



Department of Administration
Division of Statewide Planning
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TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Draft Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2025 @ 5:30PM

RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street, 3rd Floor - Room 300
Providence, RI

1. Call to Order

- John Flaherty, Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

Members Present

Mr. John Flaherty (Chair)	Grow Smart RI
Mr. Alex Berardo (Vice Chair)	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Mr. Mason Perrone (Secretary)	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Ms. Pamela Cotter	RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Carmen Diaz-Jusino	RI Foundation
Ms. Bari Freeman	Bike Newport
Ms. Ishaa Gadkari	RI Department of Health
Mr. Philip Hervey	Town of Barrington
Mr. Derek Hug	ACEC of Rhode Island
Ms. Sarah Ingle	RI Public Transit Authority
Ms. Jessica Lance	Providence - Department of Planning and Development
Ms. Alicia Lehrer	Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
Ms. Mary Maguire	AAA Northeast
Mr. James Moran	City of East Providence
Ms. Karen Slattery	RI Department of Environmental Management
Mr. Michael Walker	Commerce RI
Mr. Jeffrey Wiggin for Ms. Lori Caron Silveira	Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority
Ms. Denyse Wilhelm	Governor's Commission of Disabilities

Members Absent

Ms. Karen Capaldi	Equality Construction Works
Mr. Ernest Carlucci	Construction Industries of Rhode Island
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public Member
Mr. Bruce Iannuccillo	RP Iannuccillo Construction
Mr. Jack Madden	Public Member
Mr. Nikolas Persson	Rhode Island Airport Corporation
Ms. Chelsea Siefert	Quonset Development Corporation
Ms. Dinalyn Spears	Narragansett Indian Tribe

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Staff Present:

Division of Statewide Planning

Benny Bergantino, Principal Planner

Meredith Brady, Associate Director

Lori Cassin, Chief Implementation Aide

Roberto Echevarria, Principal Planner

Asher Eskind, Principal Planner

2. Chair's Report

- Mr. Flaherty referenced Bari Freeman's question from the August 7th meeting, asking about the process of how projects get shifted around or amended on the STIP, especially the Roady Express project. Ms. Cotter said she needed to apologize, what she said at the last meeting was incorrect. It is in the current STIP as project 7111 and they are removing it in the Draft STIP because the money changed in the August redistribution. Ms. Freeman questioned how the change was made. Ms. Cotter replied administratively. Ms. Freeman said her concerns will not be addressed in this STIP, but she wants it to remain a priority for this group to understand and receive the answers about the process. She said when it comes to how changes are made, documented, reported, her understanding from reading the Memorandum of Agreement related to the STIP is that no new project and no removal of a project can be made without an amendment. It can't be administrative. She doesn't know what we can do about it now, but she knows that we need to understand this going forward. Ms. Freeman said the same applies to the other issues they raised related to Complete Streets and the report that needs to be made. If a project does not address all road users, it must state why and it has to meet the criteria for not moving forward. It is the law. She said these two things combined with the lack of adequate adherence to the Climate Act laws, is the reason she is not going to be supporting the STIP. She feels that these are really significant issues that have to be addressed in our process, and she looks forward to it being addressed in future meetings. What is the process? How are the reports made? How is it documented if something does not adhere to the complete streets? And what decisions are being made administratively? Ms. Freeman said in the MOU from 2022 for the STIP the line that says new project or remove all aspects of a project related to STIP revisions there is nothing noted under Administrative. Mr. Perrone said he needs to clarify something that is getting lost in the translation, he believes the project is still in the current STIP, it was not removed administratively. The process of the rewrite that is going on now is when the project will be removed. We are not using the MOU process to remove the project administratively. The project was removed by way of the rewrite process.
- Ms. Wilhelm said a lot of the STIP refers to RIDOT's ADA Transition Plan, which was up to 2016. She said what is unclear is how do we track what was completed for projects from the original, from the 2016 to 2025? She tried to do an analysis, but it did not yield any information on what was completed. She feels as a committee we should understand what was completed, what was carried over and why. And again, how were those decisions made? Because this is federal law, and these projects keep getting pushed out. She knows the state budget allowance is peanuts and it has to be incorporated into either more grants, more funds, or bundled into projects, which RIDOT tries to do and they attempt to get these things done, but she feels the committee really needs to understand that process with these Safe Streets. Plans. There are all these projects and wish lists, but everything just keeps them pushed out. Ms. Wilhelm said the quick analysis she did, most of projects in this current STIP are in the out years and there's no funding attached to them. She requests that we as a committee have more information about things are decided and why things are done, why things are not done separate and apart from the STIP.

