



Climate Jobs Rhode Island  
1540 Pontiac Ave Suite A,  
Cranston, RI 02920

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
House Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: Save RIPTA Legislative Package**

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. I am submitting these comments on behalf of Climate Jobs Rhode Island, and I write in strong support of the Save RIPTA Legislative Package: **H6020, H5405, H5304, H5470, H5467, and H5468.**

Climate Jobs Rhode Island (CJRI) is a coalition of more than thirty (30) environmental, labor and community organizations committed to working together to make Rhode Island a national leader in the development of a resilient 21st century economy through a Just Transition, one that centers our frontline communities and frontline workers. Our members range from those who represent the workers who build, repair, and maintain Rhode Island's critical infrastructure and energy systems like the RI Building and Construction Trades Council, to environmental and community organizations like The Nature Conservancy, United Way of RI, and the Childhood Lead Action Project, to name a few.

Tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders depend on RIPTA everyday, whether it's high school and college students trying to get to class, workers trying to get to the office or job site, or families trying to get to doctor appointments or the grocery store. RIPTA is a lifeline for so many Rhode Islanders, yet years of inadequate funding are affecting its ability to provide these essential services.

Left unaddressed, the cuts to service and economic impacts would be catastrophic. Not only would hundreds of good paying union jobs be lost, but countless working class people who rely on RIPTA would be forced to use more expensive alternative means of transportation, or even lose their jobs due to inability to access these essential services entirely. Without necessary funding to address RIPTA's \$32.6M budget shortfall in 2026, the essential services it provides- such as access to employment, healthcare, and education- will be at risk.

This funding shortfall will likely lead to service cuts, fare hikes, and reduced operational hours, disproportionately affecting our low-income, and environmental justice communities, those already overburdened and underserved. Ensuring that RIPTA's deficit is addressed is not just a matter of supporting the agency, but supporting the people of Rhode Island and their ability to thrive.

House Bill 6020 allocates \$32.6 million to address RIPTA's looming budget deficit. This crisis did not happen overnight, but it is the result of years of underfunding and undervaluing public transit. Public transportation is an essential service, not a luxury. It connects our communities, supports working families, reduces climate pollution, and fosters equitable economic growth. Failing to fund RIPTA now would not only harm those who depend on it most, but it would also set back Rhode Island's climate and workforce goals. If we can find the resources to maintain our highways, we must do the same for our bus system.

House Bill 5405 would reallocate the state's sales tax collected on rideshare services like Uber and Lyft to help fund RIPTA. This is a smart, sustainable funding mechanism that would directly support our public transit system by redirecting revenues from services that often undermine it. Rideshare companies contribute to traffic congestion, increased emissions, and the erosion of transit ridership, particularly in urban areas. Redirecting this existing tax revenue to RIPTA is not only fair, but necessary. This bill provides a stable, independent funding stream that is not tied to declining gas tax revenue or unpredictable federal funding.

House Bill 5304 would require large employers, those with 500 or more employees, to provide bus passes as a pre-tax transportation fringe benefit. This simple measure would support RIPTA's Wave to Work program, helping to generate new revenue while encouraging more people to choose public transit for their daily commute.

House Bill 5470 would place a \$100 million bond on the ballot to invest in critical improvements to Rhode Island's public transit infrastructure. The funds would go directly towards improving bus stops and shelters, building safe and ADA-compliant access like sidewalks and curb ramps, and creating high-quality mobility hubs with essentials like indoor waiting areas, bathrooms, and secure bike parking. These improvements, again, are not luxuries, but a foundational aspect of a functional public transit system. A strong, modern transit system depends not only on the buses themselves, but on the infrastructure that supports riders before they even step on board. Having a clean, safe spot to wait will draw in new riders- something that is crucial to reducing emissions in our transportation sector.

House Bill 5467 and 5468 offer a targeted solution that would help close as much as \$7 million of RIPTA's budget deficit, while also providing a long-term mechanism as Rhode Island transitions to cleaner vehicles and new transportation needs. RIPTA's funding is currently tied to

a fixed portion of the gas tax, 9.75 cents per gallon; 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 allocation of 30% share of total gas tax revenue, it would be receiving an additional \$7 million annually; resources that would make a true difference in ensuring reliable, equitable public transit services across the state. In addition to ensuring RIPTA receives a fair share of gas tax revenue, it's essential to address the current inflation adjustment process. Currently, 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 another penny per gallon to the gas tax starting next year, RIPTA would be provided with an extra \$1.3 million annually, resources that can be reinvested in better services, expanded routes, and improved infrastructure. Together, these bills are not only a matter of fairness, but of fiscal responsibility and climate resilience. Public transit should not be left behind as the state's transportation infrastructure and tax base evolve.

Together, this package of bills represents a long overdue investment in Rhode Island's public transit system, one that meets the moment by advancing our climate goals, promoting environmental justice, and supporting the tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders who depend on RIPTA every day. A strong, more reliable transit system not only reduces emissions and traffic congestion, but also ensures that all communities, especially those historically underserved, have equitable access to opportunity, mobility, and economic stability. Moreover, RIPTA provides family-sustaining union jobs for the workers who operate, service, and maintain our buses, supporting both our workforce and our clean energy future. Proposed cuts to RIPTA threaten not only transit access, but also the stability of these careers and the communities they support.

CJRI, along with many of our coalition members, are in strong support of the Save RIPTA legislative package because to ensure a safe, efficient, and reliable public transportation system for all Rhode Islanders, RIPTA must be properly funded. We urge you to support this package of bills, as they are good for climate, justice, and jobs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Aislinn Hanley  
Program Director, Climate Jobs Rhode Island