

05.21.2025

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

TO
RI House Finance
Committee RM 35

FROM
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II
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DEAR CHAIR ABNEY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS,

Kinfolk Benefit Trust and all the organizations we steward, for that matter, firmly believe that family must hold you accountable when you are wrong; and stick up for you when you are right. As members of the KP Coalition we don't always see eye to eye with coalition tactics. Be that as it may, we write to you in strong support of HJR-6020 and we urge Chair Abney to call for a vote to pass Rep. Alzate's joint resolution out of committee, funding the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), to ensure that our public transit system remains a reliable resource for all of it's 1.1 million residents.

Without adequate funding, essential mobility for low-income families, communities of color, seniors, students, and disabled individuals is at serious risk. RIPTA faces a \$32.6 million budget deficit, and without intervention, the consequences will be severe—route closures, reduced service frequency, fare increases, and job losses. These disruptions will also harm businesses that rely on workers who depend on public transit to get to their jobs. Nearly one out of every ten Rhode Island households does not own a car, making public transit a necessity rather than a convenience.

This funding must come with conditions that prioritize smart infrastructure improvements. A key area of concern we've identified are bus routes—new routes must be developed to ease congestion and reduce strain on city and town roads. For example, expanding the Downcity Loop routes to include the mall, state house, train station, and jewellery district would alleviate congestion on critical infrastructure, such as the Martin Luther King Bridge, and improve traffic flow across urban centers; reducing traffic across the bridge from 4 routes to 1. Heavy-duty trucks and buses account for 21% of the state's emissions, and while early adopters have embraced electric vehicle options, we must accelerate transit modernization. A failure to invest in RIPTA may inadvertently disrupt Rhode Island's Climate Action Plan and increase carbon emissions; as fewer buses mean more cars on the road for longer periods, increasing carbon emissions and enabling adverse public health outcomes.

Again, we urge the House Finance Committee to pass HJR-6020 and provide urgent support with conditions that strengthen our transit system, not just sustain it. This is a critical investment in environmental justice and community well-being.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

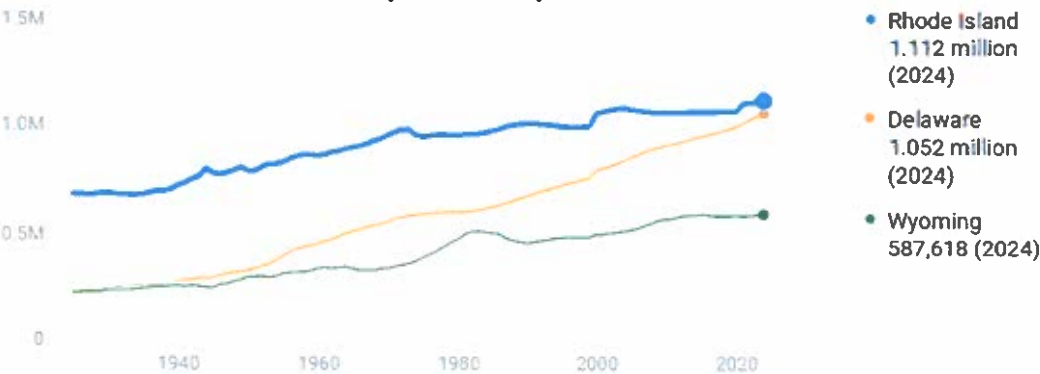
Vernon R. Martin II
Strengths: Achiever | Strategic | Relator | Analytical | Restorative

KINFOLK BENEFIT TRUST



Rhode Island / Population

1.112 million (2024)



Transportation Emissions in RI (2022)

Transportation makes up **37%** of RI's emissions

80% of passenger cars are carrying only one person per ride

