

**RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF March 11, 2011 MEETING**

Board Members Present: Thomas Deller, Chair; and Edward Field.

Other Committee Members Present: John Flaherty; Kevin Flynn; and Michael Walker.

Absent: William Kennedy; Steve Durkee; Everett Stuart; Steve Devine; Christopher Long; and Steve Farrell.

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

Mr. Deller opened the meeting at 8:38 and asked if the Committee had an opportunity to review the minutes of the meeting held December 2, 2010. The members indicated they had and Mr. Field made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Deller began by welcoming new Committee member Michael Walker from the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation. He then asked Ms. Pettine to begin the discussion on the strategy for

the public release of the strategic plan.

Ms. Pettine began by noting that the strategic plan went before the full Board at the January meeting and was unanimously approved. Final edits received from the last of the public vetting were incorporated into the plan as well as minor suggestions made by the Board and the plan was sent out to the printers. Mr. Field reminded her about Ms. Lee's suggestion at the Board meeting that the executive summary document should be translated into Spanish. The professionally printed plan along with a cover letter from either the CEO or the Board of Directors will be disseminated to elected officials, stakeholders, and others involved in the process. The final plan is also prominently displayed on the RIPTA website and RIPTA will initiate soft PR by advertising on Twitter and Facebook.

Ms. Pettine said staff is considering a press release but are concerned about perception in such a difficult economic environment. In deference to the economic environment, John Flaherty suggested rollout should include a carefully crafted message that indicates we are aware of the economic constraints but the plan is a vision for the future. He suggested the rollout coincide with the April 6th Transportation Forum at the Convention Center.

Mr. Field suggested publicizing the plan using talk radio and having appropriate staff on hand to answer caller questions. Ms. Pettine commented that staff can deliver the message more strongly to

elected officials and stakeholders and maybe stage an interactive event using social media. The social media aspect will require more thought.

Mr. Deller commented that in putting forth the plan we need to address the question of “why now” and Mr. Flaherty said that while it’s important to reach out to legislators, it’s equally important to reach their constituents. He believes we should be more aggressive, not less.

Ms. Pettine then recapped the discussion and elaborated on the targeted audiences and potential strategies set forth in her 2-page hand out. Following her remarks the Committee members reiterated that a clear cover letter explaining “why now” must accompany the plan. Mr. Odimgbe opined that the explanation for “why now” is because of our funding crisis.

Mr. Deller noted that it was always the intent of the Committee to finalize the plan and then begin work on the funding. Regarding funding, Mr. Flaherty noted recently filed legislation for a Transportation Trust Fund. He said the intent of the bill was to fund both RIPTA and RIDOT. Mr. Deller proposed an editorial in the Providence Journal to run near the date of the April transportation forum to get the message out and build on the momentum.

Mr. Field asked new member Mike Walker about getting support for

RIPTA from the EDC. Mr. Walker said the EDC has always been a proponent of using transit to maintain and attract companies to RI, especially due to the lack of parking in downtown. Mr. Walker then talked at some length about EDC initiatives as they relate to transit. He said we need to craft a concise message that shows the progress made in developing intermodal transportation.

Mr. Deller referred back to his suggestion for an Op Ed piece and said mayors and town planners need to hear the message. Amy Pettine noted that we need some communications protocol.

John Flaherty said the CTC believes RIPTA is a well run organization. Mr. Deller agreed and said the last two articles in the newspaper failed to reflect this. A brief discussion of the Transportation Advisory Committee vis a vis CTC's initiatives ensued.

Next Mr. Odimgbe made a state of the agency address which he accompanied with a handout of his remarks. He is continuing to review all facets of operations at RIPTA and, to this end, the planning department has completed a review of our current run schedules to determine if we could reduce overtime. Additionally, we are looking to ensure we have enough employees in the bus operator pool to enable us to effectively support service on the street.

He said the executive team is currently reviewing available fleet management and maintenance software in an effort to reduce

expenses in these areas. He noted that Phase I of the re-engineering project is almost complete and some realignments have already been instituted. He said it is his hope that these moves will tremendously improve communications throughout the agency. He gave the committee a copy of the re-engineering plan.

Finally Mr. Odimgbe said he will hold the status quo as relates to staffing and he is confident we can support the strategic plan initiatives with our current staff levels.

Mr. Odimgbe then discussed his plans to improve on time performance levels and answered questions on same leading to a discussion of this initiative.

Next the committee discussed the Core Connector Study. Mr. Deller said it is imperative that we identify major employment centers and identify how to move the employees from point A to B. Amy Pettine elaborated on the area of the Core Connector plan that addresses this. Messrs Walker and Flynn pointed out that the State of Rhode Island is the biggest employer in the state and we need to work to get State employees to use public transportation. Currently the state provides no incentive to ride the bus and provides free parking and this must be addressed.

Moving on to agenda item 4 regarding short term implementation of the plan, Ms. Pettine said this area was covered earlier in the meeting

and she asked those present to review the written materials and contact her if they had further comments or suggestions.

A brief discussion of the new ATMS system being installed was held and ideas for more interactive technology were discussed. Ms. Pettine said she is working with Maureen Neira on ways to sell fare products over RIPTA's website, and other ways to better utilize the website and branding at RIPTA.

Next Ms. Pettine discussed agenda item 5 regarding the Committee and RIPTA's role in funding advocacy particularly the ideas presented at the Transportation Forum on April 6th and how the CTC legislation will affect RIPTA.

Mr. Deller said that at the April meeting the Committee will need to have a robust discussion of the results of the forum and also how to use tools like the website. He said RIPTA staff needs to work hard between now and April 6th to help promote the forum.

Mr. Deller asked for public comment and none was received nor was there any old business.

There being no further business Mr. Flynn made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Deller seconded. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen M. Mandly

Recording Secretary