

Rhode Island Transit Master Plan Recommendations

December 2020

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Acknowledgments

Transit Forward RI presents a program to enhance and further develop Rhode Island's passenger transportation network to better meet the near- and long-term mobility needs of our state's residents, workers and visitors. The project is a collaboration between the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), and the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning.

Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Scott Avedisian
Chief Executive Officer

Rhode Island Department of Transportation

Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E.
Director

Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning

Meredith Brady
Associate Director for Planning

Project Manager

Sarah Ingle
Director, Long Range Planning
Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

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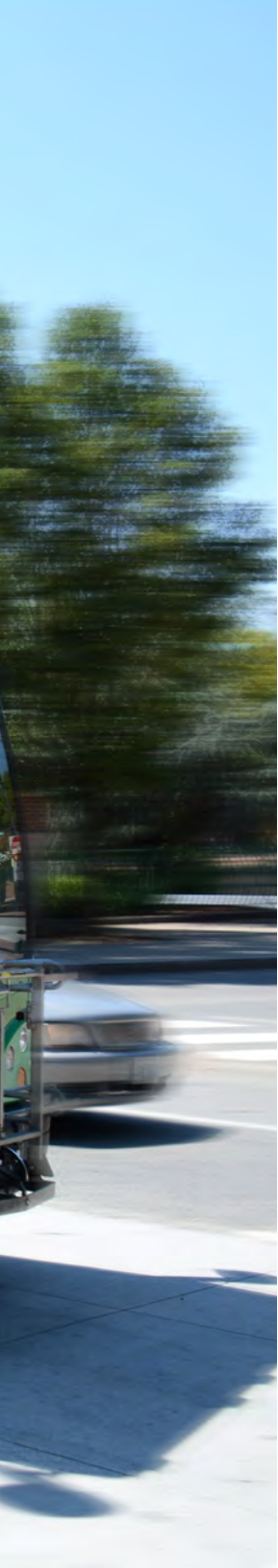
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Preface

COVID-19 and Its Impacts on the Plan

COVID-19 and Its Impacts on the Plan

The first draft of the Transit Forward RI 2040 plan was produced in March 2020 just as COVID-19 stay at home orders were issued. Transit demand plummeted and by early April,RIPTA ridership was down by over 75% compared to March. It has since been increasing, but is still down by approximately 50%. Providence Line ridership declined by over 90% and is not yet recovering in the same manner as bus ridership.

Impacts-to-Date

There have been dramatic changes in the number of people traveling and when they travel. A lower proportion of people are traveling during traditional peak periods and more are traveling during the midday and early evening. Also, a high proportion of those who are now working at home are white, have higher incomes, and work traditional nine to five hours. Those who are still commuting are largely essential workers who must work on site, and a high proportion are people of color with lower incomes and who work non-traditional hours. Consequently, ridership declines have been very different throughout the state.

Short-Term Outlook

A vaccine is now available but will take months to be widely distributed and negative impacts of the pandemic on transit ridership will continue until that time. In the interim, people are expected to return to work gradually. The need to social distance will continue to encourage many former transit riders to drive, making traffic congestion worse. By June 2020, while transit ridership was still only back to half of pre-pandemic levels, Rhode Island's automobile traffic had returned to 99% of February levels. Social distancing requirements also mean that buses can carry only partial loads, and RIPTA has reduced its acceptable maximum loads from 39 to 20. Consequently, RIPTA must provide more service to carry fewer riders. Revenues will remain down throughout the short-term, as fewer riders produce less fare revenue.

Long-Term Outlook

Looking at 2021 and beyond, the economy will gradually re-open and most travel demand should return. However, there will likely be some changes. To the extent that some workers continue to work at home either full-time or part of the time, overall commuting



Rhode Island Angel of Hope and Strength by Shepard Fairey

levels may be lower than they otherwise would be. Still, a balanced transportation system will be essential to meeting Rhode Island's transportation needs, and transit will continue to be the second most popular way for people to get to and from work. Transit improvements will also be the most effective way to minimize increases in traffic congestion, as reflected in Rhode Island's Congestion Management Plan.

Plan Adjustments

Transit Forward RI 2040 is a plan for improvements over the next 20 years. Over a 20-year period, the plan remains valid, and will help Rhode Island become stronger economically and make it a better place to live, work, and play. However, the implementation plan presented in Chapter 10 has been adjusted to move some elements forward and to move others back. Maps presented throughout this document depict proposed improvements through 2040.

In general:

- Short-term improvements should focus first on the core system where demand is highest. As described in Chapter 5, the plan includes a significant amount of expansion to new areas, mostly to provide service coverage to areas with moderate to low demand. Until the pandemic is over, demand in most of these areas will remain too low to support service. While the start of service expansion to new areas remains in the short-term, this would begin later in the period rather than sooner.
- Many short-term improvements would be inexpensive to implement and could help draw people back to transit and should proceed quickly. Two examples include the use of MBTA monthly passes on Amtrak trains between Providence and Boston and app-based reservations, fare payment, and vehicle tracking for Flex service.
- The plan emphasizes more frequent service for longer hours including the development of a Frequent Transit Network of routes that would provide service at least every 15 minutes throughout most of the day. This network would be developed over time. Given current ridership demand patterns, initial frequency improvements should focus on more frequent midday and evening service.
- Much of the Frequent Transit Network will consist of light rail and/or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines, Rapid Bus lines, and Transit Emphasis Corridors. Light rail, BRT lines, and Transit Emphasis Corridor services will run in dedicated transit lanes. All will also include transit signal priority. While the development of these lines will take many years, RIPTA and RIDOT can begin to develop transit lanes and transit signal priority in the short-term in the future LRT/BRT and Rapid Bus corridors – to provide partial benefits sooner and to avoid the state's most important transit routes from becoming bogged down in worsening traffic congestion. An additional short-term improvement would be the extension of R-Line service to Central Falls.
- The development of light rail and BRT lines typically takes eight to 10 years. Given this long timeframe, and in spite of current difficulties, RIPTA should begin project development for the first LRT/BRT line in Year 1.
- Most commuter rail improvements had already been slated for the mid to long-term. The opening of the Pawtucket/Central Falls Station and service there should proceed in the short-term. The development of an Amtrak station at TF Green Airport should occur following a bounce back in air travel. More frequent Providence Line service between Providence and Boston will be led by Boston's MBTA, and had already been slated as a long-term project.
- There is currently no demand for some projects such as service to special events. However, these continue to be included in the short-term in anticipation that special events will restart in 2021 or 2022.



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Introduction

What's This All About?

What's This All About?



Rhode Island's economic health and quality of life are directly tied to the strength of its transit network. Just as RhodeWorks identified and is implementing improvements to the state road network, Transit Forward RI is designed to support corresponding improvements to the state's transit services. These improvements are designed to enhance mobility, help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, encourage active transportation, support economic development, and make Rhode Island a better place to live, work, and play.

Rhode Island begins from a strong starting point. Although demand for transit greatly exceeds what is now provided, RIPTA's services are already much better than those in other similarly sized cities in New England, as well as larger cities such as Nashville, Kansas City, and Fort Worth.

A plan of this scale will take time to implement in its entirety, but Rhode Island can – and will – begin introducing improvements in the short-term with the goal of fulfilling the plan's vision by 2040. Many plan components are funded and poised to advance. In the short-term, among other things, riders will see **faster transit services in dedicated lanes, investments in stops and regional hubs, and increased transit frequency.**

The plan represents the results of months of data-driven analysis, public and stakeholder outreach, and pragmatic debate among state transportation leaders. **The plan is bold and ambitious, and it is vital to Rhode Island regaining its economic leadership regionally and nationally.**

This plan has been designed to achieve four major goals:

- ENHANCE** → **Make transit attractive and compelling**
- CONNECT** → **Connect people to life's activities**
- THRIVE** → **Grow the economy and improve quality of life**
- SUSTAIN** → **Ensure financial and environmental sustainability**



② Recommendations at a Glance

- Recommendations at a Glance
- Providence Metro Area Services
- Statewide Services

Recommendations at a Glance



Transit Forward RI is based on five major initiatives:



Initiative 1
Improve Existing Services



Initiative 2
Expand Services to New Areas



Initiative 3
Develop High Capacity Transit



Initiative 4
Improve Access to Transit



Initiative 5
Make Service Easier to Use

Together, these initiatives will produce a great leap forward to produce a world class transit system for Providence and Rhode Island, greatly enhancing Rhode Island's attractiveness and competitiveness to employers and residents.

These initiatives are summarized here, with service maps presented on the following pages.



Initiative 1 **Improve Existing Services**

A major shortcoming of existing services is that they operate infrequently and for short hours. A major focal point of the plan is to provide more frequent service for longer hours, including the development of a Frequent Transit Network to provide frequent services to the state's major destinations, faster and more frequent Providence Line service, and more.



Initiative 2 **Expand Services to New Areas**

To bring service to more people, service would also be expanded to new areas. These improvements will include new local services, new crosstown routes, new service partnerships, an Amtrak station at TF Green Airport, and new Flex service to, from, and within the Quonset Industrial Park.



Initiative 3 **Develop High Capacity Transit**

The development of High Capacity Transit Services - Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit, and Light Rail - would make transit in high-demand areas much more attractive by making it frequent, fast, and reliable.



Initiative 4 **Improve Access to Transit**

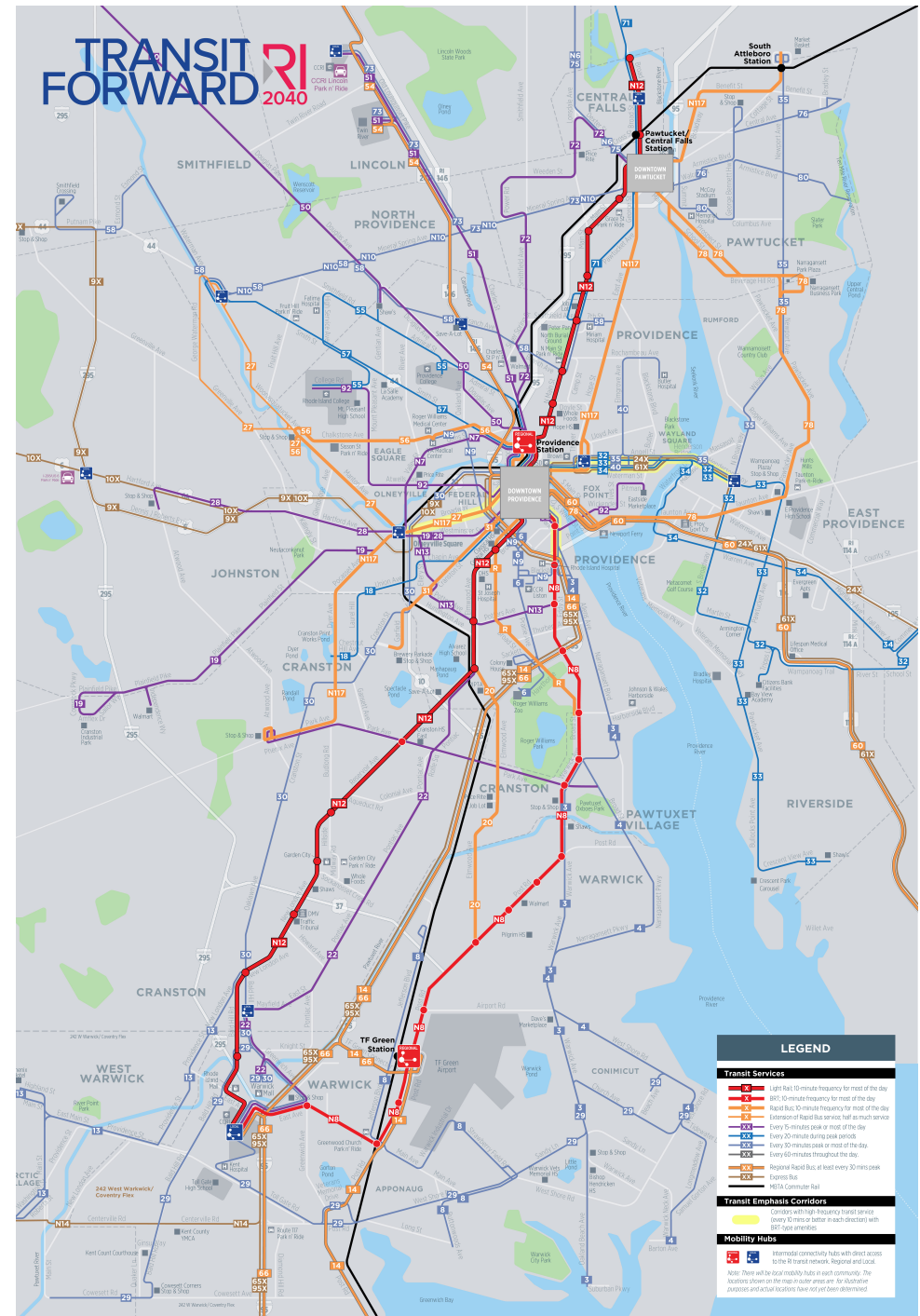
A positive transit experience includes getting to and from transit stops. Transit Forward RI will provide more and better options to get to and from transit comfortably and safely.



