

Chris O'Brien

From: Liza Burkin <lizaburkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 5, 2021 4:30 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Wednesday, 4/7 Hearing on Budget Article 1, Section 18 (Extension of Bonds)

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

Thanks to the Committee for hearing the community's voices tonight – voices that have been shut out of this process, systematically, from the beginning of this multi hub bus project.

While I live in Providence now, I used to live in Newport without a car. I witnessed the capital improvement project at the Gateway Center after Hurricane Sandy, which is now a much more resilient and inviting bus hub, where I could go to the bathroom and wait under shelter if it was raining or snowing, and where green infrastructure will soften the blow of storm surges and rising sea levels. But If I wanted to visit my mom in Narragansett on the weekend, I would have to hitchhike over the bridge with my bike to the Saunderstown park-and-ride, which is just a parking lot with no bathroom, water, or real shelter, and then bike the rest of the way home. The vast majority of the bus infrastructure in Rhode Island looks like Saunderstown, not Newport or even what's in Kennedy Plaza today.

This is what the voters had in mind when we approved the Transit Bond in 2014. **To improve bus access and capital improvements for bus hubs throughout the state.** That is the language of the bond. These funds were not intended to be solely spent in downtown Providence. This is a misuse of public funds. Please use your legislative power to override this out-of-control, unaccountable state department.

While riders are as eager as anyone to see the Transit Bond money spent, it can't be in a way that ignores the voices of bus riders.

With all this in mind, please amend Article 1, Section 18 by inserting the following two sentences beginning on line 6 of as follows:

"Per the 2014 Mass Transit Hub Infrastructure Bond ballot question, funds may only be utilized to fund enhancements and renovations to transit hub infrastructures. No bond funds may be utilized to dismantle or otherwise deconstruct the state's primary transit hub in Kennedy Plaza."

Thank you,
Liza Burkin
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