



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

May 22, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Abney and honorable members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of two bills in the Save RIPTA Coalition's 2025 legislative package – House Bills 5468 and 5470. These bills propose essential changes to establish both short- and long-term funding for the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) through new revenue streams.

- **House Bill 5468** adjusts the state's gas tax calculation to account for inflation over a two-year period, rather than just one year. This change will increase the total amount of gas tax collected, providing a more sustainable source of funding.
- **House Bill 5470** proposes a \$100 million bond for Capital Improvements to implement the Transit Master Plan, which would go before voters in 2026. Capital investments would include infrastructure for high-capacity transit lines, improved and safer bus stops, updated technology, and more.

The Save RIPTA Coalition—a group of community organizations, transit riders, and bus drivers—has introduced these bills to address RIPTA's funding challenges. Unless the current deficit is addressed through creative and sustainable solutions, many Rhode Islanders, especially Providence residents, will lose access to the public transportation services they rely on daily. This includes Providence public school students and low-income residents who have no alternative means of transportation. Cuts to RIPTA services would severely impact their ability to reach jobs, schools, grocery stores, healthcare appointments, and other essential destinations.

A well-funded and reliable public transit system is vital to ensuring that all residents can fully participate in their communities. Additionally, access to public transportation is one of the most effective tools for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These bills not only address RIPTA's immediate budget shortfall, but they also establish a framework for long-term investment in a clean, efficient, and equitable transit system for Rhode Island.

I commend the bill sponsors for their commitment to supporting RIPTA and the people of Rhode Island. I respectfully urge this Committee to vote in favor of these critical pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

Brett P. Smiley
Brett P. Smiley
Mayor