



March 10, 2026

Chairman Abney and Esteemed Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of Progreso Latino, we respectfully urge the General Assembly to fully fund RIPTA and support additional investments necessary to stabilize public transit service across Rhode Island.

Much of the conversation around public transit focuses on transportation. From the vantage point of the communities we serve in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence, we see something slightly different: public transit is workforce infrastructure.

Progreso Latino works every day with immigrant and working-class families through adult education, workforce development, youth programming, and domestic violence services. A significant share of the residents we serve rely on RIPTA as their primary way to reach employment, English classes, childcare, healthcare appointments, and court proceedings.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly one quarter of households in Central Falls do not have access to a vehicle, one of the highest rates in Rhode Island. In practical terms, this means that the reliability of bus routes connecting Central Falls and Pawtucket to employment centers in Providence determines whether thousands of residents can participate consistently in the state's workforce.

Many of these residents are employed in sectors Rhode Island depends on healthcare support, food service, hospitality, manufacturing, and cleaning services. These jobs often involve early morning, overnight, or rotating shifts, where a missed connection or delayed bus can mean arriving late or missing work entirely.

When transit works, workers show up. When transit becomes less reliable, the effects ripple quickly through households and workplaces alike.

At Progreso Latino, we have seen adult education students struggle to continue attending English classes after long workdays because bus schedules have become more difficult to navigate. We have seen workers take on significantly longer commutes because a route change added transfers and waiting time. We have also seen survivors of domestic violence face greater challenges reaching counseling services or court appointments when transportation becomes unpredictable.

These are not isolated stories. They reflect structural realities in communities where public transit is often the only transportation option available.

RIPTA currently carries tens of thousands of passenger trips on an average weekday, and rider surveys consistently show that a majority of riders are low-income workers and people of color. When service reductions occur, the burden is therefore not evenly distributed; it falls

disproportionately on those who already face the greatest barriers to economic mobility. This is why stable and adequate funding for RIPTA is essential.

Progreso Latino strongly supports fully funding RIPTA, including the \$13.8 million proposed in the Governor's FY2027 budget to close the agency's current deficit. Without this investment, Rhode Island risks further service reductions that would make it harder for thousands of residents to reach their jobs and support their families.

We also support Representative Alzate's proposal to increase funding by an additional \$5 million to restore service levels to those that existed in September 2025. Restoring these service levels would help ensure that workers can reliably access employment and essential services across the state.

Investments in public transit are also investments in economic growth. According to the American Public Transportation Association, every \$1 billion invested in public transit generates approximately \$5 billion in long-term economic value and \$3.1 billion in wages.

From the perspective of the communities we serve, however, the most important impact is simpler: reliable transportation allows people to work, learn, and build stable lives.

Public transit may be discussed primarily as a transportation policy, but for many Rhode Islanders it is the infrastructure that makes participation in the economy possible.

For these reasons, Progreso Latino respectfully urges the Committee to fully fund RIPTA and support investments that ensure Rhode Island maintains a reliable and equitable public transit system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Stevent Cleto Garcia  
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## References

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