

Dear Chairman Abney and Committee members, My name is Susan Marcus. I live in Wakefield. I am writing in support of Representative Stewart's bill H5467 Motor Fuel Tax – 30% Allocation to RIPTA. I strongly urge the Senate Finance Committee to prioritize these bills and take decisive action in supporting public transit as a critical part of Rhode Island's future. Bus service is too often seen in Rhode Island as a service for the poor. However, in South County, we suffer from an underfunded public transit system that fails more than the poor. People who work in my community can't afford to live here. They need bus service to get to their jobs – jobs they do to make our community work. We depend on tourism in the summer and URI in the school year to keep us afloat. Both tourists needing to get to the beach, restaurants, hiking trails, fish stores, the Block Island ferry, Ninigret and Truston and URI students who don't want the parking services offered by the university, need better transit. Your support for Senate Bills S46 and S47 present a key opportunity to close this gap by securing a more reliable and stable funding source for RIPTA. Together, H5467 and H5468 offer a targeted solution that could help close as much as \$7 million of this deficit, while also providing a long-term mechanism to protect transit funding in the face of evolving challenges. This includes addressing the long-term decline of the gas tax revenue that will decrease further should electric vehicles become more widespread. RIPTA's current funding is closely tied to the state's gasoline tax, which allocates 9.75 cents per gallon to public transit. This allocation has not kept pace with the overall increase in the gas tax, which has risen from 32.5 cents to 38 cents per gallon, including an environmental fee. If RIPTA had maintained its previous 30% share of total gas tax revenue, it would be receiving an additional \$7 million annually—resources that would make a real difference in ensuring reliable, equitable public transit services across the state. In addition to ensuring RIPTA receives its fair share of gas tax revenue, it is essential to address the current inflation adjustment process. As it stands, the adjustment occurs every two years but only accounts for one year's worth of inflation. This insufficient adjustment fails to keep up with the rising costs of maintaining and expanding public transit. By adding an additional penny per gallon to the gas tax starting next year, we could provide RIPTA with an extra \$1.3 million annually—resources that could be reinvested in better services, expanded routes, and improved infrastructure. With H5467 and H5468, we have an opportunity to create a more sustainable, forward-thinking funding structure for RIPTA and public transit in Rhode Island. This will not only help fill the immediate funding gap, but also set the stage for a more reliable and equitable transportation system in the years to come. Sincerely, Susan Marcus, 468 Post Road, Wakefield, RI 0287