

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is William Masse from Warwick RI, and I am writing to express my strong support for Representative Tanzi's House Bill 5468, which seeks to adjust the motor fuel tax inflation rate calculation to a more accurate two-year measure. While seemingly a technical adjustment, this change combined with H5467, a 30% allocation of Motor Fuel Tax, is a vital component in ensuring the long-term financial health and stability of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), a service I rely on daily.

As a resident of Warwick who commutes to Providence for work via RIPTA, I experience firsthand the importance of a reliable and well-maintained public transit system. It provides me with an affordable and environmentally responsible way to navigate our state, and it is a crucial lifeline for countless other Rhode Islanders who depend on it for access to jobs, education, healthcare, and essential services.

The current method of adjusting the motor fuel tax for inflation every two years but only accounting for a single year's worth of rising costs is simply inadequate. In today's economic climate, the costs of maintaining and operating a public transit system are constantly increasing. Failing to accurately account for inflation erodes RIPTA's purchasing power over time, making it more challenging to maintain existing services, let alone invest in much-needed expansions and improvements. This ultimately puts the burden on riders through potential fare increases or, even worse, leads to service cuts that disproportionately affect those who rely on RIPTA the most.

Consider the impact of inadequate inflation adjustments on my daily commute and the commutes of others. Rising fuel costs, increased maintenance expenses, and higher costs for new buses all contribute to the financial pressures facing RIPTA. When these rising costs are not fully accounted for in the state's funding mechanisms, the result is a slow but steady decline in the quality and extent of public transit services. This not only inconveniences riders but also undermines the environmental and economic benefits that a robust public transit system provides to the entire state.

House Bill 5468 offers a practical solution by aligning the inflation adjustment with a more realistic two-year measure. While the immediate impact of this change might seem modest, it represents a crucial step towards ensuring that RIPTA's funding keeps pace with the real-world costs of operation. This, in turn, will contribute to a more stable and predictable financial future for the agency, allowing it to continue providing the essential services that so many of us depend on.

When coupled with other crucial measures like the reallocation of a fair share of the motor fuel tax (as proposed in H5467), a more accurate inflation adjustment will provide RIPTA with the sustainable funding base it needs to thrive. This will allow for investments in infrastructure, technology upgrades, and service expansions that will benefit all Rhode Islanders.

Therefore, I urge you to support House Bill 5468. By adopting a more accurate two-year inflation rate for the motor fuel tax allocation to RIPTA, you will be taking a necessary step towards safeguarding the future of public transit in our state and ensuring that it remains a reliable and affordable option for all who need it.

Sincerely,

William Masse

Warwick, RI

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