

# Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plan

March 2023

# **Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

**Prepared for**

**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council’s mission is “Promoting independence through enhanced statewide mobility, while fostering collaboration between public, private, and non-profit sector partners by gathering and sharing information, supporting transportation initiatives, and advocating for positive change.” The vision is “Accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders.”

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Federal transit law requires that projects selected for funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan" (Coordinated Plan), and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public" utilizing transportation services. Coordinated plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting these needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.<sup>2</sup>

The Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan Update was developed in 2022 and adopted in 2023 by the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council. Established by the RI General Assembly in 2017, the Coordinating Council's role is to better integrate transportation programs that support individuals in need of specialized transportation assistance.

A consultant team led by Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates prepared the plan under contract to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), the sole public transportation authority within Rhode Island. RIPTA is also the designated recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding and administers FTA's Section 5310 program. The RI General Assembly has designated RIPTA as the statewide mobility manager, and in that capacity RIPTA also provides staff support to the Coordinating Council and plays a lead role in updating the Coordinated Plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Transit Administration, Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans webpage (<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/coordinated-public-transit-human-services-transportation-plans>)

## PRIOR COORDINATED PLANS

RIPTA has led preparation of required Coordinated Plans approximately every five years in accordance with federal requirements since 2008. The 2013 Plan recommended five strategies to improve transportation coordination:

1. Maintain existing public transportation services and identify sustainable funding.
2. Use resources more efficiently.
3. Provide more transportation options.
4. Improve accessibility, ease of use and customer service.
5. Increase collaboration.

The 2018 Coordinated Plan included the elements required by FTA (inventory of services, demographic analysis, assessment of needs, and strategy development). The plan, which included best practices research, recommended strategies that grew out of a robust public engagement process. The two primary recommendations were to develop state and local coordinating councils and create a statewide one-call/one-click system. Specific coordination strategies included:

- Mobility management
- Travel training
- Joint planning and grant applications
- Joint procurement
- Shared expertise and training
- Shared facilities
- Vehicle sharing

## STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED OR ADVANCED SINCE LAST PLAN

Rhode Island has implemented or is advancing several initiatives to improve transportation options for vulnerable populations, including several discussed elsewhere in this Plan:

- Establishment of the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council to improve interagency collaboration (see above and Chapter 2)
- New fixed-route bus services (see Chapter 3)
- On-demand Flex service pilot (see Chapter 3)
- Investment in fare payment technology (Wave) and fare capping (see Chapter 3)

Other initiatives include:

- One-Call/One-Click resource study to improve access to transportation information and services (completed in 2021)

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- Federal funding to purchase lift-equipped passenger vans for use by the municipalities of Cumberland, Foster, Pawtucket, and Westerly and the Cranston-based Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP) (received in 2022)
- Receipt of federal Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) funds for RIPTA to develop a travel training network (received in 2022)
- Receipt of transportation planning and implementation grants through the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)<sup>3</sup> for Age-Friendly RI and RIPTA to jointly investigate, plan, and implement a vehicle sharing pilot program (received in 2022)

## APPROACH TO CURRENT PLAN

Plan development involved coordination with the Coordinating Council, RIPTA's Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC), and other stakeholders, including elected officials, government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the public. In addition to meetings with the Coordinating Council and ATAC, two rounds of outreach were organized into listening sessions to seek input on needs and ideas, and solicit feedback on strategies, including four virtual listening sessions (April 25, 27, 28 and May 4, 2022) and two virtual strategy sessions (July 19 and 27, 2022). After the public feedback sessions, the consultant team distributed a strategy-ranking survey via SurveyMonkey. Current Plan Elements and Recommended Priorities

In addition to an executive summary and introduction, the Coordinated Plan includes a summary of the engagement process, an inventory of existing transportation services, identification of areas of need based on demographic and market analyses, coordinated strategies informed by research in effective practices elsewhere in the U.S., recommended priorities, and an action plan. The eight priority strategy areas are:

1. Increase transportation service offerings.
2. Pursue additional funding for human services transportation.
3. Enhance bus stops, mobility hubs, and availability of vehicles.
4. Expand customer service and driver sensitivity training.
5. Develop a statewide mobility management network.
6. Strengthen coordination among providers, funders, and advocates.
7. Strengthen communications and information sharing.
8. Increase coordination of travel training services statewide.

The action plan identifies implementation steps, responsible agencies and partners, a timeframe for implementation, and suggestions for tracking and reporting progress.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nadtc.org/>

## **2023 Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

Project appendices include the current roster of the Coordinating Council, summaries of public meetings including presentation slides, and results of the prioritization survey with participant comments.



# 1. PLAN REQUIREMENTS AND CONTEXT

## REQUIREMENTS FOR A LOCALLY DEVELOPED PLAN

Federal transit law requires that projects selected for funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan" (Coordinated Plan), and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public" utilizing transportation services. Coordinated plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes, provide strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.<sup>4</sup>

### Entity Roles

#### RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

In 2017, the Rhode Island General Assembly established the Rhode Island (RI) Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) during development of the 2018 Coordinated Plan. The enabling legislation directed the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) to convene the Coordinating Council to better integrate transportation programs that support individuals in need of specialized transportation assistance.

The Coordinating Council's vision is for accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders. Its mission is to "[promote independence through enhanced statewide mobility, while fostering collaboration between public, private, and non-profit sector partners by gathering and sharing information, supporting transportation initiatives, and advocating for positive change."

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<sup>4</sup> Federal Transit Administration, Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans webpage (<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/coordinated-public-transit-human-services-transportation-plans>)

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Ten state agencies that provide or manage transportation services participate and meet every other month to gather and share information, support transportation initiatives, and advocate for change. Entities appointed to the Coordinating Council include:

- RI Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals
- RI Department of Health
- RI Department of Human Services
- RI Division of Statewide Planning
- RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
- RI Office of Healthy Aging
- RI Office of Rehabilitative Services
- RI Office of Veterans Services
- RIPTA

In addition, organizations that have been involved with the Coordinating Council include United Way of RI, AARP RI, AAA, RI Association of Community Action Agencies, and RAMP, among others.

## RIPTA

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) is the sole public transportation authority within Rhode Island. RIPTA is also the designated recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding and administers FTA's Section 5310 program. The RI General Assembly has designated RIPTA as the statewide mobility manager. RIPTA also provides staff support to the Coordinating Council and plays a lead role in updating the Coordinated Plan.

## Other Participating Entities

The development of the 2023 Coordinated Plan has involved numerous state and municipal agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The process of involving these entities and members of the public is discussed in Chapter 2.

## PRIOR COORDINATED PLANS

### 2013 Plan

The transportation needs assessment for the 2013 Coordinated Plan recognized several gaps, many of which remain. Older adults and people with disabilities were found to live across the state at densities like the overall population; most resided in areas well-served by fixed-route transit for those able to access it. However, there were limited options for those living in more rural areas.

The public supported an expansion of existing services as well as enhancements to facilitate access to the RIde complementary paratransit program.<sup>5</sup> In lower density areas, there was a desire to consider new service models and interest in more on-demand transportation options.

The five strategies were:

1. Maintain existing public transportation services and identify sustainable funding.
2. Use resources more efficiently.
3. Provide more transportation options.
4. Improve accessibility, ease of use and customer service.
5. Increase collaboration.

## 2018 Plan

The 2018 Coordinated Plan included the elements required by FTA (inventory of services, demographic analysis, assessment of needs, and strategy development). Plan development included best practices research and public engagement. The two primary recommendations were to develop state and local coordinating councils and create a statewide one-call/one-click system. Specific coordination strategies included:

- Mobility management
- Travel training
- Joint planning and grant applications
- Joint procurement
- Shared expertise and training
- Shared facilities
- Vehicle sharing

The plan envisioned a one-call/one-click center housed at RIPTA and using technology to integrate RIPTA's demand-response services with other demand-response services including local shuttles and human services transportation.

## STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED OR ADVANCED SINCE 2018

Rhode Island has implemented or is advancing several initiatives to improve transportation options for vulnerable populations, including several discussed elsewhere in this Plan:

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<sup>5</sup> In 2013, the RIde program included the state's Elderly Transportation Program and Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program in addition to complementary paratransit.

- Establishment of the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council to improve interagency collaboration (see above and Chapter 2)
- New fixed-route bus services (see Chapter 3)
- On-demand Flex service pilot (see Chapter 3)
- Investment in fare payment technology (Wave) and fare capping (see Chapter 3)

Other initiatives include:

- One-Call/One-Click resource study to improve access to transportation information and services (completed in 2021 and discussed below)
- Federal funding to purchase lift-equipped passenger vans for use by the municipalities of Cumberland, Foster, Pawtucket, and Westerly and the Cranston-based Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP) (received in 2022)
- Receipt of federal Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) funds for RIPTA to develop a travel training network (received in 2022 and discussed below)
- Receipt of transportation planning and implementation grants through the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)<sup>6</sup> for Age-Friendly RI and RIPTA to jointly investigate, plan, and implement a vehicle sharing pilot program (received in 2022)

## One-Call/One-Click Resource

According to the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM),

At their simplest, one-call or one-click services enable customers to make one phone call or search one website to receive information about all transportation services available in the community. As one-call or one-click services become more advanced, they allow customers to schedule, receive confirmation, and pay for rides. Transportation providers can interact with the database supporting a one-call or one-click service to schedule customer trips, communicate with customers, and even receive payment for trips.<sup>7</sup>

The RIPTA study, completed in 2021, included stakeholder outreach, research into lessons learned and effective practices in other states and regions, a comprehensive inventory of services, and collaboration with those who receive inquiries and offer transportation information. A key recommendation implemented in 2022 was to revise RIPTA's website and customer service protocols to offer information on all available transportation resources, including services provided by others.



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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nadtc.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/by-topic/one-call-one-click/>

The study also recommended further investigation of enhancing RIPTA's web-based trip planner feature and cited Mass RideMatch,<sup>8</sup> the trip planner available to regional transit authorities in Massachusetts as a good example.

## Travel Training Network Grant

Travel training programs aim to educate individuals on how to use fixed-route transit. Students with developmental or vision disabilities often receive travel training as part of their formal education. Other participants include those who once drove but are no longer able to do so. According to RIPTA's application for an FTA Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) grant, the training will incorporate information about how to contact [RIPTA] customer service, use the new Wave account-based fare system, apply for the Ride paratransit service, and apply for the free/reduced fare bus pass program for seniors and people with disabilities. The curriculum will also cover municipal transportation options, the state's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program, the Elderly Transportation Program, taxis, trains, volunteer driver programs, and other services, as available.

## Vehicle Sharing Study

Through a National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) grant in partnership with Age-Friendly RI, RIPTA is studying ways for organizations that have underutilized shuttles to share them with other organizations to provide more trip options for vulnerable individuals. By expanding the eligibility criteria for trips, hours and days of operation, or geographic area covered, these shuttles will provide new customers with opportunities for engagement with their communities, thus reducing their social isolation. The partners are designing a pilot program with a nonprofit organization, Looking Upwards,, that serves adults with developmental disabilities and children with special healthcare needs.

## Low-income Pilot Program

In October 2022, RIPTA's board of directors approved a low-income pilot program offering 600 participants unlimited free travel for six months using photo ID Wave cards. To qualify, people must have incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and should not be enrolled in existing transportation benefit programs. A network of partners including the state's seven community action agencies agreed to identify clients who meet the criteria and assist them with completing applications for RIPTA to process. Other supporting organizations are Crossroads Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, and Mathewson Street Church. RIPTA will collect survey data, ridership data, and partner feedback to inform development of long-term benefit programs.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://massridematch.org/>

## 2. PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

### PLAN DEVELOPMENT

As Rhode Island’s designated recipient of Section 5310 funds, RIPTA, in coordination with the Coordinating Council, is responsible for preparing the 2023 Coordinated Plan. RIPTA in turn engaged a team led by Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates with ASG Planning and Monahan Mobility Consulting to prepare this plan, developed between February 2022 and March 2023.

### COORDINATION

#### Coordinating Council

Coordination with RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council occurred at several key project milestones as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Coordinating Council Meetings and Plan Topics**

Plan Milestone	Topics Discussed	Meeting Date
Project Kickoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of strategies and priorities from 2018 Plan</li> <li>▪ Scope and schedule for plan update</li> <li>▪ Comments/feedback on approach to public outreach Round 1</li> </ul>	March 2022
Public Input Round #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of public input from April/May 2022</li> </ul>	May 2022
Inventory & Assessment Preliminary Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Updated inventory of HST resources</li> <li>▪ Updated assessment of transportation needs in RI</li> <li>▪ Strategies proposed for development as part of 2022 update</li> <li>▪ Comments/feedback on approach to public outreach Round 2</li> </ul>	July 2022
Prioritization of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Survey administered to all Coordinating Council members to help prioritize plan strategies</li> </ul>	August 2022
Draft Plan Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of public input from August 2022</li> <li>▪ Report on best practices task</li> <li>▪ Results of survey prioritization of strategies</li> </ul>	September 2022

Plan Milestone	Topics Discussed	Meeting Date
Final Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption of 2023 Coordinated Plan</li> </ul>	March 2023

## Coordination with the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)

The Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) is an advisory committee to RIPTA that meets monthly to provide input on the accessibility of all transportation services and other transportation-related issues affecting people with disabilities. As part of this Coordinated Plan public outreach process, members of the project team attended ATAC meetings in May and August 2022 to share information about the plan and to solicit comment and input. RIPTA staff also provided project updates at additional meetings.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In addition to meetings with the Coordinating Council and ATAC, the team hosted two rounds of public outreach to seek input on needs and ideas and solicit feedback on strategies. These included four virtual listening sessions (April 25, 27, 28 and May 4, 2022) and two virtual strategy sessions (July 19 and 27, 2022). RIPTA publicized these sessions via email to known participants in prior Coordinating Council and ATAC meetings and other contacts, via the RIPTA website, and through press releases.

An estimated 84 individuals attended the outreach sessions (not including attendance at the two ATAC meetings and Coordinating Council meetings). Participants included those who use human services transportation, as well as representatives from:

- Eight state or quasi-state agencies
- Four municipal governments or senior center facilities
- Twenty-seven non-profit organizations or advocacy groups
- Three private businesses

At each session, at least one hour of open discussion allowed participants to share their comments as well as any ideas for transportation enhancement. Public comments include follow-emails sent to RIPTA.

Appendix A includes copies of presentations given and a detailed summary of public comments received at each round of meetings. Comments received at the two ATAC meetings attended by the study team are incorporated into these summaries.

## STRATEGY PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

In August 2022, after presentation of strategies at the public feedback sessions, the consultant team distributed a strategy ranking survey via SurveyMonkey. Respondents were offered the

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opportunity to vote on eight strategies. Voters could place all eight votes on a single strategy, one vote on each, or something in between. A summary of rankings is included in Appendix B.



## 3. EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

An inventory of existing transportation services is a required coordinated plan element. This chapter describes the transportation services available throughout Rhode Island, including:

- RIPTA services
- Statewide services for older adults and people with low incomes
- Local shuttle services
- Intercity transportation

Other transportation services are offered to individuals or groups for specific trip purposes, clients, and/or in certain areas.

### RIPTA SERVICES

RIPTA is Rhode Island's statewide public transit authority, currently serving 37 of 39 cities and towns through fixed-route bus service, Flex service, and the Ride complementary paratransit program.

#### Fixed-Route Bus Service

RIPTA operates 57 routes throughout most of Rhode Island. Routes fall into five main categories: Rapid, High Frequency, Regional, Local, and Express. See Figure 4. Most routes operate to and from Downtown Providence and 13 routes that operate outside of Providence (Pawtucket hub, Aquidneck Island hub, and South County). Cash-paying passengers spend \$2 for one-way trips, while those using plastic or mobile Wave smart cards pay \$2 for unlimited travel within one hour and \$6 for unlimited travel within a day. All vehicles are fully accessible and include two wheelchair securement areas as well as front-mounted bicycle racks.

#### Special Services

RIPTA also provides specialized services, including Route 301, a Friday-only service branded as Rural Ride, between Westerly and the Stop and Shop supermarket in Richmond. RIPTA operates a Simmons Village service on weekdays providing two trips from Simmons Village in Cranston to

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Walmart and three return trips. In addition, RIPTA provides Thursday service between several Cranston senior housing facilities and Walmart.





## Flex Service

RIPTA Flex is a scheduled zone-based service that allows passengers to board at a designated Flex stop or request a pickup within each zone by reserving a trip 24 hours in advance. Once aboard, riders can request a drop-off within the zone and may connect to RIPTA fixed route. The Flex vehicles are accessible and accommodate 16 passengers. Fares are \$2.00 each way. Flex zones and service days include:

- 203 | URI/Narragansett/South Kingstown Flex (daily service)
- 204 | Westerly Flex (weekday service)
- 231 | South Aquidneck Flex (Monday-Saturday service)
- 242 | West Warwick /Coventry Flex (weekday service; no scheduled stops)
- 281 | Woonsocket/Manville Flex (weekday service; no scheduled stops)
- 282 | Pascoag/Slatersville Flex (weekday service)



Photo: RIPTA

## West Warwick / Coventry Flex On-Demand Pilot

Flex On Demand is a pilot program that will provide on-demand shared rides within the parts of Kent County served by the Route 242 Flex zone (West Warwick and parts of Warwick, East Greenwich, and Coventry). When the pilot launches in 2023, riders will be able to use a smartphone app to book rides, pay fares, and track their trips. Riders will still have the option of calling RIPTA 24 hours in advance to book trips and they may travel within the Flex zone or transfer to a RIPTA bus.

## Service Spans

Figure 4 lists the fixed-route categories (including Flex service), minimum weekday span, route numbers within each category, and which routes operate on Saturdays and Sundays. There are several routes that run longer than the minimum span for the category. For example, on weekdays, the Rapid R line runs for approximately 20 hours, the high-frequency Route 27 runs for just under 18 hours, the regional Route 60 runs for 21 hours, and the local Route 55 runs for just under 19 hours.

**Figure 4 Fixed Route and Flex Services**

Category	Minimum Span	Weekday Route(s)	Saturday Routes	Sunday Routes
Rapid	6 AM–Midnight (18 hours)	R	R	R
High frequency	6 AM–Midnight (18 hours)	1, 20, 27, 28, 31, 50, 56, 92	1, 20, 27, 28, 31, 50, 56, 92	1, 20, 27, 28, 31, 50, 56, 92
Regional	6 AM–9 PM (15 hours)	14, 54, 60, 66	14, 54, 60, 66	14, 54, 60, 66
Local	6 AM–7 PM (13 hours)	3, 4, 6, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 40, 51, 55, 57, 58, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80, 87	3, 4, 6, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 51, 55, 57, 58, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 75, 76, 78, 87	3, 4, 6, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 51, 55, 57, 63, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 75, 78, 87
Express	AM and PM peaks	9X, 10X, 12X, 59X, 61X, 65X, 95X, QX	No service	No service
Flex	8:30 AM–4:30 PM	203, 204, 231, 242, 281, 282	203, 231	203

Source: RIPTA

## Ride Complementary Paratransit

Ride is RIPTA’s complementary paratransit service, provided in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for people whose disabilities prevent independent use of fixed-route buses or travel to or from bus stops. Qualifying individuals must apply for eligibility. This service complements RIPTA’s fixed-route service, meaning it operates during the same hours and days and within 3/4 mile of these routes. Ride service is not available in areas served by express routes except where Routes 9x and 10x provide local service in western/northwestern RI. Figure 5 shows the weekday Ride service area and Flex service zones.

Ride fares are \$4 each way (twice the fixed route fare, the allowable maximum under ADA).

<sup>9</sup>Eligible riders must request a trip the day prior to travel. As of fiscal year (FY) 2022, 3,720 individuals are eligible to use Ride service and of these, 1,755 riders traveled at least once within

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<sup>9</sup> For more information about the Department of Transportation ADA requirements, see the Federal Transit Administration’s ADA Circular, available on FTA’s website (<https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circular-47101-americans-disabilities-act-guidance>).

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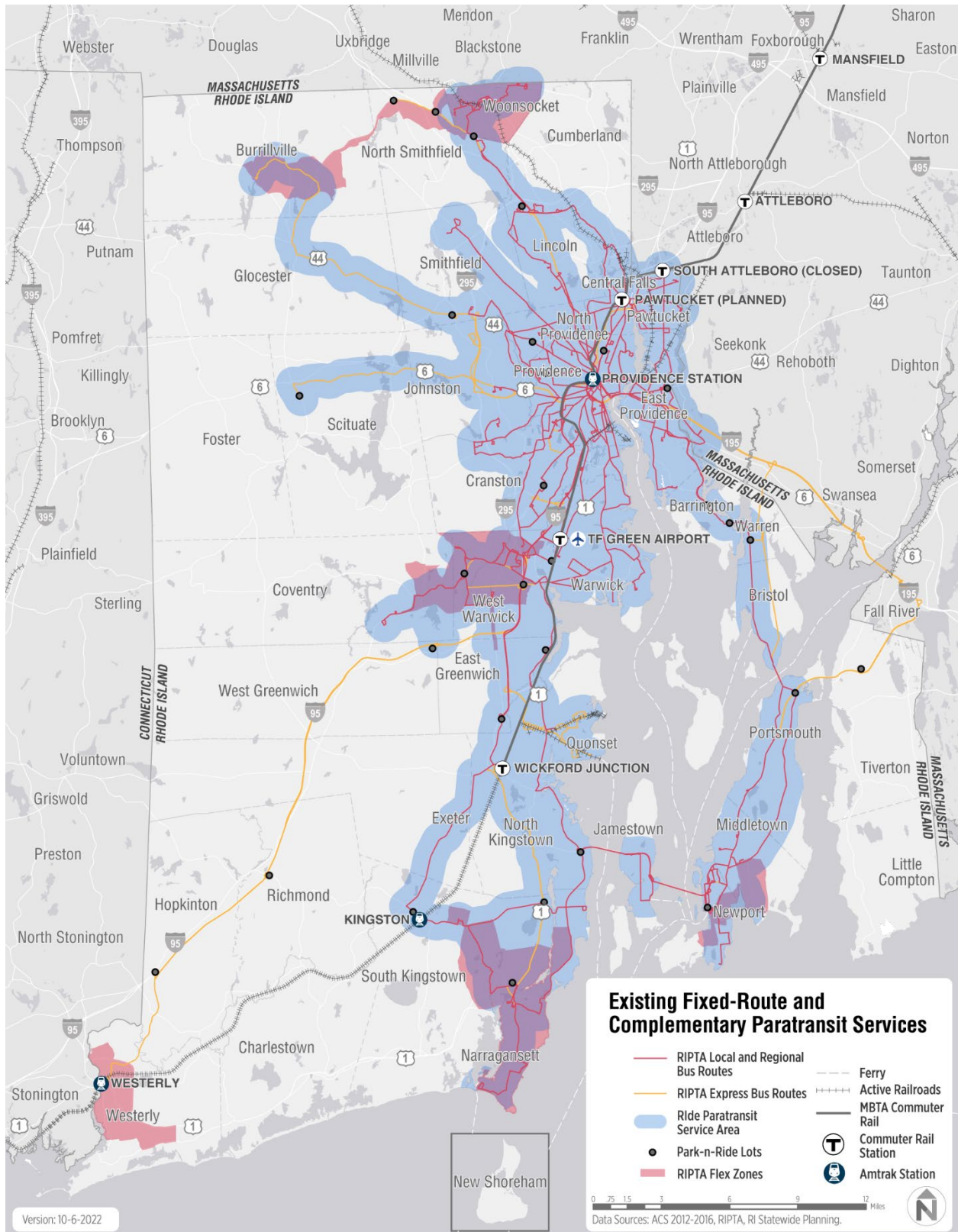
a three-month period, and noted as active. See Figure 6, which shows the number of approved riders and active riders for FY19–FY22.

In 2022, the RI General Assembly directed RIPTA to undertake a study of the potential expansion of paratransit service beyond what is required under ADA. The study findings, which were provided to the legislature in early 2023, are available on RIPTA’s website.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Search for ADA Paratransit Expansion Study or click on <https://www.ripta.com/projects-archive/planning-studies/>.

Figure 5 RIPTA Ride and Flex Service Areas





**Figure 6 Approved and Active Ride Riders FY19–FY22**

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Approved riders	4,970	3,941	3,619	3,720
Active riders	1,929	1,769	1,310	1,755

Source: RIPTA

Figure 7 shows the number of trips taken each year between FY18 and FY22 for each of the three RIPTA services. Each service saw a drop in ridership during COVID, which began during the latter part of FY20. FY22 ridership has grown from FY21 but has not reached prior levels of demand.

**Figure 7 RIPTA Annual Ridership by Service FY18–FY22**

Trips Via	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Fixed-route bus	16,339,054	16,029,388	13,026,356	8,359,684	9,361,002
Flex bus	91,198	105,858	58,410	42,996	55,446
Ride paratransit	269,238	278,360	235,052	148,691	192,468
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,699,490</b>	<b>16,413,606</b>	<b>13,319,818</b>	<b>8,551,371</b>	<b>9,608,916</b>

Source: RIPTA

## Reduced-Fare Bus Pass and Half-Fare Policy

RIPTA complies with federal transit guidelines and offers half-fare off-peak boarding to older adults (age 65 or over) and qualifying people with disabilities, regardless of income. Riders must show a half-fare off-peak identification provided by RIPTA or show their Medicare card.

RIPTA also offers a free bus pass that allows qualifying seniors (age 65 or over) and people with disabilities to travel free for two years if they also meet low-income guidelines, earning no more than 200% of the federal poverty level. Participants in this no-fare program are issued a Wave photo identification card that they use to board the bus any time. The ID card costs \$10.

## Wave Fare Payments

RIPTA’s Wave smart fare payment system launched in September 2020 and gives passengers the option of paying their bus fare with either a reloadable plastic smart card or a mobile version of the card. Wave allows riders to pay a flat fare (currently \$2) for one hour of unlimited rides including transfers. In addition, riders can add value to their Wave cards to earn credit toward a day or monthly pass, also known as fare capping. This eliminates the cost burden of the higher-priced passes but



enables all to benefit from the discount the passes provide. At the time of this plan’s publication, RIPTA was working to enable use of Wave on Ride in the coming months.

## STATEWIDE SERVICES

Rhode Island offers two statewide limited trip-purpose transportation programs to older adults and low-income residents, the Medicaid-funded Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program and the Elderly Transportation Program (ETP)

### Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program

RI’s NEMT program is available to all Medicaid-eligible (low-income) residents. Medical treatment transportation options include a subsidized RIPTA pass for those who have a minimum number of appointments each month, reimbursement to a friend or relative for use of their personal vehicle, or a contracted sedan, accessible vehicle, or other specialized vehicle (e.g., ambulance). The RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) currently contracts with a private company (MTM) to operate the program, which provides free transportation to and from Medicaid-covered services. MTM requires at least 48 hours’ notice (two business days, excluding weekends and holidays) to schedule a trip. For those who reside within 1/2 mile of a RIPTA bus stop, a physician’s note is required to travel by sedan or accessible vehicle; others are required to use RIPTA fixed-route service. Same-day trips are available for urgent care as needed. In 2020 and 2021, the program provided or subsidized an average of approximately 1,762,000 one-way rides, with approximately 53% via RIPTA bus, 42% via contracted sedans, 3% via wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and the remaining 5% via stretcher/ambulance, transportation network company (TNC) such as Uber/Lyft, and mileage reimbursement. See Figure 8.

