

Via Electronic Mail

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
Room 35, State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF **Supports** House Resolution No. 6020 – Making an Appropriation of \$32.6 million to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Dear Chair Abney:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Resolution No. 6020, a resolution for the appropriation of \$32.6 million to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (“RIPTA”). CLF supports this resolution as a necessary way of ensuring RIPTA continues to be an effective and equitable essential service in our state.

CLF is a member-supported non-profit advocacy organization working to protect public health and the environment and build healthy communities in Rhode Island and throughout New England. CLF supports policies that increase public transportation services and ridership and help to achieve the greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandates of the Act on Climate.

After reviewing the initial budget proposal for FY 2026, CLF was disappointed to see that critical funding for RIPTA was not included. RIPTA needs, at a minimum, \$32,594,799 to fill this shortfall in its 2025-2026 fiscal budget. This funding is necessary to prevent the agency from going over a fiscal cliff and to support the maintenance of existing bus services. H-6020 will close that gap to ensure that RIPTA works for all Rhode Islanders.

According to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management’s published Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, Rhode Island’s transportation sector accounts for 37% of the state’s greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore critical that we work diligently to reduce transportation emissions and meet the requirements of the Act on Climate, which mandates that Rhode Island achieve greenhouse gas emissions of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, 80% by 2040, and net-zero emissions by 2050.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R.I. Dep’t of Env’tl. Mgmt., *2022 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory* (2024), available at [https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2024-12/ghg-inventory-2022-f\\_1.pdf](https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2024-12/ghg-inventory-2022-f_1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-6.2-9.

These targets can only be achieved by substantially reducing the number of personal carbon-producing vehicles on Rhode Island's roads. One of the best tools in Rhode Island's toolbox to meet this target is to substantially increase RIPTA ridership by providing transportation alternatives that are accessible to all Rhode Islanders. RIPTA is already relied on by low-income communities, people with disabilities, the elderly, and students, making bus lines lifelines for Rhode Islanders without cars. Thriving public transit is also a key element of economic development, enticing investment, development, and jobs.

If RIPTA is not adequately funded, routes could be cut, drivers could lose their jobs, or fares could be hiked. I'm one of the tens of thousands of people that ride RIPTA and know that it is essential for Rhode Islanders to survive and thrive. It is critical that the General Assembly address the catastrophic cuts to RIPTA's budget and properly serve the public by ensuring that our public transit system is convenient, equitable, and connected.

We therefore ask that you support H-6020.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Erin Ritter  
Program Coordinator, Rhode Island  
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the House Committee on Finance  
Representative Rebecca Kislak  
Representative Jennifer Stewart  
Representative David Morales  
Representative Susan R. Donovan  
Representative Kathleen A. Fogarty  
Representative José F. Batista  
Representative Lauren Carson  
Representative June Speakman  
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation