed the Committee to discuss how to proceed with the implementation of the plan. She elaborated on the pie chart discussing funding and said the chart puts all the action items into 3 types of funding: 1) funded actions which are contained in the current capital budget, 2) no cost actions which shift policies and change attitudes with existing staff and 3) unfunded actions. She elaborated on the slides discussing the three types of funding in detail and answered questions on same.

Mr. Field said the funds RIPTA saves other agencies on their transit costs should be redirected back to RIPTA and a brief discussion ensued. Ms. Galbraith answered questions on matching funds, formula funds, discretionary funds and ARRA. She then discussed the slides detailing the three scenarios for full funding, mid level

funding, or low capital request and summarized the action steps associated with same and answered questions. She finished by saying RIPTA could also choose to take no action.

Mr. Flaherty disagreed with the concept of three scenarios and said the plan should present only the full cost for implementation and Mr. Durkee agreed. Mr. Deller said the vision plan should attempt to achieve everything and that financing is a separate Board discussion.

Mr. Therrien answered questions regarding connecting commuter rail to bus service and said at this point we can only connect with current service and there will be problems connecting from outlying areas. He and his staff are working on this issue.

Mr. Deller reminded the Committee to get their comments to staff by September 17th so the draft can be revised for the October meeting. Ms. Pettine suggested she invite members of the Finance Committee to the next meeting and Mr. Deller agreed with her suggestion. Mr. Field asked about inviting EDC to participate and it was decided that Planning staff would issue an invitation. Ms. Pettine suggested a courtesy meeting with Mike Lewis and Kevin Flynn to vet the plan and Mr. Deller agreed.

Mr. Deller asked for public comment and Randall Roads from the RPTA ridership committee was recognized. Mr. Roads expressed concern that there were no figures in the plan and suggested

developing a way to measure the efficiency of the dollars spent. He said we should try to focus on branding the plan as a new initiative.

There being no further business Mr. Deller adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen M. Mandly

Recording Secretary