



GrowSmartRI
Sustainable Economic Growth
& Quality of Place

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April 7, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chair, House Committee on Corporations
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903
VIA EMAIL - HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

RE: Support for H-8127 – that Restores the ability of the RIPTA Board to elect a Chair

Dear Chairman Solomon and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Grow Smart RI, I'm writing in support of H-8127.

Grow Smart RI is Rhode Island's statewide smart growth advocacy organization. We represent a big-tent coalition of business and civic leaders, development and finance professionals and engaged grass roots community change agents, all committed to designing and developing /redeveloping our communities in ways that strengthen our Downtowns and Main Streets, expand affordable transportation and housing options, improve access to daily physical activity and protect Rhode Island's beauty, magic and soul.

Until a law was passed in 2023, the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) was a statutory ex-officio appointed member of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) Board of Directors, but not the Chair. We believe that was the correct way to ensure that RIPTA and RIDOT optimize cross-agency alignment and collaboration.

We believe that public transit is best served with a Board Chair that is not compromised with a fiscal conflict of interest as has been the case with the RIDOT Director serving as RIPTA Board Chair. Last year for example, the only letter of opposition sent publicly opposing an increase in RIPTA funding from the Highway Maintenance Account and gas tax was from RIDOT Director Alвити as RIPTA's Board Chair. This was not the result of a vote by the RIPTA Board. Under his stewardship, RIPTA experienced the most sweeping and severe service cuts in the agency's 59-year history.

In addition to supporting greater rider representation on the RIPTA Board, we also recommend that leaders from the **Executive Office of Housing** and the **Rhode Island Climate Change Coordinating Council (RIEC4)** be appointed ex-officio members of the RIPTA Board given the outsized positive impact of transit to the State's pressing goals for housing production and climate action.

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote in support of H-8127.

Thank you,

John Flaherty
Senior Advisor and Special Projects