

Growing Smart With Transit



A Report of the
TRANSIT
2020
Working Group



Dear Rhode Islander,

Growing Smart With Transit addresses an issue critical to the future quality of life in our state: the need to develop and sustain a robust transit system.

As this report details, future economic growth requires reversing the congestion that increasingly clogs our roads and highways. We have to go beyond short-term, stopgap measures like adding new lanes to highways. The real solution lies in creating a great transit system that attracts new passengers, including those who today choose to drive, while continuing to serve riders of the current system.

The economic development imperative for transit is made more urgent today by the interrelated challenges of rising energy prices, risky dependence on foreign oil supplies, dwindling global fossil fuel reserves, and the environmental toll of oil consumption including poor air quality, loss of open space, and climate change.

It is my hope this report helps to advance the goal of building a stronger transit system by increasing public understanding of the value and benefits of transit, and by identifying transit options deserving further study.

Reaching the ambitious vision outlined in this report will not be easy or quick. But it is necessary, and we must start today. Realizing the multiple benefits of a robust transit system will require considerable and sustained investments along with policy changes aligned with this goal. Above all, it will require leadership, advocacy, and public support.

I thank the members of the Transit 2020 Working Group who generously volunteered their time. Additionally, I appreciate the time given by outside experts who shared their knowledge and insights. This report would not be possible without their participation. In particular, I thank Donna Cupelo, Regional President of Verizon Communications, who served as Chair of the group. Her leadership, intelligence, and keen appreciation for the importance of this issue were critical to the success of this effort.

Now comes the challenge to realize the vision. The challenge to begin building a stronger, healthier economy for our future. I hope you will join me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David N. Cicilline".

David N. Cicilline, Mayor of Providence

The real solution lies in creating a great transit system that attracts new passengers, including those who today choose to drive, while continuing to serve riders of the current system.

- Mayor David N. Cicilline



Dear Rhode Islander,

The Providence metropolitan area is experiencing a period of renewed economic growth, with potential for even more growth in the years ahead. The meetings of the Transit 2020 Working Group, however, made one thing explicitly clear: growth cannot be sustained without a broad public commitment to the policy changes and investments necessary to build and operate a strong transit system.

The Working Group heard from many experts during the course of our meetings. Local transit professionals, advocates for Smart Growth, environmentalists, transit users, developers, national advocates for Transit-Oriented Development, along with policy makers and advisers from local and state levels of government.

Several critical facts emerged from these meetings and they guided the conclusions and recommendations that form the body of this report:

- Rhode Island is fortunate to have a highly capable public transit provider,RIPTA, which provides very good service given funding constraints at a time of increasing demand for service.
- New and expanded transit options must be developed to serve current users and those who choose not to use transit. A robust transit system must be seamlessly intermodal and regional.
- Developing this transit system will require a capital investment and sustained operational funding. These are essential economic development investments – investments that will pay dividends for generations.
- Policies to encourage transit use and to discourage auto use must be identified and implemented in the public and private sector.
- Land use policies must encourage the expansion of transit and increase the use of transit in everyday life.


This report represents the hard work of the members of the Transit 2020 Working Group. It has been my pleasure to work with my fellow members on this important project. I believe this report makes a valuable contribution to the public policy debate in Rhode Island. I thank all Working Group members for their dedication and commitment.

I also thank Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline for creating this group, but more so for his willingness to take a leadership role on this issue. He recognizes that the very viability of our future economy depends on addressing our transit challenges today.

This report is a first step toward a future where transit plays an integral role in supporting and promoting the smart economic development of Rhode Island. I hope you will help make this future possible.

Sincerely

Donna Cupelo


Chair, Transit 2020 Working Group

New and expanded transit options must be developed to serve current users and those who choose not to use transit.

- Donna Cupelo, Chair of Transit 2020 Working Group

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Executive Summary

Rhode Island needs to make an investment to develop and maintain a seamless, integrated, high quality transit service that builds on and complements the existing system.

An investment in transit will yield numerous benefits: decreased congestion on our roadways; increased economic development potential Statewide; improved environmental quality, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions that threaten significant climate change; a better position for the City and State in competition with metropolitan areas making significant transit investments; preservation of the quality of life that distinguishes Rhode Island by supporting smart growth and preserving open spaces; an opportunity to meet the needs of the State's changing demographics characterized by an aging population, growing urban communities, and new citizens who expect and rely on robust transit.

The Transit 2020 Working Group's conclusions and recommendations will inform a comprehensive regional transit study to which RIPTA and the City of Providence have made financial commitments. The Working Group identified the following priorities, among others.

ANALYSIS

- Plans and proposals for expanding, strengthening and upgrading transit should be based on a solid foundation of data and analysis: user and non-user information; current and projected origin and destination data; current and projected population centers, activity centers, and intermodal transit connections. Also, major employers should be surveyed to determine the necessity of dedicated commuting routes.

MODIFICATION

- The current system offers many opportunities for short-term incremental improvements that could greatly increase the quality of service, user-friendliness, and ridership – even potentially drawing on “choice” riders - those who currently avoid RIPTA because they choose the private transportation options available to them. These modifications can serve as the required early successes, demonstrating to the public the value of transit investment.
- This state is fortunate to have an excellent base on which to build its transit future: the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). This highly successful organization needs to receive support and advocacy from the public and private sector, as well as improved public relations and advertisement.
- Simple innovations such as route “branding” could serve to increase and promote transit use as a regular activity. Routes could be given descriptive names (Meds and Eds) or color-coded (Red Line), to bring transit into the everyday lexicon of residents.
- Short-zone fares, day passes, and free routes should all be examined as possible modifications that could promote transit use.
- Technology upgrades to the current system could include efficiency measures such as traffic light overrides, or customer service improvements such as signs providing real-time arrival and departure information.
- New modes of transit should be explored, such as: Shuttles, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Street

Cars, Rapid Bus, and Light Rail. These new modes should be considered for existing transit routes, as well as new corridors, such as Allens Avenue and Olneyville in Providence, TF Green Airport, and the Providence-Pawtucket corridor. Additionally, new hub locations would tie these innovative routes and modes together in an efficient way.

- Kennedy Plaza is overburdened and not effective as an intermodal hub. New hub locations must be identified in Providence with an emphasis on improving intermodal connections.

INCENTIVES

- Transit use must be proactively encouraged and automobile use must be discouraged. The good news is that drivers do respond to rewards and incentives for transit use, and disincentives for single passenger automobile use can also be successful.
- There should be a thorough review of potential incentives at the state and local level, with government, non-profits and private businesses all working to decrease single passenger commutes.
- The Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) process should put a higher priority on transit infrastructure projects.

CONNECTIVITY

- Successful transit systems provide riders with easy links from one mode to another with strong pedestrian and bike routes to and from the system. Integrating and coordinating schedules, fare systems, signage, maps, routes, and hubs into a seamless network serving the rider's needs is essential.
- Consideration should be given to the consolidation of all management and operational aspects of public transit in Rhode Island under RIPTA.
- A unified fare system is a high priority and could include RIPTA, MBTA, Connecticut commuter rail, and new transit modes that may be added in the future.
- A frequent, shuttle-style rail service should be pursued to connect TF Green Airport with downtown Providence and other potential stops.
- New hubs should be built and existing hubs should be upgraded to accommodate intermodal use. The current Amtrak station and the surrounding area are one potential location for a new and improved intermodal hub.

FUNDING

- Transit improvement will require capital investment as well as a dedicated, predictable and adequate funding stream to sustain expanded and upgraded operations. Given the many demands on state spending, innovative funding options need to be examined and identified.
- Various options for funding capital improvements and expansion of the transit system are available, including Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Special Assessment Bonds, general revenue bonds, master lease agreements, etc. The criteria for evaluating different options and a recommended strategy for funding system expansion should be a result of the study.