- Mr. Flaherty said he wanted to pick up on the question that was asked about Complete Streets not that it relates not so much to the STIP, but to a state law. He said the law requires that when a road is being reconstructed, repaved and so forth, that there must be consideration of including Complete Streets principles. If it's determined that it doesn't make sense that there has to be an explanation filed as to why. So, from a transparency standpoint, where would we find that information? Where would the explanation be filed for any roads that were determined to not warrant those treatments? Ms. Cotter responded she does not know if RIDOT has anything like that right now. Mr. Flaherty said maybe the right form to ask these questions would be when we are going through the reauthorization process because that is part of the federal government's responsibility to make sure that we are following federal law. Ms. Freeman questioned if it is a state law why we would have to wait. Why not correct it now? Mr. Flaherty answered it should but if it is still not corrected by the time that reauthorization happens, that is the forum to raise it. Mr. Hug said as a consultant they have to follow RIDOT's Complete Street procedures and document the decision so RIDOT should have that information on file.

Note: Michael Walker joined the meeting @5:35PM.

3. Public Comment

- Mr. Barry Schiller said he was speaking on behalf of Rhode Island transit riders. He said today the RIPTA, Board of Directors voted to approve service cuts on about 45 different bus lines, most of the bus lines. In his opinion, this has the potential for a downwards spiral of transit service because it is going to lose riders. So, there is less people and there is less support for it. If there are less riders and there is always a line that is the least used, that will be the next thing to cut and the whole downward spiral begins. He said if you don't want to see the transit system basically unravel and give up on it as a tool for addressing climate and the environment and the economy and steering land use better and serving denser housing, then we got to do something short term. He understands that you have to balance the budget subject to the condition that the governor has two weeks to come up with a plan to come up with about \$5,000,000. The Governor can still stop this, so he has two things to suggest to the TAC: 1.) Consider passing a resolution asking the Statewide Planning Program to investigate or to form a committee including RIPTA, RIDOT, Statewide Planning, maybe a representative from the TAC to look at federal funding flexibility options. 2.) Call the Governor's Office, he said he refuses to believe Governor McKee wants to hurt the transit riders, and that he has giving up on transit being a tool for the environment, climate, economy, keeping our energy dollars in the state. He thinks the governor has been misadvised. Mr. Schiller said as members of the TAC you have clout, so call the Governor before the deadline at the end of September. He said we know that there is flexibility in funding because they found it for Washington Bridge and the ferry service.
- Ms. Emily Koo, Acadia Center said she wanted to elevate the group comments that Acadia Center and a number of other organizations submitted in regards to the STIP and highlight the room for improvement and growth in regards to the project prioritization process, which inform how STIP projects are prioritized in their timeline and in their budget. Ms. Koo said you find this be critical to transparency and accountability and to understanding how the Division, RIDOT and others are making decisions on transportation projects. What selection criteria are being used to inform this. They would encourage a more robust data-driven process that actually informs all projects of the STIP. She said Barry's comments earlier really resonated with her and she thinks kind of feeds into the erosion of trust over time because there are administrative changes that occur without the public process and without an understanding of the kind of objective criteria that are being weighed by decision makers to evaluate how billions of dollars are being allocated and for what purposes. She wants to highlight their continued disappointment that carbon emissions reduction potential did not and has not informed the 2026 STIP. She would encourage the TAC to continue to encourage more transparency and public process around emissions analysis and the setting of transportation sector targets, not just as part of the climate strategy, but as an important sub sector process. She also wanted to flag, that RIDOT requested the same amount of funds for what seemed like the same work or a continuation of the work. And she feels that it's very important that the public is aware

of what the work is advancing in order to form an opinion about how it could be continued and that there be some kind of engagement in relation to transportation emissions.