At the time of this plan’s publication, EOHHS was selecting a vendor to operate these programs for the next contract timeframe.

**Figure 8 Non-Emergency Medical Transportation and Elderly Transportation Program Trips by Mode (2020–2021)**

Year	Total Trips (1-way)	Bus	Ambulatory	Wheelchair Van	Stretcher / Ambulance	TNC	Mileage Reimbursement
<b>NEMT</b>							
2020	1,651,897	54%	40%	3%	1%	<1%	1%
2021	1,870,275	51%	43%	3%	1%	1%	1%
<b>ETP</b>							
2020	128,690	3%	79%	17%	N/A	1%	<1%
2021	132,312	2%	78%	16%	N/A	2%	1%

Source: RI EOHHS

## Elderly Transportation Program

Rhode Island's ETP is available to all residents 60 or older. The RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) manages this state-funded program through the RI Office of Healthy Aging (OHA). EOHHS contracts with a private vendor (MTM) to operate the program, which provides low-cost transportation to and from medical appointments, adult day care, meal sites, dialysis/cancer treatment and a program for people with vision disabilities. Registered vendors subcontract to MTM to provide door-to-door transportation in sedans and accessible vehicles. Unlike NEMT, medical documentation is not required to obtain a door-to-door trip. Fares are \$2 one-way. Riders must reserve trips two business days prior to appointments. In 2020 and 2021, the program provided or subsidized an average of approximately 131,000 one-way rides, with approximately 79% via contracted sedans, 17% via contracted wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and the remaining trips via RIPTA bus, ride share, or mileage reimbursement. See Figure 8. The renewal of this contract is included with the NEMT contract discussed above.

## RIPTA Wave Cards for RI Works Participants

The RI Department of Human Services (DHS) administers RI Works, "a financial and employment assistance program for parents and families with little to no income who have children high school age or younger."<sup>11</sup> This program provides a monthly pass on a RIPTA Wave card for program participants who need transportation services. MTM administers the program under contract to DHS. According to DHS staff, the program distributes an average of 1,600 passes per month.

## Commuter Resource RI

Commuter Resource RI (CRRRI), a partnership between RIPTA and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), helps individuals find alternatives to commuting solo by car. While CRRRI's current services focus on trips to work, the program's approach to outreach and support is a good model for improving mobility for all travel.

## Vanpools

RIPTA contracts with Commute with Enterprise to manage its vanpool program. This program offers subsidies for commuters who are typically traveling to the same or nearby work locations from the same general area.<sup>12</sup> For example, a Commute with Enterprise representative participated in the July 2022 strategy feedback sessions and described Have Jobs Will Travel, a

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<sup>11</sup> <https://dhs.ri.gov/programs-and-services/ri-works-program>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ripta.com/vanpool/>

program with the RI Manufacturing Association that provides free vanpools helping commuters from Woonsocket, Central Falls, and Pawtucket travel to jobs in the Quonset Business Park.

## COMMUNITY-BASED TRANSPORTATION

Throughout Rhode Island, individual municipalities provide local transportation services, typically through senior centers. Most services are for older adults (at least age 55) and people with disabilities. Figure 9 lists the communities in which such services are available.

**Figure 9 RI Municipalities with Local Shuttles**

Municipality			
Barrington	Foster	New Shoreham	Tiverton
Bristol	Glocester	North Kingstown	Warren
Burrillville	Jamestown	Pawtucket	
Cranston	Johnston	Providence	
Cumberland	Lincoln	Scituate	
East Greenwich	Middletown	Smithfield	
East Providence	Narragansett	South Kingstown	

## Volunteer Driver Programs and Medical Shuttles

Nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island offer rides to individuals for different trip purposes by connecting volunteer drivers with those who need rides. Two such programs are Southern Rhode Island Volunteers and The Village Common of RI.

Southern Rhode Island Volunteers (SRIV) is a nonprofit organization serving the southern third of the state. According to the organization’s website, SRIV:

Manages the only comprehensive and free southern RI, Washington County-based transportation ride service to medical appointments, grocery stores, pharmacy, food pantries, housing appointments and the like for older persons who are challenged with access to these services as well as are dealing with chronic disease, temporary illness and injury all while attempting to live and age independently.<sup>13</sup>

The Village Common of RI is a nonprofit membership-based organization of volunteers helping older residents remain in their homes. With programs in Barrington, Providence, Westerly, and

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.southernrivol.org/about>

Edgewood (Cranston) and a developing program in Burrillville, members provide and/or receive a range of services, including transportation.

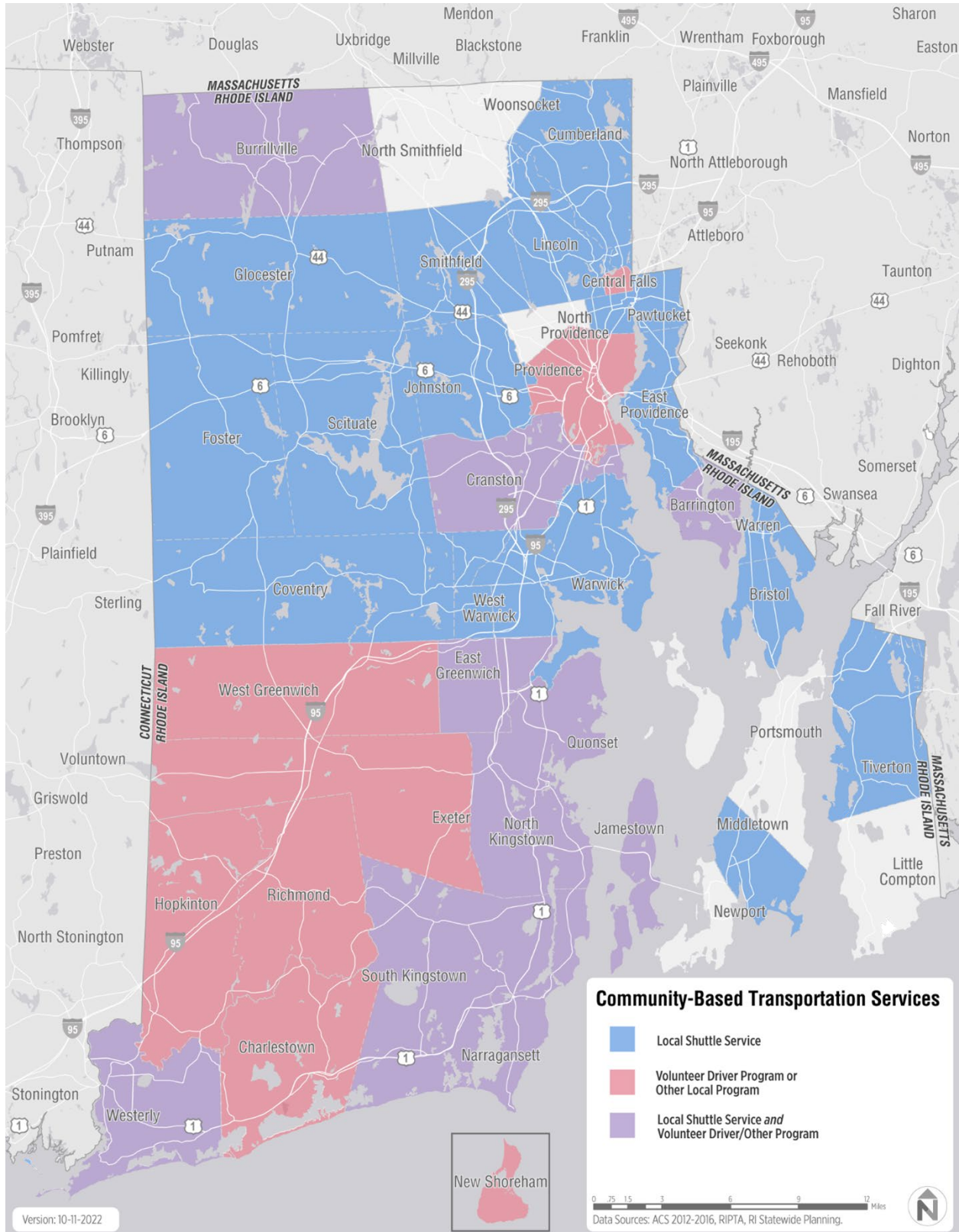
To help patients travel to/from medical appointments, several medical providers coordinate and/or offer transportation. These include the South County Hospital Wave Van, PACE, and Oak Street Health.

Figure 10 shows which municipalities in RI have local shuttles and/or access to other local transportation services including volunteer-based services.

## **Community Transportation Resources Webpage**

As an outgrowth of the One-Call/One-Click Resource Study, RIPTA is updating its website to provide current information on service options available in each community with links to local programs, targeted to older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals. Organized by municipality, the pages will feature information about RIPTA services, local transportation services, volunteer driver programs, non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), taxi providers, and other resources. Visitors to the site may call RIPTA's customer service department for general information, but they should contact each service directly to schedule trips, ask questions, and share feedback.

Figure 10 RI Municipalities with Available Local Transportation Services



## EXISTING MOBILITY MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

In addition to RIPTA, several other agencies and organizations assist individuals seeking transportation by providing information and/or rides.

### Statewide Information Providers

#### United Way's 211 Service

By dialing 211, all RI residents can access a range of services including housing, food, childcare, and transportation. Call takers staff 211 24/7 and calls are confidential. 211 staff refer callers to services such as RIPTA, NEMT and volunteer driver programs but can also provide vouchers for emergency transportation through rideshare providers including companies like Uber and Lyft. A website is also available, but most clients call.

#### The Point

The RI Office of Healthy Aging funds The Point, an information resource limited to older adults and people with disabilities. Specialists provide focused support and guidance in accessing services available to them, including the ETP. The call center is only open weekdays.

### Resource Coordinators and Service Partnerships

Two of the state agencies that provide services and resources for those requiring transportation assistance are the RI Office of Healthy Aging and the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH).

#### RI Office of Healthy Aging

The Office of Health Aging is RI's designated state unit on aging and is "the chief advocate for older Rhode Islanders, adults living with disabilities, and family caregivers."<sup>14</sup> Through its website and via The Point referral service, OHA refers individuals to the ETP and RIPTA's Free/Reduced Fare Bus Pass Program. OHA participates in the Coordinating Council.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://oha.ri.gov/>

## **RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals**

The RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) provides services to approximately 50,000 Rhode Island residents who live with mental illness and/or substance use conditions or have developmental disabilities. BHDDH clients who are also ADA paratransit eligible due to their disability may use RIde services. BHDDH and RIPTA have an established arrangement in which RIde drivers provide hand-to-hand service accompanying riders to and from the RIde vehicle, which goes beyond the requirement under ADA and BHDDH reimburses RIPTA for this additional service. This is an excellent example of coordination that benefits both RIPTA and BHDDH.

## **Advocacy Organizations**

Several statewide organizations support programs and activities that help older adults, individuals with disabilities, and people with low incomes. These include Age-Friendly Rhode Island, AAA Northeast, the AARP Rhode Island office, RI Long-Term Care Coordinating Council, RI Senior Center Directors Association, the Senior Agenda Coalition of RI, Ocean State Center for Independent Living, Disability Rights RI, Real Access Motivates Progress (RAMP), the RI Coalition to End Homelessness, and RI Association of Community Action Agencies, among others. While a complete list of organizations that participated in this planning process appears in Appendix A, the three organizations below offer examples of active partners in coordination.

### **Age-Friendly Rhode Island**

Based at Rhode Island College, Age-Friendly Rhode Island is a coalition of community and state agencies, healthcare and social service providers, individuals of all ages, advocacy and faith-based organizations, businesses, academic institutions, and municipal leaders who are committed to healthy aging. Age-Friendly Rhode Island has built a large coalition of partner organizations, including RIPTA, the Senior Center Directors Coalition, the Office of Healthy Aging, AARP, AAA, United Way, RIDOT, and the Village Common of RI.<sup>15</sup> Age-Friendly Rhode Island participates in meetings and activities of the Coordinating Council, and is partnering with RIPTA on the vehicle sharing pilot program, funded by NADTC.

### **AARP RI**

AARP RI is the statewide affiliate of AARP, which advocates on behalf of older adults. AARP is a member of Age-Friendly Rhode Island and participates in meetings and activities of the Coordinating Council. AARP has several ongoing initiatives in support of transportation

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<sup>15</sup> <https://agefriendlyri.org/about/our-partners/>



coordination including its livable communities program that advocates for smart growth principles and walkable communities.

## AAA Northeast

AAA Northeast is a membership organization for drivers in RI and nearby states. AAA Northeast offers resources for older drivers, including planning for driving retirement. AAA Northeast participates in meetings and activities of the Coordinating Council.

## TRANSIT FORWARD RI 2040

Transit Forward RI 2040, adopted by the RI State Planning Council on December 10, 2020, is the state’s 20-year transit master plan, a bold and ambitious plan designed to help make Rhode Island a better and more prosperous place to live, work, and play. Goals include strengthening existing services and adding services where needed. By improving access to better transit, those who depend on public transportation for human services needs will have more resources available to them.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

## Strategies Applicable to the Coordinated Plan

Transit Forward RI 2040 will improve statewide mobility. The following discussion highlights the initiatives that align directly with the recommended Coordinated Plan strategies targeting older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes (see Chapter 6).

### New/Improved Transit Services

Expanding transit service aligns with the feedback obtained during outreach and one of the main strategies discussed in Chapter 5. This includes new routes in Providence, Woonsocket, Newport, Narragansett, and Westerly. It also includes five new crosstown routes, a new Flex zone serving Wickford Station and Quonset, and other recommendations that focus on high-capacity transit.

### Mobility Hubs

Improving access to transit includes recommendations for a network of mobility hubs. According to the plan, mobility hubs are places “where multimodal transportation options, information resources, placemaking features, and traveler amenities are brought together in a well-designed, publicly accessible space to support a variety of trip types. Transit Forward RI 2040

will develop a network of mobility hubs throughout the state. They will be the first point of entry into the regional public transportation network for many travelers and connecting points for others. They will provide an enjoyable user experience and build a strong relationship between the community and transportation providers.”

The plan proposes nine regional mobility hubs and community mobility hubs throughout RI, with at least one in each community. Regional mobility hub locations may include:

- Providence/Kennedy Plaza
- Providence/Providence Station
- Providence/Jewelry District
- Pawtucket/Central Falls
- Newport Visitors Center
- Woonsocket/Downtown
- Warwick/TF Green Airport
- North Kingstown/Wickford Junction
- University of Rhode Island

## Service Partnerships

The plan also discusses the importance of service partnerships that offer customized services for specific populations. The plan notes, “to provide additional services beyond what could otherwise be provided, several transit agencies have developed programs that enable local governments, businesses, and other entities a way to directly fund specific transit service improvements – a process known service partnerships.” Cited examples include:

- A \$40 million-dollar annual contribution from the City of Seattle to King County Metro for expanded bus service
- Direct investments from Amazon and Microsoft to provide more frequent service for longer hours on public transit routes that serve their corporate campuses
- Purchase of specific bus trips or routes that enable shift workers to access suburban office buildings in cities like Rochester, NY and Cincinnati, OH
- Funding of additional service by many communities in the Phoenix area.

## Accessibility Improvements

RIPTA also aims to improve access to transit by improving and making sidewalks accessible around transit stops. Improved bus stop amenities and accessible paths of travel to/from the stops are an important Coordinated Plan strategy. See Chapter 5.

## 4. AREAS OF NEED

Most areas of unmet need are concentrated in the rural parts of the state where fixed-route transit service is limited or not available. There are also communities where local services (e.g., senior shuttles) are either limited by the amount of service available, restrict trips to specific purposes, or limit eligibility.

### DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS AND MAPS

The following pages present a series of maps from the U.S. Census, the RI Office of Statewide Planning, and Transit Forward RI 2040 (transit master plan). The data is based on the 2012-2016 five-year estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). These maps describe the density (residents per acre of land) and share (percentage of a municipality's population) for four population characteristics:

1. Older adults
2. People with disabilities (ambulatory)
3. People with low incomes
4. Households with no vehicles

#### Older Adults (65+)

Based on the ACS data from the master plan, adults 65 years and older make up 15.8% of the state's population. Recent estimates (not mapped) show the 2021 percentage of residents aged 65 or older is 18.3%.

Providing mobility options for older adults is a priority, particularly for those who do not drive due to physical limitations or the inability to afford to own a car.

#### Density of Population 65 Years and Older

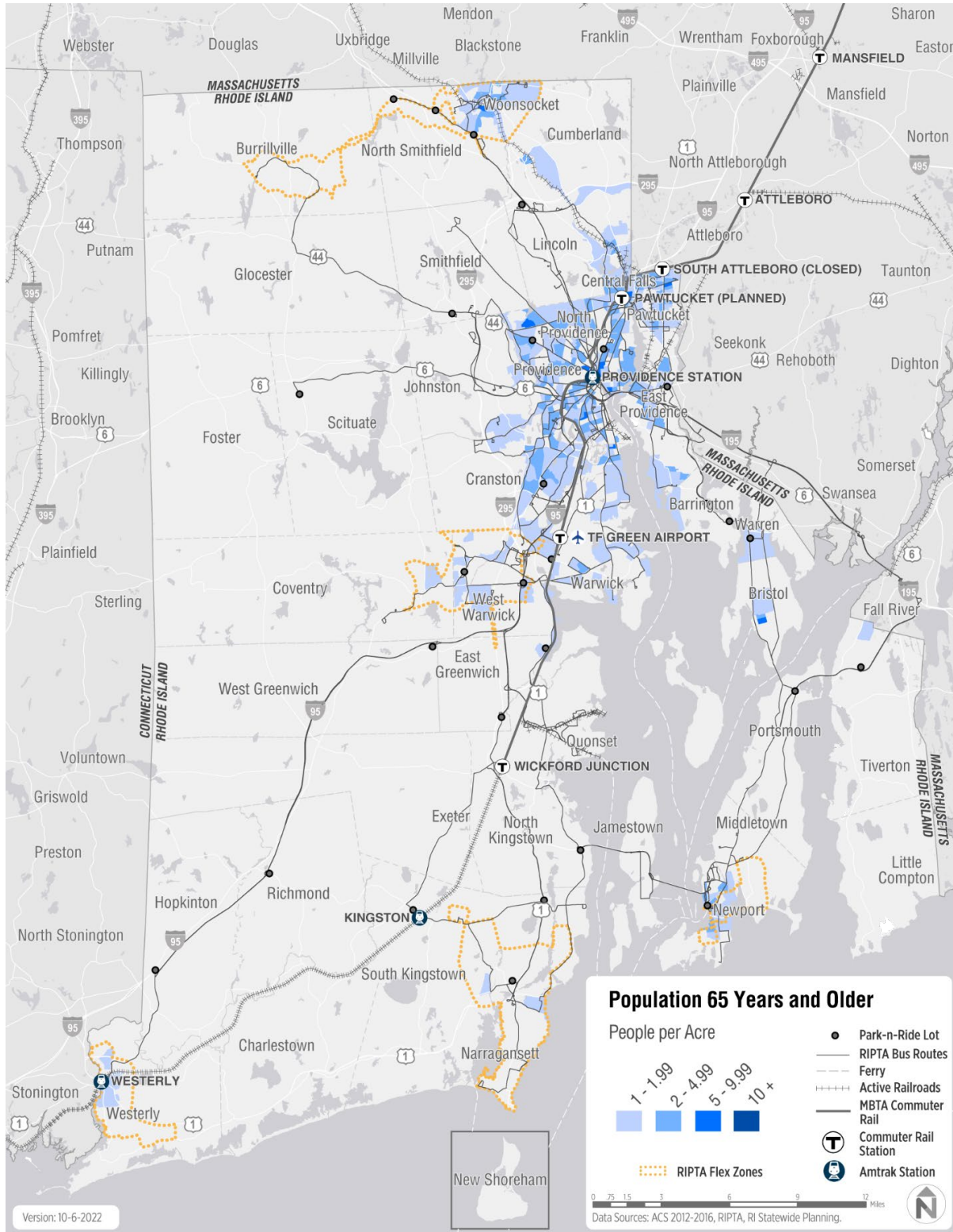
As shown in Figure 11, locations with the highest density of older adults are:

- Bristol, in downtown
- Cranston, in Edgewood
- Pawtucket, near downtown and near Norfolk Ave.
- Providence, in Smith Hill, Fox Point, College Hill/Mt Hope, Elmwood
- North Providence, near Smithfield Rd.

## 2023 Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

- Woonsocket, in downtown near Greene St.

Figure 11 Density of People Aged 65 and Older



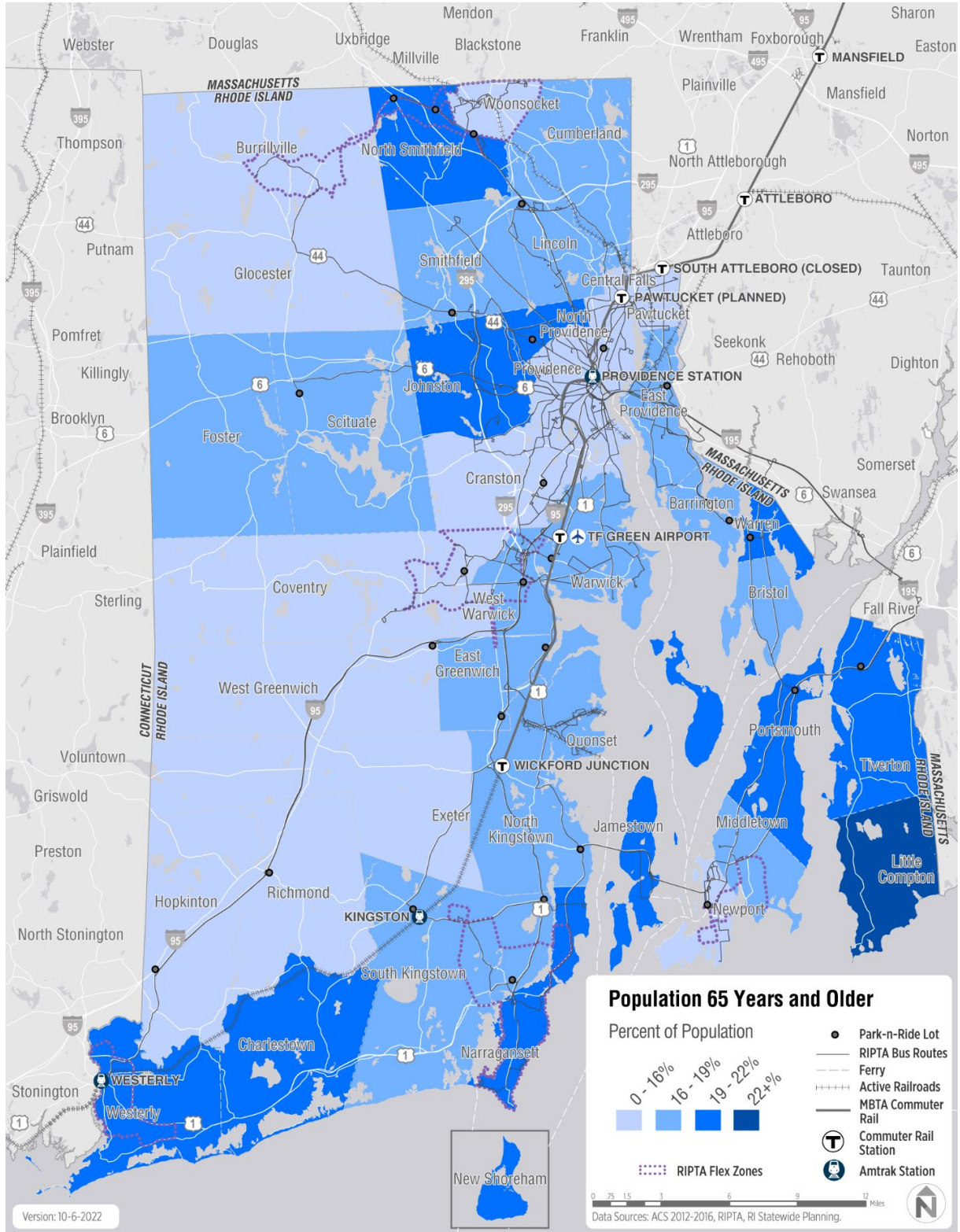
### Percentage of Population 65 Years and Older

In each of Rhode Island’s 39 municipalities, older adults make up varying percentages of the population. This means that although some communities have few residents, more of those residents may be older adults and their mobility needs are more central to that community. Figure 12 shows the percentage by community and highlights in bold the ten communities with the highest percentage of residents 65+. Figure 13 shows this graphically. Several communities that have a higher share of older adults also have low population density and little to no transit service, including Charlestown, Tiverton, Little Compton, New Shoreham, and Westerly.

**Figure 12 Percent of 65+ Residents by Municipality (top 10 communities in bold)**

Municipality	Age 65+%	Municipality	Age 65+%	Municipality	Age 65+%
Barrington	17.6%	Hopkinton	15.5%	<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>20.9%</b>
Bristol	19.1%	<b>Jamestown</b>	<b>21.8%</b>	Providence	9.1%
Burrillville	15.3%	<b>Johnston</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	Richmond	12.7%
Central Falls	7.7%	Lincoln	17.2%	Scituate	18.6%
<b>Charlestown</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>Little Compton</b>	<b>26.1%</b>	Smithfield	19.1%
Coventry	16.1%	Middletown	17.6%	South Kingstown	17.6%
Cranston	16.2%	<b>Narragansett</b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<b>Tiverton</b>	<b>22.6%</b>
Cumberland	18.1%	<b>New Shoreham</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	Warren	20.1%
East Greenwich	16.9%	Newport	15.2%	Warwick	19.2%
East Providence	18.4%	North Kingstown	16.7%	West Greenwich	10.2%
Exeter	13.7%	North Providence	19.6%	West Warwick	16.1%
Foster	18.2%	<b>North Smithfield</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>Westerly</b>	<b>20.8%</b>
Glocester	15.4%	Pawtucket	12.1%	Woonsocket	14.3%

Figure 13 Percent of People 65 Years and Older by Municipality



## People with Disabilities

People with ambulatory disabilities make up 11% of the state's population. Figure 14 presents a state map showing the concentrations of people with disabilities and Figure 15 shows the percentages by municipality. Like the population of older adults, several communities that have a higher share of people with ambulatory disabilities have little or no transit service.



Figure 14 Density of People with an Ambulatory Disability

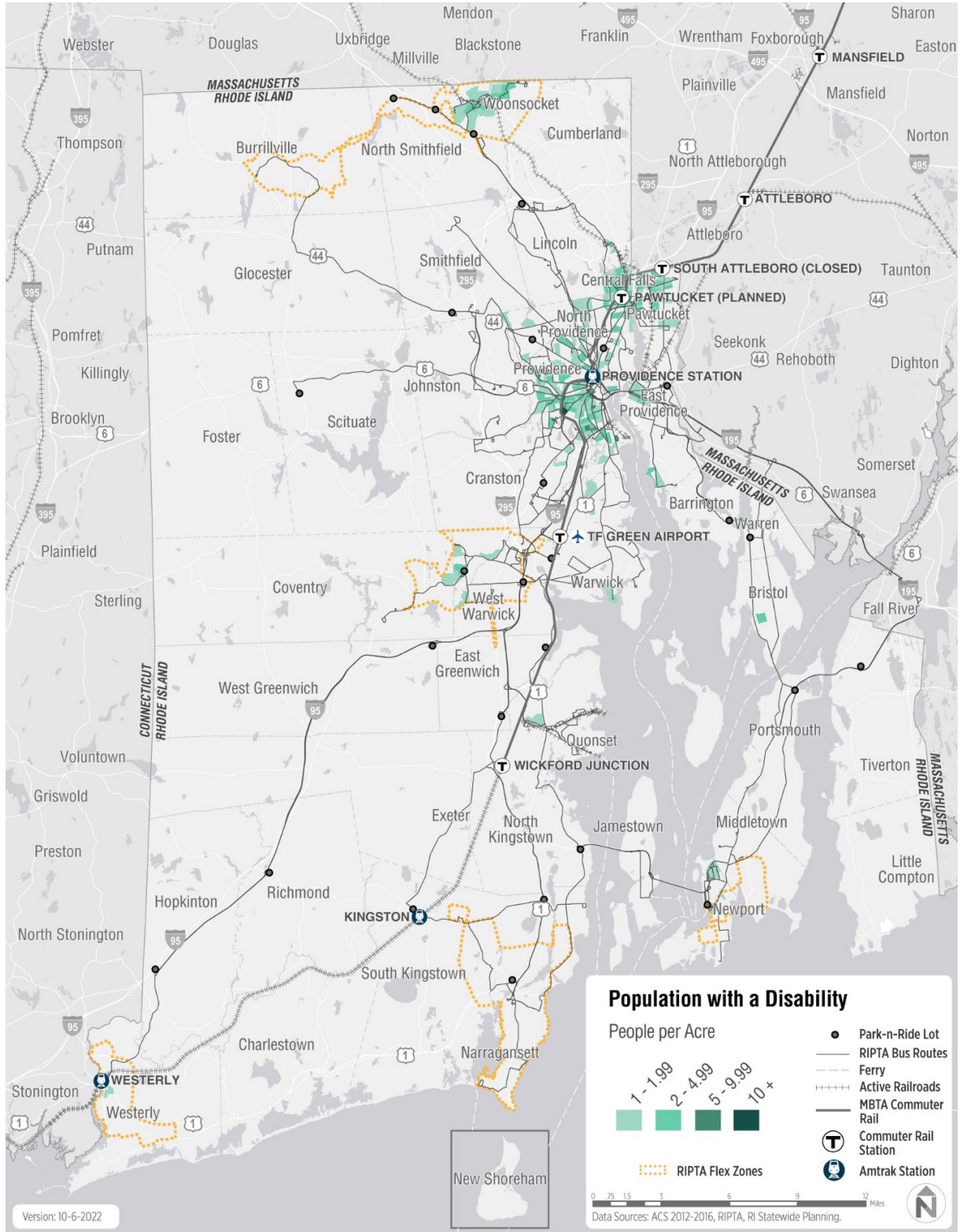
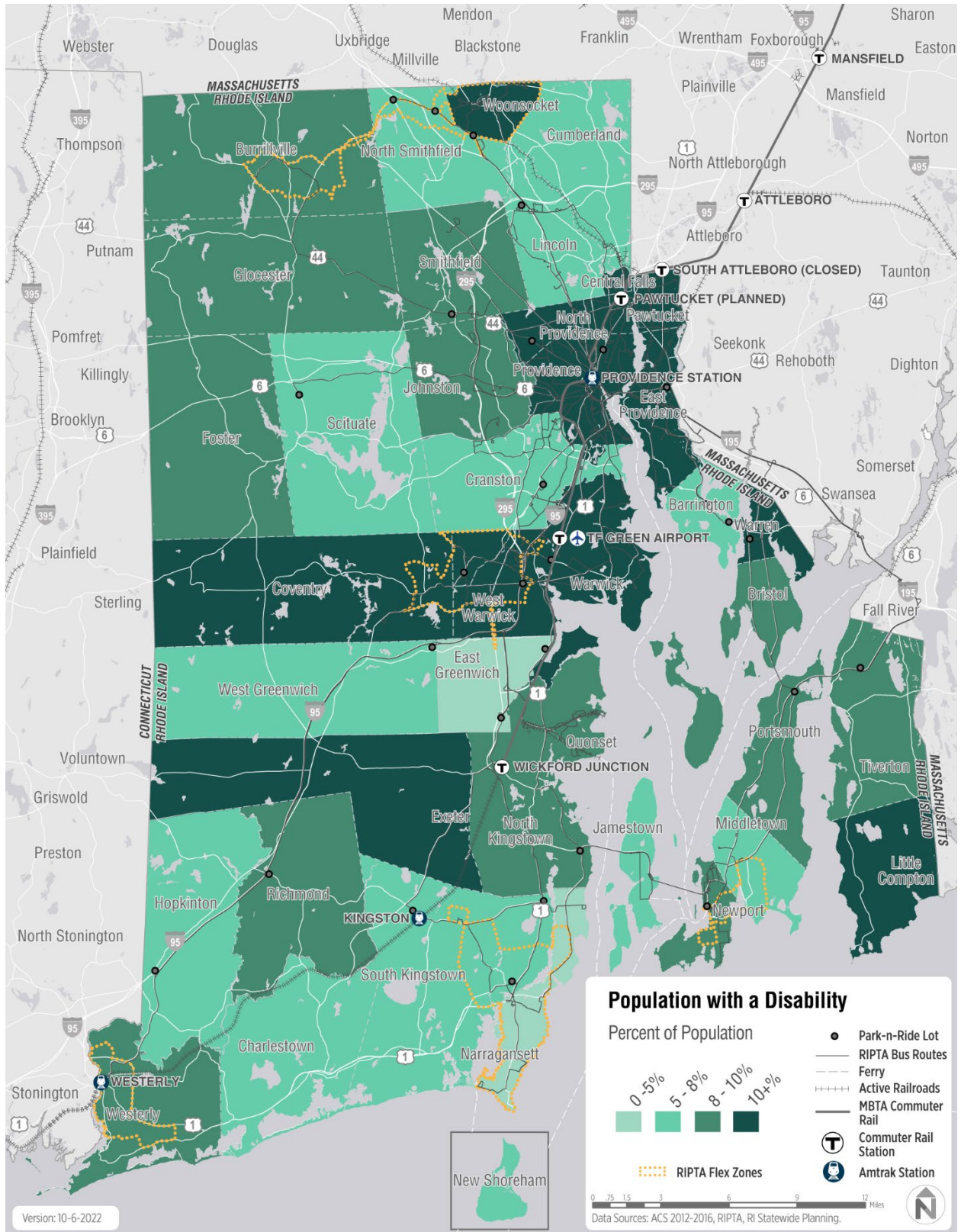


Figure 15 Percent of People with an Ambulatory Disability by Municipality



## People with Low Incomes

According to U.S. Census data, just under 14% of RI residents have incomes below the federal poverty line. Figure 16 presents a state map showing the concentrations of people with low incomes and Figure 17 shows the percentages by municipality.

Figure 16 Density of Low-Income Population

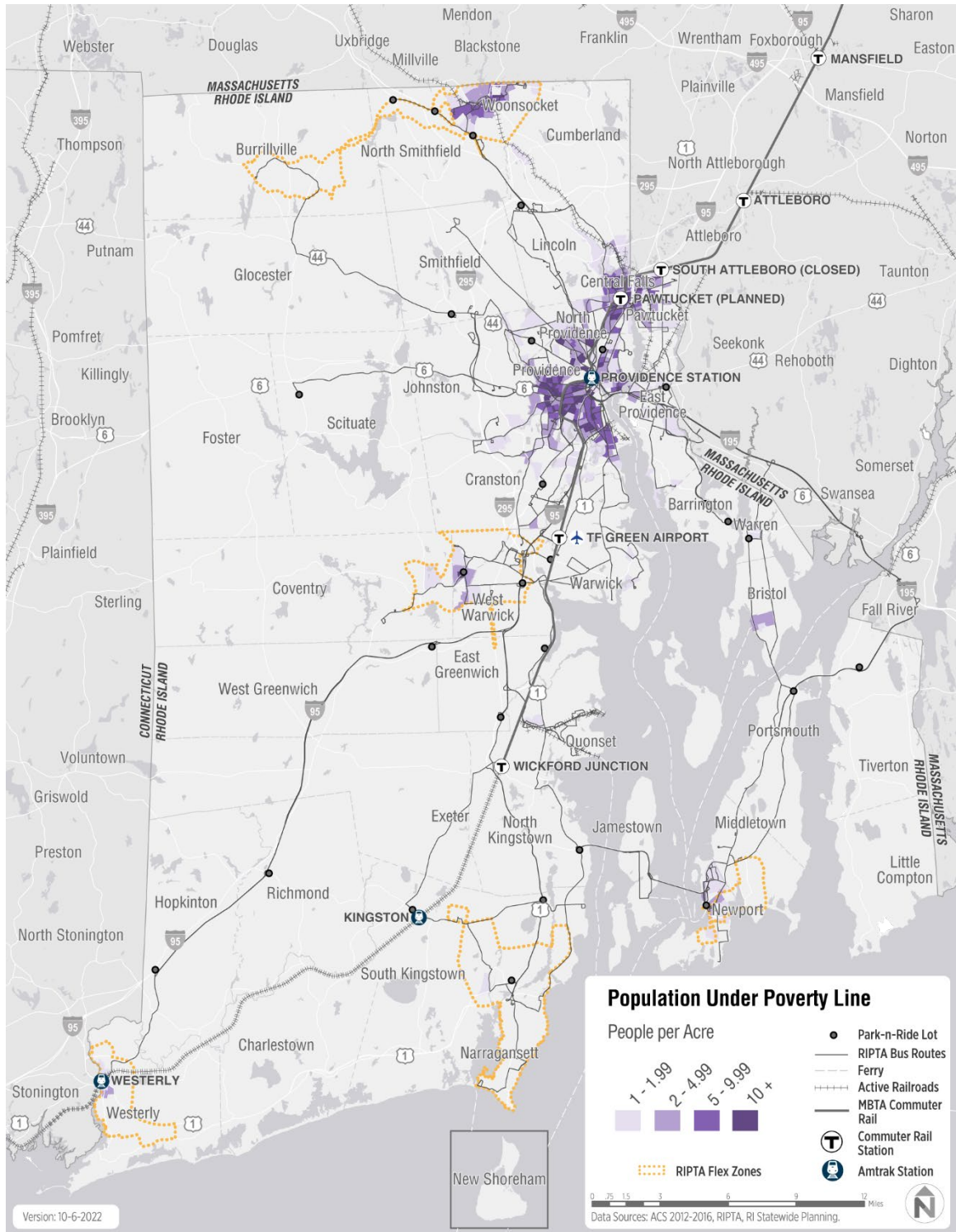
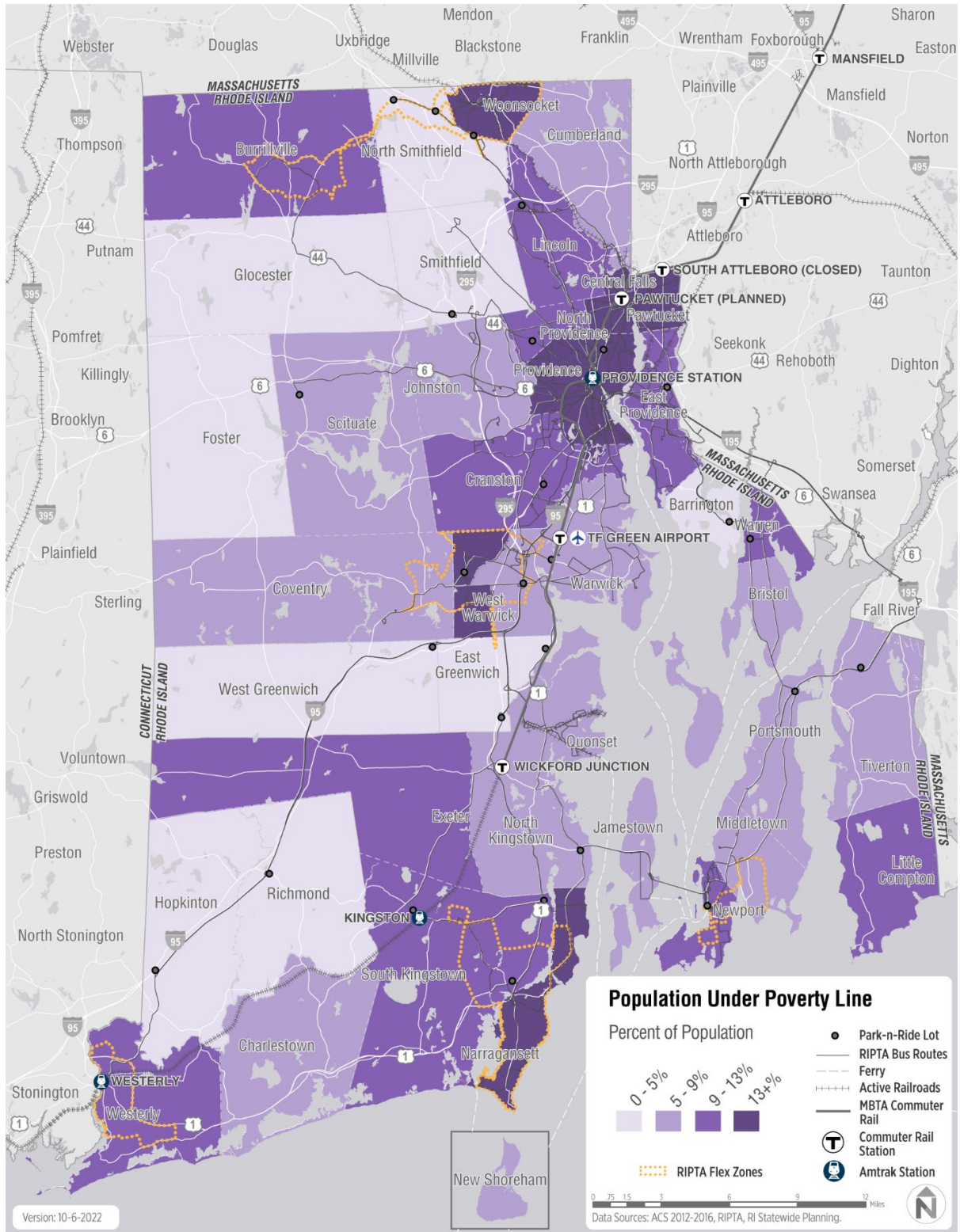


Figure 17 Percent of Low-Income Population by Municipality



## Households without Vehicles

Households without regular access to a vehicle make up just under 10% of the state population. Figure 18 shows this as a measure of people per acre (density) and Figure 19 shows the percentages by municipality.

Figure 18 Density of Zero-Vehicle Households

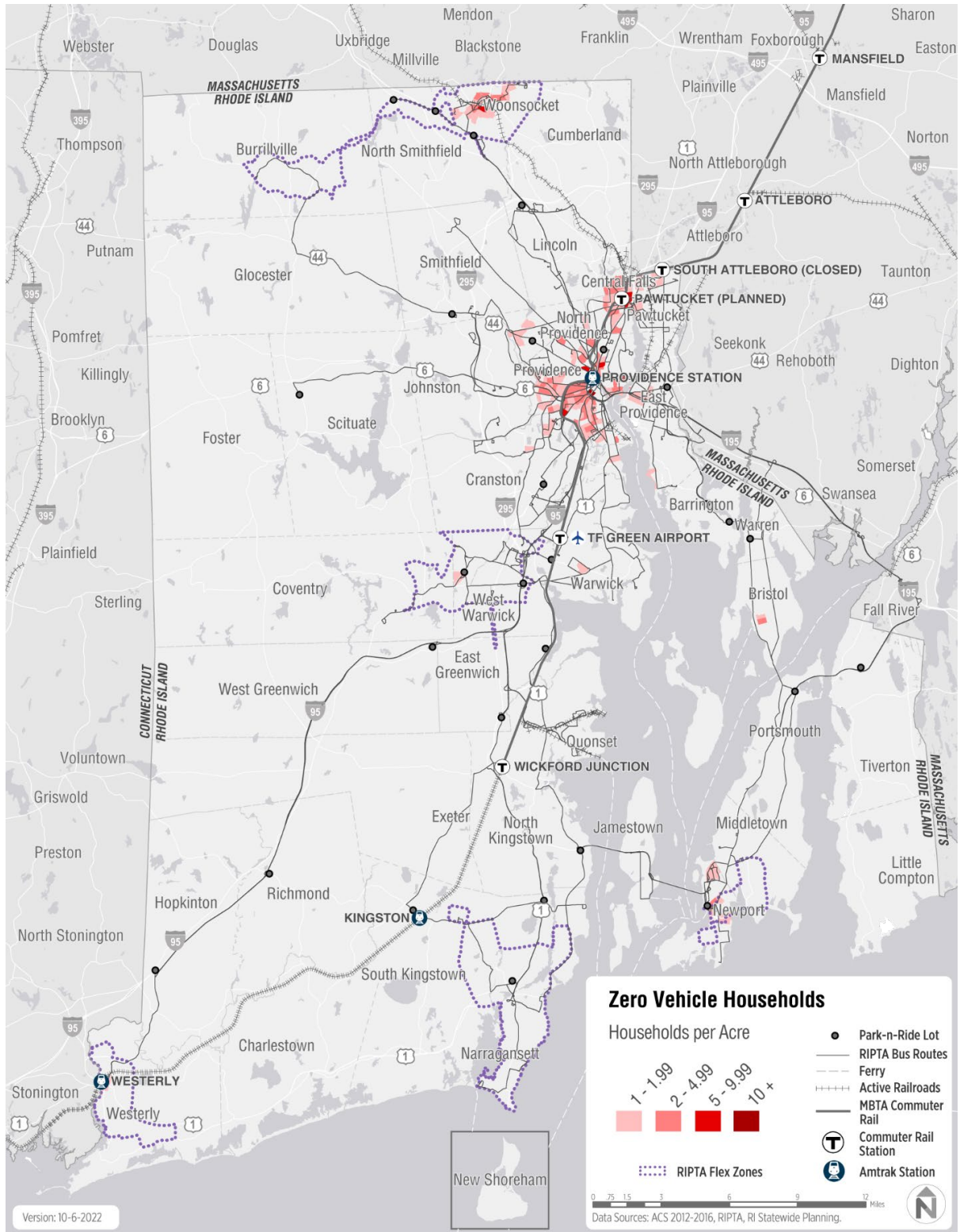
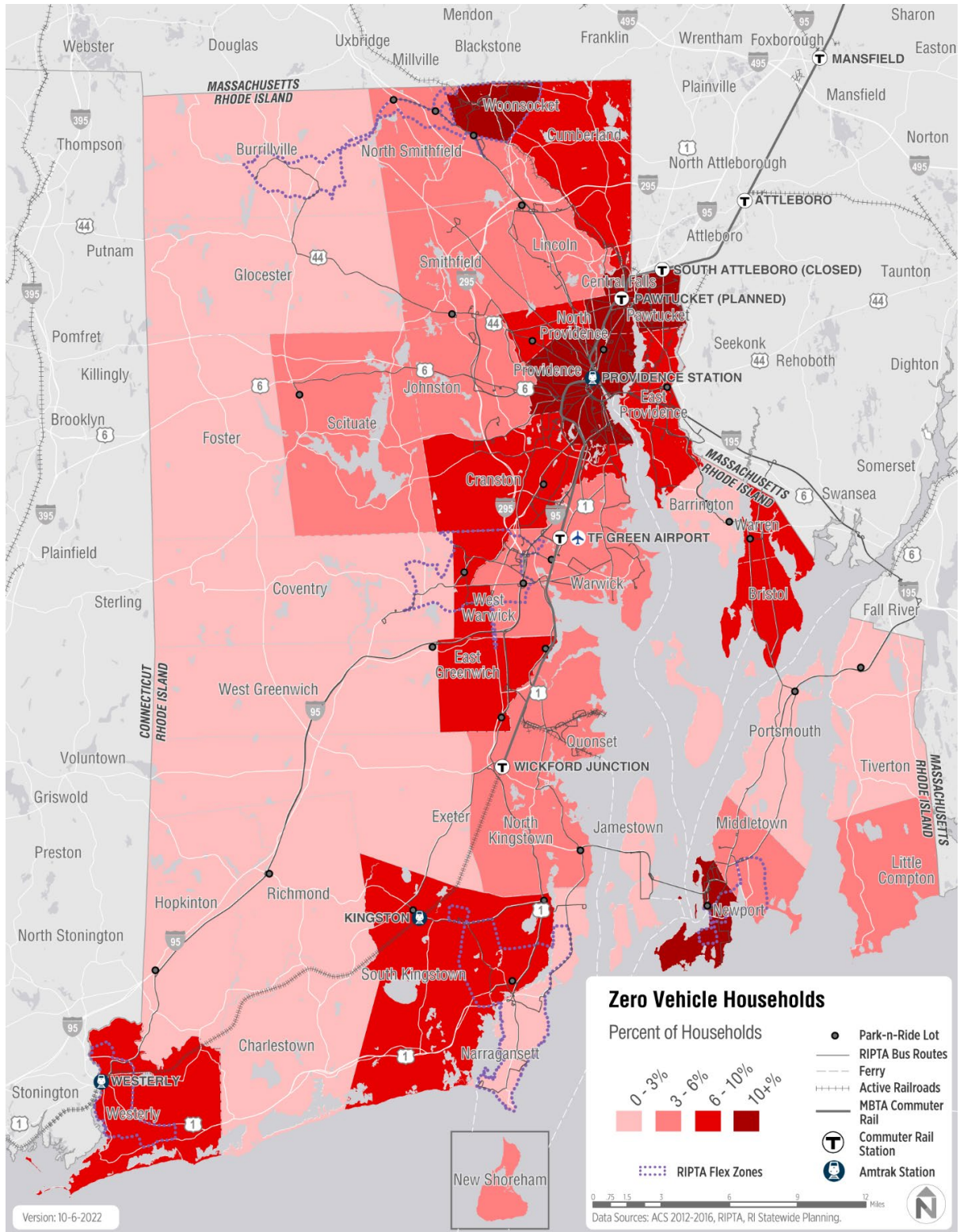


Figure 19 Percent of Households with Zero Vehicles by Municipality





## TRANSIT PROPENSITY

Transit Forward RI 2040, the state’s recently completed transit master plan, evaluated Rhode Island’s population, market characteristics, and travel patterns to map the propensity for transit service. Transit propensity is also an important consideration for the Coordinated Plan since areas where transit propensity is lower typically align with gaps and unmet needs. Underlying transit demand is strongly related to six factors:

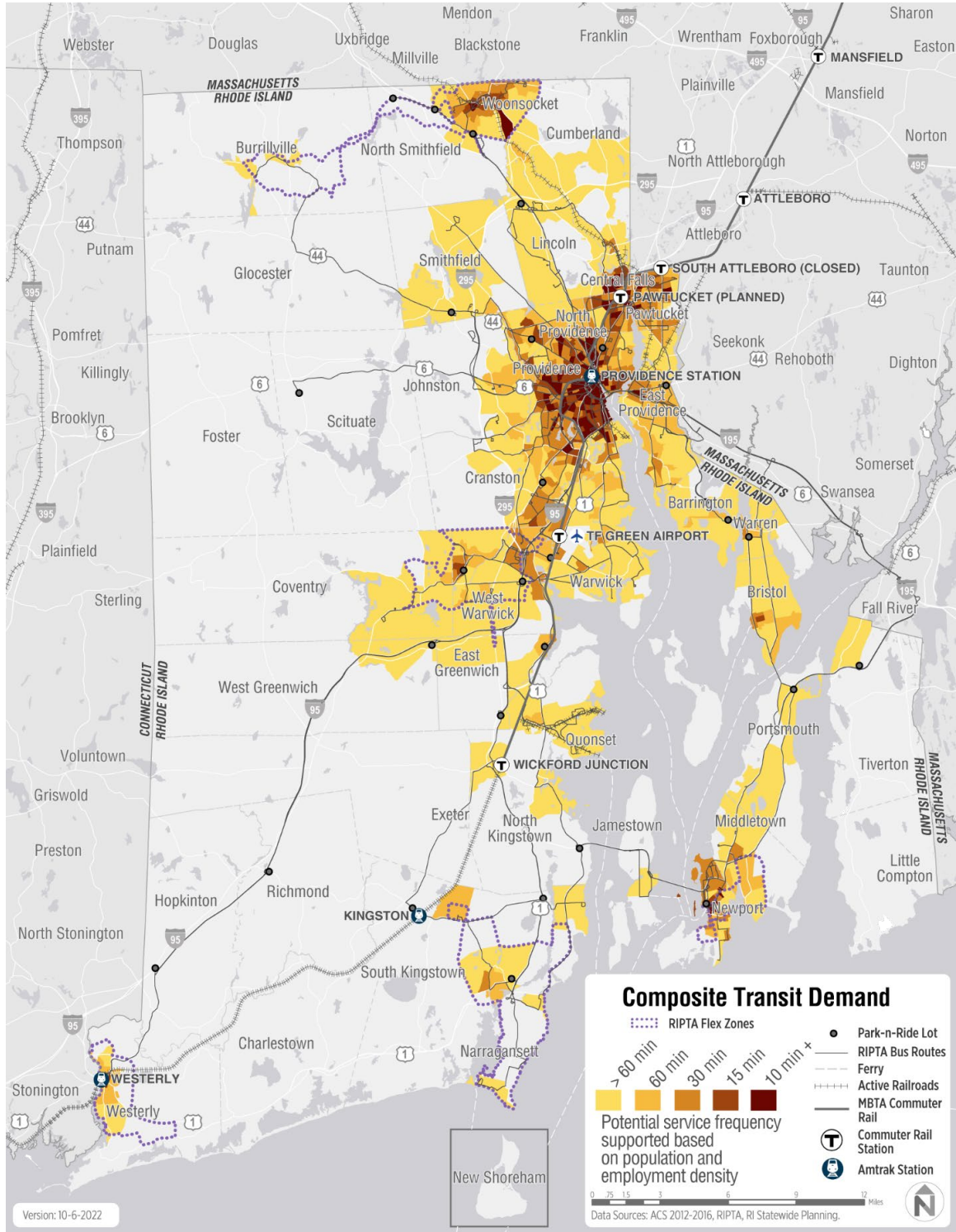
1. Population and Population Density. Since transit relies on having more people near service, higher population density makes it feasible to provide higher levels of service.
2. Socioeconomic Characteristics: Different people have a different likelihood to use transit, with differences related to socioeconomic characteristics. For example, households with many cars are much less likely to use transit than those with one or none.
3. Employment and Employment Density: The location and density of jobs is also a strong indicator of transit demand, as traveling to and from work often accounts for the most frequent type of transit trip.
4. Development Patterns: In all cities, there is a strong correlation between development patterns and transit ridership. In areas with denser development, mixed-use development, and a good pedestrian environment, transit can become very convenient, making it attractive and well used.
5. Major Activity Centers: Large employers, universities, tourism destinations, and other high-activity areas attract large volumes of people and can generate more transit trips.
6. Travel Flows: People use transit to get from one place to another. Major transit lines such as commuter rail and high-frequency bus corridors are designed to serve corridors with high volume travel flows.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 20 presents Rhode Island’s composite demand for transit service frequency. Areas with the darkest shading can support the highest-frequency service (e.g., a bus or train every ten minutes) while the lightest shaded areas can support some low-frequency service (more than one hour between trips). Areas with no shading generally cannot support fixed-route transit service. RIPTA fixed-route bus or Flex service is provided in most shaded areas. Most communities with limited or no RIPTA service that have some transit propensity also have local shuttle services.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://transitforwardri.com/documents.htm> (Market Analysis Briefing Book)

Figure 20 Composite Transit Demand from Transit Forward RI



## COMMUNITIES OR AREAS WITH UNMET NEEDS

Several communities with insufficient population to support fixed-route service have volunteer driver programs including Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, New Shoreham (Block Island), Richmond, and West Greenwich. Little Compton is the sole low-density community with insufficient population to support fixed-route service and without local shuttle services. Rural communities are eligible for separate federal transit grant funding (Section 5311). See RIPTA's website for more information.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ripta.com/projects/state-management-plan/>

## 5. PLAN STRATEGIES

### INTRODUCTION

The strategies included in this Coordinated Plan consider unmet needs (where vulnerable populations live in relation to where services are available), stakeholder and Coordinating Council input, and ongoing programs and initiatives in RI, including the Coordinating Council's ongoing efforts to improve mobility statewide. The strategies also consider recommendations from the 2018 Coordinated Plan and programs and strategies advanced over the past five years. (See Chapter 1.)

### Coordinated Plan Development: Strategy Feedback

The development of strategies included input from the Coordinating Council, best practices research, and public listening sessions. The project team developed a list of priority strategies and held feedback sessions in late July/early August 2022. The presentation slides and notes from these meetings are in Appendix A. As a follow up, participants were also invited to rank strategies using an online survey. Each respondent had eight total votes to distribute among the strategies. Participants could assign all eight votes or a combination of votes to one or more strategies up to the maximum. The survey responses, summarized in Appendix B, ranked the strategies as follows:

1. Increase transportation service offerings.
2. Pursue additional funding for human services transportation.
3. Enhance bus stops, mobility hubs, and availability of vehicles.
4. Expand customer service and driver sensitivity training.
5. Develop a statewide mobility management network.
6. Strengthen coordination among providers, funders, and advocates.
7. Strengthen communications and information sharing.
8. Increase coordination of travel training services statewide.

### Best Practices Research

The strategies incorporate research of human services transportation coordination practices in other regions conducted by the consultant team with RIPTA participation. This included interviews with representatives of the following programs.

- New Hampshire Mobility Management Network
- EMBARK (Oklahoma City, OK) mobility management services
- The Kennedy Collective (Southwest Connecticut Regional Mobility Management) travel training program
- AccessPoint RI travel training services
- King County Metro (Seattle, WA) Community Van Program

Transferable lessons learned from the interviews and brief program summaries are incorporated into the strategies where applicable.

## RECOMMENDED PLAN STRATEGIES

### Strategy 1: Increase Transportation Service Offerings

Certain areas of RI have limited access to public transportation. When local services are provided, limited hours, eligibility rules, and geographic coverage mean that individuals without access to an automobile have limited options. While transportation is available statewide for older adults and for Medicaid-eligible individuals through the ETP and NEMT programs, trips are limited primarily to medical purposes. Increasing transportation service options is therefore a foundational essential strategy.

#### New Services Recommended in Transit Forward RI 2040

As discussed in Chapter 3, Transit Forward RI 2040, the state’s public transportation master plan includes a service expansion initiative with new local services, crosstown routes, and service partnerships. Should these new services be implemented, more people would have access to more and better transit service. As discussed in Chapter 3, Transit Forward RI 2040 recommends implementation of mobility hubs and service partnerships.

#### Statewide Paratransit Service Study

In July 2022, the RI legislature directed RIPTA to study “a statewide program that addresses the transportation needs of seniors and individuals whose disability prevents independent use of the fixed route system and who do not fall within [ $\frac{3}{4}$  mile] of a fixed route as required by ADA.” The study report, submitted to the legislature in January 2023, estimated that between 59,800 and 64,200 additional one-way trips per year could be expected with statewide service. Net additional annual operating costs were forecast to be \$5.5–\$6.4 million. Between 26 and 28 additional RIde vehicles would be needed to operate the statewide service at a cost of \$3.9 to \$4.2 million. For further information, consult RIPTA’s website.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.ripta.com/projects/paratransit-expansion-study/>.

## Partnerships

Pursuant to the statewide paratransit service study, RIPTA is exploring several options for expanding accessible transportation services, including voucher programs that enable ridesharing partnerships in other regions. In addition, RIPTA may consider providing resources to assist taxi operators, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations with purchasing additional accessible vehicles.

## Vanpool Program Expansion

As discussed in Chapter 3, RIPTA contracts with Commute with Enterprise to manage its vanpool program. One strategy evaluated for the Coordinated Plan is to expand the program to meet transportation needs where fixed-route services are not available.

## Model Programs and Applicable Lessons from Other Regions

RIPTA's vanpool program offers the features of most traditional vanpool programs—a focus on coordinating and sharing the costs of work trips and designated days and hours during which the vanpool vehicle is available for use by participants.

The team interviewed staff from King County Metro (Metro), greater Seattle's public transit agency, to learn about their longstanding Community Van Program, which places vehicles in communities for shared use by any group of residents for any type of trip at any time. All drivers are volunteers, recruited, vetted, and trained by Metro staff. Today, community vans operate in eleven Seattle area cities with plans for expansion. Van service is open to everyone and for any trip purpose so long as at least two riders are traveling. Trips must begin where the van is based, and travel is permitted to places up to two hours away. Each rider's fare is the same as a one-zone Metro round-trip bus trip. More information is available at King County Metro's website.<sup>19</sup>

## Strategy 2: Pursue Additional Funding for Human Services Transportation

Funding is needed to support the provision of additional transportation services in areas of need. This legislative session, RIPTA is seeking to address long-term sustainable needs for both fixed-route and paratransit service. One option may be to establish legislation that would dedicate a local match for Section 5311 funding.

## Pursuit of Joint Funding Opportunities

RIPTA will continue partnering with other organizations to apply for funding opportunities, as it has done successfully since the implementation of the most recent Coordinated Plan. One

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<sup>19</sup> See <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/rideshare/programs/community-van.aspx>

example is RIPTA's receipt of a Federal Transit Administration's Access & Mobility Partnership grant in 2019 for a partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and the Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP) on the Rides Toward Work program. This grant aimed to remove transportation barriers for RI Works program participants. Another is an Equity and Accessibility Planning grant from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) in partnership with Age-Friendly Rhode Island in 2021, which in 2022 led to a vehicle sharing pilot implementation grant in partnership with Looking Upwards, a local organization that provides services to adults with developmental disabilities and children with special healthcare needs.

## Federal Fund Braiding

In addition to Section 5310 funding, numerous additional resources have the potential to be "braided" to meet local match requirements. The federal Coordinating Council for Access and Mobility (CCAM)<sup>20</sup> has published a guide that provides information to potential grantees as well as CCAM agency program managers on acceptable federal fund braiding arrangements on transportation-related projects. The guide defines federal fund braiding for local match and examines whether federal fund braiding is allowable for 61 programs across CCAM agencies that may fund transportation.

CCAM recently updated its program inventory of at least 130 federal programs that may fund transportation services. This updated inventory incorporates CCAM's Federal Fund Braiding Guide.

During a recent presentation, FTA's CCAM liaison reminded FTA recipients that three federally funded technical assistance programs have community grant programs that incentivize transportation partnerships:

- National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP), utilizing Section 5311 funds
- National Aging and Disabilities Transportation Center (NADTC), utilizing Section 5310 funds
- National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM), utilizing Section 5307 funds

The recently published CCAM Strategic Plan includes plans to create a new technical assistance center. A copy of the plan is available from FTA.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) is a federal interagency council that works to coordinate funding and provide expertise on human services transportation for three targeted populations: people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income. (See <https://www.transit.dot.gov/coordinating-council-access-and-mobility>.)

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/ccam/about/ccam-strategic-plan-2019-2022>

## State Funding Alternatives for Human Services Transportation

Following the statewide paratransit study, RIPTA is looking at phasing the long-term implementation of recommendations and alternative service options such as a ridesharing pilot program.

### Example of Ongoing Funding Partnerships – BHDDH

As discussed in Chapter 3, the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) works with RIPTA to provide extra funding to assist BHDDH clients who are also ADA paratransit eligible due to their disability and use RIDE services. By arrangement, RIDE drivers provide hand-to-hand service accompanying riders to and from the RIDE vehicle.

### Model Programs and Applicable Lessons from Other Regions

The two organizations interviewed as examples of mobility management utilize fund braiding to support their coordination activities. The New Hampshire Statewide Mobility Management Network is using Section 5310 funds to support mobility manager positions matched with federal funds from a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) grant specifically for rural areas.

EMBARK in Oklahoma City seeks to commingle riders and employ fund braiding when possible; it aims to operate 90% of its mobility management services in-house because this makes it easier to transport riders supported by different programs and funding sources. In addition to state and local grants, EMBARK uses a variety of federal funds to support its ADA paratransit service and mobility management programs, including:

- Section 5307
- Section 5310
- Title IIIb funds from the Older Americans Act, administered by the Administration on Aging within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Non-emergency medical transportation funding from Medical Assistance grants (Medicaid), administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services within DHHS

CCAM's Federal Fund Braiding Guide notes that funding from all DHHS programs may be used as match for other federal funds provided that "1) the HHS program's statute is silent on whether its funds can be used to fulfill the match requirement of the other participating Federal program; and 2) the other participating Federal program must expressly allow its match requirement to be met with other federal funds."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) Federal Fund Braiding Guide, June 2020, p. 4.



## Strategy 3: Enhance Bus Stops, Mobility Hubs, and Availability of Vehicles

Since the 1980s Rhode Island’s priority for the expenditure of Section 5310 funding has been vehicle replacement for the RIde paratransit program. RIPTA currently procures and maintains RIde vehicles and operates RIde service, utilizing 100% of Section 5310 funds for vehicles. These funds may be leveraged and supplemented to meet ongoing needs for infrastructure improvements and additional service.

### Vehicles for Community Transportation

Several communities and organizations in RI were recent beneficiaries of grant funding to purchase new accessible vehicles. In addition, RIPTA and Age Friendly RI are working to explore vehicle sharing in Newport County. (See Chapter 1.) Providing more resources for vehicle acquisition and for further sharing opportunities will continue to expand mobility opportunities, particularly in areas not served by RIPTA.

### Bus Stop Enhancements

Another priority is ensuring that bus stops are fully accessible, work operationally for buses to easily pull up to the curb for boarding and alighting with properly deploying lifts, and include amenities such as shelters, lighting, and clear signage. As with many transit systems, bus stops are almost exclusively owned by other government agencies or private entities. A key strategy for improving the quality of bus stops is to assess the features of existing stops and establish priorities for making improvements.

RIPTA is undertaking a study to improve its bus stops. The study will inventory existing bus stops and develop a bus stop improvement work plan, budget, and timeline. Key goals of the bus stop improvement program include establishing a high standard of quality and accessibility for all bus stops and doubling the number of bus shelters systemwide.

#### **MBTA’s Plan for Accessible Transportation Infrastructure**

Boston’s Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) undertook a comprehensive evaluation of its nearly 8,000 bus stops in 2016 as part of its Plan for Accessible Transportation Infrastructure (PATI) program. Since completing the inventory, the MBTA has worked with individual municipalities to relocate or reconstruct hundreds of stops.

See MBTA PATI [website](#).

### Sidewalk Infrastructure Serving Bus Stops

As with bus stops, other entities own the sidewalks connecting to them. Ensuring that paths of travel to and from bus stops, including street crossings between bus stop pairs, is vital. A key strategy is to focus on places with high bus ridership and to confirm that the paths of travel are unobstructed, accessible, and in good repair. This is particularly relevant in locations near where older adults or people with disabilities live, such as the connections between building entrances

at senior housing properties and nearby bus stops. In addition, RIPTA will be coordinating with local municipalities on implementation of Safe Streets and Roads for All grant funds.

### **Mobility Hubs**

As discussed in Chapter 3, Transit Forward RI 2040 proposes nine regional mobility hubs and additional community mobility hubs throughout RI, with at least one in each community. In urbanized settings, mobility hubs likely will be sited where multiple bus routes meet. Mobility hub locations will vary by community in more rural areas. Options might be a central gathering place, a location currently served by local transportation, a park-and-ride lot, or another site that is easily accessible to transportation. As mobility hubs are advanced, it will be important to work with local transportation service providers, municipal staff, and community residents to identify preferred locations.

## **Strategy 4: Expand Customer Service and Driver Sensitivity Training**

Under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), RIPTA is obligated to ensure its staff are properly trained. Specifically, Section 37.123 of the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations states:

Each public or private entity which operates a fixed route or demand responsive system shall ensure that personnel are trained to proficiency, as appropriate to their duties, so that they operate vehicles and equipment safely and properly assist and treat individuals with disabilities who use the service in a respectful and courteous way, with appropriate attention to the difference among individuals with disabilities.<sup>23</sup>

During the Coordinated Plan public input sessions, participants stressed the importance of adding sensitivity training to the ADA training RIPTA employees currently receive during their onboarding process. Such training is also beneficial to other agency staff who work with clients of the ETP and NEMT programs and community-based van services. This includes gaining a better understanding of different disabilities and knowing when to offer help and how to offer it.

### **Model Programs and Applicable Lessons from Other Regions**

Implementing this strategy would involve inviting experts to design and provide training for RIPTA staff in roles applicable to their job duties. The training could be integrated into the current onboarding curriculum, introduced as refresher training, or provided on as-needed basis such as following an incident or in response to a complaint. During the public strategy-feedback meetings, participants suggested that a video could be developed and then shared with other

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-A/part-37/subpart-G/section-37.173>

service providers. As noted in the travel training strategy discussion, AccessPoint RI has provided sensitivity training to other state agencies in Rhode Island and has expressed willingness to provide such training to transportation providers.

## Strategy 5: Develop a Statewide Mobility Management Network

Mobility management is an approach to managing and delivering coordinated public transportation services through programs that connect older adults, people with disabilities, and those with low incomes to all available transportation options. Mobility managers collaborate with partners in transportation, human services, healthcare, employment, and education to strengthen connections and improve coordination.

In Rhode Island, transportation options in rural areas are particularly limited. Efforts to coordinate all available resources have improved the availability of information and have strengthened collaboration. A statewide mobility management network would strengthen coordination among transportation providers, nonprofit organizations, agencies, social workers, and others.



Source: RTAP

Guidance from the National Center for Mobility

Management (NCMM) suggests that effective mobility management programs feature three key goals:

- Through **engagement, outreach, and coordination**, offer consistent and easily accessible information on available public transportation services,
- Through **data collection, needs assessment, and program design**, understand and better address the concerns of people who face mobility challenges, and
- Through **program evaluation and refinement**, promote and improve coordination and use of technology among providers leading to a better user experience, more transportation services, and reduced operating costs.

## Model Programs and Applicable Lessons from Other Regions

As part of the best practices research for this plan, the team interviewed individuals involved in the development and implementation of the New Hampshire Mobility Management Network and the mobility management activities of EMBARK, the public transit operator in greater Oklahoma City.

### New Hampshire Mobility Management Network

In 2007, the State of New Hampshire (NH) created the NH State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (SCC) and regional coordination councils (RCCs). Following a detailed

implementation blueprint, partners are now putting the NH Mobility Management Network into place. Mobility managers will be hired at the state and regional levels to develop coordinated transportation services in 8-10 regions. Key features of the network are extensive outreach and engagement efforts and identified funding from number of diversified sources (see Funding Strategy discussion).<sup>24</sup>

### **Embark Mobility Management**

EMBARK, also referenced in the funding strategy discussion, is the public transit agency for the metro Oklahoma City area. EMBARK's Climb Ride program, launched in 2019, is a cornerstone of the agency's mobility management services, and serves as a model for future expansion of mobility management activities in partnership with human service agencies. Created to provide transportation services to enable parents with children in foster care to complete court-ordered activities and reunite with their children, Climb Ride now serves clients of all county human services offices.<sup>25</sup>

Lessons from these programs applicable to RI include:

- Identifying institutional barriers to transportation coordination and opportunities for fund braiding at the state level should be priority tasks in the development of a coordinated transportation or mobility management network. Early identification of initial funding for development and implementation is also very important.
- Outreach to potential partners and supporters—state agencies, transportation providers, communities, consumers, advocacy organizations, municipal or regional planners—should be an ongoing effort. Regular participation on advisory committees is an effective way to increase awareness of mobility management efforts, publicize successes, and learn about existing service gaps and barriers.
- Building trust among partners takes time.
- Mobility management successes can build support for additional activities and even larger transportation projects. Be sure to highlight the human-interest aspect of success stories.
- Include communities and other organizations in the use of Section 5310 and 5311 funds to the extent possible to increase support for coordinated services and mobility management efforts.
- Buy-in at the state level for improved mobility and access is critical. Oklahoma DOT and NH DOT have provided funding, planning assistance, and/or participation in regular meetings in support of mobility management programs and services.
- Transportation needs and resources are not universal. Tailor services to address gaps experienced by target populations in each region/community or of specific human service agencies' clients.

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<sup>24</sup> For more information, search for New Hampshire mobility manager network on the State of New Hampshire website.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://embarkok.com/special-services>.

- Bottom-up ideas and solutions may be more effective than those imposed from the top down. Rely on local stakeholders to identify transportation service gaps and solutions.
- Think beyond typical sources when identifying funding opportunities. The NH network obtained a large grant from the Centers for Disease Control related to COVID-19 health disparities among at-risk populations; EMBARK's Climb Ride program began with a transportation innovation grant from a local family foundation.
- When communicating with prospective coordination partners, emphasize mutual benefits, such as the potential for increased efficiency of all participants' resources and opportunities for savings. It is important to also recognize that transit agency priorities can sometimes differ, particularly when resources are constrained. Investigating ways to expand services with human service or other types of funding can help to remove potential barriers.

## **Strategy 6: Strengthen Coordination Among Providers, Funders, and Advocates**

The Coordinating Council's enabling legislation directed RIPTA to convene the council to better integrate transportation programs that support individuals in need of specialized transportation assistance. Ten state agencies that provide or manage transportation services are represented and meet every other month to gather and share information, support transportation initiatives, and advocate for positive change. RIPTA staffs the Coordinating Council. Current coordination activities revolve around these bi-monthly meetings. The Coordinating Council has participated in the development of the 2023 Coordinated Plan through attendance at Coordinating Council meetings, public listening and strategy feedback sessions, and strategy ranking activities.

The establishment of a statewide mobility management network is directly related to this strategy. Unlike the prior plan, which recommended the establishment of local coordinating councils, the Coordinating Council should continue its statewide focus and provide a forum for the mobility management network activities and other priority strategies in RI, including related initiatives such as applicable elements of Transit Forward RI 2040. Consideration can be given to establishing committees that would report to the larger group periodically, such as every third or fourth meeting. Committees could focus on one or two key areas such as data and trend tracking or mobility management participation. Any information compiled can be organized into a spreadsheet or tracking report for use in annual Coordinating Council reports and in future coordinated plan updates.

## **Strategy 7: Strengthen Communications and Information Sharing**

The 2018 Coordinated Plan emphasized improved communications and information sharing as a priority strategy. As a follow up, RIPTA engaged a consultant for a One-Call/One-Click resource study, completed in 2021. A key recommendation was to revise RIPTA's website and customer service protocols to offer information on all available transportation resources, not just fixed-

route services. As discussed in Chapter 1, the study also recommended further investigation of enhancing RIPTA's web-based trip planner feature and cited Mass RideMatch, the trip planner available to regional transit authorities in Massachusetts as a good example.

Looking ahead, RIPTA may wish to evaluate further enhancements to its website, particularly its integrated trip planner. The current trip planner uses Google transit and RIPTA's fixed-route data to provide travel information. A next-level enhancement is to establish a general transit feed specification (GTFS) for RIPTA's Flex service. The specification, known as GTFS-Flex works with open trip planners to integrate service zones where demand-response services such as RIPTA Flex operate.

## Strategy 8: Increase Coordination of Travel Training Services Statewide

As noted above, in 2022, RIPTA received an Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) grant to develop a travel training network. This program will be implemented in 2023 and is intended to expand programs that offer riders training on how to use transportation services. As noted in RIPTA's grant application:

By creating a travel training network, RIPTA and its public and nonprofit partners have an opportunity to leverage their current training resources, which are disconnected, and collaborate to improve training delivery. Ultimately, this multi-agency effort will enhance community access to existing transportation services and may underscore the need for new services...The new training curriculum will provide case managers, senior center staff, and other program staff with customized information to share with their clients, guiding them through the steps of navigating and utilizing appropriate services to lead healthy, independent lives.

The goal of expanding travel training is to educate all potential users on the availability of transportation services, how to plan travel, reserve trips (as applicable), pay fares, ride the vehicle, etc. Given individuals' differing needs, including different disabilities, travel training programs are typically customized to account for these differences. For example, travel training for younger individuals with cognitive impairments can be effectively delivered in a classroom. Travel training for older adults who retire from driving often include peer-to-peer training where others of similar age who know how to use public transportation work with their peers.



Photo: RIPTA

## Model Programs and Applicable Lessons from Other Regions

The team interviewed two organizations with established travel training programs: Access Point, RI and the Kennedy Collective.

### AccessPoint RI

Located in Cranston, AccessPoint RI provides a variety of services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, including residential services, day programs, employment services, recreation, and community support.

AccessPoint offers training for commute trips and other community activities (excluding medical trips) using RIPTA fixed-route buses and most often, the RIde paratransit service. Trainers are AccessPoint program support staff members, typically coordinators for employment, day programs, or residential services. Using RIPTA public information materials, trainers conduct one-on-one or group sessions to explain how the services work and how to ride a shared-ride van. The length of training is individualized, depending on the needs of each client, but usually involves up to five trips on a RIde van with the trainer. For some clients, training also covers how to use the RIde mobile app to book trips; for others, AccessPoint staff schedules their rides following the completion of travel training.

AccessPoint considers the training program very successful; clients reach their destinations without incident and no complaints have been received. AccessPoint has offered to assist with sensitivity training and providing train-the-trainer services to other organizations interested in developing a travel training program.

### The Kennedy Collective

Formerly known as The Kennedy Center, the Trumbull, Connecticut-based organization provides a variety of services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, including travel training.

The Kennedy Collective's nationally recognized travel training program has been in operation since 1991. Individuals with cognitive, sensory, or physical disabilities between the ages 16 and 95 are trained to use local buses and trains independently and safely for all types of community trips throughout Connecticut. Free training is typically provided on a one-to-one basis by a mobility instructor who travels with the client until the individual is ready to travel safely and independently, however long that takes. Training includes not only skills needed to ride a bus or train but also related skills such as street crossing, interacting with strangers, dealing with unexpected situations, wheelchair securement, and self-advocacy. Funding is provided by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The Kennedy Collective also offers train-the-trainer seminars and guidance for organizations that wish to establish their own travel training programs.

## 6. RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

This Coordinated Plan describes eight strategy areas that reflect input from the Coordinating Council and participants in the listening sessions held in April and May 2022. Each of these strategies is described in Chapter 5. Figure 21 Strategy Implementation Roadmap offers a roadmap for these strategies, including implementation steps, which agencies are involved, a suggested timeframe, and suggested metrics for tracking and reporting.



Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan Update

Figure 21 Strategy Implementation Roadmap

Strategy	Implementation Steps	Agencies/Partners	Timeframe	Tracking/Reporting
1. Increase Transportation Service Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement Transit Forward RI 2040 recommendations by adding new local services and crosstown routes</li> <li>▪ Pursue service partnerships</li> <li>▪ Explore options for people with disabilities outside paratransit service area</li> <li>▪ Expand vanpool program</li> <li>▪ Sustain and/or replicate pilot vehicle sharing program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA</li> <li>▪ Local municipalities</li> <li>▪ Human service organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unmet transportation needs filled</li> <li>▪ New services added to community transportation webpages on RIPTA’s website</li> </ul>
2. Pursue Additional Funding for Human Services Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for increased state funding</li> <li>▪ Submit joint applications for federal discretionary grants for human services transportation</li> <li>▪ Utilize FTA Section 5311 rural funds where applicable</li> <li>▪ Seek opportunities to braid federal funds</li> <li>▪ Encourage local organizations to fund client trips through institutional Wave accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA</li> <li>▪ State agencies</li> <li>▪ Local municipalities</li> <li>▪ Human service organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate during state legislative session</li> <li>▪ Respond to federal notices of funding opportunities as they arise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Additional funding allocated</li> </ul>

**2023 Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

Strategy	Implementation Steps	Agencies/Partners	Timeframe	Tracking/Reporting
3. Enhance Bus Stops, Mobility Hubs, and Availability of Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issue RFP for bus stop and associated sidewalk infrastructure study</li> <li>▪ Complete study</li> <li>▪ Establish priorities for improvement</li> <li>▪ Allocate funds for stop and shelter improvements</li> <li>▪ Work with facility owners to design and build new/improved infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Monitor results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA</li> <li>▪ Local municipalities</li> <li>▪ RIDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issue RFP by Q2 2023</li> <li>▪ Complete study by Q2 2024</li> <li>▪ Begin implementing improvements in Q4 2024</li> <li>▪ Ongoing activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completion of study</li> <li>▪ Funding allocated</li> <li>▪ Stops, shelters, and sidewalks improved</li> <li>▪ Customer satisfaction</li> </ul>
4. Expand Customer Service and Sensitivity Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with AccessPoint RI and others to customize changes in training curricula</li> <li>▪ Develop refresher training materials</li> <li>▪ Invite drivers from other programs to participate</li> <li>▪ Deliver training at least quarterly</li> <li>▪ Monitor customer satisfaction to address needs and measure program success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA for project management</li> <li>▪ AccessPoint RI for curriculum development and instruction</li> <li>▪ ATAC for curriculum input and feedback</li> <li>▪ DHS (for NEMT and ETP contractors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete content development by Q2 2024</li> <li>▪ Integrate into RIPTA new driver training Q3 2024</li> <li>▪ Begin offering refresher training by Q4 2024</li> <li>▪ Share with other agencies in 2025</li> <li>▪ Ongoing activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Materials developed</li> <li>▪ Input and collaboration meetings held</li> <li>▪ Training delivered</li> <li>▪ Compliment trends</li> <li>▪ Complaint trends</li> <li>▪ Driver surveys</li> </ul>

**2023 Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

Strategy	Implementation Steps	Agencies/Partners	Timeframe	Tracking/Reporting
5. Develop a Statewide Mobility Management Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify other potential partners and interested parties</li> <li>▪ Establish a schedule for and conduct periodic partner check-ins to share ideas and report progress</li> <li>▪ Participate in partner and other events to promote mobility management</li> <li>▪ Establish reporting tools and use them to track progress</li> <li>▪ Iterate and refine the program over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA</li> <li>▪ Coordinating Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin program development as soon as possible</li> <li>▪ Formalize network by mid-2024</li> <li>▪ Refine program iteratively and maintain if successful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Barriers identified</li> <li>▪ Meetings held</li> <li>▪ Partners enrolled</li> <li>▪ Programs organized</li> <li>▪ Funding allocated</li> <li>▪ Reports or articles written sharing success stories</li> </ul>
6. Strengthen Coordination Among Providers, Funders, and Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue convening RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council</li> <li>▪ Create statewide mobility management network</li> <li>▪ Establish committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA</li> <li>▪ Coordinating Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet every other month</li> <li>▪ Supplement between meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tracking sheet created</li> <li>▪ Coordinating Council annual report prepared</li> </ul>
7. Strengthen Communications and Information Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain community transportation webpages</li> <li>▪ Train RIPTA staff and partners on using the resource</li> <li>▪ Investigate additional web enhancements, i.e., integrated trip planner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA</li> <li>▪ Coordinating Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct regular community transportation page updates at least three times/year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness grows</li> <li>▪ Website traffic increases</li> <li>▪ Information about transportation options is easy to find</li> </ul>

**2023 Rhode Island Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

Strategy	Implementation Steps	Agencies/Partners	Timeframe	Tracking/Reporting
<p>8. Increase Coordination of Travel Training Services Statewide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement tasks in current travel training grant</li> <li>▪ Coordinate with disability organizations</li> <li>▪ Coordinate with municipal senior centers</li> <li>▪ Produce shareable content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RIPTA for project management</li> <li>▪ AccessPoint RI and other local disability organizations for curriculum design</li> <li>▪ ATAC for input and feedback on travel training</li> <li>▪ Age-Friendly RI for outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete current grant scope by end of 2023</li> <li>▪ Deliver shareable content by Q1 2024</li> <li>▪ Ongoing activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revised materials developed</li> <li>▪ Input and collaboration meetings held</li> <li>▪ Outreach contacts made to share materials, arrange events</li> <li>▪ Presentations given</li> <li>▪ New riders trained</li> </ul>

# APPENDICES

## **Appendix A: Public Meeting Materials and Summaries**

# PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARIES

Six opportunities for public engagement were provided over the course of the 2022 Coordinated Plan development process. These included:

- Four virtual listening sessions (April 25, 27, 28 and May 4, 2022)
- Two virtual strategy sessions (July 19 and 27, 2022)

## Public Outreach Tools

A broad and directed outreach campaign was conducted to publicize public meetings. Similar outreach strategies were deployed for both rounds of public input in April/May 2022 and July 2022. These outreach tools included:

- **2022 RI Coordinated Plan Update Web Page**: Developed to provide information about the federal coordinated planning process and the 2022 RI update and to advertise public sessions. The webpage resides on RIPTA's website.
- **RIPTA Newsletter**: RIPTA distributes a monthly newsletter with distribution to a broad email database. Coordinated plan updates and notices of upcoming public meetings were published in both the [April 1, 2022 edition](#) and the [July 1, 2022, edition](#).
- **Direct Email Invitations**: Meeting notices with virtual meeting links were sent to all contacts in RIPTA's database of human services transportation providers and organizations, including organizations that support older adults, individuals with disabilities and others who need transportation assistance. Members of the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council and other organizations also forwarded the email invitation to their own list-serves.
- **Flyer**: A small poster in pdf format announcing the sessions was attached to emails. The figure below shows the flyer produced for the April/May meetings; a similar flyer was produced for the July meetings. Organizations were encouraged to post these flyers in vehicles, office lobbies and other locations where individuals with an interest in human services transportation might take notice.

The email distribution, website page and flyer provided an email contact for those who preferred to share comments directly. All avenues of outreach included a statement offering accessibility and translation services upon request.

Flyer Used to Publicize April/May Listening Sessions

Share your ideas for the 2022 statewide  
**COORDINATED PLAN**

Do you or your clients have transportation needs that aren't being met?  
We want to hear from you!



**3 Ways to Participate**

- 1 Attend a **Virtual Listening Session** on Zoom
- 2 Review the presentation online and email comments to [jkanter@ripta.com](mailto:jkanter@ripta.com)
- 3 Ask a friend or advocate to submit your comments

RIPTA and the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council are updating the **Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan**. The plan is updated every 5 years to consider the changing transportation needs of **individuals with disabilities, older adults and others who need transportation assistance**. With your input, it will identify strategies and priorities for implementation and funding.

**Visit our website** to register for a listening session, view the presentations, or to learn more about the plan.

**Spring 2022 Virtual Listening Sessions:**

Monday, **April 25**  
1 pm - 2:30 pm

Wednesday, **April 27**  
5 pm - 6:30 pm

Thursday, **April 28**  
10 am - 11:30 am

Wednesday, **May 4**  
3 pm - 4:30 pm

*ASL interpretation will be available.*



To register or for more information, visit [RIPTA.com/CoordinatedPlan](http://RIPTA.com/CoordinatedPlan) or call (401) 784-9500 x1283

Public comments and ideas shared at these meetings are summarized below. Comments voiced at two Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) meetings, which closely aligned with the public meetings and were attended by the study team (May 5 and August 4, 2022), are incorporated into these summaries.



## **LISTENING SESSIONS (APRIL/MAY 2022)**

Four online Listening Sessions were hosted early in the project to gather public input on transportation needs and gaps, as well as to understand the impact and opinions on strategies advanced from the *2017 Coordinated Plan*. At each session, at least one hour of open discussion allowed participants to share their comments as well as their ideas for future enhancement.

The resulting discussion from all four April/May Listening Sessions, along with comments submitted via email and by RIPTA's Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee, is summarized below.

### **Public Comments Summarized by Topic Area**

#### **Existing Transportation Services**

In general, all meeting attendees were in support of a broad increase in public transportation services to improve overall mobility, attract new riders and support broader ADA/paratransit coverage. Specific comments included:

##### RIPTA Fixed-Route Bus Service

- Increase frequency and spans of service in key areas. Examples cited included Woonsocket and West Warwick.
- Trips can be long and onerous if riders must go through Providence to transfer (e.g., Warwick-Cranston trips).
- Design bus routes to serve residential and other facilities that serve individuals with disabilities so they can retain community connections, social ties and independence.
- Attract and train new drivers to increase the driver workforce

##### Ride ADA/Paratransit

- Expand accessible service to increase statewide mobility. Example destinations cited include Little Compton, Woonsocket, South Attleboro and Seekonk MA retail centers, and recreational destinations.

##### RIPTA Flex services

- Expand geographic coverage of Flex zones (e.g., include Matunuck in S. Kingston zone)
- Expand span of service to include evenings, weekends, and holidays.
- Expand marketing to increase awareness of Flex services and how it works.
- Reduce the reservation window.

##### Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

- Several comments related concerns regarding NEMT services. Examples cited included: missed trips, driver sensitivity and safety concerns such as speeding.
- One participant suggested RIPTA provide more of these medical trips

## Coordinated Plan

RIPTA

### New or Expanded Services and Programs

#### Interstate Transportation

There is a desire for more accessible interstate transportation. Examples cited include:

- Trips between Portsmouth/Tiverton/Little Compton and Fall River
- Trips between Providence/East Providence/Pawtucket and Seekonk and South Attleboro
- Trips to Boston for medical appointments

#### Mobility On-Demand and Rural Transportation

There is continued interest in Mobility On-Demand, a strategy recommended in the *2017 Coordinated Plan*. Many expressed a desire for on-demand accessible transportation that would get them anywhere in Rhode Island. Specific destinations mentioned include:

- Harrisville, Burrillville, and Ashaway in northwest RI
- South County in general, and specifically Matunuck
- Hopkinton, Richmond, Exeter in southwestern RI
- Tiverton and Little Compton in southeastern RI

Some suggested RIPTA should operate any statewide on-demand service, while others suggested that Uber or Lyft could be used (if available) to support certain trips. One participant suggested introducing accessible circulators that serve certain local destinations a few times a week or for a higher fee.

In response to these suggestions, the study team shared the concept of community mobility hubs, as recommended in *TransitForwardRI*, the statewide transit master plan. Participants felt this concept could reduce travels times and improve rural mobility. Specific comments included:

- Make sure connections are reliable for those transferring to/from RIde or other services.
- Bring Flex services into community mobility hubs as a local circulator service

#### Vehicle Sharing

Participants expressed interest when informed about a grant awarded to Age Friendly RI and RIPTA to explore vehicle sharing across local non-profit and municipal transportation programs. Specific comments included:

- Be careful about using vehicles with organizational labels and logos, as riders may not want to be associated with certain organizations or programs.
- Organizations and drivers must be vetted to make drivers feel safe.

#### Ridesharing/Volunteer Driver Programs

- At least one organization and one private individual shared that they were interested in providing rides with private accessible vehicles but did not pursue this because of liability concerns.

## Coordinated Plan

### RIPTA

- Explore whether Commuter Resource RI vanpools are accessible and whether they could be made available for periodic one-time use.
- Host a roundtable conference on ridesharing (e.g., with OSCIL, OEHHS, OHA, and ORS)

## Information and Communication

### One Call-One Click Information Resource

RIPTA provided an update on the One Call-One Click project recommended in the 2017 Coordinated Plan. RIPTA is posting a Community Transportation page on their website with information on a range of transportation services by town. Participant comments included:

- The resource should include information on getting to places outside RI, vehicle type/accessibility and local sidewalk accessibility at destinations.
- All transportation information and services must be accessible for people without internet access or computer skills

### Other

- Improve stop announcements with cross streets, local destinations, and transfer info
- Provide signage at stops/hubs that shows all transfer options/destinations
- Employ multi-lingual staff and drivers to make people feel more welcome
- Allow advocates (e.g., senior center staff) to cancel Ride standing orders when necessary. Review no-show policy

## Training

Many identified a need for increased travel training (which had been slowed due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and sensitivity training for staff across various programs.

### Travel Training for New Riders

- Cover all types of services (RIPTA bus, Flex, ADA; NEMT, ETP, commuter rail, etc.)
- Involve people with disabilities in developing (or giving) the training
- Promote the availability of training and how to sign up for it

### Sensitivity and Customer Service Training for Drivers

- Sensitivity training should be mandatory for drivers, schedulers, and other support staff.
- Offer both new training and refresher courses covering the following topics:
  - Wheelchair securement and placement
  - How to recognize various disabilities, when to ask, and what assistance to provide
  - When to respect a rider's privacy and when not to help
- Use specialized trainers with input from riders who use services
- Introduce a process for riders to make formal commendations. Offer driver incentives based on a tally of commendations received

## Coordinated Plan

RIPTA

### **Technology**

#### RIPTA's Wave Fare Payment System

- Bring the Wave system to the Ride program; consider a feature allowing organizations to fund rider accounts
- Continue to make Wave available for people without digital access

#### Other Technology

- Improve how Ride schedulers communicate with drivers while on the road
- Improve the Ride app with real time information on pick-up times and travel delays
- Ensure all online and mobile technologies are compatible with screen readers and pinch-zooming for the visually impaired.
- Consult users with disabilities when developing new technologies.

### **Affordability of Service**

#### Maintain the Reduced Fare Bus Pass Program

This is a popular program and participants want to make sure funding is maintained to sustain it. Specific comments included:

- Expand the program to offer reduced fares on Ride for those with lower incomes
- Improve and streamline the eligibility and application process

#### Other

- Increase the age to which children can ride RIPTA for free
- Make travel free for disabled and elderly riders during off peak hours
- Expand RIPTA's free fare pilot program beyond Central Falls
- Allow bus riders to drop children at day care without being charged for two trips.

### **Participants**

A total of 48 individuals participated in the four April/May listening sessions and two comments were received via email. These individuals were surveyed about which transportation modes they utilize and whether they represented a particular organization. The results are shown below. Note that these statistics do not include participation at the May ATAC meeting or the two email comments received about the plan update.

#### **Transportation Services Used by Participants at April/May 2022 Listening Sessions**

Transportation Service Used	No. of Participants <sup>1</sup>
RIPTA fixed route (full fare)	16
Ride ADA paratransit	12
RIPTA fixed route (reduced/free fare)	10

## Coordinated Plan

RIPTA

Transportation Service Used	No. of Participants <sup>1</sup>
RIPTA Flex service	8
Municipal senior vans	3
Other transportation	13

1. Some participants indicated they use more than one service

### Agencies and Organizations Represented at April/May 2022 Listening Sessions

List of Organizations	
Bike Newport	RI Dept. of Human Services
Conservation Law Foundation	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Disability Rights Rhode Island	RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Dorcas International Institute of RI	RI Legal Services
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Community Center	RI Office of Medicaid Services
ecoRI News	RI Office of Rehabilitation (ORS/DHS)
Frank Olean Center	RI Transit Riders Alliance
Gather Together United As 1	RI Parents Information Network (RIPIN)
Lifespan Community Health Institute	RI Public Transit Agency (RIPTA)
Neighborhood Health Plan of RI	South Kingstown Senior Center
Ocean State Center for Independent Living	The Cove Center, Inc.
Providence Streets Coalition	The Edward King House Senior Center
Providence VA Medical Center	TransAction Associates Inc
Raytheon	Woonsocket Call

## PUBLIC STRATEGY SESSIONS (JULY 2022)

Two public strategy sessions were hosted midway through plan development to gather input on strategies being explored to enhance public and human services transportation. At these sessions, participants were provided with an update on a statewide transportation inventory and an assessment of transportation needs. Seven specific strategy areas being explored for the 2022 Coordinated Plan were also introduced (see table below):

### Strategy Areas Introduced for Public Input (July 2022)

Strategy	Description
<b>Transportation Services</b>	RIPTA bus, Flex, Ride, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), local services and other shuttles
<b>Mobility Management</b>	Programs that improve information sharing, trip planning, and access to transportation services among providers, other agencies, and riders

## Coordinated Plan

RIPTA

Strategy	Description
<b>Training</b>	Programs that offer travel training on how to use transportation services and those that improve sensitivity training for staff that interact with riders
<b>Information and Communications</b>	Resources that explain available transportation services and simplify the process of planning travel and obtaining rides
<b>Vehicles and Infrastructure</b>	Support for the purchase and maintenance of vehicles and improving infrastructure at bus stops and key facilities that serve riders
<b>Funding</b>	Resources for maintaining existing and expanding services, providing subsidies for low-income riders, and ensuring equity in service delivery
<b>Coordination</b>	Programs that support ongoing coordination among providers and other agencies

### Public Comments Summarized by Strategy Areas

Participants were asked to comment on the potential strategies shared in **Error! Reference source not found.** with about one hour of open discussion facilitated at each meeting. The resulting discussion from both July sessions (as well as comments submitted via email and at an ATAC meeting) is summarized below.

#### Transportation Services

As with the earlier sessions, participants voiced strong support for improving and expanding existing services, with some additional comments as follows:

##### RIPTA Fixed-Route Service

- Expand fixed route services to advance community integration and address historical inequities in access to transportation. Examples cited include:
  - Connections between Newport’s North End and downtown
  - Connect neighborhoods that lack full grocery stores, such as Woonsocket
  - Connect critical healthcare facilities outside the metro area
- Expand span of service for riders who work 2nd and third shifts

##### RIde ADA/Paratransit Service

- Expand accessible services to provide greater access throughout the state. Specific destinations cited included Little Compton and parts of Barrington.
- Expand RIde to transport individuals with disabilities to work sites.
- Coordinate ADA/paratransit services across the border with nearby MA providers.

##### Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) and Elderly Transportation Program (ETP)

- There is a need to increase accountability and both drivers and the contractor should be held accountable.

## Coordinated Plan

RIPTA

### Nonprofit Transportation Programs

- Encourage nonprofits to share information on vehicle capacity and then partner to share dispatch and better utilize existing resources
  - One local organization, Looking Upwards, indicated they provides their clientele with transportation to jobs, but have some vehicles currently sitting idle. They may be interested in funding or other resources to help deploy these vehicles.

### **Mobility Management**

Many participants indicated their organization would like to participate in Mobility Management and others suggested potential partners. Organizations cited are shown to the right. Other suggestions included:

- Allowing advocates to help manage transportation if authorized by program participants and properly vetted.
- Streamlining RIPTA's Reduced Fare Bus Pass application process
- Partnering to identify individuals who have had trouble accessing services and facilitate the process to obtain a pass and get training

### **Travel Training**

Several organizations participating in the sessions expressed interest in either a training curriculum or actual training support. Participants suggested building upon existing training programs and resources, and potentially using existing resources from the following programs:

- Looking Upward in Newport County (training clients with intellectual disabilities)
- RI Office of Rehabilitative Services, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Commission for the Blind (training individuals with visual impairments)
- Access Point RI (offers travel training on fixed bus routes and Ride)
- The Sherlock Center on Disabilities
- Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics have peer recovery specialists and case managers that could serve as trainers
- RI BHDDH is looking for one-on-one training rather than curriculum development
- The Cove Center is looking for one-on-one training but may be interested in curriculum. (for clients with intellectual disabilities)

### Ideas for Mobility Management Partners

- RI Health Equity Zones
- Employment and business groups
- SNAP Advisory Task Force
- Ocean State Center for Independent Living
- RI Office of Rehabilitative Services (RI Dept. of Human Services)
- Governor's Commission for Disabilities
- Resident Service Coordinator Collaborative
- The RI Lieutenant Governor's Office
- RI Parent Information Network
- ONE Neighborhood network
- Senior Center Directors Association
- Adult Day Health Programs.
- Community Action Program case managers
- Accessible Transportation Advisory Group

## Coordinated Plan

### RIPTA

- The Kennedy Center in CT has an extensive training program and may offer resources
- AAA's KeyTiming program is an online resource for those who no longer drive

Individuals with disabilities should be included in the development of any training curriculum and in the actual training. Individuals often respond better to those who are experiencing similar challenges.

A mix of visual and audio training tools were suggested, including multiple languages and outreach to advertise the availability of training.

### Sensitivity Training

Participants felt strongly that annual sensitivity training should be mandatory for all drivers, including NEMT contractors. This would ensure that appropriate customer service and assistance is provided across services. As with Travel Training, several organizations expressed interest in supporting this initiative including or were suggested as partners:

- West Bay Community Action (supports individuals who use wheelchairs)
- East Bay CAP (interested in supporting training on LGBTQ+ inclusivity)
- Access Point RI provides disability awareness training for the RI State and municipal police academies. This could be tailored for RIPTA possibly at no cost.

### Suggested Tools/Curriculum

- Build upon existing materials from federal and state agencies that cover a wide range of abilities (e.g., FTA, RIPTA, RI DHS, RI ORS and CCAP). Potential curriculum topics:
  - Protections under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
  - Sensitivity towards those who use alternative communication (e.g., communication books) or those who have aphasia.
  - Sensitivity towards the LGBTQ+ community
  - Guidance on making minor changes in routing and where to park to pick up or drop off individuals using wheelchairs.
- An advisory group of organizations (including ATAC) could advise and guide this training.
- Post training videos online for organizations to train new staff quickly
- Offer driver incentives when commended by riders to encourage sensitivity.

### Information and Communication

- Improve GPS information capabilities on RIDE vans.
- Use the United Way mobile 211 vehicle to share transportation information
- RI Elder Info maintains comprehensive, multi-lingual information
- Develop pandemic strategies based on lessons learned during the Covid pandemic
- Share travel training resources through the DMV when someone fails their driving test



## Coordinated Plan

RIPTA

### Vehicles & Infrastructure

#### Vanpools

Many participants expressed interest in exploring a strategy for using vanpools to enhance mobility. RIPTA and the State currently partner with Enterprise on the *Commute to Work* program and provide vanpools for 4+ people commuting to and from the same area. The program covers all operating costs including insurance, and vanpool drivers are granted 200 miles per month for personal use. It is not clear whether the program could be expanded to other trip types, but suggestions included:

- Determine whether vanpools are accessible
- Consider vanpools to serve job sites in the East Bay, South County, northern RI and Aquidneck Island areas and to transport Certified Nursing Assistants to rural areas for day assignments.

#### Infrastructure

- Accessibility is important. It would be helpful to identify which bus stops are accessible and to work to improve accessibility at key locations.
- RIPTA's new downtown terminal should include a police substation and a mental health provider for people in crisis.

### Participants

A total of 36 individuals participated in the two July Strategy Sessions and two comments were received via email. Agencies and organizations represented are shown in the table below, with representation including:

- Six state or quasi-public agencies
- Three municipal government or senior center representatives
- Twelve nonprofit organizations
- One private business

#### Agencies and Organizations Represented at July 2022 Strategy Sessions

List of Agencies and Organizations	
Access Point RI	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Commute with Enterprise	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Disability Rights RI	RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Town of Foster, Social Services	RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)
RI Elder Info	RI Department of Labor & Training
Residential Services Coordinator Association	RI Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS/DHS)
Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee	East Bay Community Action Program

**Coordinated Plan**

RIPTA

<b>List of Agencies and Organizations</b>	
The Cove Center, Inc.	West Bay Community Action
Town of South Kingstown, Senior Center	AAA Rhode Island
Disability Rights RI	Leon Mathieu Senior Center, Pawtucket
Sherlock Center on Disabilities	Skills RI
Looking Upwards	



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

# RI Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

Listening Sessions

April and May 2022

# Your Hosts

## **RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council**

- Sarah Ingle, AICP, Director of Long-Range Planning (RIPTA)
- Joelle Kanter, AICP, Project Manager (RIPTA)

## **Consultant Team**

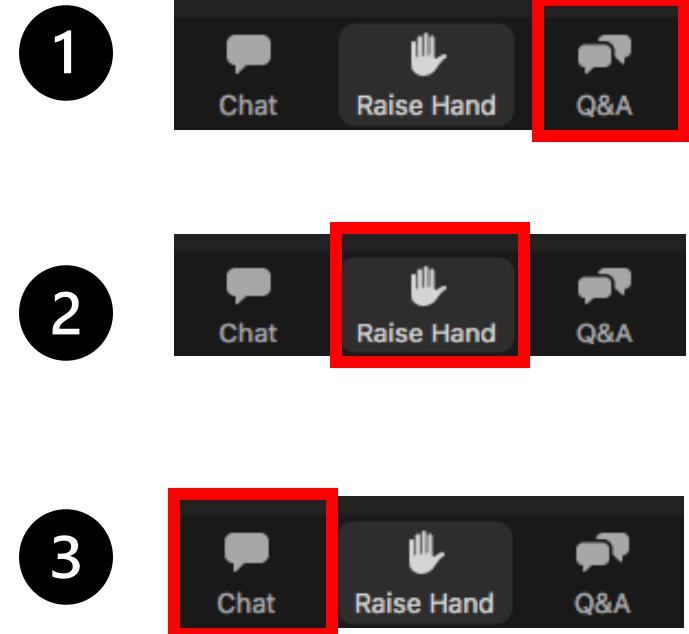
- Bill Schwartz, AICP, Project Manager (Nelson\Nygaard)
- Anne Galbraith, AICP, Facilitator (ASG Planning)

## **ASL interpretation by Source Interpreting**

# How to Participate During the Meeting

## Zoom video participants

1. At any time, click **Q&A** to ask a question or submit a comment
  - You can "**Upvote**" questions/comments asked by others
2. If you wish to speak during the discussion, click **Reactions** and then the **Raise Hand** icon. Be sure to unmute yourself when asked
3. Use **Chat** ask the host about technical issues



# How to Participate During the Meeting

## Participants who are deaf or hard of hearing

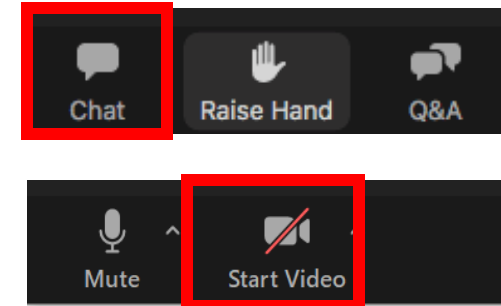
- Sign language interpretation is being provided. If you wish to sign during the discussion, **please tell us via Chat** and be prepared to turn on your camera
- We'll call on you during the discussion

## Phone participants

- Press \*6 to mute/unmute and \*9 to raise hand

## You may also provide feedback via email

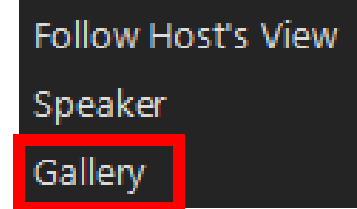
- Contact information provided on final slide



# How to Change Your Zoom View

## Zoom video participants

1. To see the speaker, slides, and ASL interpreter, be sure to select Gallery from the view
  - a. Top right on a PC or Mac
  - b. Upper left on iPad
  - c. If you have questions, please type them into the chat





# What Are We Covering Today?

- 1 Coordinated Plan Introduction
- 2 Progress Since 2018 Plan
- 3 Feedback and Discussion
- 4 Next Steps





# What is a Coordinated Plan?

# What is a Coordinated Plan?

Coordinated Plan is a short name for:

## Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

- Required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Must be updated every 5 years

# Funding Priorities (FTA Section 5310)

- The Plan focuses on FTA's Section 5310 program

## Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

- Projects receiving this funding **must be** included in a local Coordinated Plan
- RIPTA's role:
  - Statewide mobility manager
  - Designated recipient of Section 5310 funds
  - Convene and staff the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

# Plan Elements

1. Inventory of transportation services
2. Transportation needs assessment: needs, gaps and inefficiencies
3. Strategies and projects to address these needs
4. Prioritization of strategies and projects, informed by public input



# 2022 Plan Update

- Led by RIPTA with guidance from the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
- Two rounds of public listening sessions
  - April/May (today's session)
  - July
- Products:
  - Inventory
  - Assessment of gaps and needs
  - Consideration of ongoing RI initiatives and best practices from other regions and states
  - Strategies and priorities





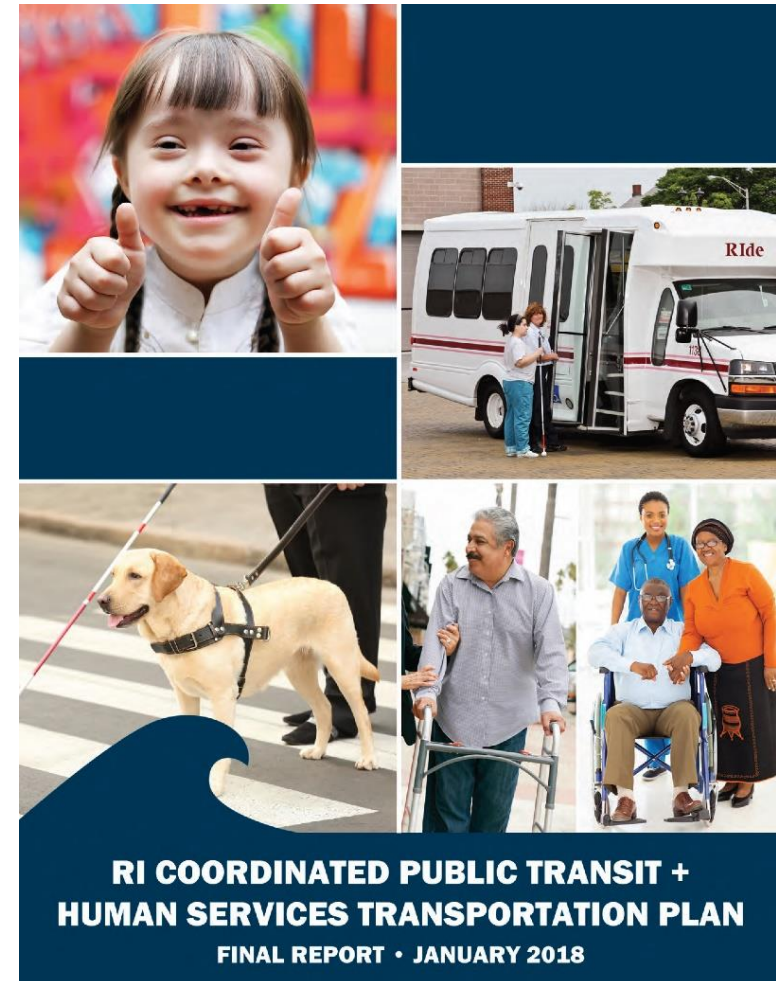
# Status of 2018 Recommendations



# 2018 Plan Strategies

1. Develop coordinating councils
2. Improve information sharing and communications
3. Ensure affordability of human services transportation
4. Increase funding for human services transportation
5. Increase span and frequency of urban services

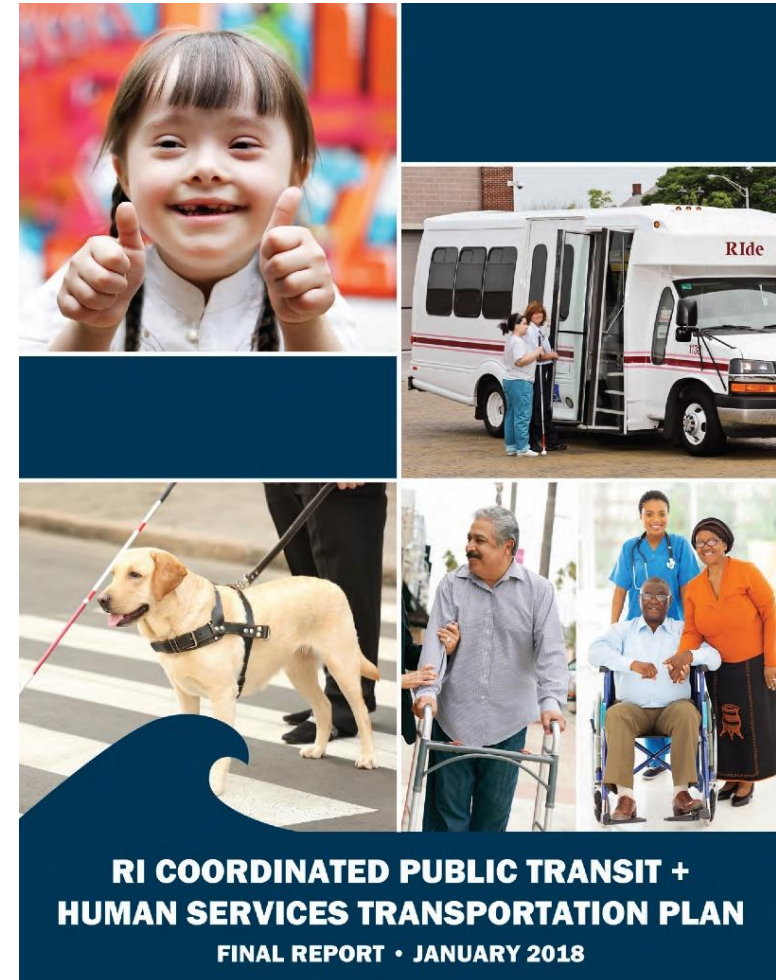
Recommended in addition to capital investments for RIdE.