PLANNING

- Greater density is an essential prerequisite to increased transit use, and it is also essential if the State is to achieve its goal of preserving open space. Increased public understanding of the value of density is essential. Local and state policies must be identified and supported.
- Transit planning should be fully coordinated statewide, and should incorporate the State land use plan where appropriate. Also, RIPTA should explore the advantages of becoming actively involved in development.
- The site selection and development of structured parking should occur in a way that supports the growth of transit.

ADVOCACY

- Transit needs advocates and leaders to ensure that these crucial plans come to fruition and continue to benefit millions of Rhode Island residents and visitors every year.
- The RIPTA board should be strengthened, and the composition revised, while its mission must be updated and expanded to reflect its current and future role as “mobility managers.”
- The Rhode Island General Assembly should form a standing Joint Committee on Transportation.
- Transit 2020 has provided a valuable forum for regional discussion of transit issues and has also brought businesses, major employers, institutions, municipal governments, state agencies, advocates, and transit users together to study and advocate for expanded transit. An advocacy and leadership group should be formalized, perhaps building on Transit 2020. One role such a group could play would be to provide advice and support for the Metropolitan Regional Transit Study. This group could also be charged with building public support for the Transit plans resulting from that study.

If our transit challenges are not addressed, these positive trends will falter and opportunities will be lost.

Introduction

We have the opportunity today to define our transit future.

We can see the outlines of one potential future – with continued growth of single rider automobile use – in the standstill traffic, bumper-to-bumper “rush hours,” and declining air quality of today. If unchanged, these current trends will lead in 15 years to the traffic-stopping equivalent of today closing an entire lane of I-95 during rush hour. If this trend continues unabated, future economic growth will be severely curtailed by the stranglehold of congestion.

Or we can imagine, and build, a different future for our state. A future where people can, and do, leave cars at home, taking advantage of an easy-to-use, integrated, modern transit system serving all Rhode Islanders. A future where commuters use rail to speed by I-95 to Providence or Boston or to an airport connection. A future where visitors bypass the rental car counters and use rail to get to destinations in Cranston or Providence or Pawtucket. A future where dynamic, higher density urban and town centers have housing, employment, and entertainment options within walking distance of each other and are served by modern, clean, quiet streetcars or advanced buses, loaded with technology, that bypasses automobile traffic. People would move about more easily and quickly, with less expense. Traffic would actually flow on streets and highways. Economic productivity would increase, and air and water pollution would decrease. And with the reversal of auto-centered, land-consuming practices, room would remain in Rhode Island for space, for fields and forests, for those features which make Rhode Island special.

This is not an impossible dream. It is a very real possibility. But it is one that will require change if it is to be realized. This report argues, and argues strongly, for change.

With the growth and opportunity that lie before Rhode Island, and the metropolitan area in particular, maintaining the status quo is not an option. High density, residential development is bringing more people into downtown Providence, and leading to a resurgence of specialty retail in the center of the city. The relocation of I-195, and the development of the waterfront in East Providence and Providence, creates unprecedented potential for growth. The nationally recognized art, theater, music, entertainment, and dining options in the metropolitan area attract more conventions, visitors, and tourists every year. Health science, financial services, and design services are poised to grow at an unprecedented rate, offering business opportunities Rhode Island must be ready to meet. To maintain Rhode Island’s place-based economic advantages, our growth must happen by choice, not by chance and it must be well-planned rather than haphazard.

If our transit challenges are not addressed, these positive trends will falter and opportunities will be lost. Fortunately, public interest in transit is at a new high. In addition to seeking greater efficiency, citizens desire transit alternatives out of concern for the environment and rising fuel prices. This interest must be met with transit options and plans that address the needs of potential riders. This report is intended to help guide the development of a robust transit system that will help Rhode Island reach its potential.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Rhode Island must invest in transit to develop and maintain a seamless, integrated, high quality transit service that builds on and complements the existing system. This will require a capital investment as well as a dedicated, predictable, and adequate funding stream to sustain expanded and upgraded operations.

Such an investment will yield numerous benefits: decreased congestion on our roadways; increased economic development potential Statewide; improved environmental quality, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions that threaten significant climate change; a better position for the City and State in competition with metropolitan areas making significant transit investments; preservation of the quality of life that distinguishes Rhode Island by supporting smart growth and preserving open spaces; an opportunity to meet the needs of the State's changing demographics characterized by an aging population growing urban communities, and new citizens who expect and rely on robust transit. And the state will benefit as money spent on transit stays in Rhode Island, rather than flowing out of state as money spent on gasoline.

The commitment to develop and sustain a high quality transit system serving all Rhode Islanders requires the careful examination of many issues: transit modes and routes, land use, planning, finance, the role of public/private partnerships, governance, oversight, and the leadership required to advance a transit agenda. It is essential that enhancements and expansion of the transit system not result in a loss of service to those currently served by the system. New transit options should supplement and not supplant existing lines of service.

In examining these notions, the Working Group analyzed the current public transportation system and its challenges and opportunities. This was done with consideration to maintaining the current momentum of these services and incorporating the region's strength in innovation, preservation, and design into the recommendations detailed below.

The following conclusions and recommendations can help guide the next steps in achieving a high quality transit system in Rhode Island. Many of the recommendations call for further study and development before they can be implemented as policies or programs. It is expected these recommendations will guide the forthcoming Metropolitan Area Transit Study funded by RIPTA, the City of Providence, and other potential stakeholders. Issues highlighted below for additional study should, in all appropriate instances, cross state lines and be investigated on a regional basis, given that Rhode Island and the metropolitan area are integrally tied to our neighbors.

It is the consensus of the Working Group that Rhode Island is fortunate to have a state transit authority that is nationally recognized for superior service and innovation. The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) provides a strong base on which to build. Currently, its ability to better serve the State is constrained by limited funding and a lack of understanding of RIPTA's strengths. RIPTA's achievements must be promoted and publicized to increase the public's awareness of transit options, and to inform the public about RIPTA's potential for serving transit needs. Business leaders, employers,

and political leaders at all levels need to speak out in support of transit. Building public support for creating superior service requires advocates. Changing perceptions and realities require dedication over time, and a strategy that incorporates early successes, laying the groundwork for larger, more ambitious goals.

ANALYSIS

Rider, Non-Rider, and Route Demand Analysis: The Foundation for Defining New Routes and Identifying the Most Appropriate New Modes of Transit

Plans and proposals for expanding, strengthening and upgrading transit should be based on a solid foundation of data and analysis: user and non-user information; current and projected origin and destination data; current and projected population centers, activity centers, and intermodal transit connections.

- A thorough analysis should be made of potential new routes, intra-city and intra-metro links and routes, corridors, and the benefits of serving these routes by an array of transit modes: Shuttles, Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Street Cars, and Light Rail. The transit study should identify and define new routes and recommend the best mode for serving each one.
- Potential corridors include:
 - Providence – Warwick corridor would be considered the primary travel lane in the state
 - Allens Avenue - Harbor Junction corridor to Cranston and possibly to the future T.F. Green Airport train station
 - Pawtucket - Providence corridor along Amtrak's Northeast Corridor
 - Promenade – Olneyville corridor
 - Providence – East Providence corridor via the East Side Rail Tunnel and Seekonk River Railroad Bridge or along alternative routes such as Angell/Waterman Street and the Henderson Bridge. Consideration should also be given to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Rapid Bus in these locations where appropriate.
 - Interstate 195 surplus area (including the new I-195/I-95 interchange)
 - Existing Freight Rail Improvement Project (FRIP) tracks should also be explored
 - Other routes should be studied per the demand analyses and jobs/housing growth projections analysis
- In addition to defining new routes and service options, the transit study should analyze and define the location for new, additional transit hubs and sub-hubs, seeking, in all instances, to strengthen intermodal ties as part of a seamless transit system.
- The analysis should consider the feasibility of utilizing existing infrastructure, such as the rails along Allens Avenue for streetcars or light rail, the Providence Train Station as a location for an intermodal hub, and other existing train stations as additional commuter rail stops.