Initiative 5 **Make Service Easier to Use**

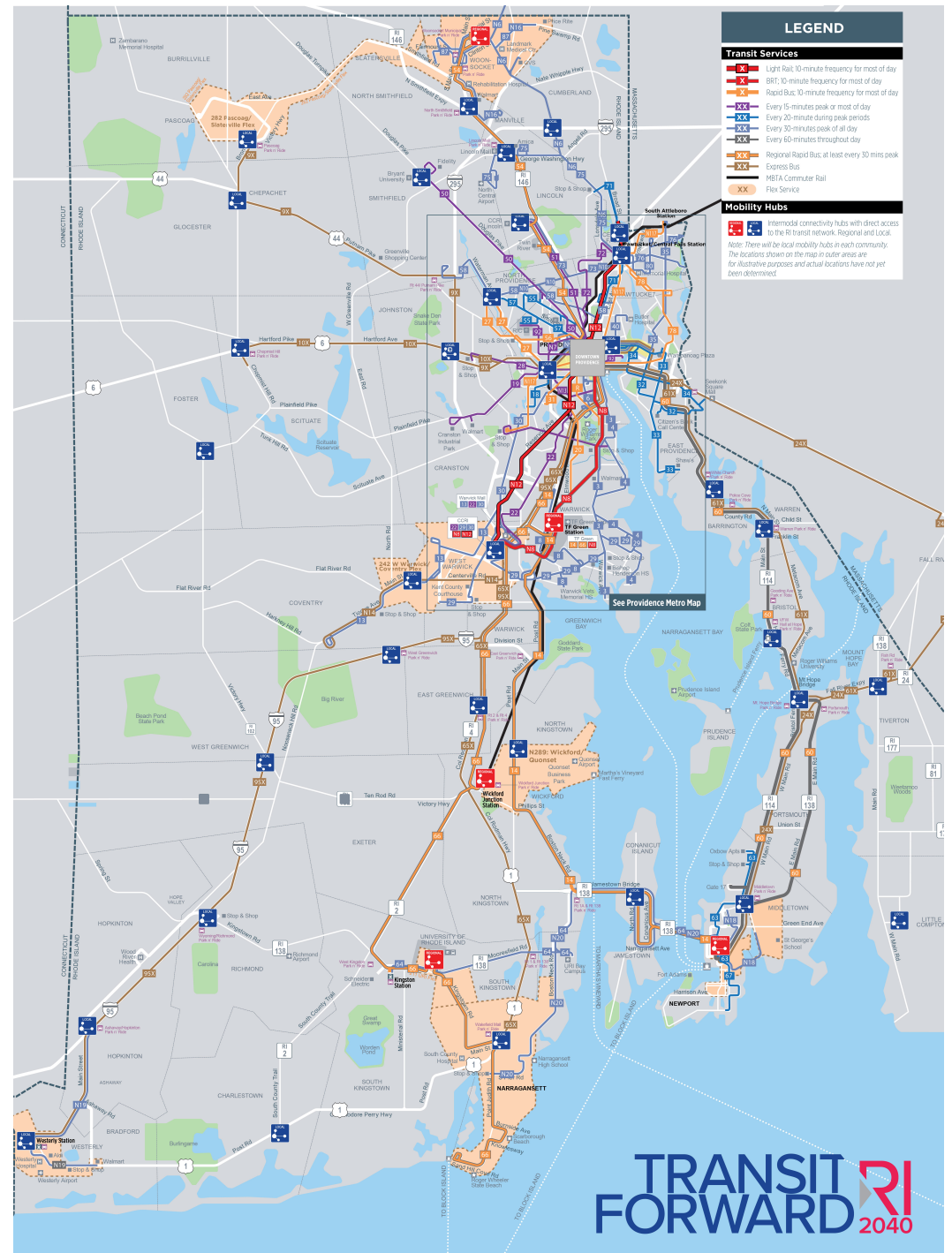
RIPTA and RIDOT will adopt new technologies and methods to make service easier to use, including easier fare payment and better integration of available services.

Recommended Providence Metro Area Services



To view the map online, visit: <http://transitforwardri.com>

Recommended Statewide Services



To view the map online, visit: <http://transitforwardri.com>

③ Why and Where Transit Needs to Improve

● The Demand for Transit in Rhode Island

● Providence Metro Area Services

● Statewide Services

The Demand for Transit in Rhode Island

In much of Rhode Island, the demand for transit greatly exceeds what is provided. This mismatch is greatest in the Providence core, but exists in many other places as well.

Demand for Service is Highest in Urban Areas

The demand for transit is highest – by far – in the Providence metro area. Demand is very high in Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, and parts of North Providence, and high in East Providence, Warwick, and much of Cranston. Transit demand in most of the rest of the Providence metro area is moderate. Key improvements that are needed include:

Transit Needs to Be More Frequent

The most important driver of transit ridership is how frequently the bus comes. At present, RIPTA defines frequent service as every 20 minutes or better, while the more common national definition is every 15 minutes. Using either standard, only one bus route – the R-Line – provides frequent service from at least 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM. RIPTA needs to provide frequent service on many more routes.

Service Needs to Operate for Longer Hours

At present, only four bus routes begin service before 5:00 AM and only five operate until after midnight. Especially to connect people with jobs with non-traditional hours, more service needs to operate for longer hours.

Service Needs to be Faster

With few exceptions such as rail in dedicated rights-of-way, taking transit will take longer than driving. However, to the extent that the difference can be reduced, more people will choose transit. There are a number of ways to make service faster. With the R-Line, RIPTA made service faster by introducing Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and consolidating stops to better balance travel times with walk times. The Downtown Transit Connector (DTC) will provide exclusive lanes for buses in downtown Providence. Additional options include queue jump lanes, transit signal priority, off-board fare payment, and more.

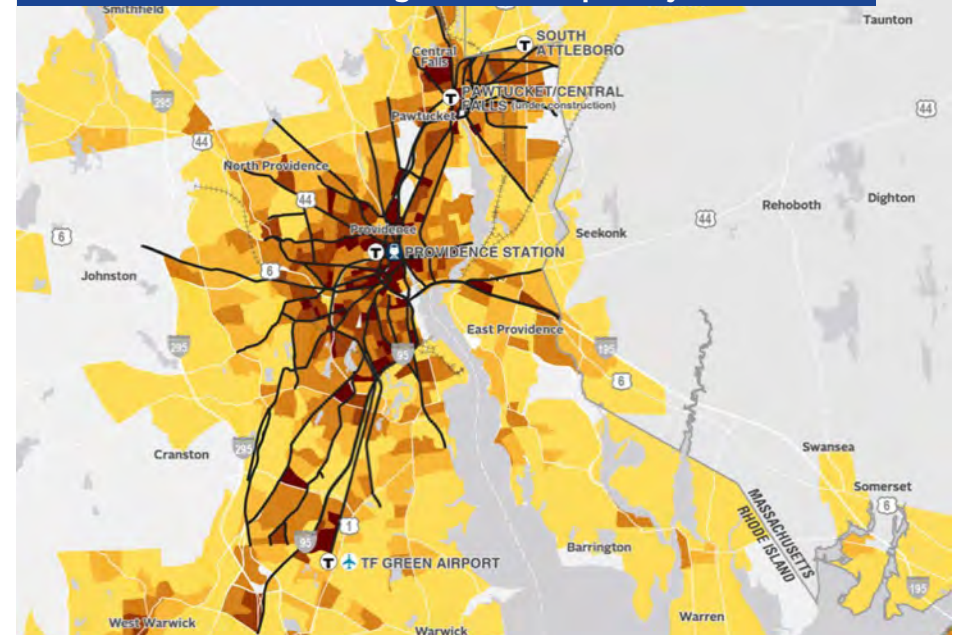
There is Demand for Higher Quality Services

In general, RIPTA and RIDOT provide service in the areas where demand is highest and in other areas where there is sufficient underlying demand for transit service. However, many of the higher demand markets remain under-served, in that there is demand for more robust services than are currently provided. In particular, there is a clear demand for more frequent service for longer hours.

Major Metro Area Corridors

With the exception of the R-Line, which provides Rapid Bus service, major corridors are currently served by local bus service. In most of these corridors, there is demand for more frequent service and/or service for longer hours. In some, there are also opportunities to upgrade service to Rapid Bus, BRT, or even light rail.

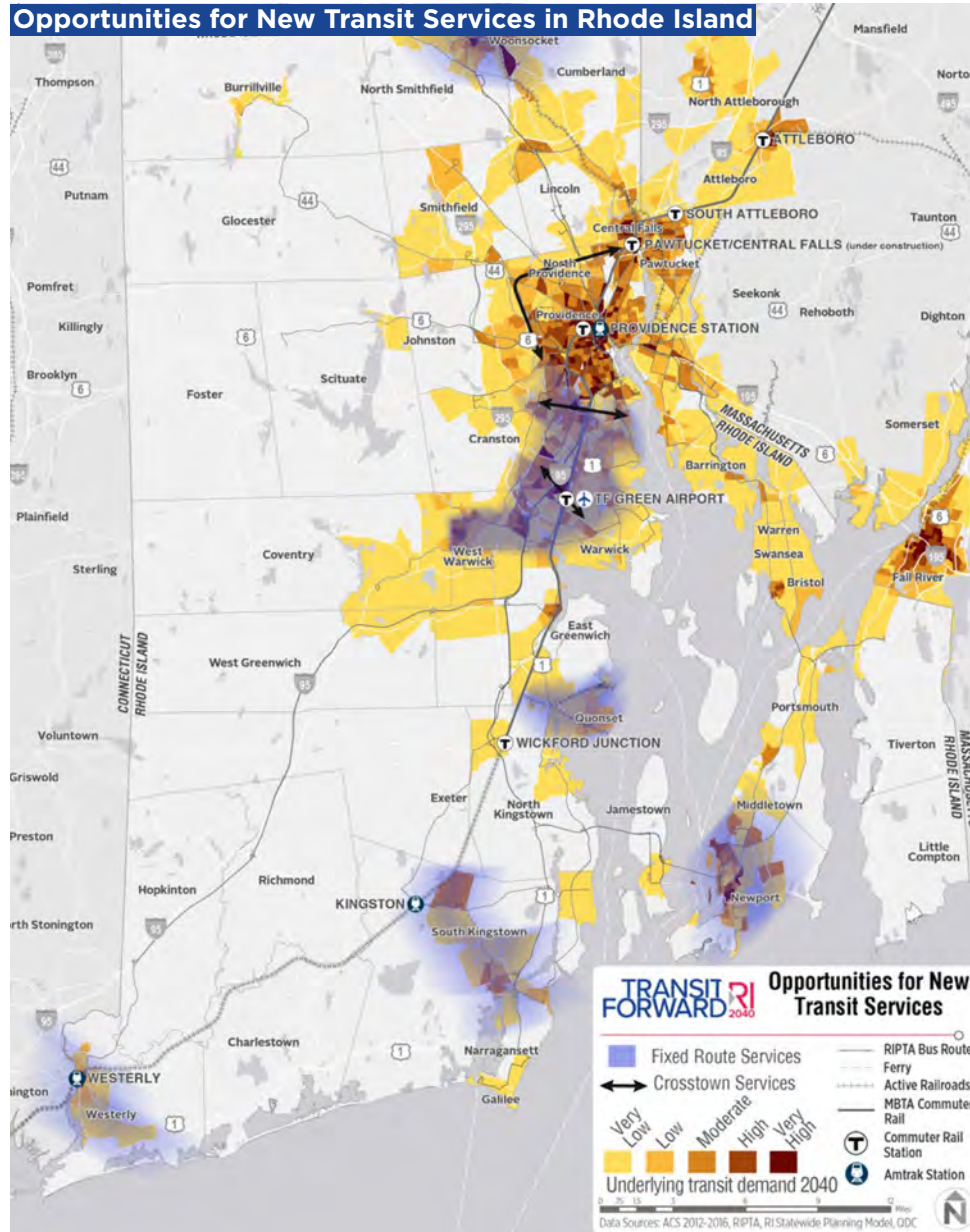
Areas and Corridors with High Transit Propensity in Providence



There is Also Demand for New Fixed-Route Transit Services Outside of the Providence Metro Area

A number of areas around Rhode Island warrant more transit service than is currently provided, including new local bus routes, Flex services, and regional services.

Opportunities for New Transit Services in Rhode Island



Boston Commuter Demand is Very High

While most Rhode Island residents work in Rhode Island, the highest demand for commuter transit service is to and from Boston. This is for a number of reasons, but two are particularly important:

1. MBTA commuter rail and Amtrak service is faster than driving and much more reliable
2. Parking costs in Boston are very high

High levels of service (40 MBTA round trips and 38 Amtrak one-way trips) also make these trips convenient. The proportion of Rhode Island residents who use transit to commute to Boston ranges by station from 47% to 76%.

While more work trips are made to Providence overall, the demand for commuter service is much lower. This is because the factors that make transit so attractive to Boston are not in place for trips to Providence:

1. Transit is much slower. All express buses operate on congested roadways, and MBTA commuter rail between Wickford Junction and Providence runs slowly to avoid conflicts with Amtrak trains.
2. Parking in Providence is relatively inexpensive for most, and free for many. The proportion of Rhode Island residents who use transit to commute to Providence, by route, is 10% or lower, and usually less than 5%.

Better Rail Service Can Strengthen Economic Ties with Boston

Rail ties between Rhode Island and Boston are already very good. The MBTA runs 40 weekday round trips between Providence and Boston and Amtrak runs 38 one-way trips. In total, there are more trains between Boston and Providence than between Boston and any other terminal city. Providence is also one of the highest-ridership commuter rail stations outside of Boston and one of the highest ridership stations in the entire Amtrak system.

However, there is still much room for improvement, and stronger links with Boston would strengthen Rhode Island economically. Opportunities include faster MBTA service, additional trains to fill gaps in existing schedules, joint MBTA and Amtrak ticketing, and the operation of more MBTA service south of Providence to Warwick/TF Green Airport.

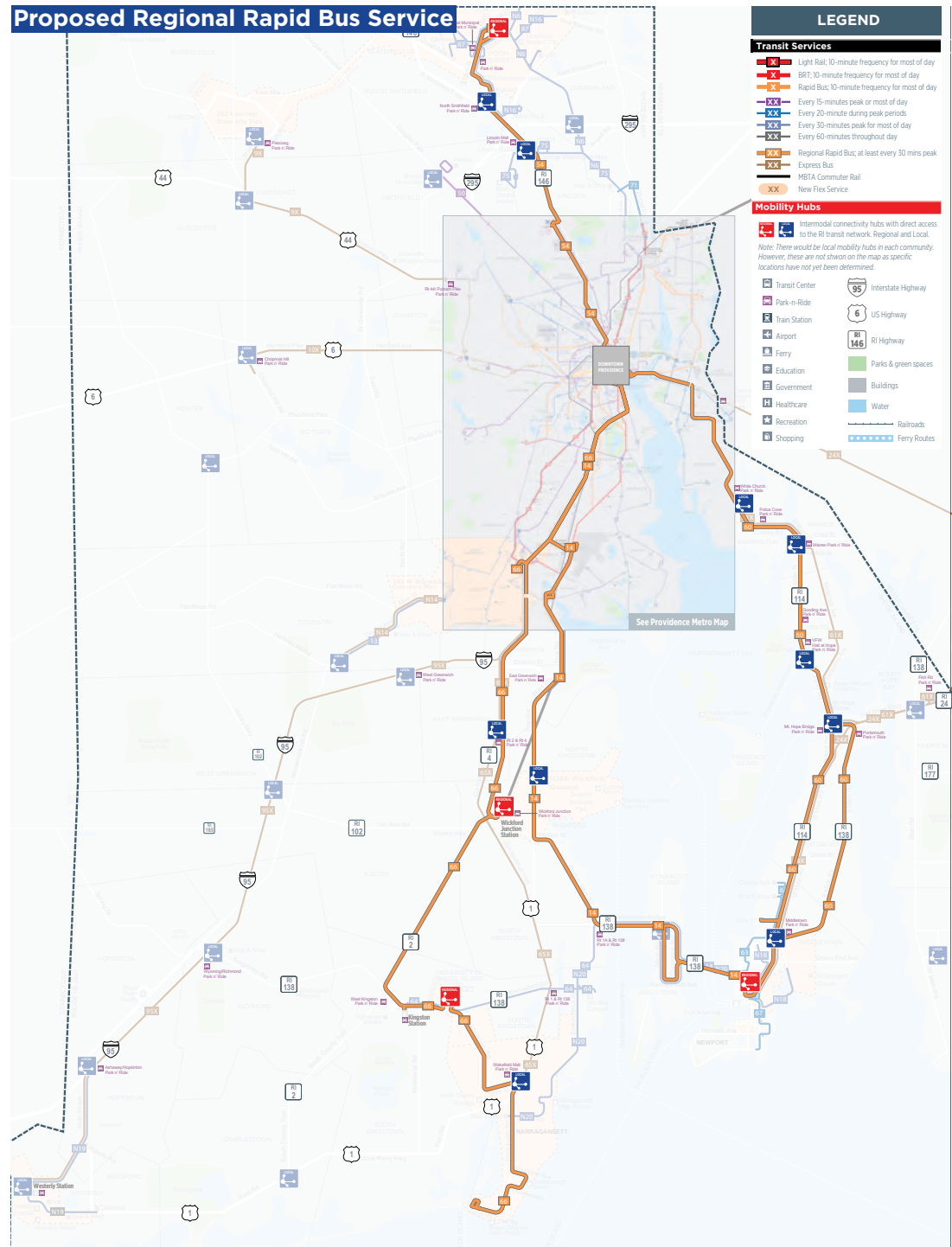
Better Express Services Could Improve Providence Commutes

Although relatively inexpensive and free employer-provided parking in Providence reduces commuter transit demand, there are still opportunities for improvement. These include more frequent peak period express service to provide riders with more flexibility.

