

Via Electronic Mail

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Room 35, State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF **Supports** House Bill No. 5405 – Amending RI’s Sale and Use Tax

Dear Chair Abney:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 5405, which will establish a restricted receipt account for the benefit of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (“RIPTA”) to be used to fund its operations. This account would be funded by sales taxes collected from ride share companies, and would be exempt from indirect cost recovery provisions.

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 transportation system and help to achieve the greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandates of the Act on Climate.

The rise of Uber and Lyft has led some to believe that these private services can fill the gaps that traditional public transit might leave behind, particularly in areas with lower demand. However, rideshare services are not a sustainable replacement for transit infrastructure—especially in dense urban areas like the Providence metro where public transportation is more cost-effective and efficient. Passage of House Bill No. 5405 will provide RIPTA with additional revenue to expand RIPTA service to better compete with inefficient and regressive rideshare services.

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 (collectively the “RIPTA Rider Advocates”). The RIPTA Rider Advocates’ main budget priorities are to keep RIPTA funded and to implement the transit service improvements outlined in the 2020 state-approved Transit Master Plan (“TMP”).¹

¹ *Transit Forward RI 2040* - Rhode Island Transit Master Plan: <https://www.ripta.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TFRI-Recs-Briefing-Book-Final-201230.pdf>.

The TMP makes five broad recommendations to increase RIPTA ridership, which is needed to lower the number of personal carbon-producing vehicles on Rhode Island's roads:

- Improve Existing Services
- Expand Services to New Areas
- Develop High-Capacity Transit
- Improve Access to Transit
- Make Service Easier

According to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's published Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, Rhode Island's transportation sector accounts for 37% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions.² On April 14, 2021, Governor McKee signed into law the Act on Climate, which sets enforceable climate emissions reduction mandates.³ In particular, the Act on Climate mandates that Rhode Island achieve greenhouse gas emissions of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, 80% by 2040, and net-zero emissions by 2050.⁴

These targets can only be achieved by substantially reducing the number of personal carbon-producing vehicles on Rhode Island's roads. One of the best tools in Rhode Island's toolbox to meet this target is to substantially increase RIPTA ridership. Moreover, since RIPTA currently serves many low-income communities in Rhode Island, there are compelling environmental justice issues that can only be addressed by fully funding RIPTA and funding the recommendations of the TMP.

We therefore ask that you pass House Bill No. 5405.

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 Finance
Representative David Morales
Representative Arthur J. Corvese

² R.I. Dep't of Env'tl. Mgmt., *2022 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory* (2024), available at https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2024-12/ghg-inventory-2022-f_1.pdf.

³ R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-6.2-9.

⁴ *Id.*



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