MODIFICATION

Improving and Expanding the Current System

The current system offers many opportunities for short-term incremental improvements that could greatly increase the quality of service, user-friendliness, and ridership – even potentially drawing on “choice” riders - those who currently avoid RIPTA because they choose the private transportation options available to them. These modifications can serve as the required early successes, demonstrating to the public the value to be realized from an investment in transit.

- The Transit study should analyze the possibility of distinguishing certain current and potential high-use routes to increase ridership by making those routes, and the vehicles serving them, more appealing and easier to identify and access. Options could include “branding” or naming routes, color coding routes, defining routes by the markets served, such as a “Meds and Eds” route or an “Arts and Entertainment” route. The possibility of serving certain key routes with buses with advanced styling should be analyzed. An implementation plan for recommended changes should be included in the study.
- Major employers in and near downtown (state government, hospitals, universities, retail, commercial) should be surveyed to determine the need (potential riders, timeframes for use) and the study should propose options for routes, funding, responsibilities, and other characteristics of a potential partnership for intra-urban shuttle service. The shuttles currently operated by Brown, Rhode Island School of Design, Johnson and Wales University, and Lifespan could be integrated and operated in a way that meets this need and serves public riders.
- The Working Group acknowledged that some modes of transit actually attract tourists to an area and may increase ridership of existing services, such as the Saint Charles trolleys in New Orleans, the cable cars in San Francisco, the red, double-decker buses in London, and the ferries in New York City and in Sydney, Australia. The study should determine if there is an opportunity for the use, or expanded use, of such transportation modes within this region, especially considering the area’s history, its focus on design and restoration, and its appeal as a tourist destination.
- The study should outline a plan for incrementally upgrading technology and rider information throughout the current system. Upgrades such as traffic light overrides, signs providing real time bus arrival estimates, access to live bus timing via cell phones, information kiosks, improved maps, and more should be analyzed and specific modifications should be identified.
- The study should analyze the feasibility of, and make recommendations regarding, integrating rapid bus service along certain existing routes.
- The study should determine the cost/benefits of reinstating the short-zone fare, selling day passes, and creating free routes in the City of Providence and within other targeted areas.

- The study should analyze the current demand on Kennedy Plaza – and its very real limits as a truly intermodal hub – and recommend new hub locations that could alleviate the burden on Kennedy Plaza and achieve stronger intermodal connections, as well as improvements to the existing Plaza including addressing shelter adequacy, building access, schedule information availability, and security concerns.

INCENTIVES

Boosting Transit Through Disincentives for Auto Use and Travel Demand Management

Transit use must be proactively encouraged. Automobile use must be discouraged. Aggressive but achievable targets for decreasing single occupant auto trips should be established and strategies developed to achieve success. Only by taking these steps will we promote the change in behavior required to realize the benefits of a robust transit system. The good news is that drivers do respond to rewards and incentives for transit use, and disincentives for single passenger automobile use can also be successful.

- A thorough review of viable transit incentives and auto use disincentives should be conducted and the study should recommend the best options, including the potential for building on the State's "parking cash-out" or adapting successful models from other governments, such as Washington state's "Trip Reduction Law."
- Major companies should be surveyed to determine current commuting incentives offered to employees. Those that carry out best practices to reduce single-occupancy commuting, or who help market transit to customers or visitors, should be recognized and publicly commended.
- The TIP process should put a higher priority on transit infrastructure projects. As appropriate, new transit routes and modes identified by the forthcoming study should be included in the "study and development" section of the next TIP. The study could recommend incentives to increase the number of transit-related projects proposed for the TIP, and to ensure projects support and enhance the growth of transit use.
- The public sector needs to lead where it can. Rhode Island College, URI-Providence, and Community College of Rhode Island should join the U-Pass program where student IDs function as bus passes. The study should recommend financially feasible incentives that the State and municipalities could offer employees to reduce automobile use and increase public transit participation.
- The study should emphasize the goals and strategies of the state's new land use plan [table 121-05(1)] that encourage municipalities to promote increased transit use. It is important that this include steps to improve the pedestrian environment, as walking and transit are complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- Methods for regulating parking supply on a statewide basis to promote economic growth and increased transit use should be developed.

CONNECTIVITY

Intermodal Links

Transit modes do not exist in isolation. Successful transit systems provide riders with easy links from one mode to another, with strong pedestrian and biker routes to and from the system. Integrating and coordinating schedules, fare systems, signage, maps, routes, and hubs into a seamless network serving the needs of all riders are essential. Achieving this will require cooperation and alignment across governments and agencies, and with private partners.

- To increase transit coordination, it is time to consider consolidating all management and operational aspects of public transit in Rhode Island under one agency. RIPTA should expand its current scope to include the bus system, commuter rail, and any future transit expansion.
- A unified fare system is seen as a priority by the Working Group. The Study should analyze and recommend a plan to implement a single fare system for RIPTA, MBTA commuter rail, Connecticut commuter rail, rail shuttle to TF Green Airport, and new transit modes and options that may be added in the future.
- The study should look at the need and options for achieving frequent, shuttle-style service on rail between the new intermodal station at TF Green Airport and downtown Providence and other potential stops, and recommend the best options for ensuring the success of this intermodal link. This line should be looked at in conjunction with the Allens Avenue/Harbor Junction corridor listed above. The intermodal station is designed to accommodate a fourth track and this track could link to the Harbor Junction line.
- Hubs and transit centers should be located and designed in a way to increase the ease of intermodal use. The current role of Kennedy Plaza does not adequately encourage easy intermodal transit use; given this, it is not well positioned to take advantage of enhanced commuter rail service or the link to the airport.
- The existing gap between bus (Kennedy Plaza) and train (Amtrak and commuter rail Station) must be addressed to fully utilize the potential advantages of commuter rail and Amtrak services.
- The current Amtrak station and the area around the station have great potential as an expanded intermodal facility which could serve existing routes as well as new routes and transit modes. The study should further analyze this proposal and make a recommendation on the best way to realize the full potential of this site.
- Publicly owned land that will be reclaimed through the I-195 relocation project should be considered for use as a possible new transit hub.
- The study should detail the potential for integrating water routes and transit into the current system and explain how these routes could support an expanded system.
- Transit must easily link to and support pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The study should identify best practices to ensure pedestrians and bicycle riders have access to transit. This should include proper snow removal at transit stops, new crosswalks as appropriate, maintenance of crosswalks and pedestrian signals, and enforcement of traffic laws that protect pedestrians.

FUNDING

Financing the Future of Transit in the Region

Without investment, transit will under perform and not yield the benefits Rhode Island needs to achieve. Constraints on financial support for RIPTA currently prevent the agency from expanding service to meet rising demand. Just when the state needs more people to choose transit, RIPTA is leaving passengers behind because of overcrowding. Transit does not work without public subsidy (just like highways or air travel); the subsidy for transit must be recognized and funded as an essential economic development investment. The means for making capital investments and for sustaining an expanded system must be identified. Given the many demands on state spending, innovative funding options, including partnerships with the private sector, need to be examined.

- Transit oriented intensive development can generate economic growth for the city and region without sacrificing environmental quality. Revenue from integrated commercial, retail and residential development can contribute to major capital and operating revenues. Such revenues can be realized through such instruments as Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Master Lease Agreements or condo fees.
- The study should analyze and detail the various options for funding capital improvements and expansion of the transit system, including TIFs, Special Assessment Bonds, general revenue bonds, master lease agreements, operations and funding, etc. The criteria for evaluating different options and a recommended strategy for funding system expansion should be a result of the study.
- An adequate, sustainable and predictable funding stream for a robust operational budget is essential to realize the full potential of transit. The study should explore best practices for developing such revenue streams and recommend the best options given anticipated needs in Rhode Island.
- Realizing the goal of developing a robust transit system will require pursuing all potential funding options. Different funding strategies might be appropriate for different projects and stages of development. All studies conducted should adhere to federal requirements to support the pursuit of federal funding. The study should support any efforts to pursue federal funds to improve and expand transit in the region.
- The study should survey best practices and propose ways to promote private sector funding of transit-related infrastructure - and the increase of such infrastructure – such as bus shelters in commercial districts.

PLANNING

Land-Use Policy and Planning

Transit and land-use are integrally connected. The success of each enhances the success of the other. Greater density – both jobs and housing – is an essential prerequisite to increased transit use, and it is also essential if the State is to achieve its goal of preserving open space. Increased public understanding of the value of well-designed density is essential. Fortunately, new guidance is now available with insights and recommendations for state and local leaders when it comes to making decisions about land-use and transportation. On April 13, 2006 the State of Rhode Island officially adopted LandUse 2025, a new land-use plan for guiding the integrated growth and development of the state's 39 cities and towns over the next 20 years, including a comprehensive set of goals and strategies to support the development of efficient and effective transportation options for all Rhode Islanders.

In fact, many of our urban and town centers are already realizing the benefits of significant new private investment and higher density – fueled largely by a successful state historic tax credit program. And some of our auto-dependent rural areas are beginning to direct growth away from their farms and forests through incentives that draw growth to existing and transit-friendly town centers and through enlightened ordinances such as “village zoning,” reversing decades of conventional zoning that prohibit the kinds of places where more and more people inherently want to live, work, shop and play. All this presents a great opportunity for the future of public transportation in Rhode Island. But, it is an opportunity that will require further support for mixed-use, dense development in targeted locations if it is to be realized

- The study should consider the recommendations of Land-Use 2025, with particular emphasis on a) the targeting of state investment resources to urban, town and village centers, b) the promotion of compact, mixed-use village zoning ordinances, c) the prioritization of choosing sites for new public facilities in or near urban, town and village centers, d) the support for an active bus and rail system connecting “centers” by providing for related features including an extensive sidewalk network and for commuter parking, bus and taxi facilities, e) the call for more transit-oriented development and for land-use plans surrounding transportation terminals and their auxiliary uses to support transit.
- The study should analyze the densities required to support various modes of transit and how those density levels can be encouraged, achieved and supported.
- Transit planning should be fully coordinated with statewide economic development, housing, public infrastructure and environmental management strategies. RIPTA should explore the advantages of becoming actively engaged in development, on its own and/or as a partner. The study should outline the pros and cons of the various options available to RIPTA and detail a development strategy for RIPTA to increase revenues and to achieve dynamic intermodal transit hubs and centers.

- Municipalities should incorporate into local zoning and land use regulations a review by RIPTA of large development proposals. These reviews should pay particular attention to pedestrian connections to transit stops and amenities for transit users.
- The site selection and development of structured parking must occur in a way that supports and does not undermine the growth of transit. The transit study should recommend a parking strategy to support growth in urban centers while supporting transit use and increased ridership.

ADVOCACY

Ensuring Success: Governance, Oversight, and Leadership

Transit needs champions and leaders from all sectors – public, private, local, and state – who speak to the benefits and value of transit. The ambitious goals outlined here will not be realized without sustained leadership and advocacy. The momentum building across Rhode Island for upgraded transit – among the public and at all levels and branches of government – must continue to grow.

- The RIPTA board should be strengthened, with members appointed according to the revised composition called for in RIGL 39-18-2(b).
- RIPTA's mission must be updated and expanded to reflect its current and future role as “mobility managers.”
- The General Assembly should form a standing “Joint Committee on Transportation” which might also oversee DOT, the airport, highway safety, etc.
- Transit 2020 has provided a valuable forum for regional discussion of transit issues and has also brought businesses, major employers, institutions, municipal governments, state agencies, advocates, and transit users together

to study and advocate for expanded transit. An advocacy and leadership group should be formalized, perhaps building on Transit 2020. One role such a group could play would be to provide advice and support for the Metropolitan Regional Transit Study. This group could also be charged with building public support for the Transit plans resulting from that study.

- Coordinated planning and policy making would greatly enhance the environment for supporting transit. The study could evaluate the various options available and recommend what new entity should be created, or what new authorities should be granted to an existing body. Among the options to be evaluated would be the creation of a Transit Management Authority for the Metropolitan Area.

Working Group Meetings

Freedom of movement is a highly regarded American ideal, yet with the rising price of fuel, increasing roadway congestion and a variety of other factors, transportation is not always as cheap and efficient as it should be. With continued economic development and population growth in Rhode Island and the entire northeast region, an efficient and reliable public transit network is not just beneficial; it is imperative to the continued success of the region. In his 2006 State of the City Address, Mayor David N. Cicilline announced the creation of the Transit 2020 Working Group to study these issues and recommend a course of action that would put the region on the right track for the future.

On April 27th, 2006, the Transit 2020 Working Group held its first meeting, with Donna Cupelo, Regional President for Verizon Communications as chairperson. Approximately two-dozen individuals from around the state convened in the Chamber of Commerce Building in Providence to lend their expertise and discuss this important issue.

The first meeting began with a call to order and a visit from Mayor David N. Cicilline, who thanked everyone for participating and reiterated the importance of the work at hand. Transit 2020 contained a group of professionals from the public and private sector who could offer a diverse range of knowledge and insight into an array of transportation issues. Representatives included government officials from several Rhode Island metro areas, environmental advocates, business professionals, and transportation and planning experts.

June 5th marked the second meeting of Transit 2020, and included vigorous discussions on topics such as density and economic development. The discussions were led by guest speakers from Reconnecting America, the Center for Transit-Oriented Development and the Smart Growth Leadership Institute. The group also looked at case studies in transit innovations from across the country and discussed the feasibility of such programs in Rhode Island.

Meeting number three occurred on June 28th and began with a presentation on “Current and Projected Road Use Patterns” by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation. Next, a representative from New Public Transit Alliance presented on the “Environmental Impacts of Sustained or Increased Automobile Traffic.” Lastly, the group viewed a RIPTA presentation entitled, “Rhode Island Public Transit: History, Current Usage, and Future Directions.” A lively discussion followed each of these presentations, which offered the group deeper insight into key elements of transit reform.

At the fourth meeting, on July 18th, the members of Transit 2020 observed presentations regarding the state land use plan, the role of the State Transportation Advisory Committee, transit funding, and legislative activity on transit. A different expert thoroughly explained each topic, followed by informative discussion and debate.

The meeting held on September 5th, was a Developer’s Forum where representatives from Struever Brothers, Eckles and Rouse, Urban Edge, Picerne Properties, and Wickford Junction provided opinions, knowledge and recommendations. The discussion provided interesting insight from the private sector, as well as a lengthy question and answer period. The developers were able to offer suggestions based on their work in different cities across the country, as well as past, present and future projects in Rhode Island.

During the month of September, comments and suggestions from group members were compiled into a comprehensive draft. This document would eventually become the aggregation of the many suggestions, conclusions and recommendations that were discussed over the previous several months.

On October 6th, the group convened to discuss the first draft of the conclusions and recommendations document. The members clarified technical points and made suggestions regarding additional content to be incorporated into the final version of the report. The final report covered seven primary topics and suggestions: a thorough study of transit demand, modifications to the current system, transit incentives, intermodal links, finance and funding, land use policy and planning, and future advocacy and leadership.

At the final meeting the group discussed its conclusions and recommendations with Mayor David N. Cicilline who announced that Transit 2020 will continue as a group to promote and advance the recommendations of the report and that a public release of the report was being planned.

TRANSIT 2020 WORKING GROUP MINUTES

April 27, 2006

I. Opening of Meeting

Donna Cupelo opened the meeting at 2:00 pm.

Donna Cupelo gave opening remarks about the transit challenges facing the Providence Metropolitan Area and the goal of identifying the ways to address those challenges in order to ensure continued economic growth.

Members of the Working Group introduced themselves and announced their affiliations.

On behalf of Mayor Cicilline, Garry Bliss thanked all the Working Group members for participating.

II. Economic Development and Growth in the Providence Metro Region – Lori Capaldi, RI Department of Economic Development Lori Capaldi, from RIEDC, presented information regarding statewide economic trends statewide and, particularly in the Providence area. Questions were raised about the Historic Tax Credits and the secondary benefits of that provision. It was noted that development under the program had been in areas and at densities that support transit. The point was made that the Working Group might want to consider making a recommendation about the preservation of the Tax Credit at or near its current rate on the basis of its positive impact on transit.

III. Remarks By Mayor David N. Cicilline

Mayor Cicilline joined the meeting in progress and at the conclusion of Lori Capaldi's presentation spoke to the group. The Mayor thanked Donna Cupelo for chairing the Working Group and thanked all members for participating. The Mayor spoke about the economic growth affecting the Providence metro area and the long-term impact of the state's neglect of transit. He said the need to develop transit options is pressing and the goal should be to allow residents to move between different population centers and live in different population centers without a car.

IV. Economic Development and Future Planning for the City of Providence – Thomas Deller, Director, Providence Department of Planning

Thom opened by stating his long-held belief that "great cities have great transit."

He talked about some historical challenges to increasing transit use in Rhode Island, including the poor image of bus transit among many riders who have alternative options. The city's density is high enough to support greater transit usage. Thom explained that any transit solution must be regional and cannot focus exclusively on Providence.

Thom talked about streetscape changes planned for the city to make the streets more pedestrian-friendly, a key to increasing transit use.

Thom provided an overview of significant development projects ongoing in the city or planned and ready to begin. Thom also provided an overview of some of the key conclusions of the Providence 2020 report.

V. Discussion

The meeting was then opened for a discussion.

There was a discussion about resistance in certain communities to transit and the degree to which this was focused on buses.

The point was made that the confluence of rising gas prices, more frequent service, traffic congestion, and increased density should lead more people to consider and use transit. The connection of land use policy and transit was discussed.

The need to consider policy changes as well as physical changes in the transit experience was discussed and it was noted that the Working Group might want to consider making recommendations on such topics as increasing incentives for employers to promote and for employees to use transit.

VI. Close

Garry Bliss provided a preview of the next meeting that will provide some historical background on transit in Rhode Island as well as data on current road use patterns.

Harriet began by talking about the value of transit in securing the economic progress of the state and the related building boom of transit systems with

fixed guideways. The interest in streetcars is driven by the economic returns realized from the investment in streetcars. Harriett discussed the streetcar experiences of Portland, OR and Tampa, FL. She talked about the way Transit Oriented Development concentrates development in ways that creates value that can be captured by communities. She emphasized the importance of connecting transit systems so riders can move from one mode to another easily.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Next Steps:

- The group requested information regarding current initiatives or studies underway
- Lori Capaldi offered to arrange a discussion lead by a person involved in the Governors' Institute on Community Design. (See below)

Next Meetings:

Monday, June 5th 10:00-12:00 PM

Guest Speaker – Shelly Poticha President and CEO, Reconnecting America and the Center for Transit-Oriented Development

Commerce Center Building 30 Exchange Terrace 1st floor Conference Room

June 5, 2006

I. Opening of Meeting

Donna Cupelo opened the meeting at 10:00 AM. II.

Guest Speakers

Donna Cupelo introduced Shelly Poticha, President and CEO of Reconnecting America and the Center for Transit-Oriented Development. She spoke briefly about the connection between transit planning and development working together and complementing each other. Shelly then introduced the presenter of the slide show, Harriett Tregoning, Director of the Governors' Institute on Community Design and the Executive Director of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute.

Garry Bliss provided a preview of the next meeting that will provide some historical background on transit in

Rhode Island as well as data on current road use patterns.

Harriet began by talking about the value of transit in securing the economic progress of the state and the related building boom of transit systems with fixed guideways. The interest in streetcars is driven by the economic returns realized from the investment in streetcars. Harriett discussed the streetcar experiences of Portland, OR and Tampa, FL. She talked about the way Transit Oriented Development concentrates development in ways that creates value that can be captured by communities. She emphasized the importance of connecting transit systems so riders can move from one mode to another easily.

Harriet next moved on to a series of case studies. The Rosslyn Corridor in Arlington, VA, transit project allowed the city to get the density it needed, preserve single family neighborhoods, maintain affordable housing, and reach a point where 8% of the land was generating 33% of the municipal revenue. Additionally, traffic counts in the area were stable or declined, in spite of a doubling in the number of workers commuting in and out each day. The Portland, OR "Pearl District" streetcar led to the development of a new area in the city which previously had been dormant. Evanston, IL's investment resulted in a significant building/ development expansion to the degree the municipality was able to cut taxes. Again, traffic congestion decreased as well. Other case studies covered included Jersey City and Hoboken, NJ; Kenosha, WI; and Tampa, FL.

The risk of gentrification and rising housing costs was discussed. Harriet emphasized the need to build affordable housing into any transit-oriented development plans. She also argued for the need to look at the Affordability Index, which accounts for the cost of transportation and the savings when a family can decrease its reliance on a car and can use more affordable transit options. Harriet listed several options for addressing this issue: inclusionary zoning, low income housing tax credits, housing incentive programs like that offered in Massachusetts, Tax Increment Financing districts, modifying parking requirements, and negotiated agreements with developers.

Harriet closed by urging prompt action. Rhode Island is small enough that the entire state could benefit from transit investments and with gas prices rising and the demand for transit rising, construction costs will only rise so there is an economic benefit to acting soon.

A question and answer period followed.

Dan Baudouin asked about the operating costs of streetcars. Shelley explained that in Seattle the City Council decided no general fund dollars would support the streetcars. Funds come from parking meters, advertising, and an endowment created by the power company. Harriett pointed out that by pulling in “choice riders,” streetcars alter the demographics of the transit user population enough to open up new economic opportunities for transit systems.

Barry Schiller expressed concern over the impact of investing in new systems would have on the existing bus system and raised concerns about economic justice. Shelley responded by emphasizing that all the modes must fit together into one system, not separate systems. She pointed to the situation in Denver where the focus was exclusively on rail. Rail and bus must fit together in terms of connections, quality, and frequency of service.

Donna raised a point about the need to think regionally given our connections to Boston. For example, MBTA can take credit cards while RIPTA can not at this point. As the Boston/Providence populations become increasingly tied to each other, great opportunities will be presented.

A question was raised about density levels required to support transit. Shelley responded that having places to go – restaurants, shopping, cultural attractions, events – is often more important than density.

Richard Godfrey warned about the risk of subsidies supporting higher income neighborhoods and pointed to the experience in Los Angeles which prompted a change in Federal regulations.