# 2018 Plan Strategies

6. Capitalize on technology opportunities
7. Enhance customer service training for drivers
8. Increase rural service area coverage
9. Consider mobility-on-demand options
10. Increase travel training for new customers

Recommended in addition to  
capital investments for RIdE.





# RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

## Strategy

- Develop coordinating council to better coordinate across agencies and among providers

## Progress

- First met in 2018
  - Convenes 6 times a year

### Council Members

*RI Dept. of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals*

*RI Department of Health*

*RI Department of Human Services*

*RI Department of Transportation*

*RI Division of Statewide Planning*

*RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services*

*RI Office of Healthy Aging*

*RI Office of Rehabilitative Services*

*RI Office of Veterans Services*

*RI Public Transit Authority*

# Information Sharing and Communications

## Strategy

- Create a comprehensive statewide information center
- Offer easily accessible information on current travel resources in different languages/formats, etc.

## Progress

- RIPTA completed “**1 Call 1 Click**” study in 2021
- New information planned for RIPTA website



# 1 Call/1 Click Study Recommendations

- Maintain directory of local services
- Post directory on RIPTA's website with a new **“Transportation in Your Community”** page
- Encourage partners (e.g., 211, the Point) to share this consistent, up-to-date information
- Develop branding to publicize the resource
- Create and share customer service protocols



# Affordability of Human Services Transportation

## Strategy

- Desire for free or low-cost transportation

## Progress

- RIPTA's new Wave system guarantees "Earn As You Go" discounts without paying up front
- Fare-free pilot in partnership with City of Central Falls
- New reduced fare bus pass application process



# Funding for Human Services Transportation

## Strategy

- Desire for more funding to increase service levels and coverage

## Progress

- 5311 backlog
- State-funding (\$5 million) for Reduced Fare bus passes
- CARES Act funding
- IIJA funding
- Funding to implement Transit Forward RI master plan
  - RIPTA federal grant requests
  - State match



# Urban Bus Service Improvements

## Strategy

- Increase RIPTA service hours and frequency
- Provide more direct RIPTA service
- Provide more late-night service

## Progress

- Transit Forward RI master plan
- New RIPTA routes
- Later RIPTA service



# Technology Opportunities

## Strategy

- Pursue new technologies to enhance transportation

## Progress

- RIPTA Wave system accepts reduced fare passes
- RIPTA Wave payment for Ride is in progress
- Mobility On Demand pilot in development to test software



# Other Progress Since 2018

- Statewide transit plan recommended a mobility hub in every community
- Travel training outreach
  - Newport, Westerly, West Warwick, Burrillville, and Narragansett/South Kingstown
- Joint planning and grant applications
  - RIPTA and Age Friendly RI exploring vehicle sharing partnership
  - FTA Innovative Coordinated Access & Mobility grant to explore mobility management network



Source: Pawtucket, RI





# Feedback and Discussion

# Please share your thoughts

- Recent progress: how are things working?
- Areas of continuing work: what are near-term priorities and next steps?
- New ideas: what else might improve human services transportation in RI?



# Recent Progress

- HST Coordinating Council work
- Improved information sharing
- More funding for human services transportation
- More frequent RIPTA service and longer hours
- Implementation of WAVE fare system
- Provision of travel training



**Have you benefited from these improvements?**

**How has COVID changed things?**

**Is there more to be done?**

# Other 2018 Strategies

- More services in rural areas
  - Serve priority communities and destinations
  - Share vehicles
  - Explore on-demand services
- More travel training
  - Offer training on how to use the bus
  - Assist those applying for reduced fare, ADA, and Medicaid transportation (MTM)
- Offer mobility management services



**What might be next steps?**

**Are there unique needs in different communities?**

**Do needs differ from 5 years ago?**

**How has COVID changed things?**

# Do you have new ideas?

- What else might help improve human services transportation in Rhode Island?
- Do you have suggestions for new strategies to be explored during the Coordinated Plan process?



# Notes

# Notes

# Notes



# Notes

# Notes

# Notes



# Next Steps

# Coordinated Plan – Next Steps

## ▪ Ongoing Study Tasks

- Inventory of transportation services
- Needs and gaps analysis
- Review of best practices in other regions



## ▪ July Listening Sessions

- Update on what we've learned
- Presentation of draft strategies



## ▪ Final Plan in November



# How to Stay Engaged

- Visit [www.ripta.com/projects/ri-coordinated-plan/](http://www.ripta.com/projects/ri-coordinated-plan/)
- Read the 2018 Coordinated Plan
- Learn more about the Coordinating Council
  - <https://www.ripta.com/human-services-transportation-coordination/>
- Watch for updates about our **July** listening sessions
- Email us with any ideas or comments:
  - Joelle Kanter [jkanter@ripta.com](mailto:jkanter@ripta.com)
  - Anne Galbraith [anne@asgplanning.com](mailto:anne@asgplanning.com)



Thank you!



# Notes – 4/27

- FTA Review of Plan
  - Must be updated every 5 years and include required elements
  - Formal approval not required
- Travel Training
  - Should explain how to use Ride in addition to fixed route
  - Should be done by people with disabilities
- Customer Service
  - New drivers should receive better sensitivity training, particularly respecting riders' privacy
- Provide service to all without too many restrictions so people can travel
- WAVE should work on Ride
  - Would be great to allow others to fund Ride account



# Notes – 4/27

- Service should be available statewide
- Remember that many still don't have digital access
  - Need to remain inclusive
- Look into other van services that can possibly be integrated
- Vehicle sharing program (please elaborate)
  - Program is in early stages
  - Looking to capitalize on other vehicles that might be available locally
  - Partnership is with Age Friendly RI
- Driver sensitivity, particularly for blind riders, knowing what assistance to provide and how to ask riders how to be of most help
  - Training of new drivers by current drivers may not be sufficient

# Notes – 4/27

- MTM
  - Would love to see RIPTA doing more NEMT (Medicaid) rides
  - Missed trips, many other complaints
- Ride program hours
  - Would like to see service expand into more rural areas
    - Any possibility to cross into MA or CT?
  - Longer span of service would improve ability to travel more
- Ride
  - Drivers being stretched too thin
  - Provide drivers more incentives/appreciation for what they do
  - Runs take them all over the state

# Notes – 4/27

- Rural service expansion targets (where?)
  - NW part of state
  - South County
  - Tiverton
  - Harrisville, Burrillville, and Ashaway
  - Would like to see expansions across the board – to get to anywhere in RI
- On-Demand
  - Would love to see “uber” for people with disabilities (but not MTM)
  - Driver’s need better/refresher training on wheelchair securement and placement
- Drivers
  - Reward drivers who receive compliments but don’t reward drivers who receive complaints
  - Perhaps this would encourage drivers to perform better

# Notes – 4/27

- Transfers between different services
  - Need to provide ways for riders to feel confident that the other vehicle will be there to meet them
- If Gateway Center moved, needs to be accessible
  - Is the relocation wasteful?
  - RIPTA to continue to serve Gateway Center
- Improve Ride and Flex programs
- Keep funding no-fare bus pass available throughout the entire state
- Having staff that can speak other languages will help others feel more welcome

# Notes 4/28

- Expand WAVE to Ride van
  - This is in development (timing uncertain)
  - Goal is to apply WAVE to full system, requires software integration
- Expand Ride to Route 2 in E Greenwich (medical offices)
  - Route 16 is a new route under discussion for expansion
  - ADA operates within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of bus stops so routes that are added expand Ride service area in a complementary fashion
- Even though this is a statewide effort, are we too focused on Providence?
- What are priorities for students? For Seniors and Disabled?
- Medical appointments take me too far out of my way
  - This is very inefficient (W. Warwick to Providence)

# Notes 4/28

- CCRI hub will offer expanded options, so trips don't have to include Providence if not needed
- Smaller mobility hubs are a recommendation of the transit master plan to create meeting places for transportation services within each community
- Westerly providers need training sessions for clients and staff – how do we obtain?
  - RIPTA has a commuter resources team
  - Coordinate through Joelle Kanter
  - This remains a priority for the Coordinated Plan (and for RIPTA)

# Notes 4/28

- For those without internet access, how do they obtain WAVE system
  - Large retail network (CVS, groceries)
  - Can be loaded onto smartphones
  - Cards can be purchased
  - RIPTA customer service
- Will RIPTA promote use of the bus given high gas prices?
  - Will this lead to statewide service?
  - Transit master plan has emphasized more frequent service over longer hours

# Notes 4/28

- Woonsocket
  - Hear from many individuals needing rides to MD appointments (mostly local), also rides for local services; not sure if using Flex
  - Issues with current provider of medical transportation
  - Flex services may help address these needs
  - More promotion needed, note need for reservations in advance
- South Kingstown
  - Very large area (30k residents)
  - Matunuck not in Flex zone – can zone be expanded
    - Limits ability of seniors to participate in senior center classes
    - Only one driver/one van – not enough coverage



# Notes 4/28

- Ride service access
  - Use app via smartphone
  - Upcoming construction concerns – want to be able to know when vehicle is running late
  - Current app doesn't provide real-time updates
  - Would be helpful to have real-time demand-response information available as a technology strategy
- Drivers are helpful in informing when issues may arise with particular clients
  - Some riders don't cancel regularly scheduled trips
  - Ability to cancel is limited to rider (not someone calling on their behalf?)

# Notes 4/28

- Ride drivers – how do we commend the drivers that do a great job?
  - Contact customer service to provide feedback



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

# RI Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

Public Strategy Sessions

July 19, 2022

July 27, 2022

# Your Hosts

## **RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council**

- Sarah Ingle, AICP, Director of Long-Range Planning (RIPTA)
- Joelle Kanter, AICP, Project Manager (RIPTA)

## **Consultant Team**

- Bill Schwartz, AICP, Project Manager (Nelson\Nygaard)
- Anne Galbraith, AICP, Facilitator (ASG Planning)

# How to Participate

## Zoom video participants

1. Go to: [Reactions / Raise Hand](#) if you wish to speak during the discussion.

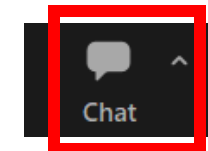
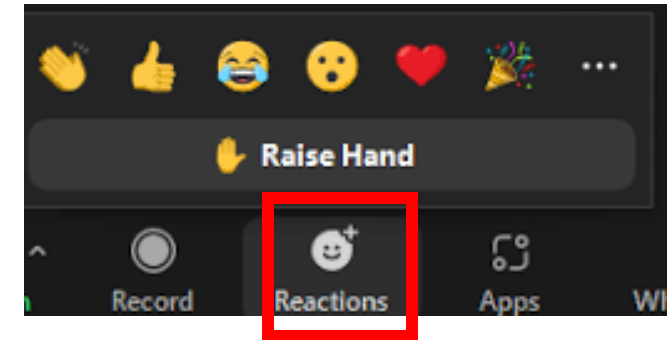
Be sure to **Unmute**. **Lower Hand** when done speaking.

2. Use: [Chat](#) to speak only with the hosts

Submit a written comment

Submit a question

Ask about a technical issue



## Phone participants

Press \*6 to mute/unmute and \*9 to raise hand

# How to Participate

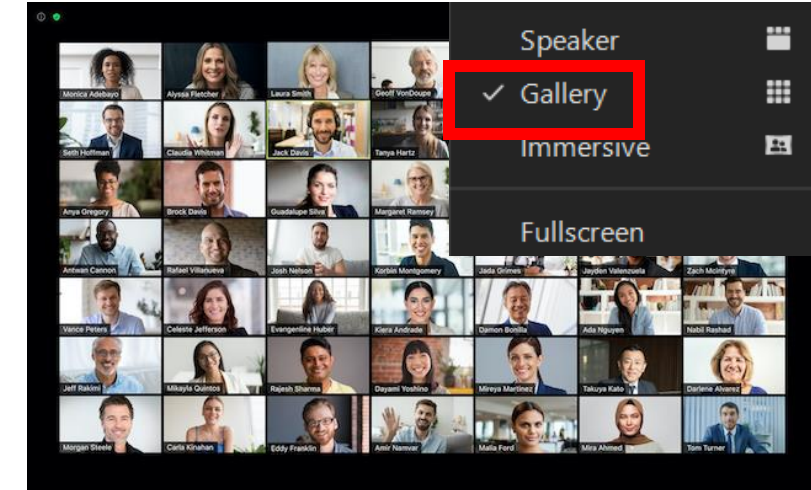
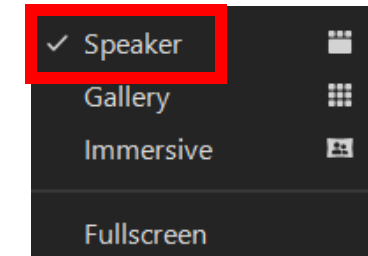
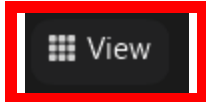
## Zoom video participants

Select **View** to change what you see on screen

- Top right on a PC or Mac
- Upper left on iPad

Click **Speaker** to see the speaker and slides

Click **Gallery** to see all participants





# What Are We Covering Today?

- 1 Coordinated Plan Overview
- 2 Services and Needs
- 3 Strategies and Feedback
- 4 Next Steps

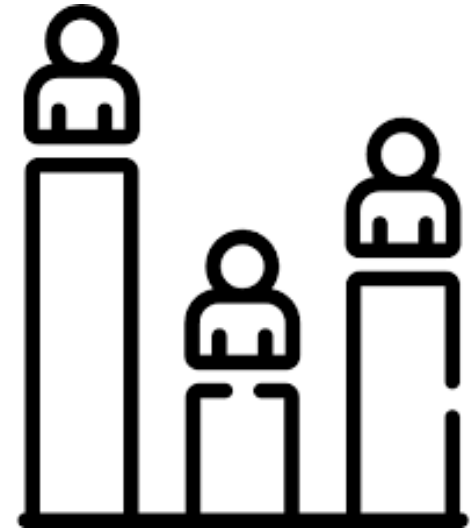
# Attendee Poll – Help us Get to Know You!

## Q1: Pick the category that best describes yourself:

- Transportation Customer
- Transportation Provider
- Non-profit Advocate
- State agency Employee
- Municipal Employee
- Other

## Q2: Which transportation service do you use most often?

- RIPTA's Fixed Route or Flex Service
- The Ride Paratransit Program
- Local van service provided by my city or town
- RI's Non-Emergency Transportation
- Elderly Transportation Program (ETP)
- Commuter rail or train service
- Other







# What is a Coordinated Plan?

# What is a Coordinated Plan?

Coordinated Plan is a short name for:

## Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

- Required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Must be updated every five years

# Funding Priorities (FTA Section 5310)

- The Plan is a requirement of FTA's Section 5310 program

## Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

- Projects receiving this funding **must be** included in a local Coordinated Plan
- RIPTA's role:
  - Designated Statewide Mobility Manager
  - Designated recipient of Section 5310 funds
  - Convene and staff the RI Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

# Plan Elements

1. Inventory of transportation services
2. Transportation needs assessment: needs, gaps and inefficiencies
3. Strategies and projects to address these needs
4. Prioritization of strategies and projects, informed by public input



# Schedule for 2022 Plan Update

Task	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Public Engagement									
HST Coordinating Council Updates									
Inventory									
Needs Assessment									
Strategy Development									
Plan Development									

9-month schedule with 2 rounds of public sessions and regular check-ins with the Human Services Transportation (HST) Coordinating Council



# Inventory of Transportation Services

# Statewide Transportation Inventory

- Developed in concert with 1-Call/1-Click project
- RIPTA website will soon host a **Community Transportation** page
  - Will list known transportation services in each RI municipality
  - Will serve as a reference for individuals, RIPTA Customer Service, and other organizations



# Welcome to **YOUR** Ride!

TRIP PLANNER

WHERE'S MY BUS?

SERVICE ALERTS

Starting Point	Destination	Travel Preference	Departing Day	Time	<input type="button" value="Get Directions"/>
<input type="text" value="Address"/>	<input type="text" value="Address"/>	<input type="text" value="Leave now"/> ▾	<input type="text" value="07/13/2022"/>	<input type="text" value="4:24 PM"/>	

**DRAFT**



Purchase Fares



Reload Wave Account



Statewide System Map



Bus Schedules



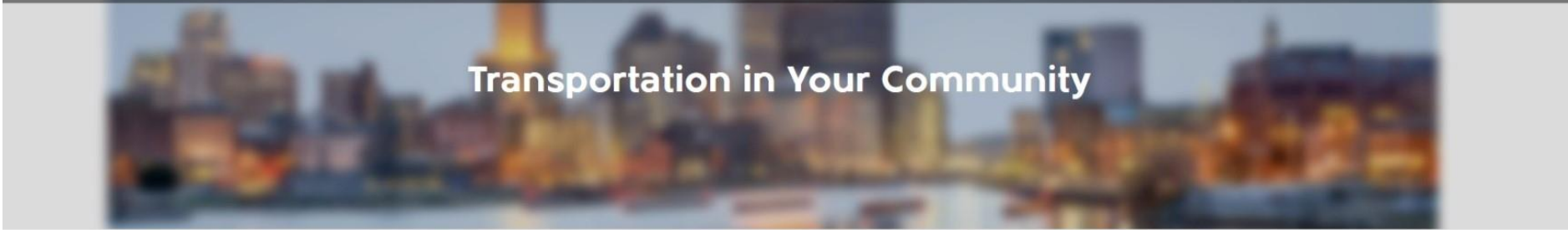
Transportation in Your Community



**ALERT:** Due to the current COVID-19 public health crisis, many RIPTA Offices and transit centers are closed. [Details >>](#)







## Transportation Services

Click on the links below to learn about transportation options available in communities throughout Rhode Island. In addition to RIPTA services, these pages include information about local transportation services, volunteer driver programs, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, taxi providers, and other resources. Contact each service directly to schedule trips, and call RIPTA's customer service department for general information at [\(401\) 781-9400](tel:4017819400)

<a href="#">Barrington</a>	<a href="#">Bristol</a>	<a href="#">Central Falls</a>	<a href="#">Charlestown</a>
<a href="#">Coventry</a>	<a href="#">Cranston</a>	<a href="#">Cumberland</a>	<a href="#">East Greenwich</a>
<a href="#">East Providence</a>	<a href="#">Exeter</a>	<a href="#">Foster</a>	<a href="#">Glocester</a>
<a href="#">Hopkinton</a>	<a href="#">Jamestown</a>	<a href="#">Johnston</a>	<a href="#">Lincoln</a>
<a href="#">Little Compton</a>	<a href="#">Middletown</a>	<a href="#">Narragansett</a>	<a href="#">New Shoreham (RI)</a>
<a href="#">Newport</a>	<a href="#">North Kingstown</a>	<a href="#">North Providence</a>	<a href="#">North Smithfield</a>
<a href="#">Providence</a>	<a href="#">Providence</a>	<a href="#">Providence</a>	<a href="#">Providence</a>
<a href="#">Warren</a>	<a href="#">Warwick</a>	<a href="#">West Greenwich</a>	<a href="#">West Warwick</a>
<a href="#">Westerly</a>	<a href="#">Woonsocket</a>		

**ALERT:** Due to the current COVID-19 public health crisis, many RIPTA Offices and transit centers are closed. [Details >>](#)

## Other Transportation Services

**MBTA**  
The MBTA provides commuter service to Boston from Wickford Junction, TF Green Airport, and Providence

[MBTA](#)

**Amtrak**  
Amtrak provides Northeast Corridor Service with stations in Providence, Kingston, and Westerly

[Amtrak](#)

**Intercity Bus**  
Multiple carriers provide Intercity bus service from Providence (2 locations), TF Green Airport, and Portsmouth to multiple cities

[Intercity Bus](#)

**Ferries**  
Jamestown-Newport, Bristol-Prudence Island, Quonset Point-Martha's Vineyard, Block Island

[Ferries](#)

**DRAFT**

# South Kingstown

## Transportation Options

This page is a resource for information about transportation services in your community. Contact each service directly to schedule trips, ask questions, and share feedback. For general information, call RIPTA's customer service department at **401-781-9500**.

- Senior Services
- Southern Rhode Island Volunteers
- South County Hospital Van
- RIPTA Services
- Vanpool
- Amtrak
- HEAT / ETP
- Taxi Services

## Local Transportation Services

### Senior Services Transportation Program

- Transportation available to South Kingstown residents age 60+.

- Trips available for Senior Center activities and lunch.

Hours: Reservations between 8:00-5:00 PM. The bus leaves the center at 1 PM daily.

**ALERT:** Due to the current COVID-19 public health crisis, many RIPTA Offices and transit centers are closed. [Details >>](#)

- Individuals requesting trips for errands will be assigned a specific day each week.
- Hours: 10 AM to 1 PM on that scheduled day.

- There is no transportation for medical appointments, hospital visits, or nursing home visits.

#### Cost

- Transportation is free to and from the Senior Center.
- One-way trips for errands cost \$1.

\*Riders may purchase a \$10 pass at the Center, good for 10 one-way trips for any errand transportation. \*Ability to pay will not affect services. \*Please discuss with the Senior Services staff if the fee is a hardship.

- Call **401-789-0268** at least 24 hours in advance to sign up for or schedule Senior Services Transportation. Please also call to cancel if necessary.

[Visit Website Here](#)

### Southern Rhode Island Volunteers

- Transportation provided for low-income individuals or those who show a great need
  - Adults 60+ years of age
  - Adults 55+ years with temporary health conditions
  - Adults 55+ years with medically diagnosed disabilities

- Individuals must be registered with SRIV before accessing the service and must be able to get in and out of the vehicle on their own.

- There is no fee. Donations are encouraged from those who have the means.

- Trips are available approximately 8 AM to 3 PM for healthcare appointments (medical, dental, therapy), pharmacies, grocery stores, housing appointments, and food pantries.

- Reservations for local appointments must be made at least 3 business days in advance. For non-local rides, at least 1 week notice is needed.

- Call **401-552-7661** with questions or to make a reservation.

### South County Hospital Wave Van

- Transportation provided to patients needing access to the Lab, Diagnostic Imaging, Pre-Admission Testing, Cardiopulmonary services, and other medical appointments at South County Hospital.
  - Residents of Wakefield may use the Wave Van for a wider variety of appointments. Call or check online for more information.

- This is a free service.

- Trips are available Monday through Friday, 7 AM to 3:30 PM. Trips must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance.

- Call **401-788-1178** and leave a message. A driver will call back to schedule your ride.

[Visit Website Here](#)

**DRAFT**

## RIPTA Services

### Fixed Route

- 64 | Newport / URI Kingston
- 65 | Wobeschee Park-n-Ride
- 66 | URI / Galilee

### Flex services

- 389 | URI / Narragansett / S. Kingstown

Flex provides on-the-spot local service within a zone as well as connections to RIPTA's network of statewide service. Passengers have two options: picking up the Flex van at a scheduled stop or choosing their own pick-up or drop-off point within the Flex zone. To make a reservation, call RIPTA 24 hours in advance: **401-784-9500** ext. 1220. Fares are the same price as RIPTA's fixed route bus service.

### Ride Paratransit

Ride service is available through an application process for individuals whose disability prevents use of the fixed route system or prevents travel to or from bus stops. Ride operates within a 3/4-mile corridor on either side of a fixed route and costs \$4 per trip. Learn more at [Ride Paratransit Program - RIPTA](#) or call **401-461-9760**.

### Vanpool

- A vanpool consists of a group of people who travel similar routes.

- Participants sign up to lease a comfortable, late-model van or SUV provided by Commute with Enterprise
- Participants decide if they will have a primary driver or rotate driving responsibilities. They also decide the daily route, times, and stop locations.
- The van can be parked overnight at the driver's home or any other designated location approved by Enterprise.

- For information, contact RIPTA Commuter Resources: **401-784-9575** or [commuter@ripta.com](mailto:commuter@ripta.com)

[Visit Website Here](#)

## Amtrak

- Northeast Regional connects Boston to Virginia Beach.
  - Full list of stops available [here](#)
  - Provides regional service.

- Kingston Station: 1 Railroad Ave, West Kingston, RI 02892

- Visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) or call 1-800-USA-RAIL for tickets.