- Mr. Richard Stang, Conservation Law Foundation said he strongly would ask that you do not approve this Draft STIP. He said achieving the requirements and mandates of the Act on Climate has got to be heavily weighted when setting transportation project prioritization strategies. The STIP does not provide guidance or any indication of the metrics by which Rhode Island prioritizes and selects projects for federal funding. There is no clarity around how goals and objectives of the STIP, the LRTP, the local communities, other stakeholders are balanced. Statewide Planning should be obligated to publicize details about specific selection criteria used to make decisions on transportation projects, as well as how much weight each criteria was given. As Emily pointed out, we are disappointed that there is absolutely no consideration about carbon reduction potential, which is funny because as part of EC4's fiscal year 2025 spending plan, they approved \$100,000 to RIDOT to quantify the emissions impacts of projects included in the STIP and the LRTP. However, as of June 2025 RIDOT has not utilized any of that \$100,000. Moreover, RIDOT is now requesting another 100,000 from EC4. This new funding will allow RIDOT to develop credible and defensible estimates of the GHG impacts of the state Transportation Improvement Program as a whole and of individual major projects in the STIP. So again, well, if that's the case, why is they specifically exclude any mention of this of the impacts in the STIP? With regard to Statewide Planning's response to that criticism, there was no response at all. It was completely nonresponsive. It's interesting because Conservation Law Foundation also put almost identical responses to Statewide Planning in regard to the LRTP. And in that case, we did get a response that says it is true that LRTP does not provide any guidance on point waiting for RIDOT. Rather, Statewide Planning does go through a separate process of setting points and waiting on our STIP solicitation criteria as part of the STIP process that we work on in collaboration with RIDOT. RIDOT also runs a parallel process to draft their portion of the STIP, but it is outside the scope of this LRTP to guide that RIDOT process. Again, if they've used this process, they didn't indicate what it is in STIP as what was used or what the criteria was that they had regarding their response on greenhouse gas reduction goals. Statewide Planning stated the emission reduction analysis is a separate process from the STIP. RIDOT is working with the EC4 to complete the 2025 Climate Action Strategies. Modelling continues and at this time all calculations are in draft format. With respect to Statewide Planning response on the LRTP concerning greenhouse gas reduction goals they said there's definitely more to be done to identify and implement strategies to ensure compliance with Act on Climate and those efforts are ongoing. This is completely nonresponsive. He would like to offer an alternative when you take a look at the state of Colorado, back in 2021, the Transportation Commission of Colorado approved a nation leading rule that helped steer transportation planning towards investments that help the state meet its climate change goals. Under the new rule, the Transportation Commission and five MPOS have to estimate total greenhouse gas emissions expected from the transportation projects in their plans and ensure that their approved plans do not exceed greenhouse gas reduction amounts specified for each region. They can meet the required reduction levels either by reprioritizing projects or investing in additional measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, also known as mitigations. The second point he wants to bring up and there were many other points, but time not allowing him to get into all those other points. We had a specific ask within our comments to the STIP that a HOV lane be added to the Washington Bridge. Statewide Planning's response from a STIP perspective was the design plan submitted by the awarded contractor do not include accommodations for an HOV lane as it pertains to the Washington Bridge. Again, I asked the same question when I was providing comments on the LRTP. The response there was the Washington Bridge design that was selected as the best value choice does not have an HOV lane. One question I've been asking is what public department process went into or goes into at all that very important project, a rebuilding Washington Bridge. Did anyone even ask any of the bidders to design an HOV lane on that? Who know? Again, there is other monies that can be found to potential add to that program as Barry just pointed out that the state came up with extra money with respect to the problem with Washington Bridge when they put extra money into the eastbound lane and the ferry service. So again, I just respectfully ask that this committee not approve this step.

4. August 7, 2025 Meeting Minutes – for Action

- **Ms. Cotter made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the August 7, 2025 meeting. Ms. Lehrer seconded. Motion carries approved unanimously. Mr. Walker, Mr. Hug, Ms. Gadkari and Ms. Slattery abstained.**

5. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) FFY 2026-2035 – for Action