Better Regional Services Could Strengthen Economic Ties between Rhode Island's Communities

Rhode Island has some of the strongest regional transit markets in the Northeast, if not the United States. These include Woonsocket – Providence and Newport – Providence via the West Bay. Other strong markets include Newport – Providence via the East Bay and Narragansett – South Kingstown – Kingston – Providence.

Existing services between Woonsocket and Providence and between Newport and Pawtucket are well-used, but very basic. Upgraded services such as Regional Rapid Bus with better stop facilities, transit priority, and bus on shoulder operations would make service faster and more comfortable. Other markets where there is demand for stronger regional service are Newport to Kingston/URI and to and from Quonset.



④ Initiative 1: Improve Existing Services

Local Bus, Express Bus, and Flex Services

Rail Service to and from Boston



Initiative 1

Improve Existing Services



A fundamental starting point for Transit Forward RI will be to improve existing services. Existing services will be improved in a number of different ways:

Local Bus, Express Bus, and Flex Service

- Development of a Frequent Transit Network
- More frequent service for longer hours
- Transit Priority to make service faster
- More frequent and faster express bus service
- Flex service improvements

Rail to and from Boston

- Faster service
- More frequent service



The Frequent Transit Network would consist of a total of 19 routes with service frequencies of 15 minutes or better.



More Frequent Service for Longer Hours Will Make it Much Easier to Travel by Transit

In addition to the Frequent Transit Network, more frequent service for longer hours would also be provided on nearly all other routes – changes designed to make service more convenient and to better match service levels with demand. All routes would be classified according to one of the route classifications shown below. Nearly all routes would operate more frequently and for longer hours. Equally important, far fewer routes would operate infrequently.

Changes in Service Frequencies (Number of Routes)

Route Type	Today	Recommended
Light Rail, BRT, and Rapid Bus (Every 10 Minutes)	1	9
Regional Rapid Bus	0	4
Frequent Local (Every 15 Minutes)	4	10
Local (Every 16 to 30 Minutes)	19	32
Local (Every 31 to 60 Minutes)	15	0
Local (Less frequent than every 60 Minutes)	7	0
Express	8	7
Flex Zones	7	8
TOTAL	61	68

Earlier and later service will also be provided to serve a greater range of work hours as well as more flexibility for other types of trips.

Changes in Service Spans (Number of Routes)

Number of Routes	Today	Recommended
Service Before 6 AM	22	23
Service After 10 PM	22	32
Service After Midnight	5	19
TOTAL	49	74

- **An east-west Transit Emphasis Corridor (TEC)** between Olneyville Square and East Providence. This TEC would be similar to the Downtown Transit Corridor (DTC) and would use Broadway through Federal Hill, Angell and Waterman Streets on College Hill, and the Henderson Bridge and Henderson Expressway in East Providence.
- **Transit priority at traffic chokepoints** at key locations throughout Rhode Island as part of roadway improvement projects.



- **More frequent service:** At present, service on some express routes is very limited, with only one or two trips in each direction. Service on all routes would be increased to at least four AM inbound and four PM outbound trips.
- **The use of commuter coaches** to provide more comfortable service.
- **Bus on Shoulder service:** Bus on shoulder service would be implemented on Regional Rapid Bus and express routes, in cases where only moderate roadway changes (such as changes to signing and striping) would be needed.

A white and blue MTA Commuter Coach bus is shown from a front-three-quarter view, driving on a city street. The bus features a large destination sign on the windshield displaying 'x27' in yellow and 'BAY RIDGE SHORE RD' in orange. Below the windshield, the bus number '2484' is visible. The front of the bus has a blue stripe with the MTA logo and a yellow license plate that reads '8-0740'. A wheelchair accessibility symbol is located on the front left. The side of the bus has a blue stripe with the text 'MTA Commuter Coach'. The background shows a city street with buildings, trees, and other vehicles.

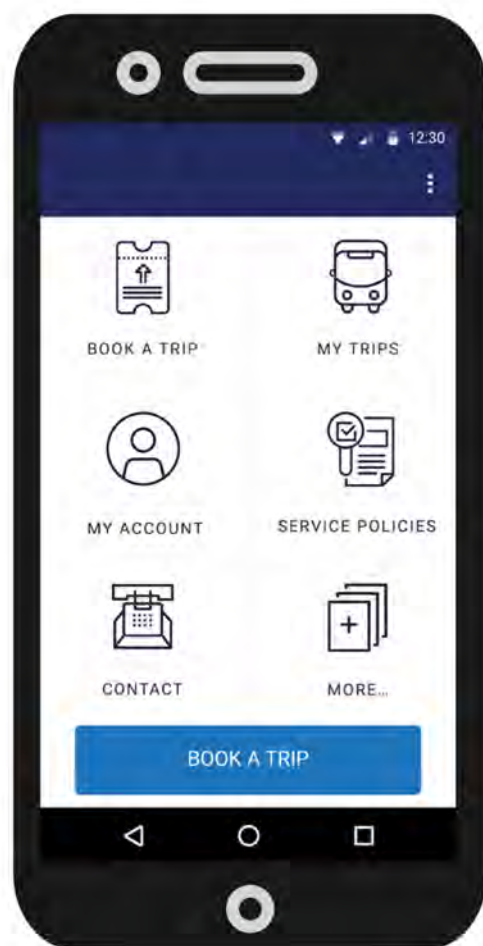
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Flex Service Improvements Will Improve Service to the Suburbs and Lower-Density Areas

RIPTA's Flex services currently require prior day advance reservations by phone and sometimes deny rides because the service is full. To improve service, the following improvements would be added to RIPTA's existing phone-based system:

- **App-based same-day/on-demand booking**
- **App-based fare payment**
- **App-based vehicle tracking**

In addition, and as required, the capacity of the existing services would be increased to accommodate all demand.



WHAT IS FLEX?

Flex Service brings a public transportation option to areas that have little or no regular service. Flex Service is unique in that it combines designated bus stops with custom reservation options—all in one service! Passengers have the option of picking up the Flex van at a scheduled stop or choosing their own pick-up or drop off points within the designated Flex Zone.

And even though Flex primarily provides local service within its designated zone, it can connect you to our statewide network.

How Flex Can Work For You

- Just **board at a scheduled Flex stop*** or **make a reservation** to be picked up at the curb at any address within your Flex Zone (*please see accompanying map*).
- Once on board, you can request to **get off anywhere in the Flex Zone**—just remember that the Pascoag/Slatersville Flex van operates in the area indicated on the map. Custom stops will be made in the areas the van is traveling.
- If you aren't boarding at a scheduled Flex Stop, you need to **make a reservation** by calling 1-877-906-3539 or 401-784-9500, ext. 220. You cannot make reservations with the driver.

**Because of custom stops, the Flex van may arrive at stops up to 10 minutes after the designated time.*

Traveling Outside Your Flex Zone

To travel outside your Flex Zone it is necessary to connect to fixed-route service. In Pascoag/Slatersville, the Flex route has scheduled stops on **Sayles Avenue** where you can **transfer to regular RIPTA Route 9X**. There are also scheduled stops at **Wal-Mart** where you can **transfer to regular RIPTA Routes 54 and 59x**. The Flex vehicle cannot travel outside its zone.

More Frequent Commuter Rail Service Will Serve a Greater Range of Trips

In Spring 2019, the Rhode Island Governor's Office and RIDOT began discussions with their Massachusetts counterparts on ways to enhance and shorten the trip time between Providence and Boston. Concepts ranging from cross-honoring MBTA commuter rail passes on Amtrak trains to pilot/demonstration services to full electrification on the Providence Line continue to be investigated by both states. In addition, RIDOT remains very active with Massachusetts on efforts to improve commuter rail service overall through Rail Vision and the Northeast Corridor Commission.

In November 2019, the MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) passed a number of resolutions related to commuter rail improvements, including the Providence Line. The MBTA envisions a commuter rail system that will be more similar to rapid transit and will include the following features:

- **All-day frequent service**
- **Electrified service that uses Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) railcars**
- **High level platforms and all-door boarding and alighting**

The MBTA FMCB identified the Providence lines as one of the first three lines for these improvements (although a schedule has not yet been set). A key element will be that **service between Providence and Boston would operate more frequently**, which would be major improvement from today's service levels.

South of Providence, where service levels will be determined by Rhode Island and demand is significantly lower, **service to TF Green would be improved to 20 round trips on weekdays, nine on Saturdays, and seven on Sundays**. To and from Wickford Junction, where demand and ridership are fairly low, service will be maintained at 10 round trips per weekday.

In addition, **cross-honored fares with Amtrak** will be implemented to provide access to select Amtrak trains, which will provide additional service. This is described in more detail below in the fare integration section.



Faster Commuter Rail Service Will Reduce Travel Times

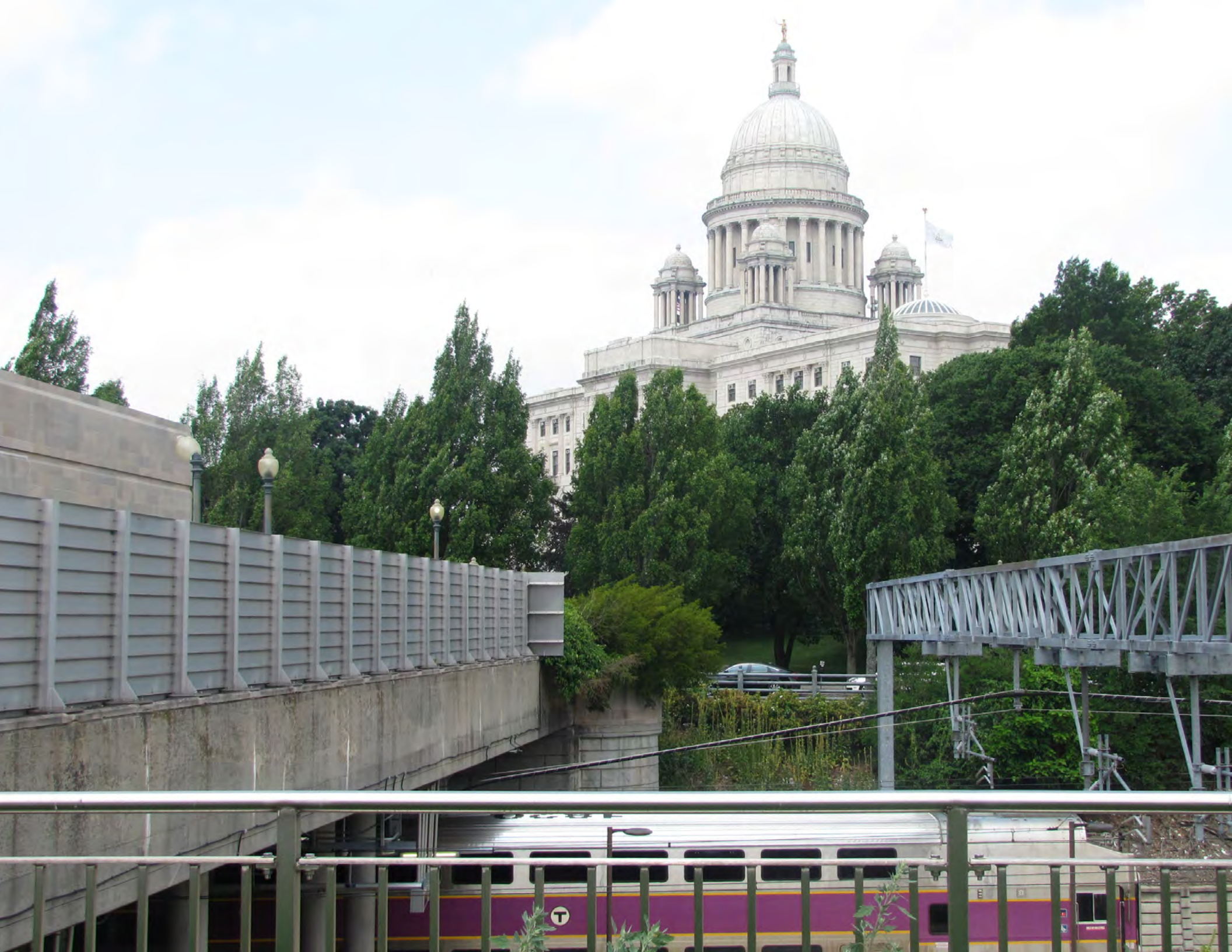
The planned improvements will also include elements to make service faster. These details also need to be worked out, but important improvements could include:

- **High-level platforms at all Massachusetts stations will significantly reduce dwell time at stations**
- **The use of electrified trains will reduce acceleration times**



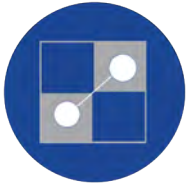
Cross-Honored Fares with Amtrak will Fill Gaps in Service and Provide Access to Faster Service

RIDOT is planning to implement a cross-honor fare agreement with Amtrak that will provide the ability for Providence Line passholders to ride select Amtrak trains. This will provide more frequent service to passholders as well as access to faster and more comfortable trains, and fill gaps in off-peak service.



5 Initiative 2: Expand Service to New Areas

- Local Fixed Route Service to New Areas
- New Crosstown Routes
- Wickford/Quonset Flex Service
- Amtrak Service to TF Green Airport
- Network of Mobility Hubs
- Expanded Seasonal/Special Event Services
- Service Partnership Program



Initiative 2

Expand Service to New Areas



Transit Forward RI will provide a variety of new services:

- **Bus services to new areas**
- **New crosstown bus routes**
- **Wickford/Quonset Flex service**
- **Network of mobility hubs**
- **Amtrak station at TF Green Airport**
- **Expanded seasonal and special event services**
- **A Service Partnership program to encourage public-private partnerships to expand transit service**



New Local Fixed-Route Services Will Bring Transit to More People

New local fixed-route services would be developed in areas where there is moderate to high demand, but are currently either unserved or underserved.

