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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say **UNION YES.**

April 14, 2026

Chairman Marvin L. Abney
House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of HB8145, HB8202, HB8369, and HB8317 - Rhode Island Public Transit Authority Funding

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, representing more than 80,000 union members and their families across the state, I write in support of House Bills 8145, 8202, 8369, and 8317 to increase funding to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA).

Access to reliable public transportation is a necessity for Rhode Island's workforce and its economy. Every day, thousands of Rhode Islanders rely on RIPTA to get to work, school, appointments, and local businesses throughout their community. For many workers, particularly those in the service, healthcare, and hospitality industry, relying on public transit is not optional, it is the only reliable way to commute to work.

Public transit is also essential to Rhode Island's local economy. Riders rely on RIPTA to travel to stores, restaurants, and other businesses, helping drive consumer activity in communities across the state. Years of inadequate funding have undermined the system's ability to reliably provide these essential services and reductions in service have made it harder for workers to reach job sites, and for businesses to attract new employees and customers.

Just as importantly, RIPTA provides stable, family-sustaining jobs for the hardworking transit operators, mechanics, and additional staff who keep the system running safely and efficiently. These workers provide an essential public service and deserve a transit system that is adequately funded and supported. Stable wages and benefits are critical to retaining RIPTA's existing workforce and attracting its workforce of the future.

The Save RIPTA Coalition, which the Rhode Island AFL-CIO is a member of, has presented several legislative proposals that would generate sustainable funding for RIPTA. Below are a four bills in particular, that we'd like to express our support for:

- **House Bill No. 8145** introduced by Representative Stewart, establishes a restricted receipts account for RIPTA from existing sales tax collected from ride-share companies.
- **House Bill No. 8202** introduced by Representative Tanzi, proposes a \$100M capital development bond for the implementation of the 2026 Transit Master Plan.
- **House Bill No. 8369** introduced by Representative Furtado, increases the vehicle inspection fee and allocates additional funding to the inspection station owner, the RI highway maintenance account, and RIPTA.
- **House Bill No. 8317** introduced by Representative Alzate, allocates five million dollars (\$5,000,000) to RIPTA to restore the service cuts from Fall 2025.

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In 2025, RIPTA faced the largest service reduction in the agency's history and as a result, service has been impacted across the state, especially on weekends and evenings. The Save RIPTA coalition released the [2025 Service Cuts Impact Report](#) in January, citing a decline in ridership following a reduction in service on 45 of 63 routes. A 15% decrease in service equates to over 4,000 fewer daily riders, and a total loss of 113,684 annual hours of service. Ironically, it now costs 29% more to deliver each hour of bus service as compared to before the 2025 budget reductions.

Additionally, riders are waiting longer for buses. They are being forced to find alternative, more costly modes of transportation, and many have no choice but to travel further distances and take different routes. Transit workers are also feeling the impact. Drivers are hearing the frustrations directly from riders, and they are experiencing first-hand the difficulty of decreased runs and shorter recovery times. Constrained schedules and limited rest time pose dangerous risks to the well-being of drivers and the safety of all RIPTA passengers and the surrounding community.

For many Rhode Islanders, public transportation is not simply a convenience, it's a critical piece of our workforce and economic infrastructure. By increasing funding to RIPTA you can ensure the system thrives for both riders and the dedicated transit workers and the proud members of Local 618 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and Local 808 of the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA).

For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO urges the committee to support these bills and fund RIPTA.

Respectfully submitted,



Erica A. Hammond
Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO