

May 21, 2025

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members  
Of the House Finance Committee:

**RE: Support for RIPTA (H.6020, H.5405, H.5467, and H.5468)**

I write to you today, both on my own behalf and as a member of AARP Rhode Island's advocacy team, in support of four bills – H.6020, H.5405, H.5467 and H. 5468 – which advance necessary allocations for RIPTA's FY2026 budget. These bills meet urgent needs to fill the large gap of \$32.6 million left unaddressed in the Governor's FY2026 Budget request, as well as to provide forms of permanent allocation from the existing ride-share tax and motor fuel taxes to RIPTA. These funding streams are strictly necessary to meet the basic ongoing operational needs that RIPTA has projected for FY2026, and without it RIPTA faces catastrophic cuts to both its services and its workforce.

Many Rhode Islanders rely on RIPTA for their transportation needs, and some are entirely reliant on RIPTA for travel. Personally, I am a firm believer in the importance of public transit, and have been a RIPTA rider for many years. I have used RIPTA to travel to work, to medical appointments, to get to and from the airport and/or rail station, and for travel to after-work meetings, social events and shopping. Especially now that I am retired, I appreciate having RIPTA as a backup when my car is acting up or whenever it is inconvenient to use it. As the co-lead of the AARP Rhode Island Livable Communities subteam, I would also point out that RIPTA supports new development that brings jobs – such as the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Johnston (RIPTA route 10X) -- as well as the much-needed affordable multi-unit housing that will be necessary to meet the state's ambitious goal of building 15,000 new homes by 2030, without making major additions to our existing traffic woes.<sup>1</sup> When I lived on the West Side of Providence, I saw first hand how well-connected and reliably consistent public transit<sup>2</sup> aided development and growth in the neighborhood by making it easy for city residents to get to local businesses and other parts of the city while simultaneously creating space for new housing by minimizing the need for large parking lots. Now I live in North Providence, where the closest bus stop is harder to get to and bus service is not only less reliable but also does not adequately connect various parts of the town to each other. Using a car is not an option but a necessity in places like North Providence.

RIPTA's services are essential to the welfare of every Rhode Islander, even if they don't use it themselves. Every day, RIPTA transports thousands of Rhode Islanders to and from work or school, decreasing street congestion during rush hours and reducing wear and tear on our roads. RIPTA also plays an important role in helping Rhode Island meet its climate goals, not only by reducing the number

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<sup>1</sup> As to Rhode Island's 2030 Housing plan, in which this goal is articulated, please see <https://www.ripbs.org/news-and-culture/community/15-000-new-homes-in-four-years-state-housing-officials-set-ambitious-target>).

<sup>2</sup> There are 5 main RIPTA routes serving the West Side near my former home: two that alternate along Westminster Street (17,19), two that alternate along Broadway (27, 28), and one along Atwells Avenue (92) that runs from Rhode Island College to Fox Point.

of cars on the road, but also by adding new and more efficient technologies to its bus fleet. As a member of the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council, on which I represent AARP Rhode Island, I can report that RIPTA, through various other services it offers, addresses the transportation needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities of every sort, helping them to live independently. RIPTA also provides good jobs – for drivers, technicians, engineers, and planners, among others. RIPTA, in short, is part of our essential state-wide transportation infrastructure; neglecting it, as has been a long-term pattern in our state, has had negative consequences just as damaging for our citizens as neglecting to repair our bridges. Last year, when RIPTA was forced to cut back service, was exceptionally painful for those who rely solely on RIPTA because they don't have access to a car.

It is AARP's position that access to functional public transit is a necessary component of any livable community, where people of all ages will be able to live comfortably and those who are aging will have choices once they begin to transition away from driving. Going forward, Rhode Island just won't be able to create or maintain vibrant communities that will attract people to live, work and establish businesses without a stable public transit system. We'll just have more intense congestion of the kind experienced daily by drivers along Mineral (a/k/a "Miserable") Spring Avenue.

Fully funding the essential transportation services that RIPTA provides is critical to the future of our state. The significant gap left in the Governor's proposed 2026 budget, if allowed to stand, will cripple RIPTA services at a time when more Rhode Islanders are losing jobs due to government cutbacks while expenses (particularly for automobiles) are escalating. Given the current environment, we can reasonably anticipate that more Rhode Islanders will need to rely on public transit in the near future.

The \$32.6 million provided by H.6020 and the additional funding that H. 5405, H.5467 and H.5468 will contribute to RIPTA's budget will not solve all of RIPTA's funding issues, but taken together they will at least help to stabilize RIPTA services at their current level. After years of inconsistent funding, that would be a very important first step. Accordingly, I support all four of these bills and I urge you to approve each of them.

Sincerely yours,

Holly Snyder  
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