



Christopher Durand
Chief Executive Officer
401-784-9500
cdurand@RIPTA.com

May 22, 2025

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

RE: House Resolution No. 6020

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

I write to you today in support of House Resolution No. 6020, as well as to provide an update on the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority's (RIPTA) budget.

Last year, RIPTA provided over 13 million rides to your constituents. They were able to get to work and school, buy groceries and get to appointments. The elderly and disabled members of your communities are able to live full lives because of their access to RIPTA.

In FY2025 our budget allocation was \$153.4 million. In the proposed FY2026 budget, RIPTA's allocation was \$126.6 million, which is \$32.6 million short of our operational needs.

To assist the legislature with their budget deliberations, an efficiency study is underway. WSP, the vendor, is evaluating current operations compared to national trends and best practices, identifying solutions to support operational and network efficiencies, and recommending ways to enhance internal operations and customer experience. Attached are the first two work products. We expect the next deliverable this month.

WSP will also be helpful in potentially identifying ways in which we can maximize federal reimbursements even further. For example, we are federally mandated to provide paratransit services, which came at a cost of \$19,317,255 in FY2024 and to which we only received \$2,155,803 in federal reimbursement. Paratransit accounts for 1/3 of our deficit.

While RIPTA will continue to realize savings and align service to work opportunities, it has been an ongoing challenge that our portion of the gas tax has been unchanged since 2010. Structurally, public transit needs a revenue stream that keeps up with the cost of transportation and doing business in 2025 and beyond.

Page 2
May 22, 2025

RIPTA plays a role in the state's economy and can play an even larger role moving forward. I am committed to aligning our service with the workforce needs of the state. In fact, we have already started.

We worked with Amazon to alter our route to provide service to their new Johnston warehouse facility during their shift changes. In exchange, they have committed to purchase \$90,000 in fare products annually for the next decade. Beginning in June, we are realigning the Quonset Express to go direct from Woonsocket to Quonset to connect Rhode Islanders with good paying jobs at Electric Boat. And we are having discussions with Quonset Business Park and their tenants to make additional improvements to service. Transportation shouldn't be a barrier to a good paying job.

At a time where costs are putting enormous pressure on Rhode Islanders, I am concerned that cutting transportation will have a ripple effect. Without affordable transportation, your constituents will struggle even more to pay rent, their mortgage, groceries and medications. Rhode Islanders cutting back on their spending, losing their jobs and facing housing insecurity will be challenging for the state to absorb. Public transportation is not only an equity issue, but an economic one as well.

I thank you for your consideration and continued support. I truly hope we can work together to find a long-term solution so we can continue improving our service for all Rhode Islanders.

Respectfully yours,



Christopher Durand, CEO
Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Enclosures

cc: RIPTA Board of Directors