

House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
May 20, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of H5467 & H5468

Dear Chairman Abney and Committee members,

My name is Veronicka Vega, I live in Woonsocket, and I am here/writing in support of Representative Stewart's bill H5467 Motor Fuel Tax – 30% Allocation to RIPTA. I relied on RIPTA's 54 line to get me to and from Johnson & Wales University before the COVID-19 pandemic. After COVID while I was taking online classes I relied on the local 87 line to get me to and from work. It wasn't perfect, but it was all I had. For many people in my community, that's the case. Rideshare services can be too expensive, especially during peak times, and having a car payment, insurance, gas, and maintenance can be even more costly.

Now that I own a vehicle, I'd love to be able to commute to Providence every day. Without proper funding that will never be a reality. There will be service cuts and delays, which happen sometimes but they'll be even more frequent.

I urge you to support this bill to help the working class residents, students, people living with disabilities, and any other resident looking for a safe and affordable transportation option.

Support for Senate Bills S46 and S47, which are critical to the sustainability and future growth of public transit in Rhode Island. These bills 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, which is expected to decrease as 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. However, 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 both bills, 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. 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.

I urge you to support H5467 & H5468, to give RIPTA a fair share of the Motor Fuel Tax and support the riders who rely on the service.

Sincerely,

Veronicka Vega  
85 W Park Pl, Woonsocket