These routes would be:

- **Providence**
 - N7 Valley Street
- **Woonsocket**
 - N16 Bellingham-Manville
- **Newport**
 - N18 Hillside/Valley
 - N20 Newport-Narragansett
- **Narragansett**
 - N20 Newport-Narragansett
- **Westerly**
 - N19 Westerly-Bradford
- **New crosstown routes in the Providence Metro Area (see following page)**



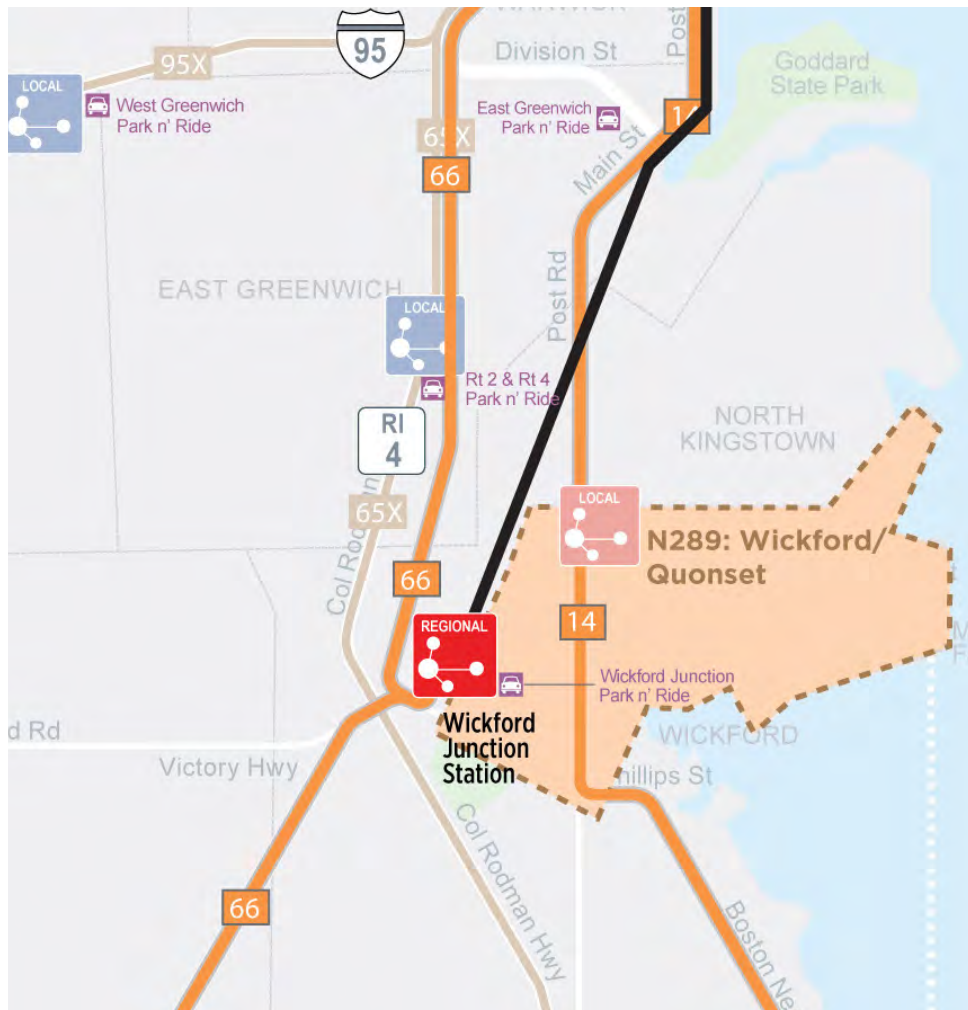
- **N9 VA Hospital - Eddy Street via Dean Street**
- **N10 Mineral Spring Ave**
- **N11 Cranston/Park Ave**
- **N13 Olneyville Square - Eddy Street**

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Wickford/Quonset Flex Service Will Improve Service to an Important Job Site

New Flex service would be developed in Wickford and the Quonset Industrial Park to enhance employee access to Quonset. The new service would provide connections between Regional Rapid Bus services and commuter rail.

With longer spans of service on regional bus routes, connections would be available to Quonset for long hours from Providence, South County, Newport, and points in between.



Amtrak Service to TF Green Airport Will Improve Interstate Connections

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) recently awarded a grant to RIDOT to undertake preliminary engineering and environmental review for the development of an Amtrak stop at TF Green Airport. Based on a favorable outcome of this phase, funding for construction, and the agreement of Amtrak, some or all Northeast Regional trains would stop at TF Green Station, providing one of the closest air to intercity rail connections in the country.



A Network of **Mobility Hubs** Will Improve Connections Throughout Rhode Island

Mobility hubs are sites 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 different types of trips.

Transit Forward RI 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.

Mobility hubs vary in size and function based on the types of options available and volumes:

- Large **regional mobility hubs** such as Kennedy Plaza, Providence Station, and the Newport Visitors Center typically include services and amenities such as indoor shelter, restrooms, bicycle facilities, and staffed or technology-enhanced information kiosks. Regional mobility hubs are located at the ends of major transit lines and in downtowns and major regional activity centers.
- Smaller **community mobility hubs** that provide mobility services for their immediate surrounding neighborhoods are generally located in village centers and other activity centers in lower density suburban areas. Community mobility hubs typically include bus stops, outdoor shelters, real-time signage, bike/car share, and park and ride lots.



Community and Regional Mobility Hubs

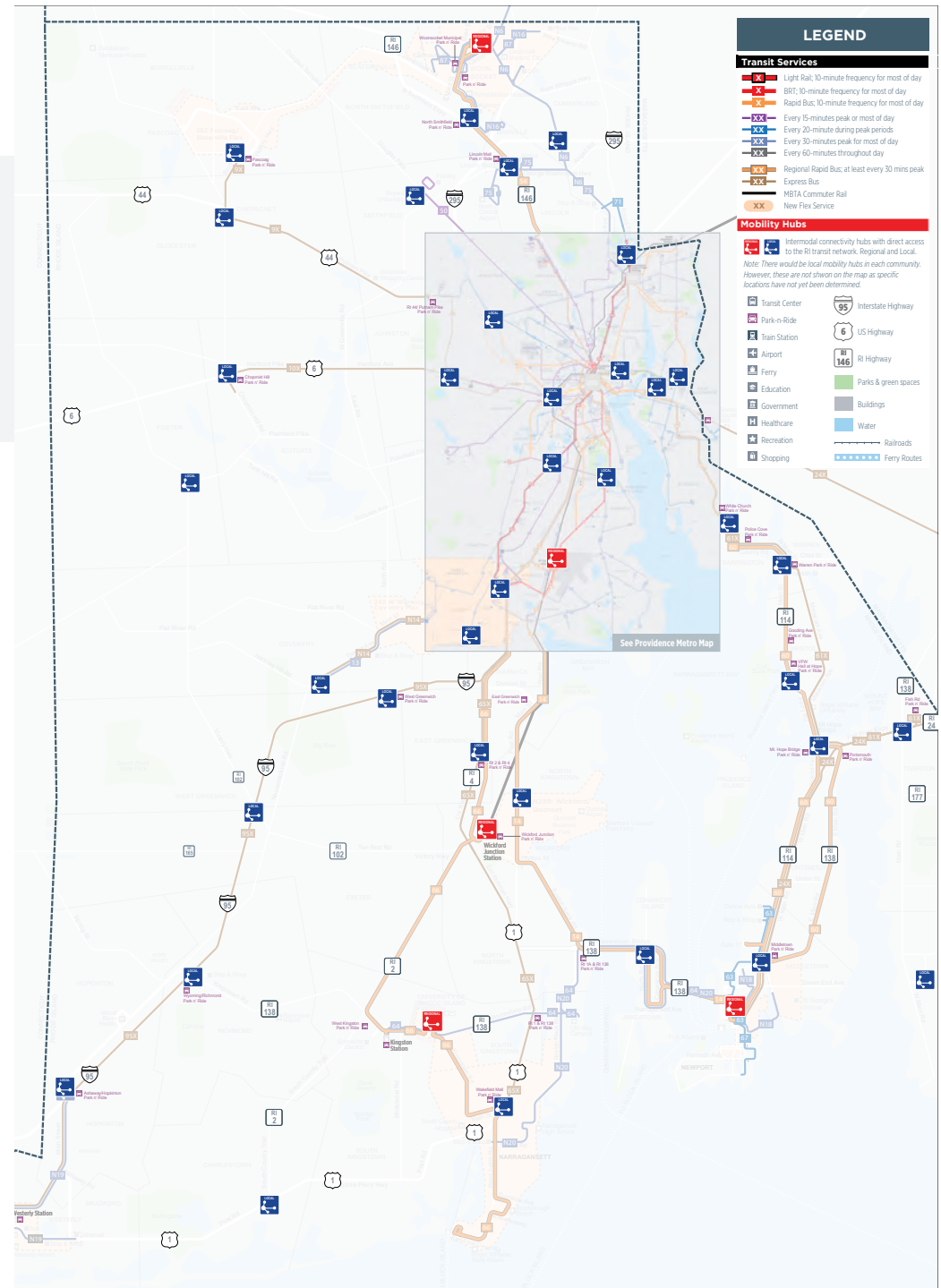
There will be nine regional mobility hubs and at least one community mobility hub in each community.

Regional Mobility Hubs

- 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

Community Mobility Hubs

- Barrington
- Bristol
- Burrillville
- Central Falls
- Charlestown
- College Hill
- Coventry
- Cranston/Knightsville
- Cranston/Pawtuxet
- Cumberland
- East Greenwich
- East Providence
- Wampanoag Plaza
- Exeter
- Foster
- Glocester
- Hopkinton
- Jamestown
- Johnston
- Lincoln
- Little Compton
- Middletown
- Narragansett
- New Shoreham
- North Kingstown/Quonset Gateway
- North Providence
- North Smithfield
- Portsmouth
- Providence/Olneyville
- Richmond
- Scituate
- Smithfield/Bryant University
- Tiverton
- Warren
- Warwick/Arctic
- Warwick/CCRI
- Westerly
- West Greenwich



Additional Service Will Better Serve Special Event and Seasonal Demands

RIDOT currently provides seasonal ferry service to Newport and Bristol. RIPTA provides seasonal services to beaches and in Newport, as well as shuttle services from Providence Station and Downtown to the ferry terminal on India Street

To better support tourist-related businesses and residents and visitors, RIPTA and RIDOT will include annual budget set-asides for the operation of special event services.



Service Partnerships Will Engender Public-Private Partnerships

Due to financial constraints, transit systems can never provide as much service as all constituents want. 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.”

These programs enable stakeholders to purchase additional services while providing transit agencies the financial means to satisfy requests for new or expanded services. In other parts of the country, service partnerships have been used to enhance transit services in a wide range of scopes and contexts. These have included:

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

RIPTA can develop a Service Partnership program that can specify how outside organizations can partner with RIPTA to provide additional service. As described above, these service partnerships could include the expansion of traditional transit services, as well as new rideshare, microtransit, Flex, shuttle, or other services.

⑥ Initiative 3: Develop High Capacity Transit Services

Rapid Bus

Regional Rapid Bus

Light Rail and Bus Rapid Transit



Initiative 3

Develop High Capacity Transit Services

High Capacity Transit services are those that serve high volume markets with fast and frequent high-quality service. Recommended urban services include Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit, and/or Light Rail, which are summarized below. The R-Line is an example of Rapid Bus service. At a statewide level, Regional Rapid Bus services are also recommended.

Rhode Island can make incremental advances to High Capacity Transit in the short-term through investments in transit priority infrastructure and reallocation of right-of-way.

LIGHT RAIL

TYPICAL FEATURES

- Two car trains
- Service in exclusive rights-of-way
 - Center running in urban arterials
 - In own right-of-way
 - Aerial and underground sections
- High quality stations with level boarding
- Very frequent service (at least every 10 minutes)
- Service from early morning to late night
- Limited stops
- Transit signal priority
- Special branding
- Off-board fare collection
- Real-time passenger information



Salt Lake City TRAX light rail service

BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

TYPICAL FEATURES

- 60' articulated buses
- Center or side-running on urban arterials
- High quality stations
- Very frequent service (at least every 10 minutes)
- Service from early morning to late night
- Limited stops
- Simple service design
- Limited stops
- Transit signal priority
- Special branding
- Off-board fare collection
- Real-time passenger information



Cleveland Healthline BRT service

RAPID BUS

TYPICAL FEATURES

- Similar to BRT but without exclusive lanes, or only limited exclusive lanes
- 40' or 60' articulated coaches
- More limited forms of transit priority:
 - Transit signal priority
 - Queue jump lanes
- Frequent service, but less frequent than light rail or BRT
- Service from early morning to late night, but often shorter span than light rail or BRT



Los Angeles Metro Rapid service

REGIONAL RAPID BUS

TYPICAL FEATURES

- Similar to urban Rapid Bus but serves regional corridors with limited stops
- Commuter coaches
- Similar forms of transit priority as urban RAPID Bus plus:
 - Bus-only access to and from station
 - Bus on shoulder operations
- Less frequent service, but at least every 30 minutes during peak periods
- Service from early morning to late night, but often shorter span than urban Rapid Bus



Denver RTD Flatiron Flyer service

Rapid Bus Will Extend R Line-type Service Throughout the Metro Area

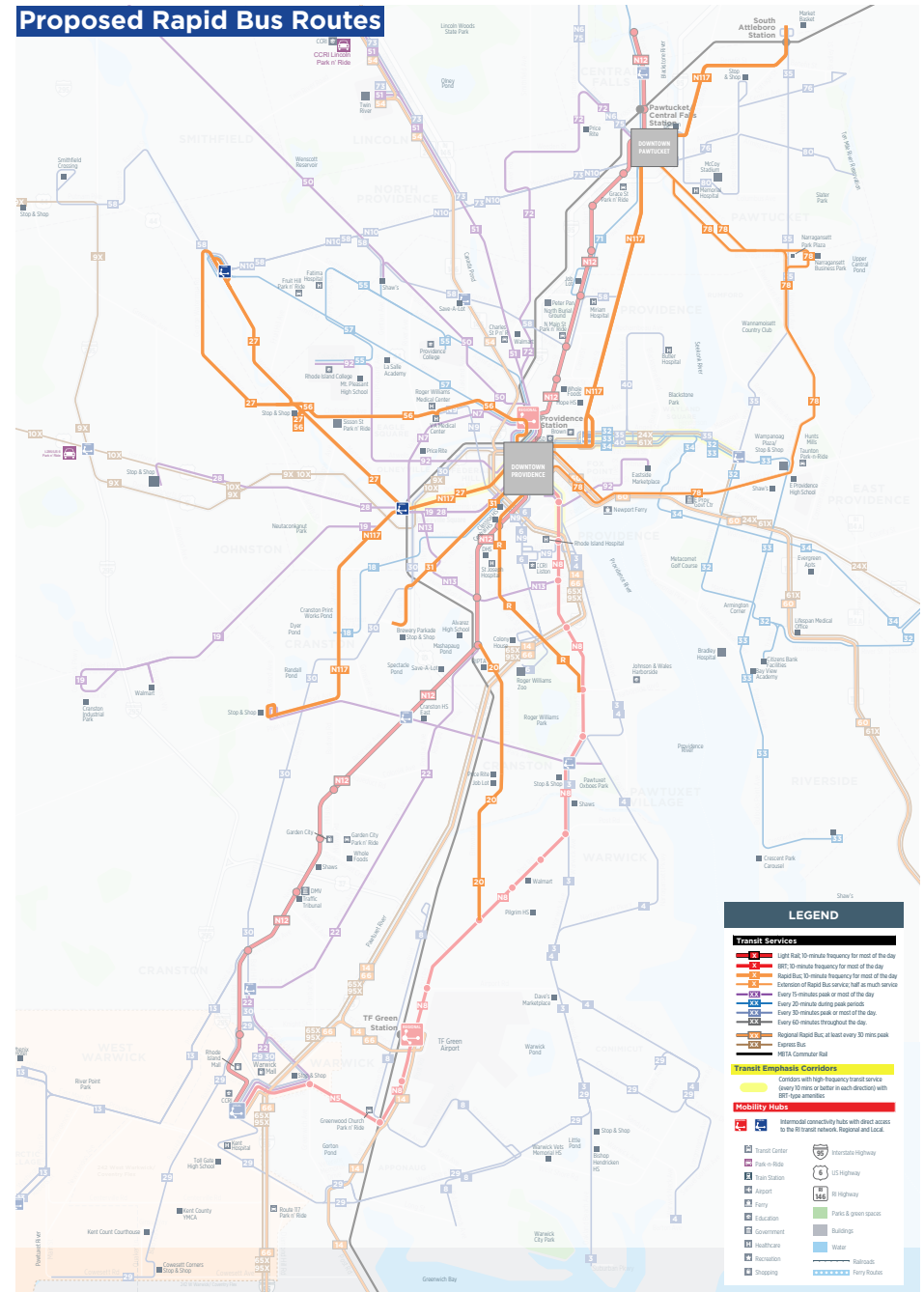
Rapid Bus services have many of the same features as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services but operate in mixed traffic rather than dedicated bus lanes. They require fewer resources than BRT systems but provide higher-quality service than local buses.

