



Memo To: House Finance Committee

From: Angela Lima, Policy and Advocacy Program Director, Women's Fund of Rhode Island

Date: May 21, 2025

Concerns: **SUPPORT FOR H-6090**

**We at the Women's Fund of Rhode Island stand in support of H-6090 to fund 32.5 million dollars for operating costs to RIPTA . Rhode Island Public Transit passes as a crucial way to improve congestion, reduce emissions, and increase Rhode Island's competitiveness as a business-friendly destination.**

Women make up 51% of the population in the state of Rhode Island and economic insecurity is at the root cause of many problems women and girls face in Rhode Island. Transportation is crucial for women because it directly impacts their access to education, employment, healthcare, and social opportunities, which are often limited by concerns about safety and accessibility on public transit, particularly when considering factors like frequent short trips for childcare or errands; essentially, safe and reliable transportation empowers women to participate fully in society and the economy.

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island would like to thank our legislative leadership in the house for providing critical funding during last year's budgetary investments to keep RIPTA's bus lines and employment thriving. This was a great first step in preserving our critical transportation sector but more innovation is needed.

Without the necessary funds to address RIPTA's \$32.6M budget shortfall in 2026, the essential services it provides—such as access to employment, healthcare, and education—will be at risk. This funding shortfall could lead to service cuts, fare hikes, or reduced operational hours, disproportionately affecting low-income communities and individuals who rely on public transit to live their daily lives. Ensuring that RIPTA's deficit is addressed is not just a matter of supporting an agency—it is a matter of supporting the people of Rhode Island and their ability to thrive.

The Women's Fund would also like to also highlight the many groups that have been impacted including small businesses and the hospitality industry that continues to be impacted by the 195 bridge. During a small business committee meeting held on 4/3/2024 these industries highlighted the many challenges that had impacted their businesses. These impacts stemmed from 3.2 million dollars in revenue losses, \$600,000 loss in workers tips, a reduction in workers schedule, a reduction in customer reservation, event bookings, and the logistics of delivering products. While small businesses have been doing their part in pivoting business practices to adapt with traffic on the 195 bridge there was also a specific ask in how businesses and legislation could come together for real time solutions.

**We urge you to support the allocation of the proposed 32.6 million dollars of necessary funding for operational costs.** As a member of the SAVE RIPTA coalition, we are helping to

aid solutions that would result in the sustainability of our public transit systems, helping women, our businesses, carbon reduction, and less congestion related to the traffic.

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The mission of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is to invest in women and girls through advocacy, research, and strategic partnership designed to achieve gender equity through systemic change. Our [Women's Well-Being Index](#) compares how well women fare against men on topics related to health, safety, economic security, education and civic participation in every RI city/town. Our [policy briefs](#) are written in response to the data found on the Index. You can find more about our work at [www.wfri.org](http://www.wfri.org).