

RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF October 3, 2013 MEETING

Board Members Present: Director Michael Lewis

Other Committee Members Present: John Flaherty, Mike Walker, Everett Stewart, Linsey Callaghan and Steve Devine

Absent: Steve Durkee, Maureen Martin, Paul Harrington

Also Present: Raymond Studley, Mark Therrien, Amy Pettine, Karen DiLauro, Ed Scott and members of the public whose names are on the meeting sign-in sheet.

Director Lewis called the meeting to order. First item on the agenda is the Strategic Plan Status Report and asks Mr. Therrien to speak.

Agenda Item 1: Strategic Plan Status Report

Mr. Therrien states that he has provided everyone with a status report which reflects items that have been completed, that are in motion and future actions to be done for each of the goals. He will discuss briefly key points under each goal.

Goal # 1: RIPTA serves as Rhode Island's Mobility Manager

RIPTA has been improving intermodal connections and wayfinding signage. New service is going to the two rail stations under the COA.

The 3-bike rack on the bus may not happen because it makes turning radius too difficult. A current bike rack on a bus extends approximately 5 feet already.

Goal # 2: Increase Ridership by Making Transit More Convenient, Attractive and Easy to Use.

Bus stop improvements are continuing; one Trans Art Shelter will be put in East Greenwich and one at the Warwick Mall. Mr. Flaherty recalls a conversation that at each bus stop there would be identifiers that would instruct the riders of other routes that stop at the same stop and would that still be happening. Mr. Therrien responds that yes, however they are focusing on the COA Changes and the Bus Stop Removal currently and that will be coming along later.

Under Accessible Information RIPTA has issued information in Spanish and other formats. The web page has been updated and improved.

Mr. Therrien states that the process of bus stops removals have been sped up. Currently, 200 bus stops have already been removed and the goal is approximately 1000. Removing bus stops causes a lot of angst from everyone. Mr. Studley states that Mr. Almonte put together a dedicated plan, policy and process in regards to how and why these decisions were made regarding the bus stops. Director Lewis adds that being able to articulate the benefit of removing a stop is important and removing the stops will increase efficiency in the system.

Next week there will be a public meeting to discuss additional service in Woonsocket.

They believe the Westerly ridership increase is due to the Try Transit Program. A conversation is had regarding that it should become an express ride in the future.

Mr. Therrien states that bus stop announcements are being made on the buses although it is still in the testing phase. Hoping it will be fully functioning in January.

Goal # 3: Grow Our Transit Network to Expand Mobility and Support Economic Growth

Mr. Therrien states that they are trying to complete the implementation of changes from the COA within one year. Under the COA, RIPTA changed 24 routes in September. Due to the changes coming with Kennedy Plaza all the COA changes must be complete in and or around the changes happening at Kennedy Plaza.

R-Line implementation has been delayed until June 2014. There will be specialized branding on the buses for the R-Line.

Ms. Pettine states that also on the R-Line they are piloting Ticket Vending Machines which will create new fare products one of which would be reloadable fare product card that you can reload like a Charlie card.

Mr. Therrien states that transit hubs are taking up a lot of time. Pawtucket has re-thought everything they want and they are using a challenge grant to do a whole process of rethinking downtown Pawtucket. There may not be a hub for RIPTA. There is not a lot of draw to have a hub in downtown Pawtucket. Demographics show that there should be more ridership than there is in downtown Pawtucket. Multiple analysis of that area shows the same thing.

The R-Line is an express enhanced service that would run from Pawtucket into downtown Providence and it intersects at the Providence train station. Ms. Pettine states that serving rail with comparable bus routes allows the people the opportunity to ride either. Mr. Therrien states that this is not a bad thing to do because it will help with overloading and off peak riding. Mr. Therrien states that this line is one of the top two corridors of people using transit.

Mr. Rose states that he thinks research should be done as to why the ridership is not there in Pawtucket seeing how it has a very dense population. Mr. Therrien responds that a lot of research has been done and it is hard to find locations within Pawtucket that people want to go. Most people travel in and out of the city.

Mr. Studley adds that once the Pawtucket-Attleboro issue gets resolved RIPTA should market the fact that it will go directly to the Train Station.