Rapid Bus lines have a combination of the following elements:

- Unique identity and Branding
- Premium Stations
- Real-Time Passenger Information
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Technologies
- Effective Connections
- Transit Signal Priority

The R-Line is currently RIPTA's only Rapid Bus service, with 10-minute frequency most of the day, high quality stations, more limited stops, queue jump lanes, transit signal priority, and special branding. The southern portion of the R-Line, as well as six other rapid Rapid Bus lines would be developed:

- **Southern part of R-Line**
- **20 Elmwood Ave**
- **27 Broadway-Manton**
- **31 Cranston St**
- **56 Chalkstone Ave**
- **78 Beverage Hill-East Providence**
- **N117 Hope/Dyer-Pocasset (which would replace the northern end of Route 1 Hope/Eddy and Route 17 Dyer-Pocasset)**

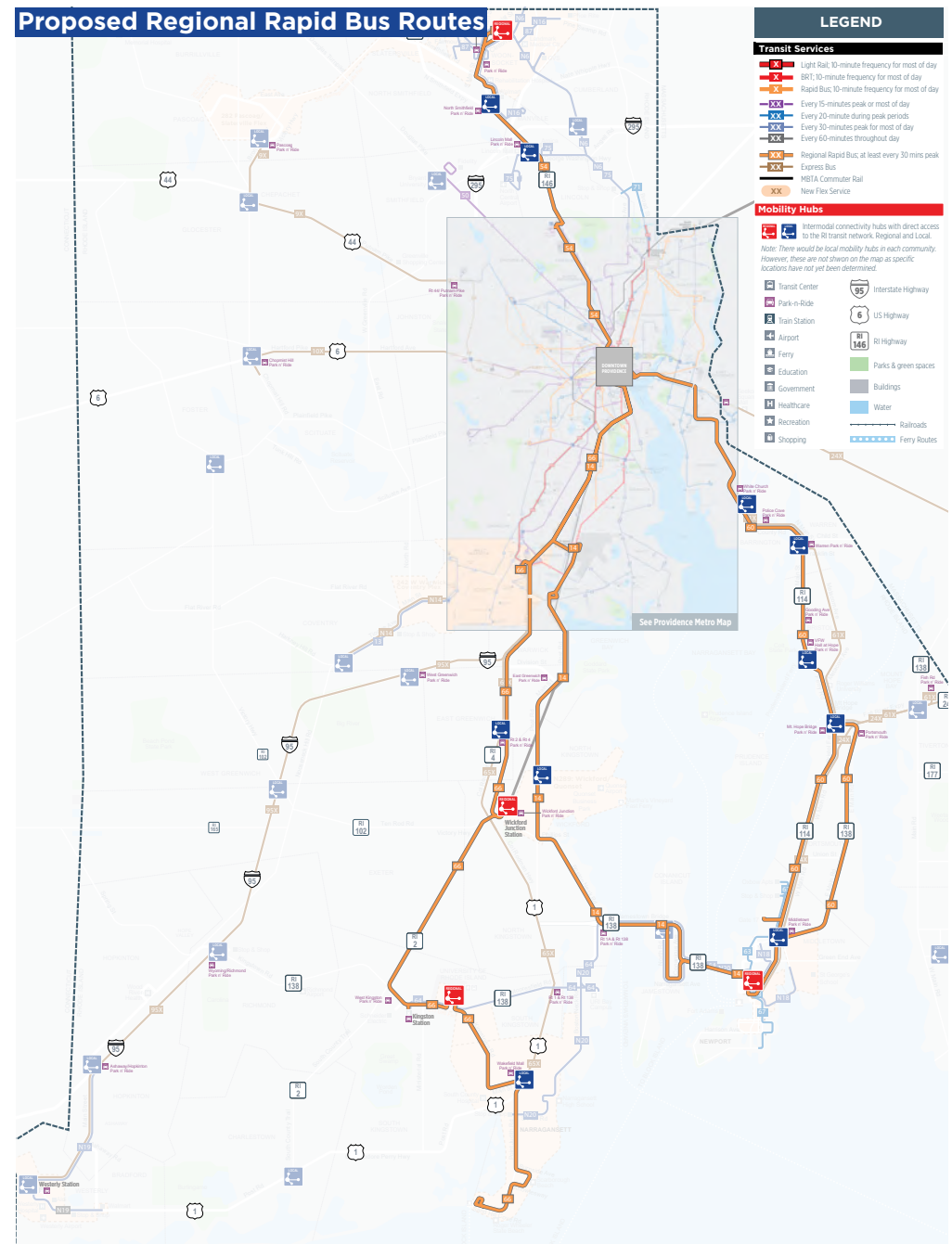


Regional Rapid Bus Will Provide Fast, High Quality Service to Connect Rhode Island's Regional Centers

One of the most effective ways to encourage transit use is to increase travel speed by implementing transit priority strategies. Highway bus routes are often slowed by congestion, and the development of transit priority for these routes and better circulation in and out of a station can make service faster and more convenient.

Regional Rapid Bus service would be similar to urban Rapid Bus service and would be designed to connect regional centers. As with urban Rapid Bus, Regional Rapid Bus would feature high quality stations, limited stops, the use of queue jump lanes and transit signal priority, and special branding. Regional Rapid Bus would also include the use of highway shoulders to bypass congestion. Four existing routes would be upgraded to Regional Rapid Bus:

- **14 West Bay**
- **54 Lincoln-Woonsocket**
- **60 Providence-Newport**
- **66 URI-Galilee**



Light Rail and/or Bus Rapid Transit Will Provide Much Higher Quality Service

Light Rail Transit (LRT) is electrified rail service that operates in a variety of urban environments including completely exclusive rights-of-way, in exclusive lanes on roadways, and in some cases in mixed traffic. It serves high volume corridors at higher speeds than local bus services.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is similar to light rail, except that service is provided with buses rather than rail vehicles. Since the late 1990s, nearly 200 cities around the world have developed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services that can provide Light Rail-like service without the high costs associated with rail infrastructure. BRT typically has lower capital and operating costs than Light Rail Transit and faster, more reliable, and more easily identifiable service than typical buses.

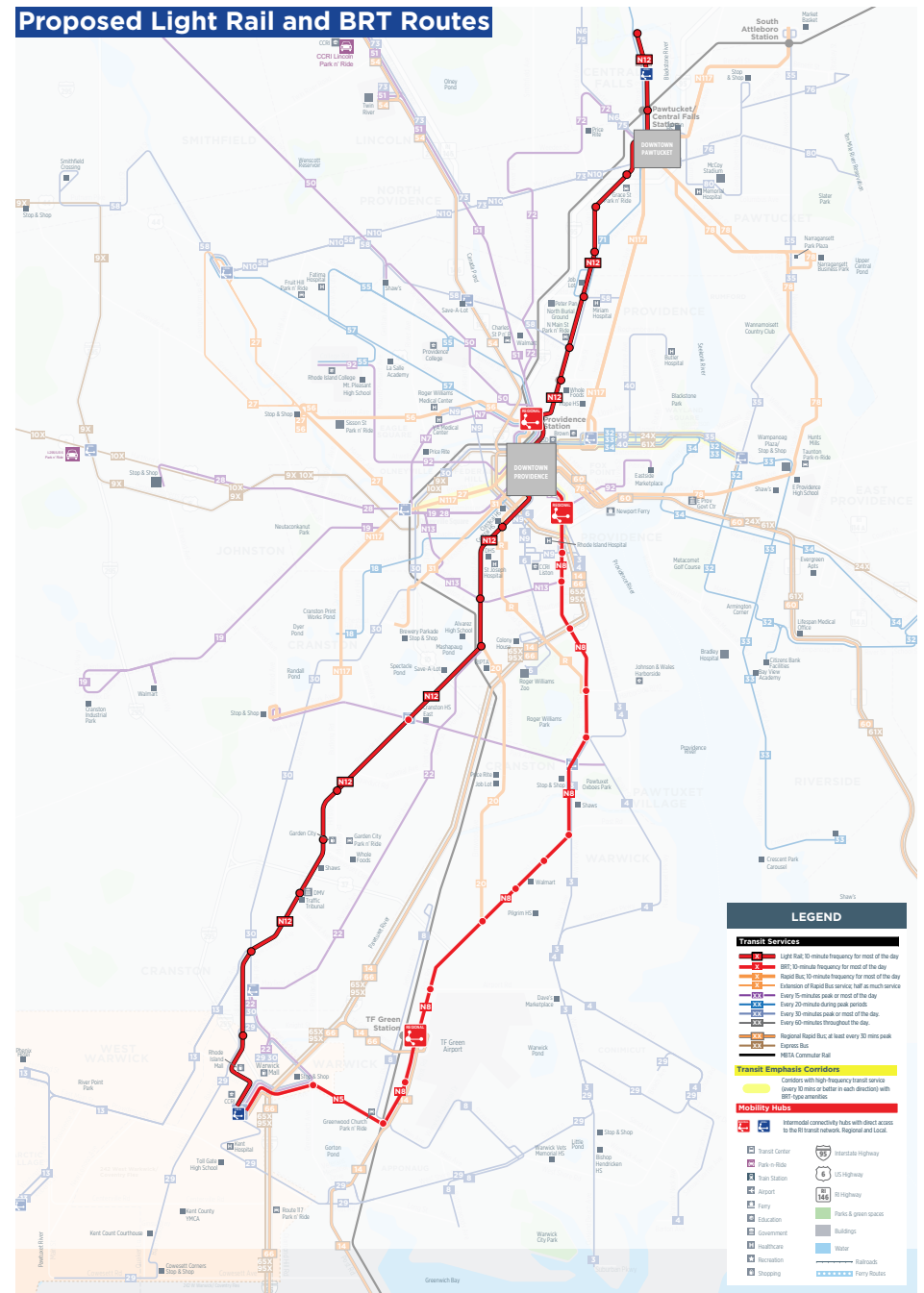
Common characteristics of both include:

- Frequent service, typically every 10 minutes or less
- Long span of service, often 18 hours a day or more
- Dedicated lanes

The development of light rail and/or BRT would make transit in the highest demand areas much more attractive by making it frequent, fast, and reliable. Light rail or BRT – with the choice to be determined based on more detailed project development work – would be developed in Rhode Island's key north-south corridor between Central Falls and CCRI Warwick via Pawtucket and Providence. BRT would also be developed between Providence and CCRI Warwick via TF Green Airport:

- **LRT or BRT:** N12 Central Falls and CCRI Warwick via Pawtucket and Providence Station
- **BRT:** N8 Providence and CCRI Warwick via TF Green Airport

Proposed Light Rail and BRT Routes







7 Initiative 4: Improve Access to Transit

Walking

Driving

Biking

Other



Initiative 4

Improve Access to Transit



For people to be able to use transit, they must be able to get to it and then get to where they are going after they leave it. The overwhelming majority of transit riders walk to and from local transit services, a very large proportion drive to regional services, and a much smaller, but increasing number of people bike to and from transit services. In addition, newer options, such as scooters, are becoming increasingly popular. Transit Forward RI includes a wide variety of first mile/last mile improvements:

- Walking/Pedestrian Improvements
- Driving/Park and Ride Lots and Passenger Drop-Off and Pick-up Areas
- Bicycling Improvements
- Other improvements including
 - TMA/Employer Shuttles
 - Rideshare Partnerships
 - Microtransit

In addition, a key to making first mile/last mile connections work will be to ensure that connections can be made at convenient and comfortable locations. The development of mobility hubs is one way in which this will be done. Connections will also be facilitated at transit stations and major stops.



Pedestrian Improvements Will Extend the Reach of Transit

Over 90% of transit riders walk to and from transit. As a result, **pedestrian improvements provide greater first mile/last mile benefits than all other approaches combined.** In places where pedestrian conditions are good, people will walk farther to transit; where they are bad, people will not walk as far. Pedestrian improvements thus extend the reach of transit and increase ridership.

Pedestrian improvements will be implemented at and around:

- **Mobility Hubs**
- **Rapid Bus stops**
- **Transit Emphasis Corridor stops**
- **Commuter rail stations**
- **LRT/BRT Stations**

These improvements will include:

- **Better sidewalks around transit stops and in neighborhoods, that meet ADA standards**
- **New pedestrian crossings around transit stops and stations can improve access as well as rider safety and comfort**
- **Wayfinding, including signs pointing to transit services (and pedestrian network maps at transit stations and major stops)**

Local communities can assist these efforts significantly. For example, the City of Providence's Great Streets plan focuses on pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and includes a large number of improvements that would ease access to and from transit. This plan can also provide guidance to other communities.



Facility Improvements Will Make It Easier to Drive to Transit

The second most common way that people get to and from transit is by driving or being dropped off or picked up. This is especially the case with commuter rail and express bus routes, where large volumes of commuters park at stations and stops and are dropped-off and picked-up. Serving this demand requires parking spaces and curb space for private pick-ups and drop-offs and rideshare and taxi pick-ups and drop-offs.