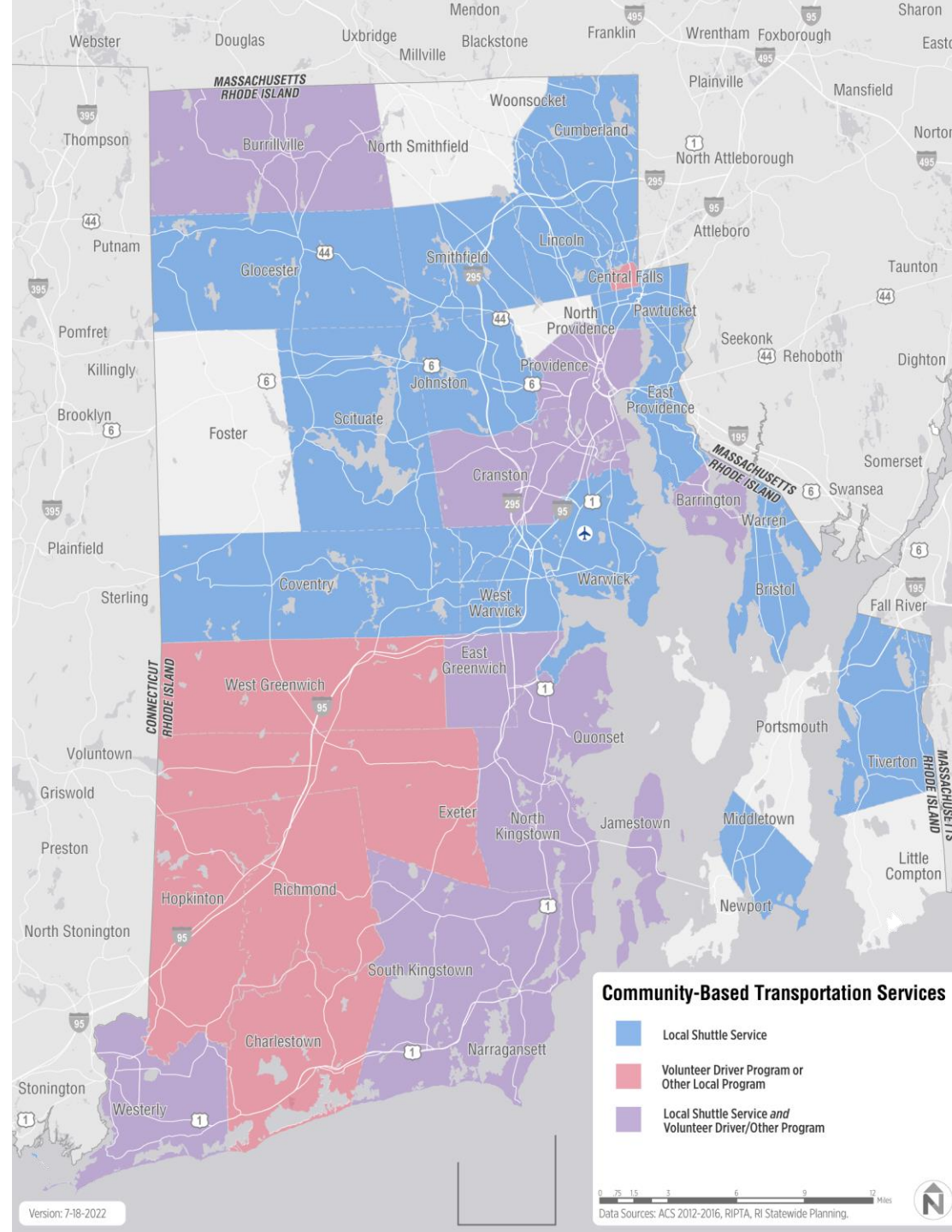
## Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) / Elderly Transportation Program (ETP)

Medical Transportation Management (MTM) provides statewide transportation for Medicaid members and for all Rhode Islanders age 60+ for routine, non-emergency medical appointments. Trips must be scheduled at least two business days in advance and must occur Monday-Friday between 5 AM and 6 PM. Call **855-330-9131** to schedule.

## Taxi Services

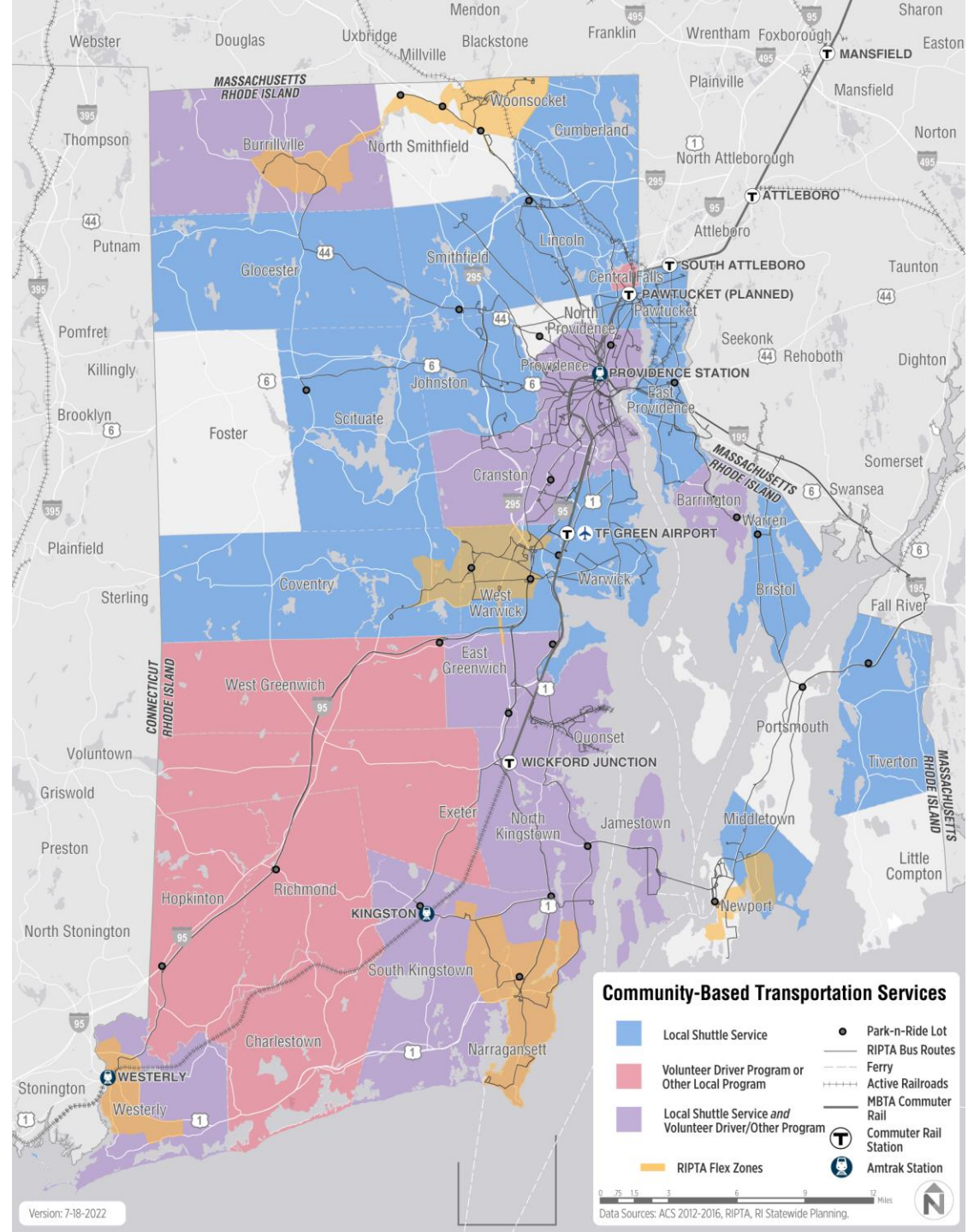
# Local Services

Includes local shuttles, and  
volunteer programs



# All Services

Includes local shuttles, volunteer programs, and RIPTA services

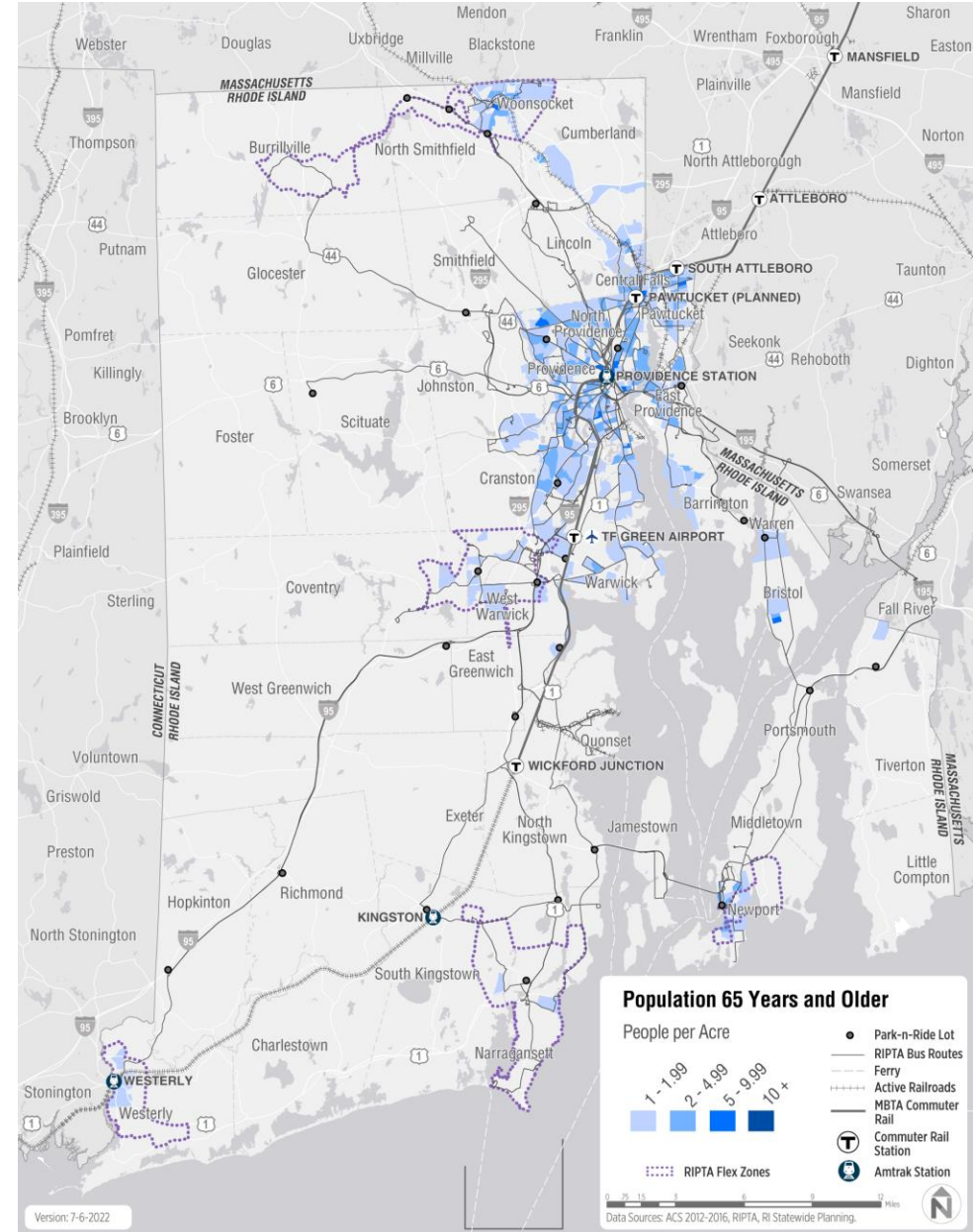
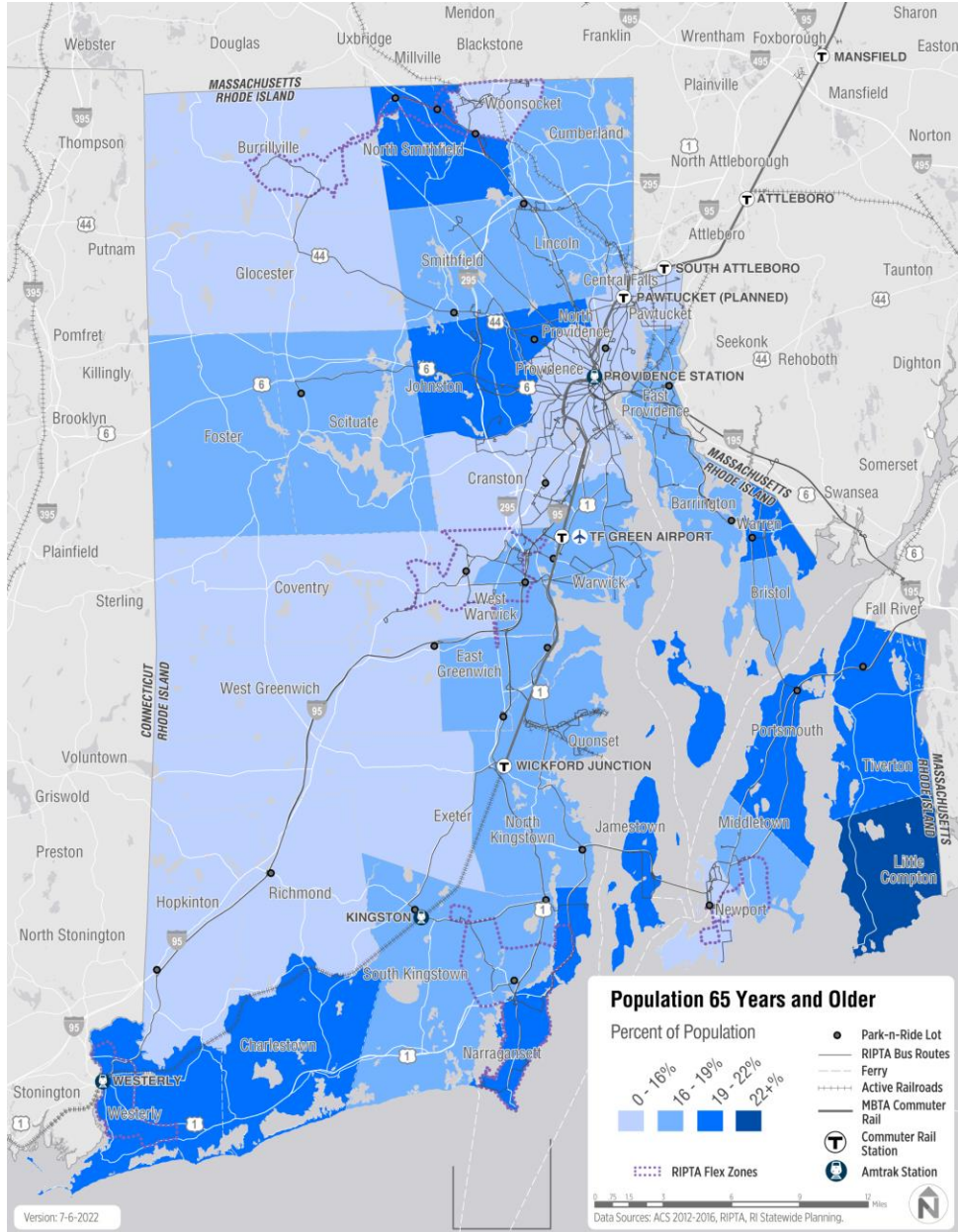




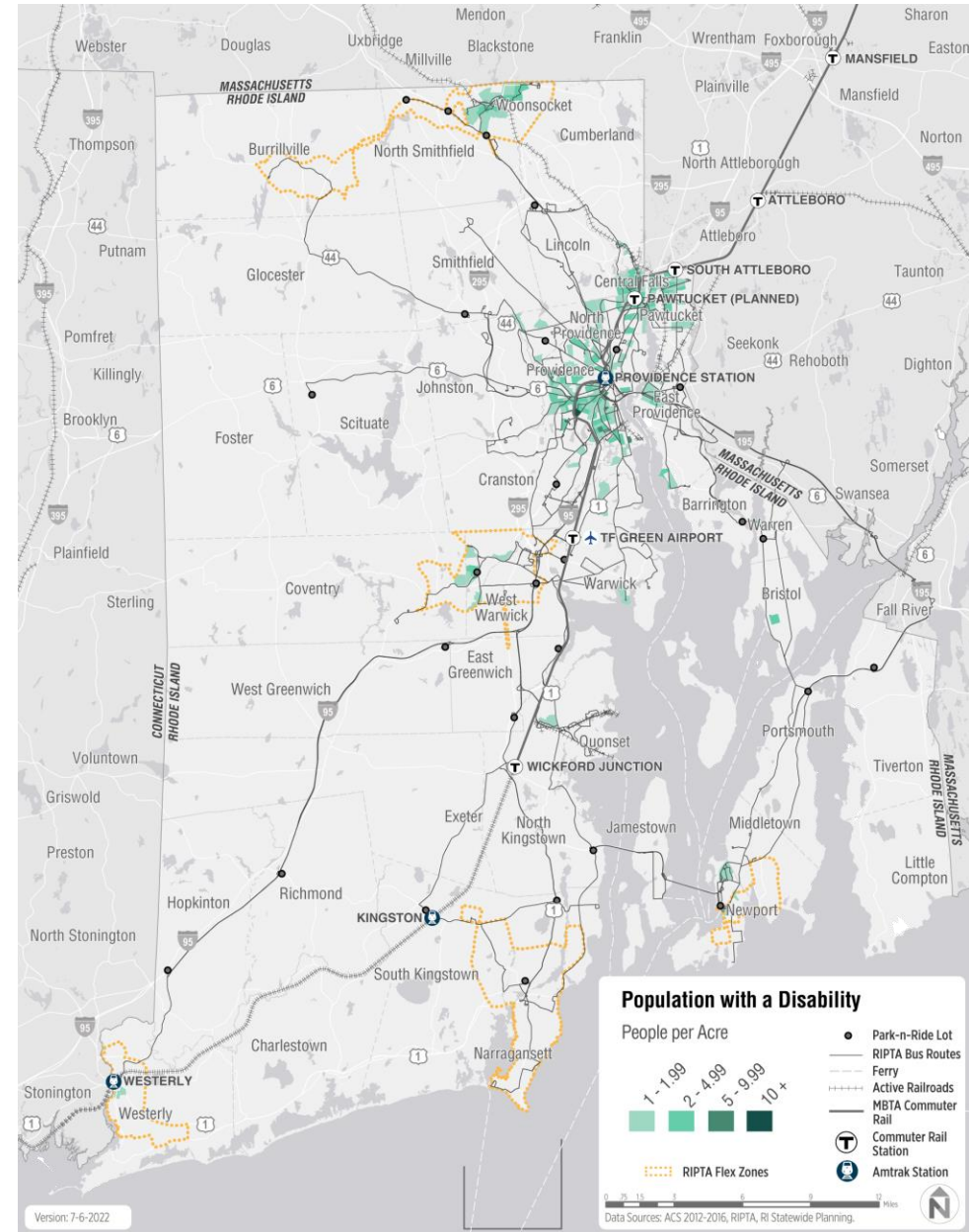
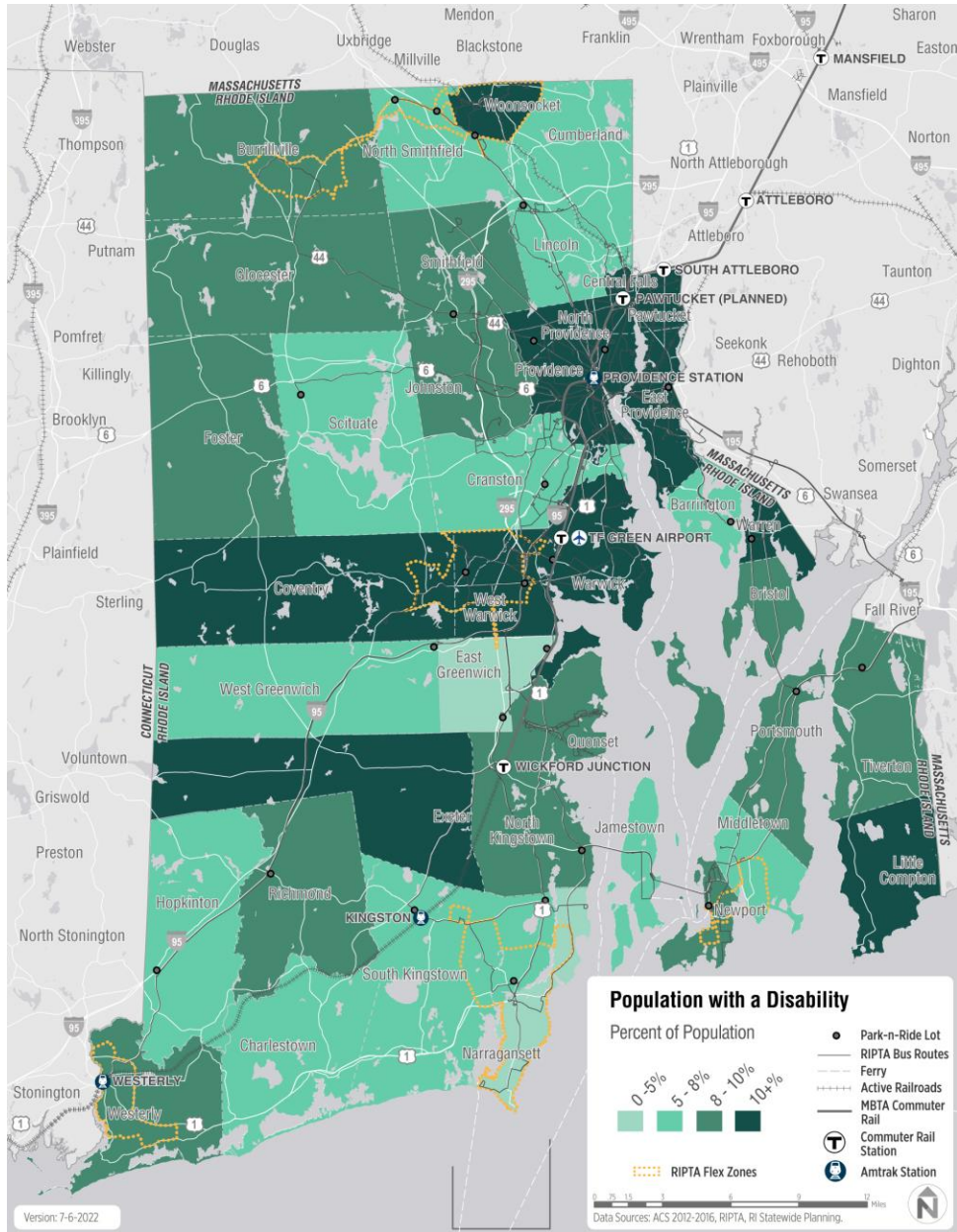
# Needs Analysis



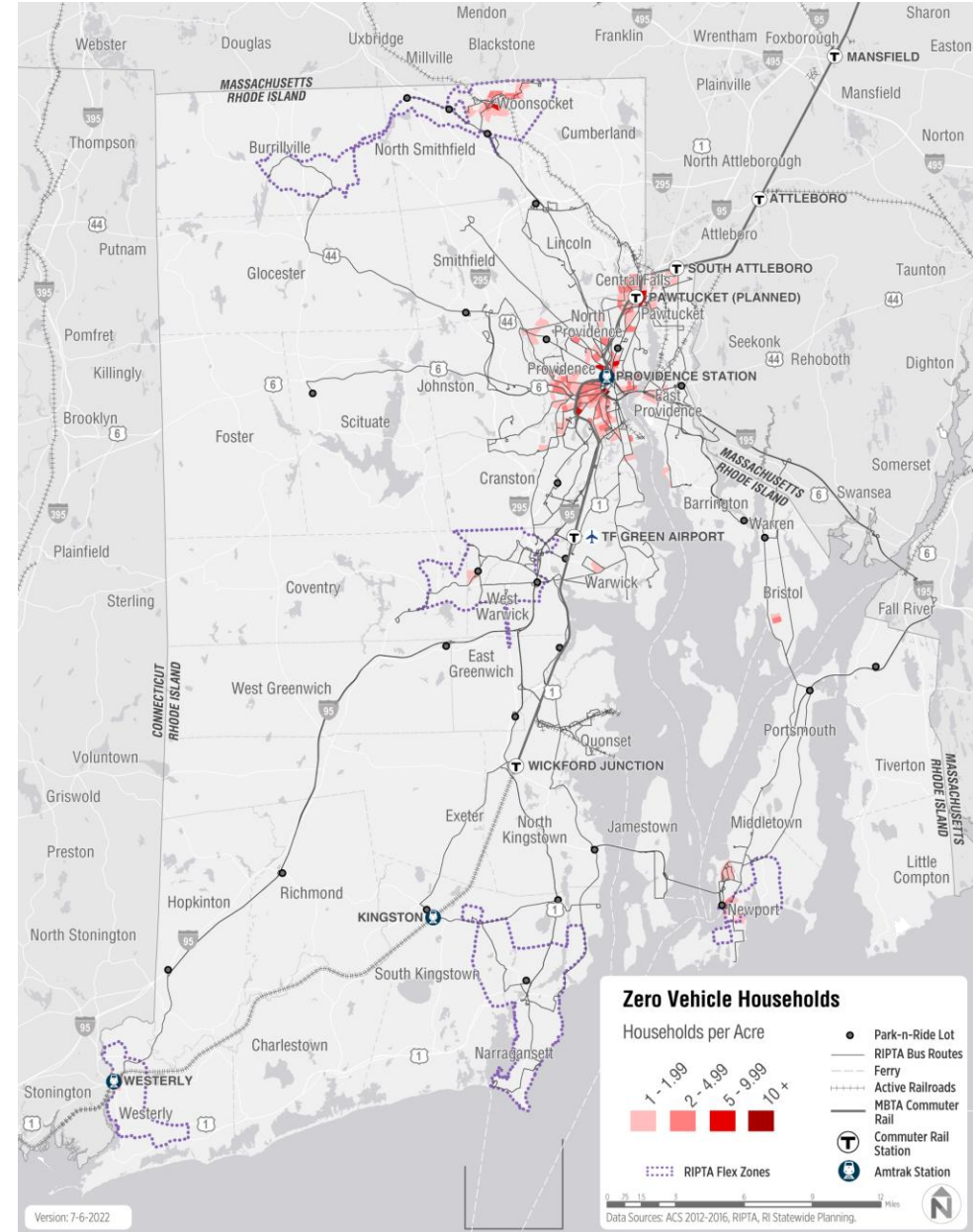
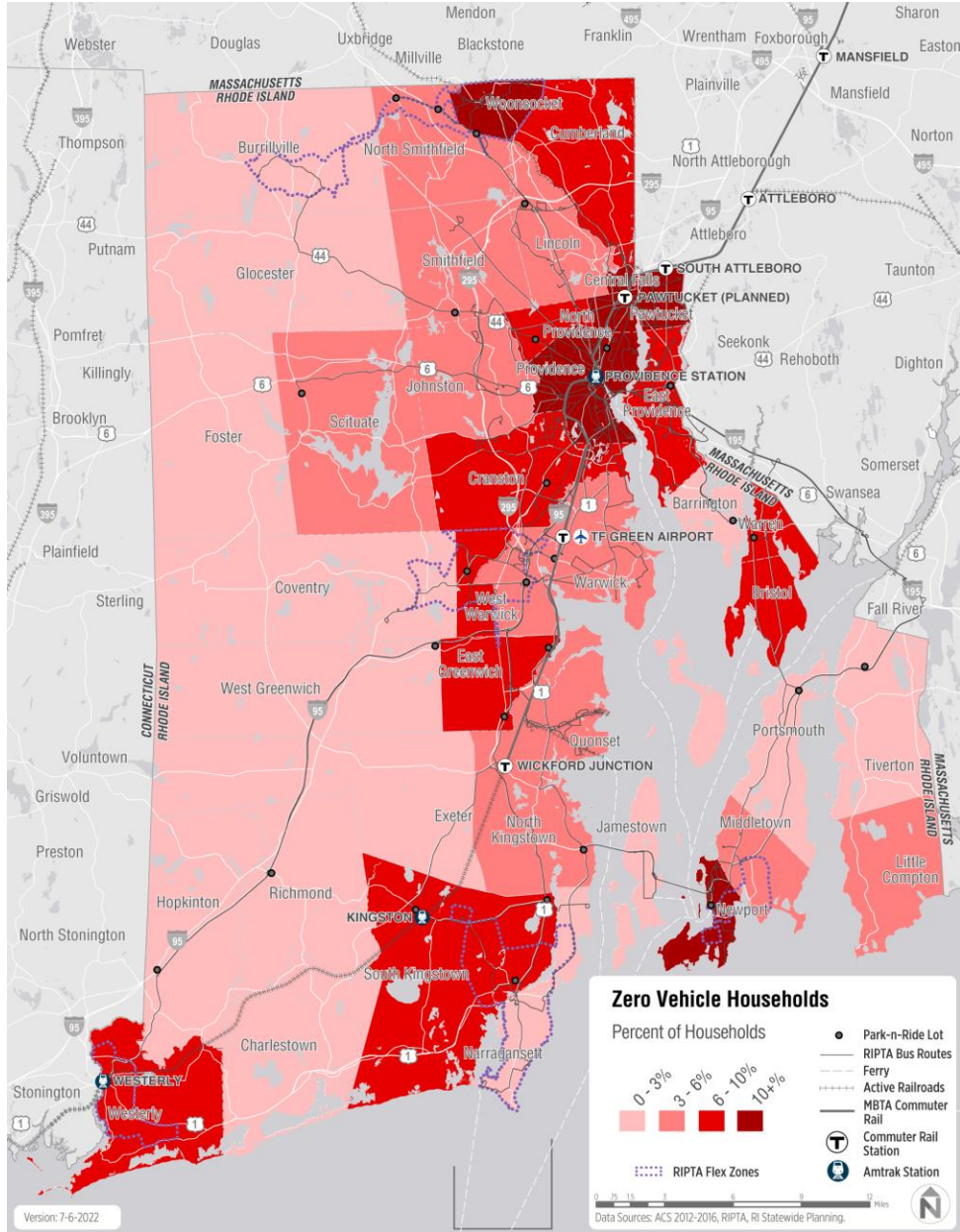
# DEMOGRAPHICS – PEOPLE 65 OR OLDER



