

# SAVE RIPTA

May 21st, 2025  
House Committee on Finance  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903  
RE: Support H6020

Dear Chair Abney and Committee Members,

The Save RIPTA Coalition would like to extend its support of Representative Alzate's bill H6020, this would authorize the appropriation of the sum of \$32,594,799 to the RI Public Transit Authority to continue services, hire and train more bus operators, and implement the State's Act on Climate goals. This amount is what was left unfunded in the Governor's FY '25 proposed budget.

The Save RIPTA Coalition is a broad coalition of community organizations, labor unions, legislative champions and everyday Rhode Islanders who call upon our state to save and expand the capacity of RIPTA to get Rhode Islanders where they need to go with affordable, convenient, environmentally responsible and reliable public transit.

RIPTA's most immediate need is a fix for this year's \$32.6 million operational deficit to preserve the service we currently have. RIPTA has made so much recent progress, and is being helmed by such a promising new captain—we cannot allow our transit system to fall apart and let all the shiny capital investments go to waste.

We know Rhode Island is facing huge fiscal challenges this year, but funding public transit operations is central to our economic progress and achieving our climate goals. The operations budget, crucial to maintaining the existing service for those who rely on it, may not be as exciting or ribbon-cutting-worthy as new capital projects, **but it is literally what keeps the buses running.**

A convenient, frequent, and robust transit system is now *essential infrastructure* for any vibrant metro region. You'd be hard-pressed to name a healthy, strong city that doesn't have a quality public transit system attracting and retaining the talent that leading companies are seeking. Recently, in speaking about Hasbro's potential move out of state, its CEO said it would be "[prioritizing convenience to public transit](#)" in seeking a new location.

To attract new companies as well as residents, we must invest in the *convenience* and *reliability* of our transit system—as well as facilities. Ridership is a function of frequency, which is a function of staffing. Right now, 88% of RIPTA's bus lines run only every 30 minutes or more,

making most trips exponentially longer than the time it takes to drive. Only the R-line is frequent enough not to require looking at a schedule—you just walk to the bus stop and know one will come soon. We need ten more R-Lines, reaching every corner of the state.

In Rhode Island, RIPTA provided over 13 million rides last year! A 2024 survey showed just how important RIPTA services are:

- 63% of riders use RIPTA at least five days a week.
- 39% of trips help people get to and from work.
- 32% of riders are students.
- One-third of RIPTA riders have depended on the service for at least ten years.

We urge the General Assembly to increase the Governor's inadequate budget proposal to fully fund and find an **increased, stable funding solution for RIPTA** that does not rely on the federal government or declining gas tax revenue.

A reliable public transportation system are lifelines – for our youth, for our seniors, for our disabled, for our low income, for our new arrivals, and for those who would rather take a ride than contribute to our chronic traffic, parking, and pollution issues. Rhode Island has the foundation of a wonderful statewide bus system, but it has **suffered from disinvestment and neglect for many years.**

Tonight, we are making clear that the budget proposed by the Governor is inadequate and will devastate public transit if the deficit is left unaddressed. That's why we are calling on you to support Representative Alzate's bill H6020. Please save RIPTA. Please fund transit. Please help us get where we need to go.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicole O'Loughlin and members of the Save RIPTA Coalition

