



Via Electronic Mail

April 7, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chair, House Corporations
House Lounge, State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF **Supports** House Bill No. 8127 – Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Board Composition

Dear Chair Solomon:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 8127, which amends R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-18-2(e) to remove the director of the department of transportation (“RIDOT”) as the chairperson of Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (“RIPTA”) board of directors.

CLF is a member-supported non-profit advocacy organization working to protect public health and the environment and build healthy communities in Rhode Island and throughout New England. CLF supports policies that increase services and ridership on RIPTA’s bus system and help to achieve the greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandates of the Act on Climate.

CLF works alongside several RIPTA transit rider advocacy groups, including the Kennedy Plaza Coalition, the Save RIPTA Coalition, Providence Streets Coalition, Rhode Island Transit Riders, and GrowSmartRI. CLF and these advocacy groups believe that access to affordable transportation is a fundamental human right of all Rhode Island residents.

In 2023, the General Assembly amended R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-18-2(e) to require that the director of RIDOT be the chairperson of the RIPTA board of directors. RIDOT has been heavily criticized in recent years for its near-total focus on cars in transportation planning, to the detriment of other modes of transit including walking, cycling, and public transportation. This legislative experiment further entrenched Rhode Island’s position as a car-centric state that is not serious about expanding access to affordable transportation.

This is evidenced by the state’s failure to avoid a RIPTA budget shortfall in 2025, which caused “the largest service reduction in the agency’s 59-year history . . . affecting 45 out of 63 routes

and reducing service by approximately 15% across the system.¹ RIPTA and its riders didn't deserve these budget cuts. As noted in the Save RIPTA campaign's 2025 Service Cuts Impact Report, "[a] much-delayed efficiency study, released on August 1 [2025], predictably concluded that RIPTA is an efficient operator of essential public transit service throughout the state."² This report is a concise, easy to follow, graphically compelling account of the real-world pain and hardship that the service cuts caused thousands of our fellow Rhode Islanders who depend on RIPTA for access to transportation.

It is time to admit that a car-centric society does not meet the fundamental human right of access to affordable transportation by all Rhode Island residents. It is also time to take affirmative steps to meet this fundamental goal. Passing House Bill No. 8127 is a good first step.

We therefore ask that you pass House Bill No. 8127.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Stang
Senior Attorney, Rhode Island
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the House Committee on Labor
Representative Teresa A. Tanzi
Representative Terri Cortvriend
House Minority Leader Michael Chippendale
Representative Jose F. Batista
Representative Evan P. Shanley
Representative Jennifer A. Stewart
Representative Rebecca M. Kislak
Representative Cherie L. Cruz
Representative Raymond A. Hull
Representative Arthur Handy
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation

¹ Save RIPTA, *2025 Service Cuts Impact Report* (Jan. 2026), available at https://rhodeislandcurrent.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Service-Impacts-Report_package.pdf.

² *Id.*