

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. 5467 – An Amendment to Rhode Island’s Motor Fuel Tax

Dear Chair Abney:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 5467, which will fix the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority’s (“RIPTA”) allocation of the Motor Fuel Tax, as well as RIPTA’s allocation of the one cent per gallon environmental protection fee,<sup>1</sup> at 30%.

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.

For fiscal year 2026, RIPTA faces a \$32.6 million deficit<sup>2</sup> resulting from the loss of federal COVID-19 funding. Without any additional revenue sources to make up for this loss, similar annual deficits are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. A significant portion of RIPTA’s annual budget is funded from a portion of Rhode Island’s Motor Fuel Tax, but RIPTA’s current allocation has not kept pace with the tax’s overall increase. Passage of H-5467, along with H-5468, could make up up to seven million dollars of the budget shortfall.

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”).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See R.I. Gen. Laws § 46-12.9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Colleen Cronin, *RIPTA Is Facing a Budget Deficit ... Again: The 2026 budget proposal marks the second consecutive year that Gov. McKee has proposed a spending plan that leaves the transit agency with a deficit*, EcoRI News (Jan. 17, 2025), <https://ecori.org/ripta-is-facing-a-budget-deficit-again/>.

<sup>3</sup> *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>.

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.<sup>4</sup> On April 14, 2021, Governor McKee signed into law the Act on Climate, which sets enforceable climate emissions reduction mandates.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.

Besides H-5467, the RIPTA Rider Advocates are urging the passage of several other legislative initiatives, like H-5468, that are necessary to effectively close the RIPTA budget gap and ensure there is reliable, equitable public transportation for all Rhode Islanders.

We therefore ask that you pass House Bill No. 5467.

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 Jennifer Stewart  
Representative Megan L. Cotter  
Representative Rebecca Kislak  
Representative David Morales  
Representative John J. Lombardi

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<sup>4</sup> 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](https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2024-12/ghg-inventory-2022-f_1.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-6.2-9.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*



Representative Arthur Handy  
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation