

Dear Chair Cortvriend and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation and the Environment,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on another part of H 7127. I am an energy policy analyst, a campaign co-lead in Climate Action Rhode Island, and a father who lives in Providence.

As expressed in previous committee hearings, I strongly oppose other parts of the governor's budget bill (H 7127). However, I would like to register my support on the portion that funds RIPTA at \$13.8 million this year. This support comes with a caveat that this \$13.8 million is not nearly enough and that we will need other sources of funding.

You have doubtless heard many reasons why you should support funding for RIPTA. These include that many in our state, including youth, the elderly, the disabled, and those who cannot drive for other reasons rely on RIPTA to meet basic needs. Buses reduce congestion on our roadways. They lower transportation costs for those riding them. Bus riders are less likely to get killed or maimed than automobile drivers.

This includes youth 15-24 for whom vehicular accidents were the leading cause of death in the most recent year for which the Centers for Disease Control has published data (2023). This is particularly notable for me, as my son is 15 and car-centric planning and budgeting decisions put him and other youth at risk of physical harm.

RIPTA: Critical to Reducing Emissions, Meeting Climate Targets

I have another reason to more fully fund RIPTA: a robust, well-funded, effective mass transit system is necessary to reduce emissions and meet our legally binding Act on Climate targets.

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Rhode Island, at [37% of all emissions](#). It's a larger source of emissions than all building energy use and roughly double the emissions from our electricity sector.

There are two main strategies to reduce emissions in the transportation sector: electrify transportation with EVs and reduce vehicle miles travelled, including by mode shift to a mix of mass transit, bikes, and walking.

The former (EV deployment) is going very slowly. While EV sales have been growing rapidly year-over-year, the large stock of existing internal combustion engine vehicles on the road will inherently be slow to replace.

According to the RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Committee, in 2024 EVs were only [1.47% of total vehicles on the road in our state](#). And now that Congress Republicans and Trump have removed federal EV tax incentives and the state has imposed a new,

discriminatory fee on EV owners, you can expect that the rate of growth for EV deployment will slow.

That means that we are dependent on mode shift to reduce emissions. RIPTA is the largest source of non-car transportation available for most Rhode Islanders to meet daily needs, with 38,700 daily riders.

Conclusion: Fully Fund RIPTA

Last year's budget cuts to RIPTA have reduced ridership and affected the quality of service, and this will inevitably increase the transportation-related emissions in our state versus what they would otherwise have been.

We need a fully funded RIPTA to have a healthier, safer, more equitable state. But we also need to fully fund RIPTA to have a shot at reaching our legally binding Act on Climate targets, including the 2030 and 2040 targets. Anything less is to abandon our duty to our children and to future generations.

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