



February 4, 2026

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

**RE: 2026- - An Act Making Appropriations for the Support of the State for Fiscal Year  
Ending June 30, 2027 – Article 2 and Article 5 Sections 3, 4, and 8**

Dear Chair Abney:

I am writing to express my strong support for provisions contained in Governor McKee's Budget Articles 2 and 5 which, if passed, would provide critical funding to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA or "the Authority") allowing us to close our budget gap for FY 2027.

The investments contained in Governor McKee's proposed budget affirm the progress we have made over the past year to stabilize our finances, operate more efficiently, and better align service with the needs of riders and employers across the state. Through more than \$30 million in cost-savings measures, increased federal reimbursements, and new revenue sources, RIPTA has taken meaningful steps to strengthen its long-term sustainability while continuing to serve the people who rely on transit every day.

With a projected deficit for FY 2027 of \$13.8M, the Governor's proposal makes several changes to not only close this budget gap, but to set the Authority up for predictable and stable long-term funding. Article 2 increases RIPTA's share of the Highway Maintenance Account from a \$5M allocation to \$14.3M, an increase of 9.3M. This allocation is in addition to receipt of 10% of proceeds.

Article 5 Sections 3, 4, and 8, adjust the landing fee of \$10 and a boarding fee of \$10 from every passenger on every cruise vessel to \$15 per landing and \$15 per boarding. The additional \$5 fee assessed will be allocated to RIPTA in support of its transit operations in Newport and Aquidneck Island. The projected revenue from this proposed change is approximately \$1M per year.

RIPTA operates a facility on Aquidneck Island staffed with approximately 60 employees, including 46 vehicle operators. From this garage, 37 fixed route transit buses are maintained and dispatched, with annual operating costs of more than \$6 million. These resources support service on the island and across the state, including connections to CCRI, URI's Kingston and Bay Campuses, Downtown Providence, and Fall River via the 24L.

Service on the island is diverse and economically vital to the state with connections to employers such as the Navy Underwater Warfare Center, Raytheon, WaterRower, and the region's robust hospitality industry based in historic Newport. With the opening of a new mobility hub at the base



of the Pell Bridge and a growing number of cruise ships anchoring in Newport, RIPTA is seeing a significant increase in ridership. Increasing the cruise vessel landing fee will help ensure the ongoing provision of transit service in the region and especially in Newport.

We thank the Governor and the General Assembly for their continued investment in public transit and its recognition of the essential role RIPTA plays in supporting Rhode Island's workforce, students, seniors, and patients accessing medical care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Durand", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Christopher Durand  
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee  
Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor