



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In support of House Bill 7127 – Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
House Finance Committee
March 10, 2026

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of AARP Rhode Island and our 125,000+ members in Rhode Island, I am pleased to express support for the funding of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority in House Bill 7127.

Public transportation provides critical mobility for many people, including older adults. Older adults use mass transit—urban rail and buses—and taxis and paratransit services to meet their daily needs. Public transportation between cities—passenger rail and bus services—help older adults avoid driving long distances and connect them with family, friends, and the benefits of travel.

In cities, public transportation can be a safe and affordable transportation solution. For those who drive, public transportation can become an important resource as older adults start to avoid driving at night or driving in busy, unfamiliar places. For those who do not drive, public transportation can allow older adults to maintain independence, minimizing the need to depend on family and friends for rides. Among older adults living at home, although 92% maintain driver's licenses, driving declines with age. For those aged 75 and over, nearly 20% of all adults and 25% of women do not drive at all. Older adults typically outlive their ability to drive by 7-10 years.

Many transit agencies are facing a “fiscal cliff” due to expiring Federal recovery funds that had compensated for the lost fare revenue during the pandemic, and transit agencies are scrambling for new revenue amidst cost increases caused by labor shortages and inflation. Funding from state, regional, and local government sources are critical to adequately funding transit. A lack of dedicated funding for transit by many communities makes it hard for agencies to plan for expansion, maintenance, and service innovations.

According to the American Public Transportation Association, for every dollar invested in transit operations returns \$5 to our local economy. Furthermore, transit agencies and organizations employ many people and create many times more private-sector jobs. For every \$1 billion in investments in the sector, 50,000 jobs are created and supported.

AARP Rhode Island supports fully funding RIPTA and identifying a steady revenue stream to support these essential services. We respectfully ask for you to keep RIPTA funding in the FY27 budget and continue to work to identify funding solutions for increased public transit in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Netto".

Matt Netto
Associate State Director - Advocacy, AARP Rhode Island