III. Approval of Minutes

On a motion from Barry Schiller, seconded by Steve Durkee, the minutes of the April 27 meeting were approved.

IV. Adjournment

Donna adjourned the meeting at noon.

June 28, 2006

I. Opening of Meeting

Donna Cupelo opened the meeting at 8:30 AM and asked all attendees to introduce themselves and announce their organization/ affiliation.

II. Current and Projected Road Use Patterns and Trends, Edmund T. Parker, Rhode Island Department of Transportation

Ed Parker presented an overview of road use patterns and trends. The notes used for his presentation will be shared with Transit 2020 members.

The presentation emphasized the following key points: disparity between the recent growth of vehicle miles traveled vs the slower pace of growth in population; capacity of roads has been increased, but congestion rather than faster driving times and less crowded roads has been the result; congestion is time-limited in the Providence area.

Potential responses revolve around widening or expanding roads – not economically or environmentally realistic – or reducing traffic volumes. Several options currently in use or development were discussed including car pooling, RIPTA coordinating with developers and municipal planners, increasing the potential of the northeast rail corridor, encouraging flex time by employers, congestion pricing, transportation management systems, and the eventual appearance of intelligent vehicle systems.

Questions followed the presentation. Donna Cupelo asked about the impact of poorly designed interchanges. The problem of too many interchanges too close together and the priority given to reducing interchanges on the relocated I-195 were discussed. Additional questions focused on the rise of traffic from South County and the South County Traffic Study. Steve Durkee posed the idea that “congestion is our friend” in that it slows traffic and increases the appeal of transit.

He argued for including housing in the Wickford station project and questioned the wisdom of the Route 6/10 work. Ed Parker answered that housing is a possibility in parts of the Wickford station site and that the 6/10 project was not prompted by a desire to increase

capacity but to replace aging and unsafe infrastructure. Rebecca Barnes requested a future presentation on the intersection of statewide transit planning and statewide land use planning. Barry Schiller argued that Rhode Island continues to overly invest in increasing road capacity.

III. Environmental Impacts of Sustained or Increased Auto Traffic, Christopher Wilhite, New Public Transit Alliance

Chris discussed the environmental impact of auto traffic in Rhode Island where 37% of greenhouse admissions in the state are from the transportation sector and greenhouse emissions are higher per capita than in Mexico.

Chris discussed the environmental impact of auto traffic in Rhode Island where 37% of greenhouse admissions in the state are from the transportation sector and greenhouse emissions are higher per capita than in Mexico.

Switching to lower carbon fuels and increasing fuel efficiency offer some relief, but reducing vehicle miles traveled is the best solution.

Chris distributed two reports, Driving Global Warming and Shifting Gears. Links to both reports will be shared with members. Chris argued that the best responses for Rhode Island and the Providence area were: a regional and transit-oriented development, transit promotion by employers and government. Richard Godfrey argued that uniting employers who were promoting transit so that employees would know the breadth of this support could increase employee use of transit.

IV. Rhode Island Public Transit: History, Current Usage, and Future Directions, Mark Therrein, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Mark opened with a brief overview of the high points, low points, and turning points in the history of transit in Rhode Island. Following this Mark provided an overview of recent improvements undertaken by RIPTA to improve quality and the increase in ridership. Additionally, Mark outlined the conflict RIPTA faces with some routes at full capacity but RIPTA restricted

from expanding service. Mark discussed the popularity of the U Pass used by Providence College and Johnson & Wales and the popularity of the reduced price pass for Brown students. The increased use of transit data in RIPTA planning was also discussed. The benefits of “through routing” were discussed as was the negative federal limit on RIPTA’s ability to cross state lines.

Mark also provided an overview of services other than the traditional bus service and provided some comparative information on Bus Rapid Transit and Street Cars. He closed by emphasizing that Rhode Island was at a transportation crossroads where the decisions require considerable political leadership to be enacted.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM

July 18, 2006

I. Opening of Meeting

Donna Cupelo opened the meeting at 9:30 AM and asked all attendees to introduce themselves and announce their organization/affiliation.

Donna Cupelo then discussed the future meetings of the Working Group. She requested that members begin sending ideas and proposed conclusions to herself and to Garry Bliss. These suggestions will be discussed at a future meeting.

The proposed Developers Forum will be moved to the September meeting as Transit Oriented Development has already been covered in a previously unscheduled special meeting.

She also spoke from personal experience with Boston-area traffic about the advantage of transit alternatives during the Big Dig tunnel closures and that this incident underscores the importance of the group's work.

II. Rhode Island's State Land Use Plan and Transit – George Johnson, Statewide Planning

George Johnson attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of Kevin Flynn. George spoke about the recently adopted land use plan and the transit/transportation issues. He distributed a PowerPoint presentation with his talk.

The overriding conclusion of the land use studies that informed the new plan was that Rhode Island remains compactly developed but with increasing sprawl.

Post World War II development uses more land per residential unit than did prior development. These land use patterns increase traffic burdens as well. Rhode Island is not growing fast in terms of population, but land is being consumed comparatively very quickly. This trend of land use needs to be changed if the state's character is to be preserved.

To help achieve this change and to protect undeveloped land, the land use plan created a new concept for Rhode Island: the "Urban Services" Boundary. The purpose of the Boundary is to define the areas where urban growth should occur and to define those areas of the state where development should not occur which would remain primarily rural. The key to the Urban Services Boundary is investing in the infrastructure required to maintain urban uses within the boundaries. It was noted

that an investment in transit is just such an investment in building the capacity of an Urban Services core.

George noted that many of the guidelines in the new land use plan are similar to those in the previous plan, the only way this plan will be different and achieve its goals is if there is coordinated, cooperative work to enforce the plan.

III. Overview of the Transportation Improvement Program process and the role of the Transportation rail plan, increased emphasis on smart growth

Advisory Committee – Katherine Trapani, Supervising Planner, Statewide Planning

Katherine explained the processes used in the State of Rhode Island to allocate and commit public funds for transportation projects. She provided a PowerPoint with her talk.

One factor driving decision-making is emissions levels. This is an important issue because if a state exceeds its "emissions budget" the state could lose federal funding. Rhode Island has come close. Overall, state spending on transportation is low. Funding is provided via the Gas Tax, but much of that money is devoted to retiring debt so there is actually little flexibility in spending without decreasing debt levels or increasing the gas tax.

Katherine also discussed Transportation 2025 which she conceded was not particularly visionary in the area of transit, primarily bus focused, with some discussion of commuter rail and the cross-bay ferry.

Barry Schiller commented that Traffic Calming is not a transit investment and he commented that municipalities have not made transit a priority, with Transit 2020 being the first such commitment by municipalities.

Dan Baudouin asked about statistics regarding density required to support transit. Mark Therrein said he would provide a copy of one study to the group. Barry Schiller commented that density is not the sole determinant of the success of transit and that density tolerance levels vary.

IV. Overview of Transit Funding – Mark Therrein

Mark outlined various federal options for funding and cautioned about the need to be focused on any project given the scale of ongoing projects in the State.

Federal Highway Administration – putting together a patchwork of funding for a project is key to support here. A small earmark might be possible.

Federal Transit Administration – Very difficult to work through the FTA process which is very time-consuming and cumbersome. There is the possibility of some reform of the process. The formula funding from FTA is more promising as RIPTA can have some flexibility with this funding.

Discretionary Earmarks – Rhode Island is well positioned with a transit project for funding.

Local Funding – A sustained commitment of local funds is required for federal support, both capital and operating costs.

Private Funding – This is a funding option increasingly used around the country with major institutions/transit users like hospitals and universities (especially those that are expanding) and private developers investing in transit systems. As well, transit systems are becoming investors and partners in development sharing and selling development rights of transit hubs.