# DEMOGRAPHICS – PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

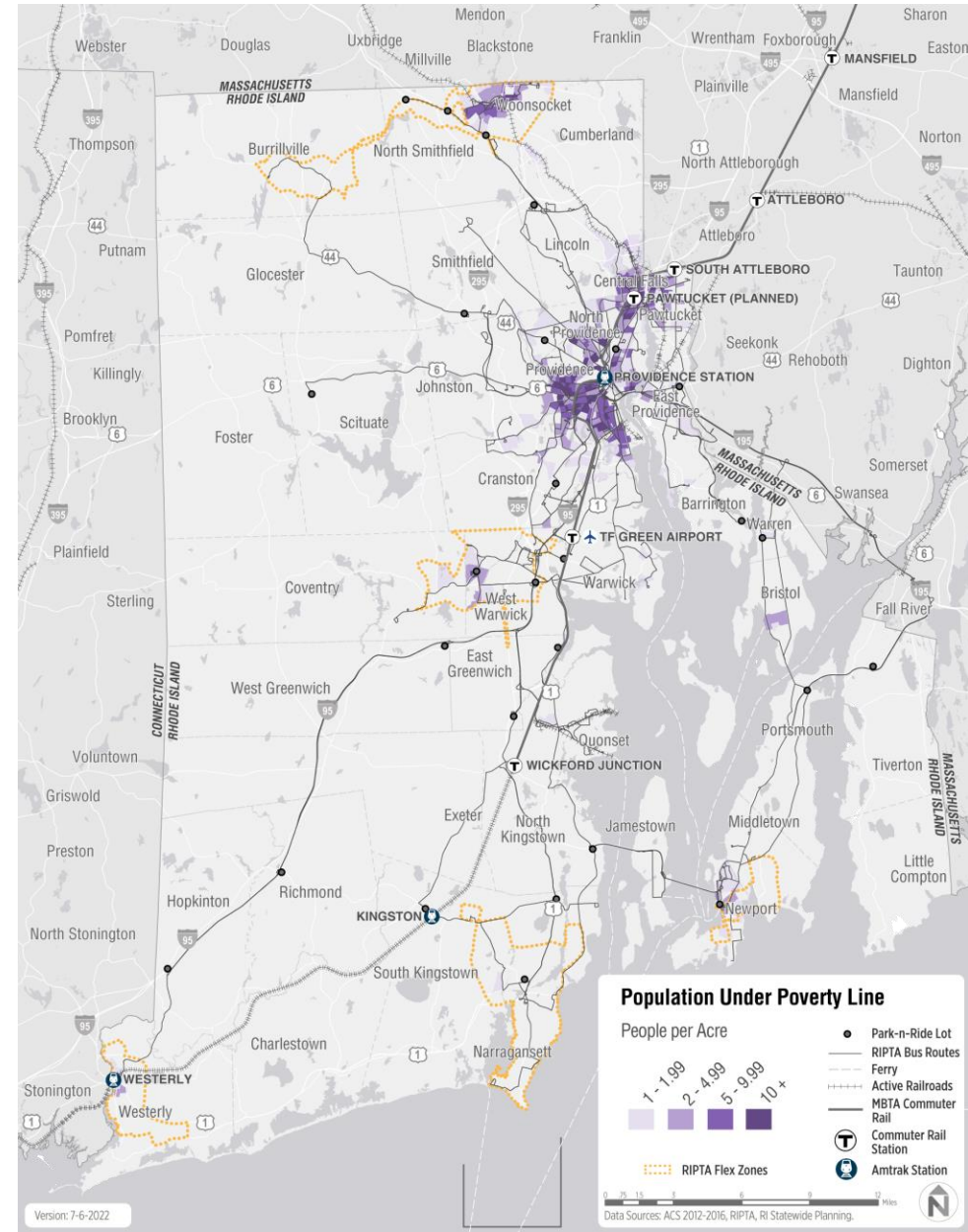
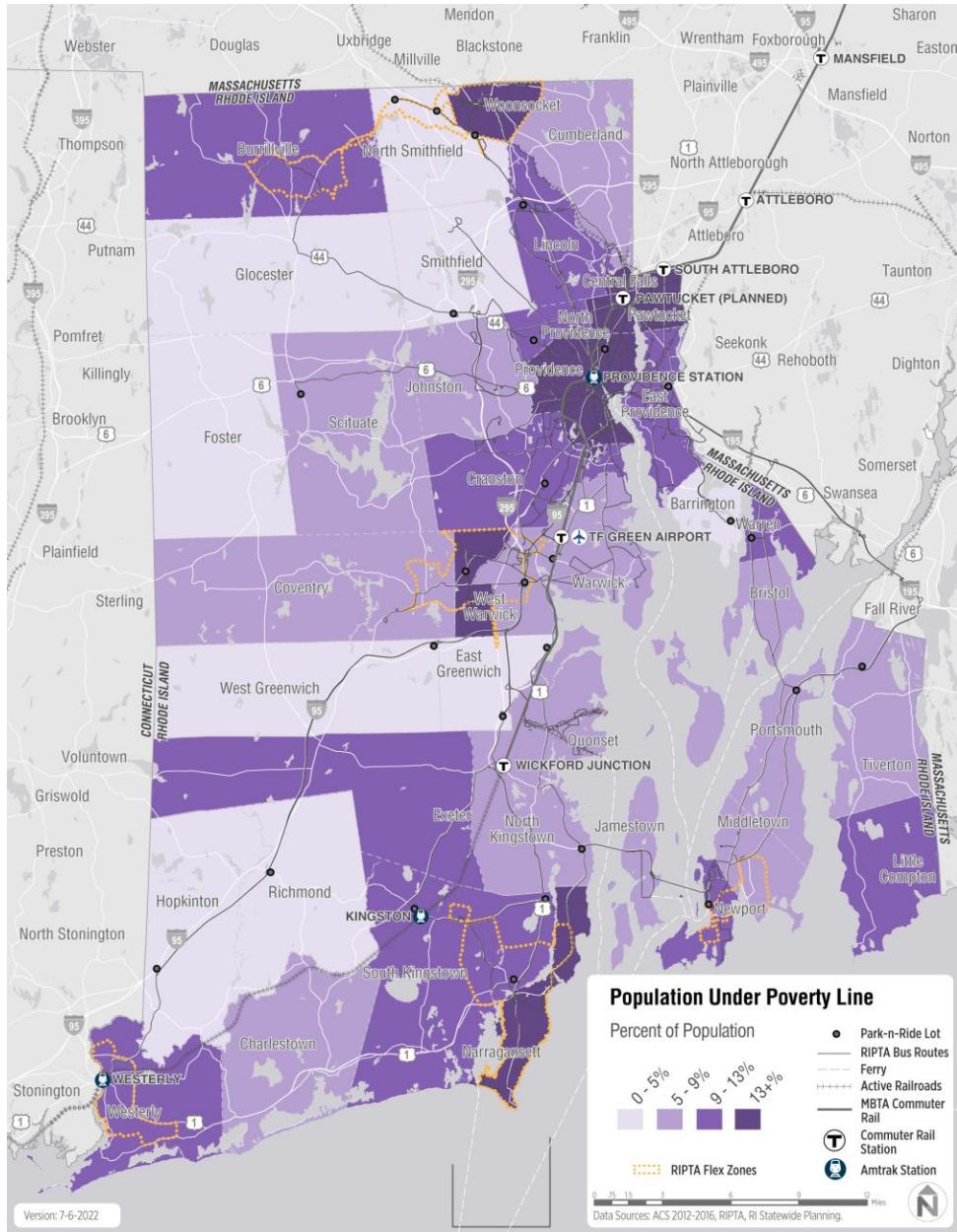


# DEMOGRAPHICS – ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS





# DEMOGRAPHICS – LOW INCOME POPULATION

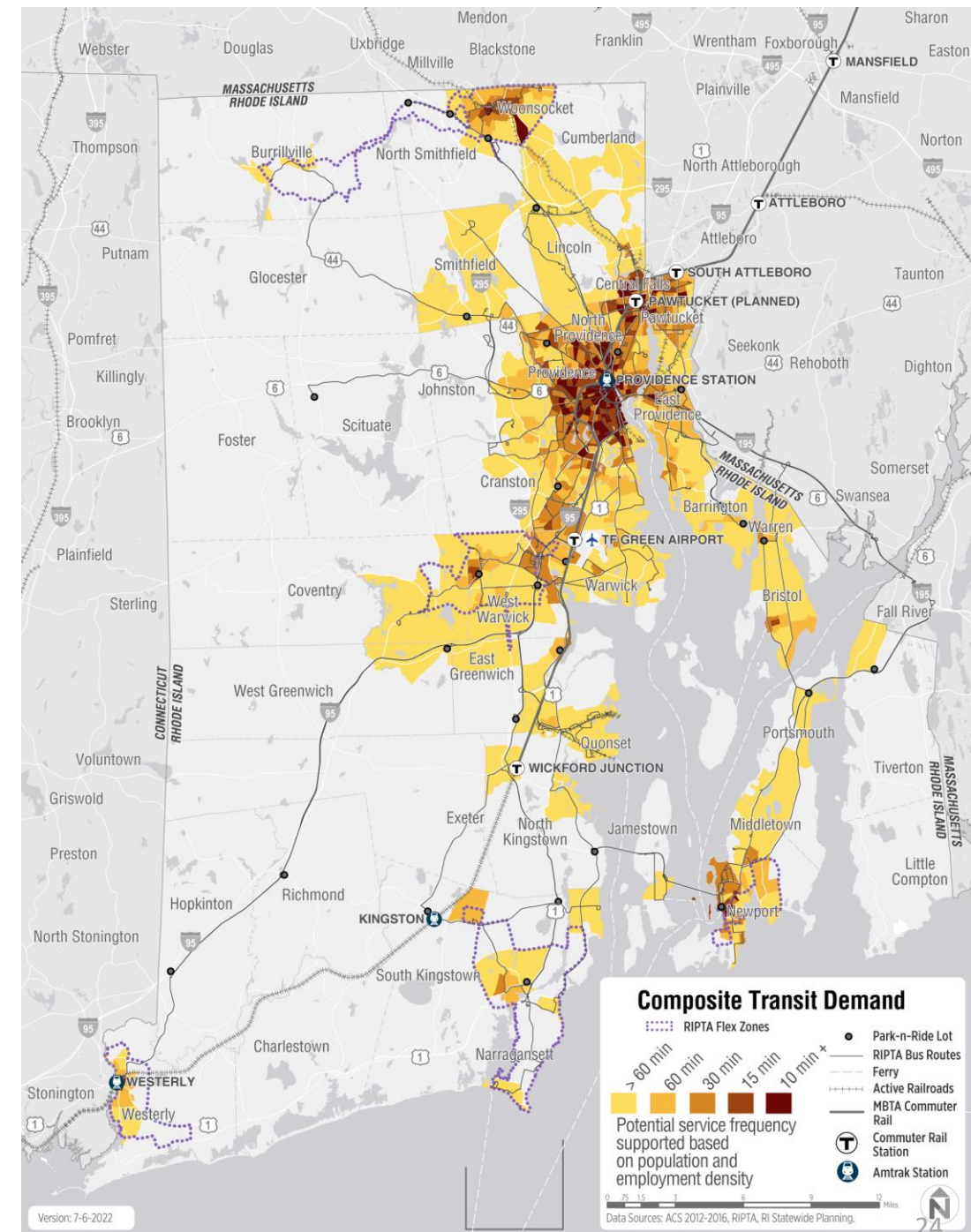


# Overall Transit Demand

From Transit Forward RI, the statewide transit master plan

- Shaded areas can support fixed-route transit
- Darkest shades can support transit services at 10-to-15-minute frequencies
- Areas with no shading:
  - Have insufficient population and/or employment to support fixed-route transit
  - But may include people that need transportation services

## ■ QUESTIONS?





# Improvement Strategies

# Strategy Development Steps

## 1. Considered current services and gap analysis

- Service changes
- New services added



## 2. Sought public input (April/May)

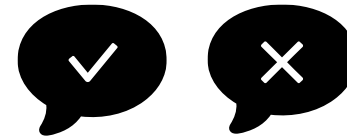


## 3. Refined list of strategy focus areas



# Strategy Development Steps

4. Obtained guidance from HST Coordinating Council at July meeting



5. **Seek additional input (this session)**



6. Perform external research on best practices



7. Incorporate refined strategies into new RI Coordinated Plan



# Strategy Categories

- **Transportation Services:** Transportation service offerings such as RIPTA bus, Flex, RIder, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), local services, and other shuttles
- **Mobility Management:** Programs that improve information sharing, trip planning, and access to transportation services among providers, other agencies, and riders
- **Training:** Programs that offer riders training on how to use transportation services and improve sensitivity training for staff that interact with riders
- **Information and Communications:** Resources that explain available transportation services and simplify the process of planning travel and obtaining rides
- **Vehicles and Infrastructure:** Support for the purchase and maintenance of vehicles and improving infrastructure at bus stops and key facilities that serve riders
- **Funding:** Resources for maintaining existing and expanding services, providing subsidies for low-income riders, and ensuring equity in service delivery
- **Coordination:** Programs that support ongoing coordination among providers and other agencies

# Strategy Focus Areas

- **Transportation Services:** Transportation service offerings such as RIPTA bus, Flex, RIder, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), local services, and other shuttles
- **Focus Area: Mobility Management:** Programs that improve information sharing, trip planning, and access to transportation services through coordination with providers, other agencies, and riders
- **Focus Area: Training:** Programs that offer riders training on how to use transportation services and improve sensitivity training for staff that interact with riders
- **Information and Communications:** Resources that explain available transportation services and simplify the process of planning travel and obtaining rides
- **Focus Area: Vehicles and Infrastructure:** Support for the purchase and maintenance of vehicles and improving infrastructure at bus stops and key facilities that serve riders
- **Funding:** Resources for maintaining existing and expanding services, providing subsidies for low-income riders, and ensuring equity in service delivery
- **Coordination:** Programs that support ongoing coordination among providers and other agencies

# Mobility Management

## Strategy Ideas:

- Develop a statewide network
- Involve transportation providers, agencies, advocates, and riders
- Collaborate on services and programs
- Hold annual mobility management conference
- Build support for more funding



*Source: National Rural Transit Assistance Program*



# Travel Training

## Strategy Ideas:

- Build upon RIPTA's current travel training program, which trains individuals on how to ride the bus
- Use FTA grant to develop a new curriculum
- Seek partnerships with local providers
- Consider recruiting riders to become trainers/ride ambassadors



# Sensitivity Training

## Strategy Ideas:

- Offer to all staff who interact with riders, caregivers, and others
- Include customer service staff and drivers
- Include representative riders with different disabilities in curriculum development
- Consider producing a video
- Start with RIPTA but can offer to other providers (local senior centers, MTM, etc.)



# Vehicles and Infrastructure

## Strategy Ideas:

- Continue to fund Ride replacement vehicles
- Investigate using vanpools for rides other than commuting
- Seek and leverage additional funding for community-based vehicles
- Collect data and identify needs for upgrading priority bus stops to ensure accessibility and provide amenities
- Investigate other infrastructure improvements



# Discussion Questions

- Do you have any questions about the strategy?
- Do you agree with this focus area?
- Do you have additional ideas?
- What would you suggest for partnerships, resources, or initial next steps?

**If you have comments or questions, please put them in the chat or raise your hand to speak**



# Next Steps

- **Review Best Practices**
- **Refine Strategies**
- **Draft Plan** (*September*)
- **Final Plan** (*November*)



# How to Stay Engaged

- Visit [www.ripta.com/projects/ri-coordinated-plan/](http://www.ripta.com/projects/ri-coordinated-plan/)
- Read the 2018 Coordinated Plan
- Learn more about the Coordinating Council
  - <https://www.ripta.com/human-services-transportation-coordination/>
- Email us with any ideas or comments:
  - Joelle Kanter [jkanter@ripta.com](mailto:jkanter@ripta.com)
  - Anne Galbraith [anne@asgplanning.com](mailto:anne@asgplanning.com)



# Thank you!

[www.ripta.com/projects/re-coordinated-plan/](http://www.ripta.com/projects/re-coordinated-plan/)

## **Appendix B: Prioritization Survey Results**



Appendix B – Coordinated Plan Strategy Rankings

Commentor	Strategy Votes (8 maximum)								Strategy Comments								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Other
1				1		3	3	1						More Sheltered Bus stops. CLEAN THE ONES YOU HAVE			
2	2	2				2	1	1									
3	2			2		2	2							Stop taking bus stops and bus routes out and make hubs more user friendly			
4	2	2			2		2		Need to support to volunteer transportation programs with operational funding								
5	4			1	1		1	1	Keep and make enhancements to Kennedy Plaza as the central bus hub.	Have RIPTA take over what MTM does and make it run smoothly.		Some bus drivers are very friendly, and some need to learn not to get angry so easily.		We need more bus shelters around the state.			It is important to listen to bus riders and not spend tons of money replacing Kennedy Plaza as the central bus hub.
6	3			1			3	1									
7	3	2	1			1	1		RIPTA needs to develop the ability for people to put an address into their site and see where the closest bus stop is to them - bring up the related schedules(s), etc.								
9	1	2	1	3				1									Ensure existing systems and services are funded and targeted to vendors, riders and other users.
10	8																
11	4	1			2			1									
12	5					3											
13			2		2			4			Offer Training to Resident Service Coordinators/Social Workers to better help our residents						
14	1			2	2	2	1		Provide								

Appendix B – Coordinated Plan Strategy Rankings

Commentor	Strategy Votes (8 maximum)								Strategy Comments									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Other	
15		2					4	2		We would hope that resources may be directed to include/cover the needs of the Block Island community.						We currently underwrite a Senior Ride Service, with inconsistent funding from the town & from donations. At times, we run out of funds and have to curtail our service. We seek consistent funding in the range of \$10,000 annually to maintain this service.	We would appreciate any outreach from or coordination with the state Human Services & Transportation Departments.	To date, we have had no input from the state of Rhode Island, though several years ago, we requested assistance from the state for a service we feel is vital to our seniors, who make up one-third of our year-round population. We believe we can manage to provide & maintain the Senior Ride Service--consistently with a budget of \$10,000.
16	5				1	2			This is key, we need more routes and more schedules on these routes									
17	2	2			2			2	Expanded service in the West Bay and South County is a great start. Keep it coming with more options.	A RIPTA app would be helpful with updated information on schedules and how to get to a destination. Especially helpful for adults with disabilities.	Offer travel training and Wave card or senior/disabled card sign ups at local senior centers	This or customer service in general. Some drivers seem like they just don't want to be there.	Very important. RIPTA app with schedules and trip planner (google maps). Access to paper schedules for seniors and adults with disabilities. Seminars and trainings at housing facilities or senior centers.	Benches and covers at key stops. More electric vehicles.	Yes.	Encourage providers and advocates to utilize RIPTA for their clients and provide educational support to do so.	Pursue the idea of vehicle sharing for seniors and adults with disabilities for locations not covered by stops.	
18	3	2			2			1	Expansion of services to underserved areas and populations	Crucial for assisting the disabled and older adults with navigation								
19	1	1	2	2		2					Peer support service	Oasis and NAMI-RI create a survey and presentation		Seating area needed at bus stops for the disabled and older adult riders				
20	4	2					2		RIPTA routes need to make public transit use easier and faster									
21	2			3		1	1	1	A wider geographical area will allow for more of our clients to utilize these services		We do this ourselves	Drivers are not familiar with our population and are not always sensitive to the needs of riders	Better communication to agencies like ours helps us to work with riders and train		Always more funding for training, vehicles and more locations			
22	8																	
23	3	2				1	1	1										

Appendix B – Coordinated Plan Strategy Rankings

Commentor	Strategy Votes (8 maximum)								Strategy Comments								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Other
24	2		1	1	1	3											We need more vehicles, routes, better shelters stations and stop areas for our vulnerable population. The more money that can be allocated to those needs the better. I live in Westerly RI area and I am constantly told that there is no para service for my young adult as far as RIDE buses, etc. this needs to change. We are a growing part of the state and need the same services as the other areas have. Thank you for all your work and attention to this matter.
25	2			2			4										
26	8								expand services to rural areas (Little Compton) and forego the three quarter mile from RIPTA bus stops								
27	4						4										
28	1				1		2	4	service should expanded/extended when colleges/schools are in session	Disabled passengers may need additional assistance, not everyone is accustomed to using the bus	travel training video kiosks around the city may be great way to service the community and visitors alike	rules of riding should be posted around the terminals so people are aware of the responsibility for a safe ride	video trainings for passengers onboard the bus would deter stupid questions to the drivers.	signage in and around the terminal for passengers would alleviate constant questions from bus riders	I think the fares should be increased to reflect the distance someone should travel and eliminate the riders from jumping on and off the buses and bothering the drivers	RIPTA could coordinate with Google, MSN, Yahoo, FB, Twitter and other platforms to let passengers know of any detours/changes on a route	
29	1	1	1	1		1	2	1						Need to have maps showing where bus stops are located and features	Need to increase funding for the ELDER TRANSPORTATION program and add trip types		
30	8								Seems to be best option								

Appendix B – Coordinated Plan Strategy Rankings

Commentor	Strategy Votes (8 maximum)								Strategy Comments								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Other
31	1	1	2	1	1	1	1				Updated bus travel information is very necessary especially since so many regular riders lifestyle has changed since the pandemic.						I have taken the bus for most of my life. Since retiring at the beginning of the pandemic I'm not sure how things have changed. I have only used my senior pass for a couple of months before the pandemic hit. Not sure how to obtain a new "wave" card for seniors or use it.
32	3	1		2		1		1	Need more options for those who are disabled, application process for RIDE is awful								
33	4		2		2												
34	3		2				3		Opening up the areas to rural communities		Education is key! Getting the word out.					I like the idea of vouchers.	
35	2	2				1	1	2									
36						4	4										
37	3					5											RIPTA needs an actual functioning online bus tracker so riders know where their buses are. There is no reason in 2022 the state hasn't figured this out yet!
38				1	2	3	2		I am in a wheelchair and are interested in Transportation services.	There are areas RIDE doesn't travel to.		Sensitive to disabled.	More people ride RIPTA to save money. Gas prices are very high. RIPTA has electric vehicles.	I like increasing routes.	To increase RIPTA funding.		
39	2	2		1		1	1	1		MTM is not reliable and could be improved in a variety of ways		consider sensitivity in regards to ALL identities, not just physical disabilities		need safer bus stops and more accessible stops and vehicles			
40	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Have to be able to open up the ADA corridor - especially as communities start to grow	Is there way to share services with a city/town transportation?	seems like provider agencies, schools, rehabilitation agencies should take lead	access training done with other agencies, and the state	Vary communication modalities	Continue to use Section 5310 funding to purchase different size vans, not the bigger bus like vehicles	go after more grant opportunities, federal & state	RI Human Services Coordinating Council could do sensitivity training too	all the strategies are equally important an each relies on the success/execution of the other

Appendix B – Coordinated Plan Strategy Rankings

Commentor	Strategy Votes (8 maximum)								Strategy Comments									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Other	
41	5			1		2			Top issue of concern for riders. We met with over 1,000 people in 2021. Riders want more frequent bus services, expanded night and weekend service, and new bus lines in underserved areas.				This is a major problem. I hear constant complaints about drivers that don't treat disabled passengers with respect. I do not experience this problem. Drivers generally treat me well.			I would give this section more votes but don't want it as an endorsement of Dorrance Street Transit Hub. Kennedy Plaza should be modernized, bus stops improved, and infrastructure expanded rural areas and in cities such as Woonsocket		RIOP supports RIPTA mission and will support your efforts to get more resources to improve service and infrastructure. However, the Dorrance Street Transit Hub is mistake. Energy and resources should be devoted to the issues mentioned in this survey.
42	3				1	2	2											
43	2		1	1	1	2	1											
44		2				4	2											
45				5			3						Some of the drivers will not look at you. Awful.					RIPTA needs a lot of work
46	1	1	2	1	1	1	1											
47	3					3	2		increased frequency of trips especially during business hours, working hours.							more shelter for bus stops, including benches for sitting		
48		2	2	2		2					The trip planner on the RIPTA site is a mess. Confusing even for experienced riders				Keep up the good work on clearing snow from bus stops			

Strategy List

1. Increase Transportation Service Offerings
2. Pursue Additional Funding for Human Services Transportation
3. Enhance Bus Stops, Mobility Hubs, and Availability of Vehicles
4. Expand Customer Service and Sensitivity Training
5. Develop a Statewide Mobility Management Network
6. Strengthen Coordination Among Providers, Funders, and Advocates
7. Strengthen Communications and Information Sharing