

Dear Chairman Abney and Committee members,

My name Jamie Pahigian, I live in Providence and I am writing in support of Rep. Alzate's bill H6020. The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority(RIPTA) is facing a deficit of \$32.6 million dollars, this deficit is caused from years of underfunding and undervaluing our vital transit system that Rhode Islanders need.

I realize that in a tight fiscal year, \$32.6 million dollars seems like a lot, and it is an objectively large sum. But I want to make the case that relative to overall transportation spending in the state, funding RIPTA is a bargain. When you consider that RIDOT has an annual operating budget edging in the direction of a billion dollars, and individual municipalities additionally spend substantial percentages of their annual budgets on maintaining roads, the additional funds RIPTA needs to prevent massive service cuts represent a miniscule percentage of overall transportation spending in the state.

Failing to fund RIPTA at a level that will preserve current service will not only reduce access to transportation options for many Rhode Islanders, but will also force many current transit riders with the financial means to move toward cars to meet their transportation needs. Additional vehicle traffic will increase road maintenance costs and increase traffic, accelerating the need to upgrade roadways for higher capacity. In the years ahead, this will carry a cost that exceeds the proposed budget allocation currently under consideration.

I urge you to support H6020, to give public transit and the riders who rely on RIPTA a fighting chance. Reducing the size and capacity of our public transportation infrastructure will carry a high cost to all Rhode Islanders – not just transit riders.

Sincerely,

Jamie Pahigian  
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