Regardless of what federal funding stream, or streams, are used a local funding commitment for capital and operating expenses is required. Additionally, it is critically important that the transit system, transit agency, be in the lead on new initiatives.

V. Kenneth Payne, Policy Director, Rhode Island Senate - Overview of Legislative Activity on Transit

Ken provided an update on the activity of the General Assembly, particularly the Senate, in the area of Transit. He noted that this past year was unusual for RIPTA in that the conversation was about moving RIPTA forward, not about averting the demise of RIPTA. The Study Commission that Ken has been supporting has focused on what should be the defined mission of RIPTA.

Ken spoke about the special moment of opportunity that exists for transit in Rhode Island at this time. There is unprecedented interest among legislative leaders for a major initiative in transit, the Transit 2020 Working Group represents a unique time that municipalities have collaborated on transit, and the issues of sprawl, gas prices, and environment combine to further enhance arguments for transit investment.

Ken discussed the potential role of Tax Increment

Financing districts as a way to provide local support for transit. The key is providing a transit vision which attracts wide-spread support across the State, a transit vision that Rhode Islanders would support investing in.

A question was raised about the potential for and potential value of a Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.

VI. Preview of Next Meeting

Donna spoke about the next meeting which would be a Developers Forum and opened the floor for comments from Working Group members.

Barry Schiller expressed the need to focus more on ways to increase the efficiency of the current system. Dan Baudoin urged the group to look at an array of recommendations. Sally Strachan made the point that Rhode Island is currently attracting many people from other parts of the country and that many of these new residents come with positive experiences with transit and an expectation that good transit will exist in Rhode Island. George Johnson spoke positively about the breadth of the composition and the conversation of the Transit 2020 Working Group.

September 5, 2006

I. Call to Order

Donna Cupelo called the meeting to order at 9:30. She urged members to submit their ideas and suggested recommendations/conclusions to her and to Garry Bliss. The next meeting in October will be the first discussion and review of conclusions for the group.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 5, June 28 and July 18 meetings were approved on a motion from Steve Durkee, seconded by Dan Baudouin.

III. Developers Forum

Streuver Brothers, Sam Bradner

Sam provided background on the company including geographic range, range of activity in residential, retail, and redevelopment of Fenway Park, as well as their Providence area activity (American Locomotive, Rising Sun Mills, and Dynamo House) and Rhode Island activity outside of Providence.

Donna asked what role transit had played in their Rhode Island plans to date. Sam answered that transit had not played a major role yet, but Amtrak is affecting their planning and if transit is expanded it could play a role in future planning. Transit has had an impact on plannings in Baltimore.

Mossik Hacopian, Urban Edge

Mossik provided a brief history of Urban Edge which started as a result of neighborhood opposition to a proposed expansion of I-195 and relocation of railway lines. The company's mission was to develop the land taken for the highway expansion, arrest neighborhood blight, and has sought to relocate some infrastructure and other public service facilities that are now inappropriately sited.

John Cio, Wickford Junction

John spoke about the history of the Wickford Junction project, a development made possible because of the rail link which enabled commuting from Wickford. His firm is looking at transit lines in future markets to guide forthcoming projects.

He cited a very real need to increase municipal

understanding about transit-oriented development, density, and mixed use development.

Mike Hennesy, Picerne Properties

- spoke about his previous experience in Seattle where there were more transit options which increased opportunities for developers and where development regulations were progressive.

Given the limited transit options in Rhode Island, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is not a realistic option. TOD becomes a realistic option when there is a wide array of choices. Mike said that new transit options need to be developed, and that municipalities need to provide infrastructure and densities that enable TOD planning.

He argued that better coordination among municipalities was needed.

Question and Answer Session

Donna Cupelo asked what role developers have in paying for transit infrastructure?

Sam answered that if an investment is going to be made in fixed rail, the investment should be made where it will have an impact on development, revitalization, and ridership. The public sector can send messages about where future development should be based on station and corridor planning. Transit need areas should be defined and planning should proceed from that.

Sam pointed out that the advantages and disadvantages of seeking federal funding had been discussed at past meetings.

He also pointed out that because of its compact geography, the street car could be a commuter (as opposed to an intra-city) option in Rhode Island where that is not practical in other parts of the country.

Sam pointed to the experience of Portland, Oregon where they did not seek federal funding. The business community took the lead for business reasons. If this strategy is followed Tax Increment Financing or other tools to share the burden of investment should be explored. Business and development community will support special taxing, public financing, incremental districts and other measures because they recognize the clear business benefit of transit investment.

Mossik commented on the importance of a community process in leading to support of TOD. He talked about the need to get communities comfortable with density and to see the connection between density and dynamic cities.

John Cioe talked about the willingness of developers to make long-term investments in infrastructure, but increases in density – or other incentives – are necessary. In terms of density, he said in his experience achieving increased density is much easier in other parts of the country. Towns in Rhode Island are very resistant to increased density.

- Hennessy spoke about the barriers he has experienced with proposals to increase density. He highlighted the land to be made available when I-195 is moved as one area prime for higher density.

Donna Cupelo then invited Transit 2020 members to ask questions.

Dan Baudouin asked about Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and in particular about the success of the “Silver Line” in Boston.

Mossik said that its value was controversial because it was not fixed as had originally been promised. The connection the line makes between neighborhoods and the airport is good. The possibility of an underground route is being explored and Mossik highlighted the importance of a dedicated road to the success of BRT.

Sam said that BRT has a positive impact on development where the investment in infrastructure – e.g. stations and vehicles – is greatest. Increasing the appearance of permanence of the route increases the likelihood of investment.

Sally Strachan asked the speakers to discuss ideas in other places that have failed so we do not repeat these actions.

Mike mentioned that the Department of Environmental Management needs to be involved in any plans, and that DEM needs to be flexible when reviewing proposals.

Sam discussed the experience in Baltimore where TOD was studied but without involvement of the neighborhoods and developers. Sam urged that developers and neighborhoods be engaged early in the process and that the message about the value of development, of redevelopment, and the link with

transit needs to be communicated.

Barry Schiller urged developers to get more active as advocates for transit.

Rebecca urged that transit be evaluated in terms of connecting people to their jobs and to look carefully at institutions, which are large employers, which are also developers in their own right.

Sam suggested the Urban Land Institute might be a resource for the City. They are active in Massachusetts but to date have not been active in Rhode Island.

Scott Wolf spoke about the gap between those developers and planners set in entrenched ways, and those open to new ideas such as accepting increased density in certain areas, steering growth to designated areas. He also spoke about the property tax/school funding challenge and how much opposition to density is driven by school costs. He suggested there was value to looking at the approach in Massachusetts that compensates for increased education costs from new development.

There was a broad discussion about the need to increase understanding about the value of Transit Oriented Development and looking at development and density in new ways and making it possible for municipalities to accept and encourage such projects.

Sam Bradner highlighted the need to tie density, Transit Oriented Development, and increasing transit modes to community benefits.

IV. Close

Donna asked all members to get suggested conclusions and recommendations for the group to Garry and to her by September 26th.

V. Adjournment

The Meeting Was adjourned at 11:30.

October 6, 2006

I. Opening of Meeting

Donna Cupelo called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

Donna outlined the goals and scope of this meeting and explained that this is a not a point by point editing session, but rather a forum to focus on substance, missing pieces, areas of contention and general discussion.

Donna explained the timeline moving forward: - Final comments due on October 20th

- Circulate the revised draft beginning November 3rd
- All technical corrections due on November 10th

After these materials are received, the group will be informed about plans for the release of the report and follow up.

