RIDOT’s Latest “Transit Improvement” Plan Bad for Transit Riders

RI Transit Riders opposes RIDOT’s latest “transit improvement” plan for downtown Providence.

It has been rolled out with little transparency and no input from passengers. By the time we have been presented to stakeholder groups and the media, the basic outline and details of the plan have been set and the implement all but finalized. This has resulted in a plan that will make the transit experience worse for riders.

- **It will be inconvenient for passengers**, as it will require additional transfers for those riders changing from one bus line to another because not all lines will connect in Kennedy Plaza as they do now. Thus, this makeover is likely to have exactly the opposite impact that the State hopes to achieve: it will dissuade potential new riders from taking the bus and perhaps reduce the number of current riders who have another way to get to work, etc.

- **It moves half of all bus lines from Kennedy Plaza to a remote and inappropriate location.** The proposed Dyer Street hub is surrounded by parking lots. This site is too small to accommodate any growth in the transit system and seems to have been selected simply to move passengers away from Kennedy Plaza.

- **It is a waste of money.** It is only the latest iteration of the several plans to make over Kennedy Plaza. There have been problems with the previous renovations, in part because the public--especially those riders who use Kennedy Plaza daily--weren't included in the planning process. We don't think this plan will succeed, either. Things get badly done when there is no meaningful input.

- **It short-changes the rest of the state.** The 2014 Transportation Bond was passed to "fund enhancements and renovations to mass transit hub infrastructure throughout the State of Rhode Island." Other than some money that was used in Pawtucket, the State is using the rest of the money solely on a Providence plan that is not in the best interests of transit riders.

- **For all the reasons above, it fosters a “Worse Normal” that privileges the voices of the powerful over the less-powerful yet again.** Even though the state has talked about creating a "better normal" after the pandemic, especially for Rhode Islanders who have struggled with discrimination in one form or another or whose voices frequently aren't heard over those with more money and influence, this plan makes life harder for the many who depend upon RIPTA as their basic form of transportation. This is not a "better normal."

We think this is a bad plan, and RI Transit Riders opposes it.

Patricia Raub  Coordinator, RI Transit Riders