- Mason Perrone provided an overview of the Final Draft STIP FFY 2026 – 2035 Program and financial analysis, and the advances made in the STIP rewrite. It was prepared using the new process of the Electronic STIP by the RIDSP Transportation Team, in cooperation with RIDOT and RIPTA. The STIP presents a 10-year program for transportation projects from FFY2026 to 2035, the first four years of which (FFY 2026-2029) are fiscally constrained. Projects resulting from solicitation and public comments were highlighted such as America's Cup/Memorial Boulevard Resiliency and Multi Modal Improvements - Newport, Trinity Square Intersection Improvement – Providence, and Kingston Station Bus Hub – South Kingstown. Since the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) last met on August 7, 2025 to discuss the Public Comment Report on the Draft FFY 2026-2035 STIP, final adjustments have been made to the FFY 2026-2035 STIP to address substantive comments received during the public comment period. Rhode Island needs to pass this STIP to access any and all federal transportation funds. Without a STIP no projects can advance in Rhode Island, as the current FFY 2022-2031 STIP expires on September 30, 2025. The FFY 2026-2035 STIP as presented serves as a baseline STIP, as Amendments can be made anytime.
- Questions and Comments from the TAC:
 - Mr. Flaherty congratulated and thanked staff for their great work on such a huge undertaking that happens every four years. He said this year in particular has been especially challenging transitioning to the ESTIP, aligning to a new federal administration, and that the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that they usually draw off will not be completed until after the STIP is approved.
 - Ms. Freeman questioned if there was any step or public process on the changes made to the STIP. Mr. Perrone responded that the public process was the public comment period. A lot of the changes made are either in correlation with the comments that came in or due to funding.
- **Mr. Flaherty said he would entertain a motion to send an affirmative recommendation to the State Planning Council on the adoption of the Draft STIP. Mr. Walker motioned to include the amendments that were outlined tonight and any subsequent omissions or corrections that may be discovered prior to going to the State Planning Council that are not material in fact. Mr. Hervey seconded.**
- Discussion:
 - Mr. Flaherty said he will not vote to support the STIP. He stated there were a lot of reason from the public comment report, but he would highlight for the record some of the points made by the Attorney General since that office would defend the State in lawsuits brought against the Act of Climate.
 - As currently drafted the STIP fails to take a forward-looking approach to achieving the state's long term goals and falls far short of meaningfully furthering compliance with the Act on Climate. Its deficiencies should be addressed in the next iteration through a series of recommendations that the Attorney General makes.
 - Rhode Island's transportation sector is not currently positioned to meet the state's legally binding 2040 and 2050 mandates in the Act on Climate. It is imperative that the final STIP identified transportation projects and programs that can be implemented within the next 10 years to reduce Rhode Island's emissions in the near and long term with the game of achieving compliance with the Act on Climate.
 - The Draft STIP should incorporate a greater number of projects that meaningfully reduce emissions and vehicle miles travelled.

- The Draft STIP fails to take concrete and meaningful steps to invest in the reduction of vehicle miles travelled and transportation emissions.
- The Draft STIP should aim to identify, means for fully funding regionally significant projects that promote public transportation and alternative modes of transit.
- Ms. Ingle said it was a great plan and a great process that she was involved in as RIPTA's representative. As a 30-year city and regional planner, Rhode Island resident and mother she would love to see complete streets, ADA accessibility, climate related improvements and transit advancing more rapidly. She said she would not stand in the way of the plan and vote no, but she wish there was a way the state could move the bar a little quicker.
- Ms. Wilhelm said she would vote in favor, but she was extremely concerned again, that the state match for ADA Compliance is only \$1,000,000., which is nothing. The more creative we can be to make sure the project we are doing meet federal and state laws in spirit as well as getting the work done. She said these projects continue to only be funded when a complaint by a citizen is filed with Federal Highway, the State, and with our office as well. If the complaint is for a state road, it must go to RIDOT. She knows they are working with a lot of constraints, but we must do better in this plan to make all these projects a reality and not just replaceable moving out year after year after year when we know that money was taken from all of these projects to fund the bridge. So, we are constantly in a state of reaction not in a state of actually moving forward.
- Ms. Freeman stated it was important to be on the record that she would vote no due to the lack of carbon emissions reduction information in the STIP and progress in that area.
- Mr. Hug said he will support the plan but acknowledges all the shortcomings that have been brought up here and he does not disagree with any of them. From his perspective there is a lack of commitment at the highest levels of our government, both federal and state for the initiatives that have been discussed. And that is reflected in funding availabilities, and what the funds can be used for and the types of projects that get nominated. What we are dealing with is a process. Were there projects that went to great lengths to meet those climate goals that were not selected and are not included in the plan or could have been put in the front years and not the back years? Mr. Hug said there is a general lack of vision and lack of commitment with the state that is the bigger problem rather than the process. Since there is no alternative right now, he will vote to approve it. He said we talked about Complete Streets earlier and RIDOT has a Complete Streets mandate that is put out as a directive to all their designers, but in his experience, there is not a lot follow up by RIDOT technical staff or project managers who shepherd these projects through the system. If there was, there would be real commitment. He thinks the list of projects in the STIP would have better align with the concerns that the Committee has.

