



Monthly Board Meeting

Monday, December 6, 2021 | 5 PM – 6:30 PM | Virtual on Zoom

ECRI Office Contact: environmentcouncil@earthlink.net

Attendees

Priscilla De La Cruz, Darrell Brown, Zack Agush, Meg Curran, Mal Skowron, Amanda Freitas, Erica Hammond, Paige Therien, Donovan Davino, Sarah Ingle, Jessie Kingston, Susan Korte, Paul Beaudette, Peter Trafton, Eugenia Marks, Barry Schiller, Nicole DiPaolo, Greg Gerritt, Erin Taylor, Logan Torres, Emily Koo, Jim Kingston, Ken Filarski, Angie Koziara, Kai Salem, Katherine Gibson

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions 5:00 – 5:15 PM

- Approval of November meeting minutes
- Office Report

2. President's Report and Strategic Planning update 5:15 – 5:25 PM

- ECRI administrator transition and hiring process

3. Presentation and Discussion 5:25 - 6:10 PM: Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)

4. Policy Committee and Climate Crisis Campaign upcoming meetings 6:10 – 6:25 PM

- PolComm legislation straw proposal review, discussion, and approval

5. Announcements 6:25 – 6:30 PM

Adjourn

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

- a) Introductions given in the chat.
- b) Land Acknowledgement
 - i) Learning about indigenous culture, especially alternative ways of knowing and thinking, by reading – Book Recommendation: Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

- c) **Approval of the November 2021 Meeting Minutes: Peter Trafton makes the first motion to approve the November 2021 meeting minutes and Paul Beaudette seconds. All vote in favor without abstention or opposition.**
- d) Office Report
 - i) ECRI Ed Fund balance \$42,421 of which \$4,179 is designated for Strategic Planning work
 - ii) ECRI balance \$40,589
 - iii) Applications for the Tisdale Environmental Education grants are closed. Winners will be announced in early January.
 - iv) We are currently accepting videos for the February RI Nature Video Festival
 - v) We are soliciting donations for our Year End appeal. Have received \$1,300 so far
 - vi) The committee is interviewing candidates to take over as Administrator, so I am hoping this is my last office report. I am trying to tie up loose ends for the handover.

2. President's Report and Strategic Planning update (Priscilla De La Cruz – pdelacruz@asri.org)

- a) Executive Committee (ExComm) has formed a Hiring Committee sub-group to find a replacement for Greg Gerritt, administrator
 - i) Currently completed three interviews with a fourth scheduled for this week
 - ii) ExComm will make a decision this month
 - iii) Formal Celebrations for Greg are forthcoming
- b) Next ExComm meeting is December 14, 2021
- c) Strategic Planning work done to date can be reviewed at <https://www.environmentcouncilri.org/content/strategic-planning>
 - i) Resolve Conservation is finalizing the draft using information they collected during October and November community sessions
 - Ready to present and unveil final strategic plan and report at January 3rd meeting
- d) Next ECRI Board meeting is January 3, 2021, 5:00-6:30
- e) [Climate Jobs RI](#)
 - i) Green and Healthy Schools Initiative – first campaign launched at an Initiative
 - Decarbonize RI public school K-12 by 2030
 - Press conference at 2:30 pm on Wednesday, December 8, 2021 – all are welcome!
 - [Link to sign-on](#) (includes link to letter)
 - Contact Erica Hammond at erica@climatejobsri.org

3. Presentation and Discussion: Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) - Sarah Ingle (ingle@ripta.com) and Zach Agush (zagush@ripta.com)

[View the presentation slides, here.](#)

- a) Electrification Project
 - i) FZEV Pilot Program Basics
 - Phases: Demonstration; Broader Adoption; Sustainable and Resilient Deployment
 - Testing (elevation, weather, ridership rates, routes, etc.) has been taking place on Route 20 since late 2019 with R-line as pilot beginning in June 2020
 - (a) New buses for R-Line (14 40-foot New Flyer) scheduled for delivered in Fall 2022
 - \$4M secured by Senator Reed for Aquidneck Island Long term vision is Newport Gateway Center and RIPTA Middletown Garage facility improvements and charging equipment
 - ii) What we're Learning