II. Discussion of "Transit 2020 Recommendations and Conclusions"

David Farmer referred to a map that showed the existing and planned rail lines and stations that extend through Warwick, Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls. David also mentioned the existing FRIP lines (Freight Rail Improvement Project) as a possible avenue for commuter rail transport since there is already a \$200 million infrastructure in place.

Mark Therrien said that he liked the idea of such a rail service, but it would need at least half hour frequency to realize a benefit.

Dan Baudouin made several suggestions regarding various parts of the document. Specifically, Dan mentioned the importance of making this transit initiative statewide and that a change in culture is also necessary, as well as a plan for businesses outside of the city to decrease automobile use. Dan also mentioned that the new 95/195 interchange should be included in the study as a possible parking/hub site.

Steve Devine suggested that we look into the under utilized freight line, and to study the costs and benefits of a fourth, dedicated rail line. He also mentioned that parking disincentives need to be statewide and cannot undermine the Providence economy.

Lori Capaldi pointed out that density is the key matter in these development issues being discussed.

Donna Cupelo made several comments regarding the need for stronger language regarding thorough data analysis as well as intermodal hubs and parking.

Sally Strachan pointed out that the positive benefits of transit need to be emphasized: tourism, economic development, environmental, etc. She also mentioned that state government employees should be added to the list of transit beneficiaries, in addition to local hospitals and universities.

Jim Moran touched on several points regarding the private sector in relation to public transit and how businesses can help improve transportation. He also discussed the image changing impact of new technology such as fare paying via cell phones.

Chris White commented that many times the State Plan goes unheeded because local elected officials choose to ignore it for political reasons.

Jared Rhoades commented that the transit study can help the implementation of the State Plan, by increasing understanding of its importance.

Barry Shiller made several suggestions regarding the Transit 2020 recommendations document such as the inclusion of global climate change as a reason for investing in transit. He also stated that the document could mention that decreased consumer spending on fuel would increase the amount of money that they could otherwise spend in the Rhode Island economy. He also discussed several new corridors for expansion as well as the possibility of a dedicated bus lane on the highway and other main thoroughfares. Targeting state employees for transit use was also discussed, as well as incentives for employers and a state-wide campaign to promote public transportation. Barry highlighted one challenge – the current split management of transit with RIDOT responsible for rail and RIPTA responsible for bus service. Barry also suggested that we look for useful data beyond the RI population since many riders and potential riders are from out of state.

Scott Wolf stated that there are encouraging signs that adherence to the State Land Use Plan is increasing and he talked about steps Growsmart was taking to seek increased compliance.

Jared Rhoades discussed the geography of potential routes and the need for a discussion of East/West transit in Rhode Island.

Ron Gallo talked about regionalization, technology and the need for a culture change, in order for these positive advancements to occur.

Mark Therrien talked about the issues of over-capacity buses and the negative impact on riders.

Steve Durkee discussed the need to lobby extensively as well as the need for cooperation between RIPTA and RIDOT in order for regionalism and intermodalism to work.

Rebecca Barnes suggested the language regarding federal funding should be revised. Mark Therrien added that, while pursuing small start funding could be a bureaucratic burden, there are other funding sources within the Federal Transit Authority.

Chris Wilhite continued the discussion on overcrowding. He also brought up the idea of “district heating” as a way to improve the experience of customers at Kennedy Plaza.

Lori Capaldi discussed the need for the identification and analysis of the specific new routes that have been discussed.

III. Adjournment of Meeting

Donna Cupelo adjourned the meeting 11:32am and reiterated the timeline for corrections, comments and suggestions of the report draft

January 29, 2007
I. Opening of Meeting

Donna Cupelo called the meeting to order at 11:00am and distributed copies of the report draft to the committee members. She asked that the group review the document one final time, and submit corrections to Garry Bliss within two weeks (February 12th).

II. Discussion and wrap up of the working group

Donna put forth the idea of committee members presenting parts of this study to outside organizations, or sitting on informational panels. She mentioned the opportunity to educate business leaders and organizations, environmental groups and all levels of government.

Donna then asked the committee members to offer their general thoughts on the overall working group process, as well as their thoughts about future leadership and advocacy on the issue.

Steve Durkee stated that he had a very positive experience overall, and suggested that connections and linkages are the big issues to focus on going forward.

Janet Raymond said that advocacy will play a tremendous role going forward, such as resolving issues with the business community for example. She also recommended doing an annual survey of employers to gauge the needs of area commuters.

Barry Schiller suggested that four of the most pressing issues are reorganization of the RIPTA Board, 2007 transit legislation, response to the Governor’s budget and the State’s updated 20 year transit plan.

Chris Wilhite recommended that several municipalities be kept on board, as well as a diverse array of community groups that represent multiple ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Richard Godfrey said that the Department of Transportation should stay engaged, and that it would be a good idea to meet with the new director.

James Moran said that East Providence was happy to be part of this working group, and pointed out that the new land use plan will be vital to the region’s transit future.

Ed Parker of the Department of Transportation expressed strong support from the DOT, and

recommended expanding transit development to other municipalities going forward.

Sally Strachan stated that organizations respond well to this type of issue and that a transit advocacy group can define what is critical.

Dave Everett stressed the importance of highlighting the environmental implications of not investing in transit innovation.

Sam Bradner said that it's impossible to underscore the importance of this advocacy group moving forward because often times, without a group like this, things will not move along at all.

III. Mayor's remarks

Mayor David Cicilline joined the group at 11:40am and began by thanking everyone for their hard work and dedication. He went on to say that he fully supported findings outlined in the final report. The Mayor talked about the critical importance of continuing advocacy on this issue and the need to steer conversation away from simply more parking garages. If the unprecedented development that is presently occurring is to continue, said Mayor Cicilline, then new transit solutions must be found to accommodate construction workers and future employees.

Thom Deller, Director of Planning and Development for the City of Providence, stated that transit is an important issue to the City and State because it is part of the overall concept of "affordable living."

The Mayor agreed, and stated that an investment in reducing the cost of living in Providence is an investment in working families.

Mayor Cicilline also suggested inviting a group of political leaders from across the State to attend a special "pre-release" event and informational session.

IV. Closing remarks

Garry Bliss thanked everyone for all of their hard work and asked anyone who is interested in continuing with transit advocacy to please inform him at the end of the meeting. He also said that there would be a press conference for the official release of the report, and that everyone in attendance today would be invited.

Donna Cupelo thanked everyone once again and adjourned the meeting 12:15pm.

Working Group Membership

Chair: DONNA CUPELO, Regional President, Verizon Communications

SCOTT AVEDISIAN, Mayor, City of Warwick

REBECCA G. BARNES, FAIA, Director of Strategic Growth, Brown University

DANIEL A. BAUDOUIN, Executive Director, Providence Foundation

GARRY BLISS, Director of Policy, City of Providence

JEANNE M. BOYLE, Acting City Manager, City of East Providence

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WILLIAM HATFIELD, President, Bank of America Rhode Island

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JOHN NICKELSON, Director of Department of Public Works, City of Providence

EDMUND T. PARKER, Chief Engineer, RI Department of Transportation

MARK PELSON, Managing Director, Providence Equity Partners, Inc.

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EDWARD J. QUINLAN, President, Hospital Association of Rhode Island

JANET RAYMOND, Senior Vice President, Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce

JARED RHODES, Director of Planning, City of Cranston

BARRY SCHILLER, New Public Transit Alliance

SALLY STRACHAN, Business Consultant

MARK THERRIEN, Assistant General Manager, RIPTA

CHRIS WILHITE, Sierra Club, Rhode Island

SCOTT WOLF, Executive Director, GrowSmart Rhode Island