

Rapid Transit & Bus Committee

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Thursday, May 14, 2026

- A. Call to Order:** Lenard Diggins (Arlington) called the meeting to order over Zoom at 10:04 AM.
- B. Accessibility and Paratransit Update (The RIDE):** Chris Jurek, MBTA Interim Director of Paratransit Services joined to brief the committee on The RIDE and recent TRAC contract.
- a David Koses (Newton) thanked C. Jurek for the presentation and asked for further clarification on the 20-minute buffer time. C. Jurek answered that this is primarily a federal standard meant to be comparable to the fixed route travel time. The RIDE finds that 70% of trips are completed within half of the maximum on-board time and 90% are completed within 75% of the max time. From this perspective the T is confident that it is able to achieve good trip sharing and pooling service while not exceeding the maximum. D. Koses also asked if it is common for drivers' schedules to regularly change throughout the day. C. Jurek answered that there is a 25 – 30% cancellation rate of trips. In August, the MBTA launched a transportation management software system which helps the MBTA run real time scheduling and dynamic re-optimization. The drivers only see their next three activities to help them to feel a little more in control.

- Finally, D. Koses asked about ridership trends. C. Jurek answered that there has been consistent growth since the pandemic and The RIDE sees about 8% YOY growth. Last year, The RIDE saw full pandemic recovery, however in 2025, the greater share of the trips was taken through RIDE Flex.
- b Steve Olanoff (Westwood) asked if the displayed chart of costs included both vehicle procurement and maintenance costs. C. Jurek answered that it included only maintenance costs. Vehicle purchasing is covered in the capital budget. The wheelchair equipped vans are about \$110,00 per vehicle. The rest of the fleet are sedans which cost around \$50,000. The fleet value is between \$30 and \$50 million.
 - c Hanna Switekowski (Deputy Director) asked about the Uber and Lyft partnerships with The RIDE. C. Jurek explained that in 2020 the pilot with Uber and Lyft became an official program to create the RIDE Flex program. In February, he went to the Board of Directors to get approval for a new round of contracts for the program.
 - d Alan Castaline (Brockton) asked if the authority owns every vehicle that is used to operate basic RIDE service. C. Jurek answered that they do.
 - e L. Diggins asked H. Switekowski to elaborate on any issues regarding the RIDE that have surfaced during community visits. H. Switekowski answered that common considerations are wait times, dropped trips, and further coordination with senior center transportation providers. L.

- Diggins also asked C. Jurek if zone transfers are still in practice. C. Jurek answered that in 2020, the zone system was eliminated and now providers can go anywhere in the service district. L. Diggins asked what determines how a rider's trips are capped on the Flex program. C. Jurek answered that it is dependent on a rider's usage of The RIDE in the last 6 months. L. Diggins asked if the MBTA has data on the demographic profile of the user base. C. Jurek answered that they capture the minimum amount of personal data possible to make eligibility determinations, however they do know that the vast majority of the user base is 65+ and 70% of users are enrolled in the senior reduced fare program. L. Diggins asked if any raw data that The RIDE has about their ridership base could be made available to the committee and C. Jurek said he could do so.
- f S. Olanoff asked about the relationship between The RIDE and municipal Councils on Aging. C. Jurek answered that there is a staff member who makes regular visits to community events and COAs to provide outreach with residents about the process of using The RIDE and RIDE Flex. S. Olanoff also asked if The RIDE connects with communities that have local shuttle bus services to coordinate their shared demand. C. Jurek answered that this is a good question and one that the MBTA hopes to explore in the future to realize further efficiencies in the program at a larger scale. There are areas with duplicative services and areas with gaps across the system. There are a number of communities that are interested in having RIDE

- service extended to them and the MBTA is currently working on extending service to North Reading after a recent appropriations bills provision.
- g H. Switekowski asked about The RIDE's transfer points with RTAs and if there will eventually be a time when trips can be continuous across multiple service districts. C. Jurek answered that The RIDE has official transfer points with MetroWest RTA and BAT where the agencies will coordinate, however The RIDE is not looking to expand into any other service districts right now.
- h L. Diggins asked if there are any trends in late trips. C. Jurek answered that The RIDE has seen better On-Time-Performance with the new schedule management software, however the most delays still come from afternoon peak traffic.
- i Todd Blake (Medford) asked if The RIDE will consider shifting to more Flex trips to reduce costs and be more responsive with on demand and possibly less cancellations. C. Jurek answered that customers can opt into having their trip shifted to a Flex trip if TRAC determines that will provide the best service. The schedule software allows The RIDE to shift trips to maximize efficiency.
- j A. Castaline asked who the vendor was for the new software. C. Jurek answered that it is Spare Labs.
- k H. Switekowski thanked C. Jurek for joining the committee.

- C. Minutes:** L. Diggins requested a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2026 meeting. S. Olanoff motioned to approve and A. Castaline seconded with a correction to change a reference to the D to the B line. The motion passed unanimously.
- D. Old Business/New Business:** No additional business to discuss.
- E. Next Meeting Dates:** June 2, 2026 at 10:00 AM.
- F. Adjourn:** L. Diggins closed the meeting at 10:58 AM.

Attendees:

Committee:

Arlington
Brockton
Everett
Medford
Newton
Quincy
Westwood

Len Diggins
Alan Castaline
Jay Monty
Todd Blake
David Koses
Frank Tramontozzi
Steve Olanoff



MBTA Advisory Board Staff:

Hanna Switekowski

Isabella MacKinnon

Deputy Director

Budget & Policy Analyst