A variety of improvements can be implemented. These include:

- **New park-and-ride lots along express routes:**
 - **Johnston at the intersection of I-295 and US Route 6 to serve Route 9X Pascoag Park-n-Ride and 10X North Scituate**
 - **Lincoln in the vicinity of the CCRI and Twin Rivers to serve Route 54 Woonsocket -Providence Regional Rapid Bus**
 - **Pascoag near the outer end of Route 9X Pascoag Park-n-Ride**
 - **Portsmouth near the intersection of Ferry Road and Boyd's Lane to serve both Route 60 Newport-Providence via East Bay and the new Route 24 Newport-Fall River-Providence**
- **Parking and passenger drop-off and pick-up areas at some outer area light rail and BRT stations**
- **Upgrades at existing stations and stops**

Park-and-Ride Lot in Barrington



Bikes Will be Better Accommodated

Bicycling, whether by a personal or shared bicycle, is another important way to make short trips and connect with transit.

Three types of transit-related bicycling improvements will be implemented:

- **Sharing of bus lanes with bicycles**
- **Bikeshare and bike storage at regional mobility hubs**
- **Bikeshare and bike racks at urban rail stations and transit stops**



Other Improvements Will Also Be Made

A number of other improvements will also be made, mostly through the Service Partnerships program described in Initiative 2.

TMA/Employer Shuttles

As part of the Service Partnerships program, RIPTA and RIDOT can create incentives for the development of TMAs or employer shuttles. These incentives could include financial incentives that could be less expensive than new publicly funded rideshare partnership and microtransit services. With the development of mobility hubs throughout the state, TMA or employer shuttles could provide connections between mobility hubs and more isolated worksites. The shuttles could be traditional shuttle services or Flex-like microtransit services.

Transportation Management Associations

Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) are member-controlled, member-funded organizations that provide transportation services for a particular area, such as an industrial park, medical center, commercial district, or mall. Employment areas that lack concentrated density but still form a congregation of employees are prime targets for TMAs, which can partner with transit agencies to provide transportation services. Many TMAs run shuttles to and from major activity centers and transit stops.

Rideshare Partnerships

Many areas have developed rideshare partnerships with Uber, Lyft, and other competitors. Through these partnerships, subsidized rides are provided to and from mainline transit services. Rideshare partnerships would be developed through the Service Partnership program.

Scooters

Scooters will also be accommodated at mobility hubs and transit stations and stops, as permitted by local ordinances.

TMA Shuttle Operated by the Route 128 Business Council in Suburban Boston



Scooter Parking at Providence Station



8 Initiative 5: Make Transit Easier to Use

- Fare Capping/Earn As You Go
- Better Information
- Fare Integration
- Mobility as a Service



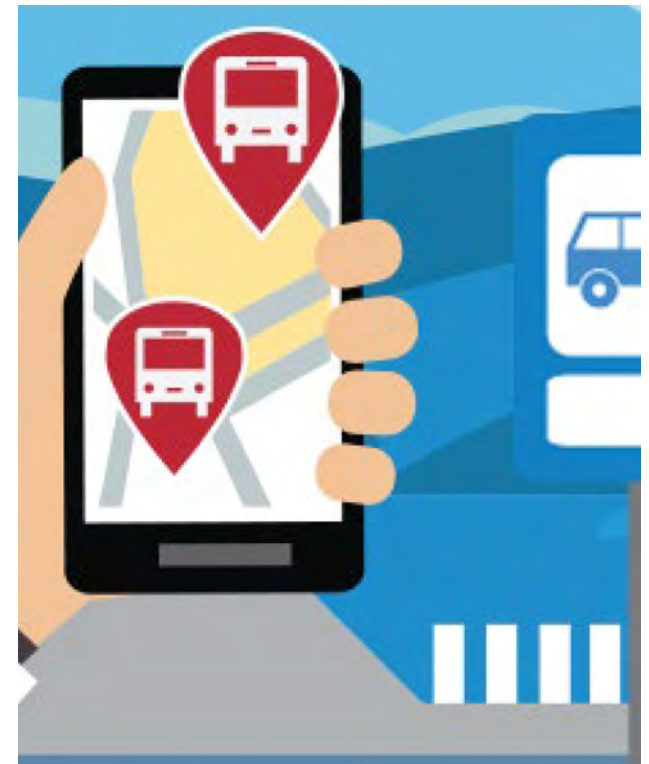
Initiative 5

Make Transit Easier to Use



In order to improve service for existing transit riders as well as to entice new ones, the full experience of riding transit must be intuitive and seamless. Transit Forward RI proposes a number of ways in which to make transit services easier to use:

- Fare Capping
- Better Information and Signage
- Fare Integration with other regional service providers, such as the MBTA
- Implementation of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms



Fare Capping/Earn as You Go Will Make Fare Payment Much More Flexible

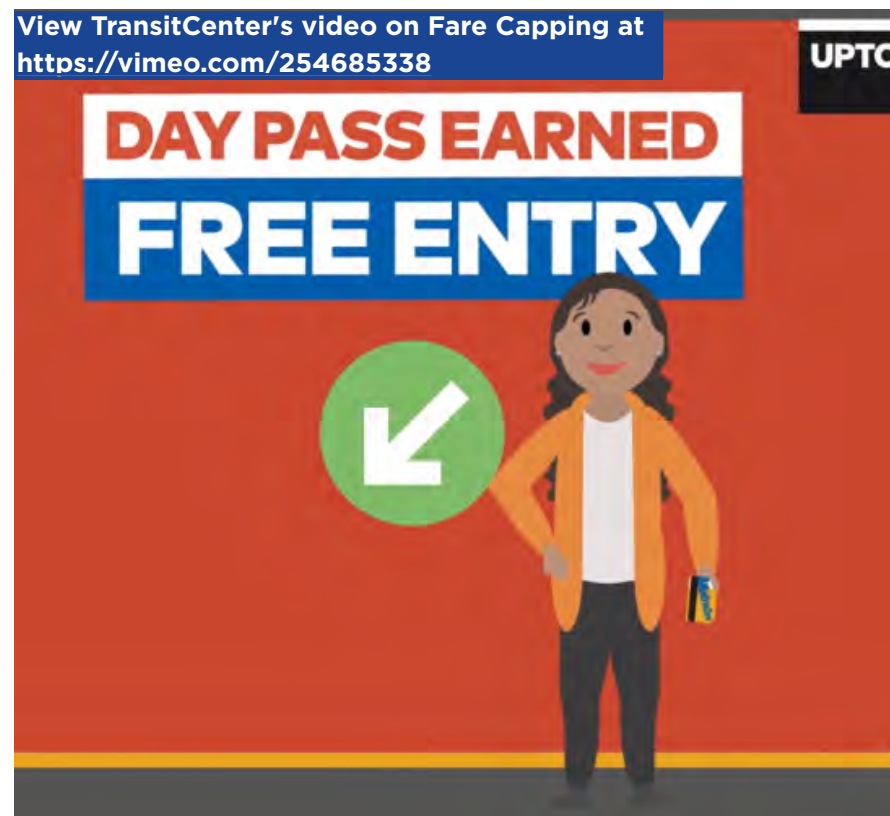
Six different fare options are available for full fare riders, which range from \$2 for a single trip to \$70 for a monthly pass. The monthly pass provides the best value, but requires an upfront payment for low income riders that can often be difficult. In addition, many riders don't have the same travel patterns every day.

RIPTA will soon be introducing smartcard fare payment and fare capping to make fare payment more flexible. With the introduction of smartcard fare payment, RIPTA will also be able to introduce fare capping, which is also known as "Earn as You Go," through which all riders will pay single trip fares up to maximum fare levels for daily, weekly, and monthly use. Earn as You Go will make transit more affordable for lower income riders, provide more flexibility for all riders, and encourage the use of transit on a more spontaneous basis. Although there are still details to be worked out, fare capping will work as follows:

- **All riders will pay single ride fares for all trips with total costs that will max out at daily and monthly pass rates.**
- **On a daily basis and at current fare levels, riders would pay \$2 per trip until they spend \$6 which is the current cost of a daily pass. For the rest of the day, all subsequent rides would be free.**
- **Daily expenditures would also roll up to monthly pass costs. After spending \$6 per day for 11 days and \$4 on the 12th day, all subsequent trips for the rest of the month would be free. Earn as You Go will also be implemented for riders who use discount fares.**

Current Fares		Fares with Fare Capping	
Single Ride	\$2	Single Ride	\$2
Transfer	\$1	Transfer	Free for one hour
1 Day Pass	\$6	1 Day Pass	\$2 per trip for the first three trips. Free for all subsequent trips
7 Day Pass	\$25		-
10 Ride Pass	\$20		-
Monthly Pass	\$70	Monthly Pass	\$6 per day for the first 11 days and \$4 for the 12th day. Free for the rest of the month.

Fare capping is a new concept that is currently being used by DART in Dallas and TriMet in Portland, OR. Outside of the United States, it is used in the following cities: London, Great Britain; Dublin, Ireland; and Sydney, Australia.



Better Information Will be Provided

RIPTA and RIDOT will provide information in a variety of ways to make transit options easier to understand:

- **A single website for regional transit information. This single website would provide information on services provided by RIPTA, RIDOT, and other available service such as the Providence Line and GATRA services**
- **The provision of schedule and real-time information via websites and smartphone apps**
- **Real-time information at major stations, stops, mobility hubs, and park-and-ride lots**
- **Route information, including schedules and maps, at all busy stops**
- **Wayfinding and local information signage at major stops, stations, and mobility hubs**



Fares Will be Integrated

Fare integration will enable transit riders to use a single pass to ride services provided by multiple transit providers. Four types of fare integration will be implemented to allow use of:

- **MBTA passes honored on Amtrak trains between Providence and Boston**
- **MBTA passes honored on RIPTA buses**
- **SRTA passes on RIPTA Newport-Fall River-Providence service**
- **RIPTA monthly passes on rail trips between Wickford Junction and Providence**



Mobility as a Service Will Make All Available Options Easier to Understand and Use

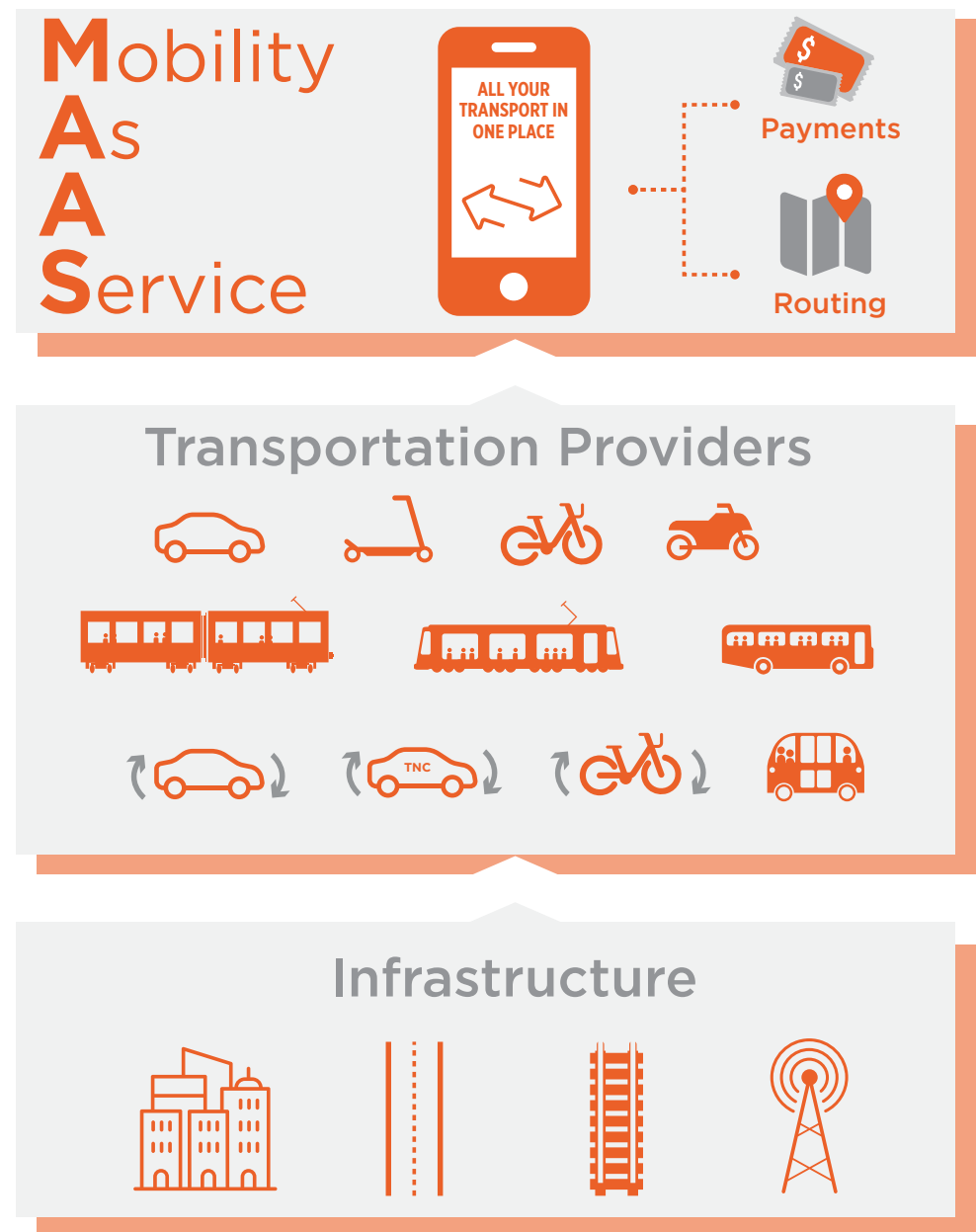
Mobility as a Service (MaaS) integrates various forms of transportation services into a single platform to provide flexibility and convenience for travelers. People frequently make trips using multiple modes – for example, a bus to a downtown station, then bikeshare to their destination, and maybe Lyft back in the evening if the weather is bad. At present, this usually means that travelers must learn about these options from many different sources and pay separately. MaaS provides the ability to plan, book, and pay for different options using a single smartphone app.

MaaS integrates different public and private transportation services into one app, where users can book transportation, pay for it, and understand the multitude of options to travel from point A to point B. Through MaaS, RIPTA could create its own app or partner with an app developer to enable partnerships with private transportation companies to allow subscription transportation service. This subscription would allow passengers to have access to RIPTA-provided transit as well as scootershare and rideshare, for example, all for a fixed cost per month.

It is important to note that MaaS is very much an emerging technology that is still in its infancy. At present, many apps that focus on a single service are starting to provide information on other services. Other efforts are starting from the ground up.

RIPTA can develop MaaS as technology allows, with a focus on the following areas

- **Integration of transit and first mile/last mile connections**
- **Transit schedule and real-time information**
- **Trip planning and booking**
- **Fare payment**





RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

222 PONTIAC AV

back to ordinary.

ve Cancer Center

Miriam Hospital, Newport Hospital



KNEELING

RAMP



A woman with long brown hair, wearing an orange t-shirt and blue jeans, stands with her hands behind her back, looking towards a white bus. The bus has a black door frame and a large window. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a building.