Goal # 4: Realize the Environmental, Economic and Quality of Life Benefits of Transit

Ms. Pettine states that goal of number four is to encourage public private partnerships and sustainable communities. The statewide planning HUD challenge grant is an example of our state's efforts to pursue these types of goals. RIPTA is also looking at getting more partnerships to provide local matches on various capital projects. For example, RIPTA is doing a million dollar upgrade to the bus tunnel and both RISD and Brown have shown interest to partner on this project. RIPTA is trying to be creative in getting private partners to step up. Ms. Pettine put Transit Oriented Development (TOD) project under future actions because RIPTA currently does not have anything under this area. Warwick is working on TOD and the streetcar would be about TOD.

In regards to sustainable communities, John Flaherty sat in on the Growth Center meeting of Northern Rhode Island last night and it was about economic assets of which the highways, waters, and bike paths were all mentioned however there was no mention of use of transit. It was talked about generally but not integrated into where growth should continue, redevelopment occur or new development take place and it was not part of the discussion last night. This group was part of Kevin Flynn's sustainable community grant and they are doing a growth center component to it where looking at where growth in each community does occur or should occur in the future and come up with policy decisions about that before they are done. He thinks transportation should not be over looked. Ms. Pettine states that early on in the growth center conversations early meetings push back on including transit as a requirement for a growth center designation and Ms. Pettine agrees with that because then the ownership would be on RIPTA to serve a lot of places.

Goal # 5: Identify a Sustainable Funding Strategy

Ms. Pettine states these action items are a little different than the others. They are looking internally for efficiency and this has been a huge focus since Mr. Studley has been here.

Mr. Rose comments about a system app that is a key marketing tool. In transit system it shows existing route structure and dashes for projected routes which indicates future expansion and thinks it should be put out regularly. It should show what RIPTA would be able to do if the funding was available. Currently, all people see is the current structure and if their reaction is it doesn't work maybe if they could see what the system could be with funding they would have a better outtake on the transit system as a whole.

Director Lewis states that he has seen this more with a commuter rail or subway where this is a plan with a targeted date verses bus routes that are more operational changes. This would be an organizational decision because RIPTA would not want to tell the public an expectation without the funding or a project to back it up. Mr. Rose doesn't

agree with this and thinks the dash lines indicating this could happen if funding available is important and Director Lewis agrees if it is an actual planned service or expansion.

Ms. Pettine agrees that would be needed in a document where putting together cost and impact, however thinks it may be more confusing for the riders. She doesn't think the true picture would be had because it is not new routes rather it is frequency.

Ms. Callaghan states in regards to item two under asset replacement plan through Map 21 it requires transit asset management plan. She has been meeting regularly with DOT and talking about coordination and status of that. She understands no official ruling has been made, but wanted to make sure it is on RIPTA's radar.

Agenda Item 2: COA and Bus Stop Alignment Update

Everything under this agenda item was covered previously.

Agenda Item 3: FY 14 Priorities

Mr. Therrien states that One Solution will be the new operating software at RIPTA mostly funded by a FTA grant for asset management and it focuses on assets, identifying them and controlling them.

Ms. Pettine states the FY 14 priorities are the COA and R-Line implementation, Kennedy Plaza changes, Ride Changes in the Paratransit program, One Solution which is upgrading all internal communications, ATMS rolling out and Security initiatives.

Director Lewis states there are scheduled public meetings regarding the Northeast Corridor and one is scheduled for Providence. It is to identify a tiered approach of what the Northeast corridor will do in the future and what investment requirements should be made. The implications for Rhode Island are along the lines of does RI continue to use the existing corridor. This highlights the need to invest in the state of repair with the existing corridor and the importance of connecting all transit systems in the future.

Agenda Item 4: Future of the Committee

Ms. Pettine states that RIPTA is four years into the Strategic Plan and they are trying to determine what would be the best use of everyone's time; should the group focus on different things and where does this committee go from here.

Director Lewis states that committees are very difficult to end. However, he thinks that putting the committee on hiatus is a good idea and there is nothing that prevents the committee from meeting anytime that is needed.

Discussion regarding where the committee should go from here is had and the consensus is that the group can go on hiatus. Smaller informal groups could meet to keep all departments in the loop of what is going on bi-monthly is a good idea.

Agenda Item 5: Public Comment

Mr. Rose from RIPTA Riders thinks that the committee is valuable and it is important to maintain the vision for the growth of the system, whether there is funding or not. In the original plan of the strategic Planning Committee was to look towards the future and the growth of RIPTA. If the funding is low level like it is now then that means focus needs to be on productivity and demand, however he feels strongly that a vision needs to be had if the funding becomes available. He would like to see the committee not disband.

Agenda Item 6: Old Business

This has been covered already in previous agenda items.

Agenda Item 7: Adjournment

With no further business Director Lewis adjourned the meeting.