• **Mr. Flaherty called for a roll call vote:**

Ms. Karen Slattery	Yes
Mr. Jeffrey Wiggin	Yes
Mr. Philip Hervey	Yes
Ms. Bari Freeman	No
Mr. Alex Berardo	Yes
Ms. Carmen Diaz-Jusino	Yes
Ms. Ishaa Gadkari	Yes
Ms. Pamela Cotter	Yes
Mr. Michael Walker	Yes
Ms. Denyse Wilhelm	Yes
Ms. Alicia Lehrer	No
Mr. John Flaherty	No
Ms. Jessica Lance	Yes
Mr. James Moran	Yes
Ms. Mary Maguire	Yes

Mr. Derek Hug	Yes
Ms. Sarah Ingle	Yes
Mr. Mason Perrone	Yes

- **Committee voted 15 – Yes to 3 – No to approve motion to make a recommendation to the State Planning Council to adopt the FFY 2026-2035 STIP and the findings for the STIP to be in accordance with the Clean Air Act and Transportation Conformity rule requirements for the 1997 Ozone NAAQS standards at their September 11, 2025, meeting.**

6. Moving Forward RI 2050 Update – Final Draft for Public Comment – for Information

- Liza Farr provided an overview of the 2050 Rhode Island Long-Range Transportation Plan and Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Moving Forward RI 2050, (Plan) is a limited update to Moving Forward RI 2040, in accordance with federal law (49 USC 5303 and 5304) and the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations 23 CFR 450; 23 USC 134 and 135. This plan is required to be updated every five years, and the vision integrates strategic direction of supporting modal plans that are updated at varying intervals. Work on this limited update began last fall with the goal of having the plan approved by December 2025. She updated the Committee on the first public comment period and changes made to the draft plan in response to public comments, including an overview of the comment period activities, a summary of the major themes of the comments, and highlights of the changes made to the plan. Liza Farr also summarized the final public comment period and public notice information, as well as provided a summary on any comments received by this halfway point of the comment period.
- Questions and Comments from the TAC:
 - Mr. Flaherty questioned the final timeline for adoption of the LRTP. Ms. Farr responded the final LRTP along with the final public comment report will be presented together to the TAC at the September meeting for recommendation for approval. The State Planning Council then would hear that in October. We know that is well in advance of December, but because it is a state guide plan element, it needs the governor's signature and then also get sent on to the Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations for their review as well, all before our December deadline.
 - Mr. Flaherty questioned if the STIP that was just approved was based on the existing LRTP and not this rewrite, can the STIP be amended several times a year to align with the new LRTP? Mr. Perrone responded yes as many times as needed.
 - Ms. Lehrer said she appreciates the LRTP and thinks it is inspiring but is disappointed that when making decisions for the STIP, the LRTP is not part of the decision. She thinks the top three elements should be: Is this part of the Long Range Transportation Plan? Does it refer to Act on Climate? Does it give multimodal transportation? If we are going to even bother to create the plan and approve it, there has to be a way that we are saying as a state, we're putting our money where our mouth is and setting our priorities. We have to say that we are going to fund what our priorities are.

7. Assistant Chief's Staff Report – for Information

- Mr. Perrone waived the staff report since the committee met three weeks ago.

8. Public Comment

- Ms. Freeman questioned how the Committee could consider a resolution such as Barry Schiller's suggestion to communicate to the Governor a request to potentially find funds for RIPTA. Mr. Flaherty said he thinks the Committee has done it in the past without necessarily having a vote, through a subcommittee or a small working group, that worked on the internal criteria. Ms. Brady said if you are going to vote on it, it would need to be on the agenda, but you could direct staff to work with a subset of members to develop a statement that you wanted to be an actual resolution to go on the next agenda. Ms. Ingle said the timing probably doesn't work if the next meeting is in late September, it is too late to make a difference in terms of

the service changes going forward. Mr. Flaherty informed the Committee that the proposed cuts were approved by the RIPTA Board today, August 28th and he believes the implementation date is late September. It was decided that staff would look into the matter and provide information so members could make an informed decision and send letter themselves.

9. Announcements

- Mr. Moran suggested getting on the bike path to see “Mrs. Skipper” the new troll sculpture located at Kettle Point, East Providence.

10. Adjourn

- **Mr. Moran made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Lance seconded. Motion carries approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:07PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Mason Perrone
Secretary