9 Benefits and Costs

- Benefits of Transit

- Benefits and Costs

Benefits of Transit



1 MAKES RHODE ISLAND
A BETTER PLACE TO
LIVE, WORK, AND VISIT



2 ATTRACTS TALENT AND
MAKES RHODE ISLAND
MORE COMPETITIVE



3 SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE
GROWTH



4 BOOSTS THE STATE'S
ECONOMY



5 CONTRIBUTES TO
ACTIVE, HEALTHY
LIFESTYLES



6 SUPPORTS A HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT



7 SUPPORTS ACCESSIBILITY,
AFFORDABILITY, AND
MOBILITY BEYOND THE
AUTO



8 HELPS PEOPLE LIVE
INDEPENDENT LIVES



Benefits and Costs



Transit Forward RI has been developed with a focus on improving transit service – to make it easier for Rhode Islanders to get around, and in a way that makes the state a more attractive place to live, work, and play, and to strengthen the economy.

Goal 1

ENHANCE

Make Transit Attractive and Compelling

Objectives

- Make existing services more convenient
- Improve passenger experience
- Better integrate different services
- Increase awareness of transit

Goal 2

CONNECT

Connect People to Life's Activities

Objectives

- Connect people with jobs and activities that are part of daily life
- Emphasize services that will benefit the largest numbers of people
- Develop a unified cross-agency transit decision-making framework

Goal 3

THRIVE

Grow the Economy and Improve Quality of Life

Objectives

- Prioritize transit improvements that support RI's economic development policies
- Provide services that will help Rhode Island retain and attract younger residents
- Provide services that help people live independently as they age
- Expand service to new areas that are transit-supportive
- Build on existing assets including RIPTA services, the Northeast Corridor and proximity to Boston

Goal 4

SUSTAIN

Ensure Financial and Environmental Sustainability

Objectives

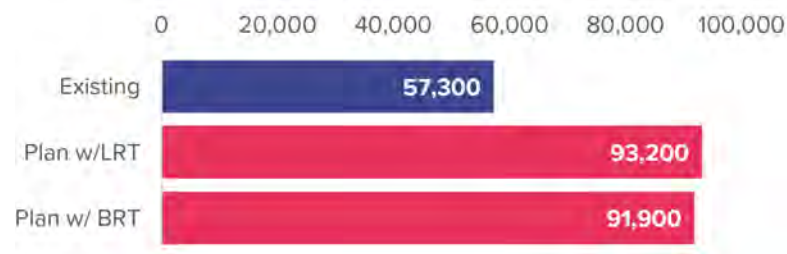
- Identify and pursue new funding opportunities, including leveraging private funds
- Achieve and maintain a state of good repair
- Develop cost-effective, implementable transit solutions
- Develop services that achieve a high level of public and political support
- Work with communities, businesses, and others to build partnerships that support proposed transit strategies
- Reduce greenhouse emissions

Benefits

Ridership

RIPTA currently carries approximately 52,600 passengers per day, and 4,700 commuter rail passengers ride to, from, and within Rhode Island. This ridership would increase to 83,600 to 84,900, depending upon whether BRT or LRT is selected for Central Falls-Pawtucket-Providence-CCRI/Warwick service, and 8,300 on commuter rail. Total ridership would increase up to 63% from 57,300 passengers per day to 91,900 to 93,200.

Weekday Ridership



Service Improvements

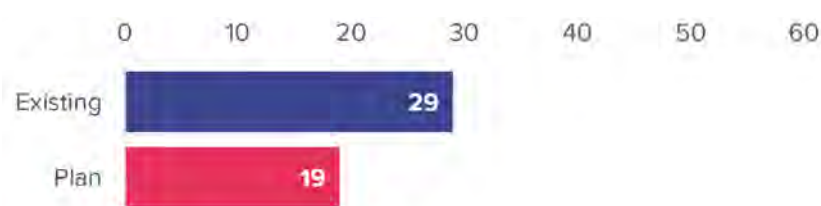
Longer Hours of Service

At present, only 22 RIPTA routes operate past 10 PM and only five operate past midnight. Transit Forward RI will increase these numbers to 32 and 19, respectively.

Frequency of Service

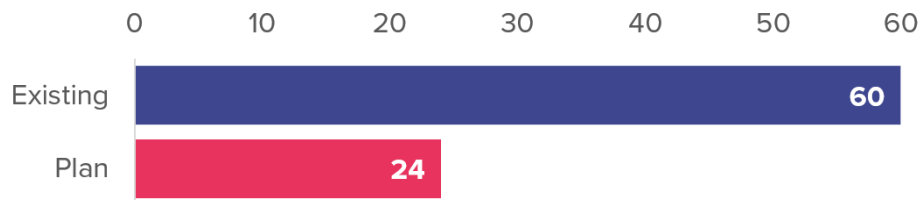
At present, RIPTA services operate – on average – every 29 minutes, and commuter rail between Providence and Boston operates at an average of every 60 minutes. Transit Forward RI will reduce RIPTA service frequencies to an average of every 19 minutes. On the Providence line, the MBTA’s Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) resolved in December 2019 that service in its densest corridors should operate every 15 to 20 minutes.

RIPTA Average Weekday Service Frequencies (Minutes)



Accounting for less frequent early morning and late night service, this would reduce average commuter rail frequencies to an average of less than 25 minutes.

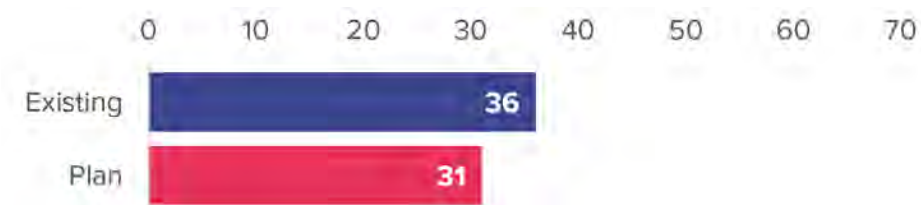
Providence-Boston Commuter Rail Average Weekday Service Frequencies (Minutes)



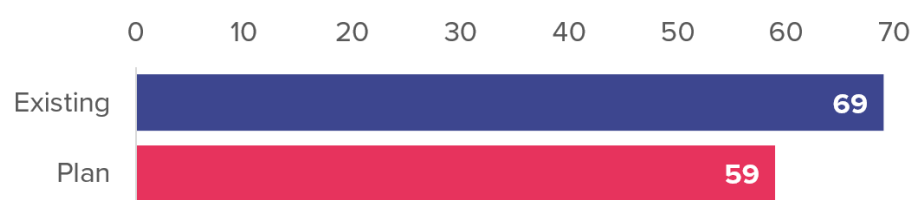
Travel Times

In-vehicle travel times will be reduced by 14 to 15%. For RIPTA riders, average trip times will be reduced by five minutes. On longer trips and where premium services are developed, savings will be higher. Transit Forward RI set a goal of reducing commuter rail travel times between Providence and Boston to less than 60 minutes. The FMCB’s December 2019 resolution includes a number of actions to reduce travel times. While specific estimates are not yet available, the goal of less than 60 minutes appears to be achievable, and even lower travel times are possible.

RIPTA Average In-Vehicle Travel Times (Minutes)



Providence-Boston Commuter Rail In-Vehicle Travel Times (Minutes)



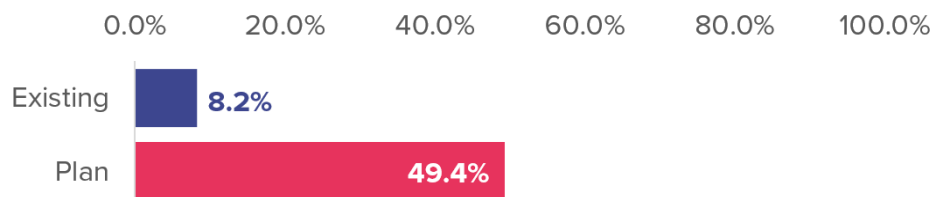
Residents Served

Today, service is provided within 1/2 mile of 69% of Rhode Island's residents and 86% of its jobs, but most is infrequent and operate for hours that are short. Thus while service is technically available, it does not provide an attractive option for most people. Transit Forward RI will provide a much higher quality of service.

Total Residents Served by Frequent Transit

Today, only 8% of Rhode Island's residents have access to service that operates at least every 15 minutes. Planned improvements will increase the number of residents served by over fivefold to 49%.

Percent of All Residents within 1/2-mile of Frequent Transit



Low-Income Residents Served by Frequent Transit

Improvements for low income residents will be even greater. At present, fewer than 20% of Rhode Island's low-income residents have access to frequent transit. This will increase to over 70%.

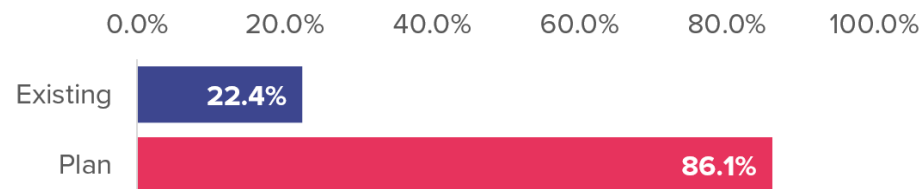
Percent of Low-Income Households within 1/2-mile of Frequent Transit



Minority Residents Served by Frequent Transit

Increases to minority residents will be higher still. At present, 22% of Rhode Island's minority residents have access to frequent transit. This will increase to over 86%.

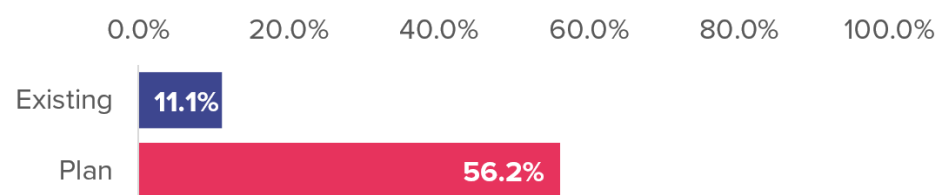
Percent of Minority Residents within 1/2-mile of Frequent Transit



Younger Residents Served by Frequent Transit

Rhode Island, like all states, needs to retain and attract younger residents to ensure future success, and younger people want to live in places with excellent transit. At present, only 11% of residents aged 20 to 39 are served by frequent transit. This will increase to 56%.

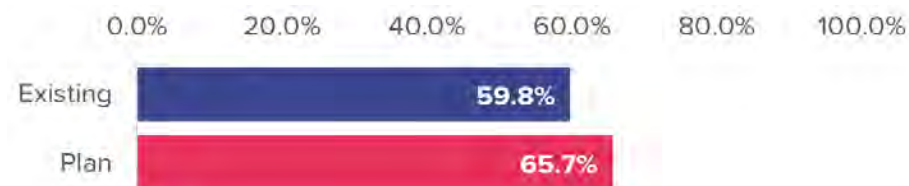
Percent of Residents Aged 20-39 within 1/2-Mile of Frequent Transit



Older Adults Served by All Transit

Transit forward RI will help older residents live independently. The percentage of elderly residents who are currently served by all forms of transit (within 1/4-mile) will increase from 60% within 1/4-mile of transit to 66%.

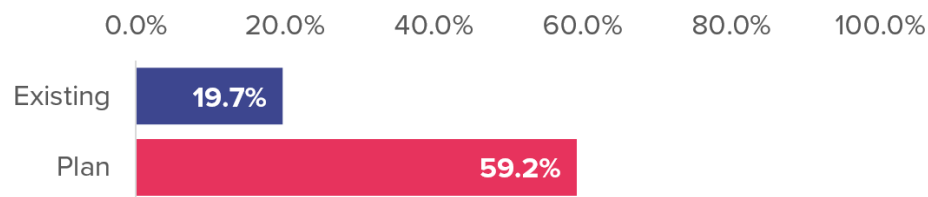
Percent of Residents 65 and Older within 1/4-Mile of Any Transit



Jobs Served

Today only 20% of jobs are within 1/2-mile of frequent transit. This will increase to nearly 60%. A combination of frequent transit to 49% of Rhode Island’s residents – and even higher percentages to disadvantaged residents – and 59% of jobs will greatly increase job opportunities.

Percent of Jobs within 1/2-Mile of Frequent Transit



Total Residents and Jobs Served by Transit

As described above, nearly half of residents will have access to frequent transit. An additional 20% will be served by other forms of transit. The total percentage of residents served by some type of transit will increase from 69% to 78%. The total number of jobs within 1/2-mile of some type of transit will increase from 86% to 90%.

Costs

Transit Forward RI represents a major investment in Rhode Island's transit services, its people, and its economy. As such, associated costs will be much higher than what the state spends today.

Operating Costs

Total operating costs, in \$2020, would range from \$230 to \$237 million, with the difference depending upon whether or not Central Falls-Providence-CCRI/Warwick service is developed as LRT or BRT (with the higher cost for LRT). This would be an approximate doubling of current operating costs of \$112.9 million for both RIPTA and RIDOT.

Note also that these costs do not include any increases for faster and more frequent commuter rail service between Boston and Providence, as that process is being led by Massachusetts. The costs do, however, include the cost of additional commuter rail service between Providence and TF Green Airport.

Capital Costs

Total capital costs, also in \$2020, would be \$1.9 to \$3.1 billion over the next 20 years, with the differences again on choices made between LRT and BRT. Average expenditures would be \$94 to \$154 million per year. This would be a significant increase over RIPTA and RIDOT's current expenditures that average approximately \$32 million per year. However, a large proportion of these costs could likely be funded through federal sources. As with operating costs, the difference will be driven by choices between light rail and BRT. Also as with operating costs, the capital costs do not include costs to upgrade Providence Line service between Boston and Providence.

OPERATING COSTS	PLAN
Transit Services	
High Capacity Transit	\$110 - \$118M
Improvements to Existing Services	\$97M
New Services	\$20M
Paratransit	\$14M
Other	\$3M
Total	\$244 - \$253M
CAPITAL COSTS	PLAN
Transit Services	
High Capacity Transit	\$1.3 - \$2.5B
Existing RIPTA Services	\$216M
New RIPTA Services	\$34M
Other	\$5M
Subtotal	\$1.5 - \$2.7B
Infrastructure/Facilities	
Transit Priority	\$63M
Bus Stop Improvements	\$16M
Mobility Hubs	\$91M
Park and Ride Lots	\$9M
Maintenance Facility	\$48M
New Amtrak Station at TF Green	\$110M
Subtotal	\$337M
Total	\$1.9 - \$3.1B
Average Cost per Year	\$94-\$154M



RIPTA
RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

CHARLES

51 TWIN RIVER

SHOW TELL
1:00 PM

SATURDAY, AUG. 29, 2015

Star Wars FESTIVAL

INDIA POINT PARK
300 N. FIRST PROVIDENCE, RI

TICKET INFO
WWW.YARDANDBROAD.COM
OR
718-807-6241

PERFORMERS:
TASHA T
JUNIE RANKS
PAPA BOLA
MISCHIEF
JERRY

1323

10 Next Steps

- Funding Plan
- Implementation
- Partnerships



Next Steps



Develop Funding Plan

The projects and programs in this plan will provide existing riders with much better service, and attract many new riders. Some proposed improvements can begin immediately with available funds. Larger, unbudgeted projects and service upgrades will require identification of new or reallocated funding. Depending on the specific improvement, there may be opportunities to advance an incremental approach as a strategy for full implementation is developed.