- Vehicle Price and scalability: electric buses have a 40% increase in cost
- Energy costs
- Energy Requirements – 14 electric busses requires 1.2 MW
- Infrastructure
 - (a) Buses require different technology than cars
 - (i) R-Line will use pantograph (fast) charging
 - (ii) Wireless/induction is being considered for other buses
- Vehicle Range
 - (a) Buses tested are currently running 120 miles per day on average (manufacturers claim between 200-300 miles per day under ideal conditions). 50% of RIPTAs services are 140 miles per day.
- Weather/Temperature Impacts
 - (a) Below 40 degrees or above 90 degrees, state of charge and effective range decline by 30%
- Resiliency and Redundancy
- Impacts on Transportation Operations
- Supportive Technology
- iii) Environmental, Health, and Equity Impacts
 - Transition to renewable energy
 - Equity and Health Impacts
- iv) Next Steps
 - Integration of fleet electrification & Transit Master Plan (TMP) implementation
 - (a) Fleet and Facilities Action Plan coming spring 2022
 - Strengthen partnerships
 - Support Act on Climate Implementation
 - Leverage federal infrastructure investment
- b) Questions
 - i) How was ridership affected by COVID and how does RIPTA plan to increase ridership?
 - RIPTA did not cut service during the pandemic; ridership has largely bounced back, especially in high school and college students and in increasing
 - Enhanced service on a few routes both pre-covid and more recently – response has been very positive and ridership has increased
 - During TMP process, RIPTA found their ridership was comparable to nearby cities
 - ii) Are there any savings to be had by running electric vehicles versus diesel?
 - There isn't too much data since most electrified fleets are still new – we will start to see this data in the next couple of years
 - Savings depends on manufacturing, vehicle, battery, routes, etc.
 - iii) Why New Flyer (versus another manufacturer?)
 - Every manufacturer is different. The overarching market for manufacturers who are building compliant buses is very small. Administration wants aggressive transfer to electric buses.
 - iv) Is the Fleet and Facilities Action Plan funded yet?

- It is funded.
- v) How is RIPTA addressing the chicken and egg conundrum of making transit convenient and easy by increasing the frequency of scheduling at each stop during strategic and critical times of the workday and the weekend?
 - Life doesn't just happen in the "peaks" and improved/modified service are some of the easier changes to make.
 - Do a few routes at a time (a couple times of year.)
- vi) The other elephant question in the room is what happens when the bus ecosystem is simplified to electrification of the fleet and the grid goes down?
 - Will be digging into this with OER in next research phases. National Grid has been a good partner so far on determining capacity variables and resiliency pathways.
- vii) What is RIPTA's plan for service improvements?
 - Resources are limited. Electrification with no service enhancements is beneficial but with enhancements is even better. Current funding levels mean RIPTA needs to prioritize changes towards sustainability, but federal funding opportunities are promising.

4. Policy Committee and Climate Crisis Campaign upcoming meetings (Kai Salem – kai@greenenergyconsumers.org)

- a) Next PolComm Meeting is December 14, 2021 – On the agenda:
 - i) ECRI Coffee Hour – Third Wednesday of January; Virtual again; possible two events so legislators will have options; Repeating topical breakout group format from 2021
 - ii) Discussing bill review process – how can we keep it efficient and democratic?
 - (1) A new set of procedures has been drafted – including process for approving bills which ECRI has approved in that past that remained relatively unchanged.
 - (a) Document will be shared with everyone in advance of January 3rd meeting so board can vote on elements if needed.
 - (2) More online voting – currently testing out TriCider online platform
 - iii) Climate Crisis Campaign Updates
 - (1) 2030 Working Draft, Act On Climate hearing for new decarbonization planning process, ARPA funding priorities letter submitted
 - iv) Potential upcoming legislation/ECRI priorities

5. Announcements

- a) Lloyd Albert of the AAA Is hosting a Zoom session with RIDOT head Peter Alviti on Wed this week about their RI impact of the new US transport law with more funds and new programs including competitive grants.

Adjourn at 6:29 pm