

Chris O'Brien

From: will masse <willmasse@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 9:02 AM
To: House Finance Committee
Cc: Sen. LaMountain, Matthew L.; Rep. McNamara, Joseph M.
Subject: SUPPORT (H8145) - Rideshare Sales Tax Reallocation to RIPTA's Paratransit Programs

Categories: Red category

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee;

My name is William Masse, I live in Warwick, Rhode Island, and I am writing in support of Representative Stewart's H8145, which would restrict the current 7% sales tax on Uber and Lyft rides to fund RIPTA's Paratransit and Ride Anywhere programs.

I rely on RIPTA to commute from Warwick to Providence most days using Route 4, and the recent service cuts have made it much harder to depend on public transportation. With buses running less frequently, I face longer wait times and more uncertainty getting to work. When transit becomes less reliable, riders are often pushed toward alternatives like rideshare services, which are significantly more expensive and not sustainable for daily use.

While I do not personally use paratransit services, I understand how essential they are for many Rhode Islanders. When fixed-route service is reduced, it increases demand on paratransit systems, putting additional strain on an already overburdened service.

Last year the General Assembly passed the FY '26 budget with language stating that paratransit was not to receive any cuts and that the Ride Anywhere pilot program be made permanent. However, no additional funding was provided to support this expansion, even as demand has increased due to service cuts, a larger service area, and an aging population.

The demand for paratransit service is so high that RIPTA is forced to supplement its own vehicles and drivers with expensive private taxi rides, while riders experience longer wait times and declining service quality. Without additional funding, RIPTA may be forced to restrict eligibility, which would leave many people without access to this critical service.

Redirecting the existing 7% sales tax on rideshare services like Uber and Lyft to support RIPTA is a practical solution. These companies have been shown to reduce public transit ridership, and many of their vehicles are not accessible to riders who need paratransit services. Using this revenue to strengthen RIPTA would improve accessibility, reliability, and equity across our transportation system.

At a time when Rhode Island is working to meet its Act on Climate goals and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, investing in accessible and reliable public transit is more important than ever.

I urge you to support H8145 to provide sustainable funding for RIPTA's paratransit programs and ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable and dependable transportation.

Sincerely,
William Masse
Warwick, Rhode Island