The first implementation step will be to develop a funding plan. The Transit Forward RI program was developed using the most common process for developing these types of programs, which is to determine the desired program and then identify funding. This was the case for a number of reasons, the most important of which include:

- Many potential funding sources, and in particular, federal funds, are tied to specific types of projects. Thus, the projects must be known in order to identify the full range of potential sources.
- High levels of public support will be essential to implement new sources of funding. It is difficult to generate this support without being able to describe proposed improvements.

There are many potential funding options. However, there is no single approach that works for every area. Instead, Rhode Island needs to develop a transit funding plan that will engender broad-based political and public support. It is expected that the proposed improvements will be funded via competitive federal programs as well as through increases in non-federal contributions.

The most significant existing sources and additional sources used by other areas include:

Currently Available Funding

Federal Funds

There are many federal funding programs that provide funding on both formula and discretionary bases. The major programs include:

- **Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula funding:** The FTA provides funding largely for capital purposes, and in limited cases, for operations. RIPTA and RIDOT utilize all of the federal funding for which they are eligible. There are also other sources that they could be eligible for, but to date have not had qualifying projects.

As the amount of services that RIPTA and RIDOT provide increases, the amount of formula funds that it receives will increase. The increases would vary depending upon the formulas used in each program, with higher increases possible for the development of new rail, BRT, and ferry services and less for local services.

- **FTA Discretionary Funding:** In addition to formula funding, the FTA has two major discretionary programs (New Starts/Small Starts and Bus and Bus Facilities), that fund light rail, BRT, and Rapid Bus projects and major bus facilities such as regional mobility hubs and transit emphasis corridors. By statute, FTA funds can cover up to 80% of the capital costs for these types of projects. In practice, however, the maximum amounts that FTA now provides is closer to 50%.
- **BUILD Grants:** The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program, funding for multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects that are more difficult to support through traditional DOT programs. This program, which was known as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grants has provided nearly \$7.9 billion over 11 years, and \$1 billion for FY 2020.
- **CARES Act Funding:** The CARES Act provides funding to help transit systems deal with the financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and to regain ridership. Rhode Island will receive \$104 million in CARES Act funding, which could exceed the direct financial impacts and provide funding for projects to regain riders. Unless there is an additional stimulus bill, this will be a one-time funding infusion and not a new ongoing source of funding.

State Funds

- **State Gas Tax:** RIPTA's primary source of operating funds is a share of the state's gas tax, which is currently 35¢ per gallon (including a 1¢ environmental surcharge) and adjusted every two years based on inflation. Of this, 10.25¢ is apportioned to RIPTA. However, due to improved fuel economy, a shift toward electrification of vehicles, and other factors, gas tax revenues are not increasing.
- **RhodeWorks:** RhodeWorks is a 10-year program designed to rebuild Rhode Island's transportation. Over the 10-year life of the program, \$80 million has been allocated for transit improvements. This funding has not yet been programmed and represents funding that is available to implement this plan.
- **State Highway Maintenance Account:** Rhode Island has a State Highway Maintenance Account that is funded through license and registration fees, along with a percent of inspection fees, costs for certain transfers and duplicates, and other miscellaneous transportation-related revenues. Five percent of these funds are allocated to RIPTA to fund operations: in FY 2019 RIPTA was budgeted to receive \$4.9 million. In addition, for FY 2018 and 2019, the General Assembly directed an additional \$5.0 million to RIPTA to offset a reduction in revenue from the reinstatement of free rides for elderly and disabled riders and to fund debt service on outstanding General Obligation bonds.
- **Rhode Island Mass Transit Hub Infrastructure Bonds:** Question 6, which was approved by Rhode Island voters in 2014, authorized the issuance of \$35 million in General Obligation bonds for "enhancements and renovations to mass transit hub infrastructure throughout the State of Rhode Island to improve access to multiple intermodal sites, key transportation, healthcare, and other locations." These funds are available for the development of regional and community mobility hubs.

Fare Revenue

Fare revenue paid by passengers and third-party sponsors is one of RIPTA's major sources of operating revenue, and for FY 2020 is projected to generate \$24.4 million. In total fare revenues cover approximately 20% of RIPTA's operating costs. As RIPTA increases

service and ridership increases, fare revenues will also increase, but as is currently the case, will cover only a minority portion of operating costs.

Potential New Funding Sources

Throughout the United States, transit is funded in many different ways, both large scale and small scale. These methods of funding range from sales taxes up to 2.0% to taxes on Uber and Lyft to a 10% tax on poured drinks in bars. The most important include:

Sales Taxes

Sales taxes are the most important source of funding at many transit systems and are frequently used to fund major transit expansion programs. An example list of transit systems funded by sales taxes along with the tax rates is shown in the table on the right. Sales taxes are also the most common way to fund major expansion programs.

Historically, sales taxes for transit have been well supported by voters, and approximately 70% of transit initiatives pass. Rhode Island's current sales tax is 7%, and for 2020, Rhode Island projects to generate \$1.4 billion in sales tax revenue. A 1% sales tax rate for transit would generate approximately \$200 million per year.

City/Transit System	Sales Tax Rate
Boston/MBTA	1.0%
Denver/RTD	1.0%
Los Angeles/LA Metro	2.0%
San Diego/MTS	0.5%
Phoenix/Valley Metro	0.7%
Salt Lake City/UTA	1.2%
Seattle/King County Metro	1.4%
Dallas/DART	1.0%
Fort Worth/Trinity Metro	0.5%

Fuel Taxes

Rhode Island already uses fuel taxes to fund transit, and could increase the rate to generate additional revenue. Rhode Island's current fuel tax, at 35¢ per gallon, is far from the highest in the country. However, it is above average, particularly when compared with neighboring Massachusetts and the northern New England states, which could make further increases more difficult. Also, gas tax increases often generate less than is commonly believed. A one cent increase in Rhode Island's gas tax would generate approximately \$4.3 million per year.

Special Assessment Districts

Another common way to fund major projects is to develop special assessment districts in areas that benefit from the transit improvements. The taxes are typically based on property value, or sales, special business fees, or other measures of value. They are most typically implemented in specific areas to fund specific projects such as rail lines.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Tax Increment Financing Districts are similar to Special Assessment Districts in that districts are created to encompass areas that will benefit from transit improvements. However, in these districts, rather than increasing taxes, the new property tax revenue generated as a result of increases in property value are used to fund the transit improvements. This approach is often preferred by property owners as tax rates do not increase (although taxes paid do increase due to increased property values). A disadvantage of TIFs compared to Special Assessment Districts is that revenue amounts are much more speculative.

A TIF is being considered in downtown Pawtucket surrounding the future Pawtucket/Central Falls commuter rail station. It is possible that a portion of TIF revenues could be directed towards ongoing maintenance and operation of the new station and adjacent bus hub.

Vehicle Taxes

Different forms of vehicle taxes are occasionally used to fund transit. The most significant example is Minnesota, where the state generates transportation funding through a 6.5% sales tax on motor vehicles. This is in lieu of a general sales tax. The funds are used for both highways and transit, with a minimum of 40% directed to transit.

Local Assessment (General Fund)

Some transit districts assess local communities for the service they receive. For example, in Massachusetts, communities served by the MBTA are assessed based on a state-mandated formula that considers local population, access to other transit authorities, and proximity to Boston. The amount each community pays does not correlate to the level of service received. MBTA assessments represented about 8% of its FY19 budget and cannot increase more than 2.5% annually.

Other

There are also a large number of other sources for funding of transit that have either been implemented or are or have been considered. These include:

- Real estate transfer fees
- Payroll taxes
- Hotel/motel taxes
- Rental car taxes
- Parking taxes
- Taxes on Uber and Lyft trips
- Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI)

Plan Implementation



The Transit Forward RI program is large and comprehensive and will be implemented over time. The plan must be flexible to react to funding opportunities and cost constraints. In the short-term, it will focus on improving and expanding existing services in a cost-effective manner using available funding. This will include, among other things, more frequent service for longer hours and facility improvements. Simultaneously, planning will begin for more intensive high capacity projects to be implemented in the medium to long-term. It is anticipated that there will be an incremental build-up to many proposed plan elements, and the full implementation of the plan will take twenty years.

Finally, the plan is intended to be flexible. In this regard, as a funding plan is developed and in response to other factors, specific timeframes may be adjusted.

Short-Term Improvements

During the summer and fall of 2019, the public was asked to rank potential transit improvements. The top priorities were:

- Longer hours of bus service and more weekend service
- More frequent bus service
- More frequent commuter rail service to Boston
- Improved crosstown services
- Cross-honoring of MBTA passes on Amtrak Northeast Regional trains
- Better bus stops
- More Rapid Bus lines

In addition to the development of a funding plan, short-term efforts will be directed at delivering most of these improvements.

Extend Bus Service Hours and Provide More Frequent Service

The most desired improvements are for more frequent service for longer hours. This input is consistent with the desires of transit riders everywhere. Based on this input, the logical starting point for improvements will be the development of the frequent transit network as well as more frequent service for longer hours on other routes. These improvements will also be expensive in terms of operating cost increases, and as such, initial implementation efforts should focus on

the routes that serve the greatest number of passengers. In the very short-term, these should also focus on increasing midday and evening service to better serve essential workers.

Provide More Frequent Commuter Rail Service to Boston

RIDOT is close to launching a program with Amtrak for the use of MBTA commuter rail passes on select Amtrak trains. This agreement would provide access to more frequent rail service between Providence and Boston.

Improve Crosstown Services

The plan recommends four new crosstown routes to make non-Providence trips easier. The development of four new routes could be accomplished quickly and at relatively low cost. It could also relieve crowding on radial routes.

Provide Faster Service

Rhode Island transit riders desire faster service, particularly for Rhode Island - Boston rail service and in primary bus corridors. Proposed improvements that will provide faster service include the development of Rapid Bus, Regional Rapid Bus lines, express bus on shoulder service, and LRT and/or BRT. The MBTA is simultaneously planning for the future of commuter rail via its Rail Vision process which focuses on increased speed and frequency.

The development of Rapid Bus, Regional Rapid Bus and LRT or BRT lines also present the greatest opportunities to leverage federal New Starts/Small Starts funding. To be eligible for these funds, the development of these projects needs to follow a prescribed FTA project development process. This process will also provide the mechanism to determine whether the Central Falls-CCRI/Warwick line should be developed as LRT or BRT (or Rapid Bus) and similar decisions on other lines. Because federal funding will be essential to the development of this plan, the initiation of project development for the highest priority High Capacity Lines should begin in the short-term.

An additional early effort to make service faster will be the development of the highway improvements needed to implement

express bus on shoulder service. It is possible that RIDOT could incorporate those improvements into upcoming highway projects.

Development of Providence-Boston commuter rail improvements will be led by the MBTA with RIDOT as a participating stakeholder. The MBTA has direction from the Fiscal Management Control Board (FMCB) on broad goals for improving commuter rail service, including a Phase 1 effort involving the Providence Line. As MassDOT and the MBTA work to advance a funded implementation plan, RIDOT remains poised to assist and facilitate necessary changes in Rhode Island to accommodate for the potential new operations. All future improvements along the entire Northeast Corridor are coordinated by the Northeast Corridor Commission and its 15-year Northeast Corridor Service Development Plan process currently underway, and its ongoing 5-Year capital planning process. RIDOT, MassDOT and MBTA, along with Amtrak, are active members and participants in these Commission planning efforts.

Partnerships

The implementation of the Transit Forward RI plan will require strong partnerships among many parties. Most importantly, RIPTA and RIDOT have many complementary capabilities that can further the implementation of this plan. RIPTA has a particularly strong expertise in how to design transit services that people want and that will increase ridership. RIDOT's experience is in design and construction, and this plan includes many projects that will require design and construction expertise. RIDOT can also make highway improvements that will improve transit, especially with respect to express bus on shoulder service. In addition:

- New LRT and/or BRT and Rapid Bus lines will operate on local roads. For these lines to be developed as effectively as possible, **RIPTA will need to work closely with local communities.** Local communities will also need to help improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to, from, and around stations.
- The development of High Capacity Transit services also provides opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). However, while the projects can stimulate demand, many other actions are also required to make it happen. **The successful development of TOD will happen through partnerships** between RIPTA, RIDOT, local communities, and developers.
- The plan includes major improvements to Rhode Island-Boston **commuter rail services.** These improvements will require close collaboration between **RIDOT, the MBTA, and Amtrak.**
- The use of MBTA commuter rail passes on Amtrak trains and **Amtrak service to TF Green Airport** will require **new partnerships between RIDOT and Amtrak.**

Project/Program	
1 TO 4 YEARS	IMPROVE AND EXPAND SERVICES AND LAY GROUNDWORK FOR BIGGER IMPROVEMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a funding plan and strategy to leverage existing and new funding sources with broad-based public support Develop a Frequent Transit Network developed by increasing service on existing local routes Provide more frequent service for longer hours on other local routes, with an emphasis on improving midday and evening services in high need areas Use of MBTA Commuter Rail passes on Amtrak trains Complete Pawtucket/Central Falls commuter rail station Introduce app-based reservations, fare payment, and vehicle tracking for Flex service Implement bus stop improvements at high volume stops Initiate project development for highest priority LRT and/or BRT lines and Rapid Bus lines Develop bus lanes and Transit Signal Priority in LRT/BRT and Rapid Bus corridors and Transit Emphasis Corridors Extend the R-Line to Central Falls as precursor to LRT/BRT development Begin to implement bus on shoulder improvements Provide additional services to special events Implement a Service Partnership Program to encourage third-party funding for transit expansion Begin making pedestrian improvements to and from major transit locations Implement joint MBTA, RIPTA, SRTA, and GATRA fares Implement the first services to new areas
	FOCUS ON HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct the first High Capacity Transit lines Continue to implement frequency and span improvements Continue to expand service to new areas Implement transit priority at traffic chokepoints Develop new park and ride lots Develop an east-west Transit Emphasis Corridor Improve rail service to TF Green Airport, including development of an Amtrak Station Make bus stop improvements at more stops Develop new regional and community transit hubs Continue to improve pedestrian and bicycle conditions at and around major transit facilities Develop new Mobility-as-a-Service options
11 TO 20 YEARS	A COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE SYSTEM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent rail service between Providence and Boston Additional High Capacity Transit lines Continued development of mobility hubs Pedestrian improvements at and around major transit facilities Continued development of Mobility-as-a-Service options

TRANSIT
FORWARD  2040