



For a thriving New England

CLF Rhode Island 235 Promenade Street  
Suite 560, Mailbox 28  
Providence, RI 02908  
P: 401.351.1102  
F: 401.351.1130  
www.clf.org

*Via Electronic Mail*

April 14, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, House Finance  
Room 35, State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF **Supports** House Bill No. 8178 – Transportation Investment and Debt Reduction Act of 2011

Dear Chair Solomon:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 8178, which would annually allocate twenty percent (20%) of available proceeds in the Rhode Island highway maintenance account to Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (“RIPTA”).

CLF is a member-supported non-profit advocacy organization working to protect public health and the environment and build healthy communities in Rhode Island and throughout New England. CLF works alongside several RIPTA transit rider advocacy groups, including the Kennedy Plaza Coalition, the Save RIPTA Coalition, Providence Streets Coalition, Rhode Island Transit Riders, and GrowSmartRI. CLF and these advocacy groups believe that access to affordable transportation is a fundamental human right of all Rhode Island residents.

As noted by the Save RIPTA Coalition, an 80/20 split for surface transportation funding between highways and mass transit has been the standard in Congress since 1982. However, RIPTA has been historically short changed. Currently, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (“RIDOT”) takes 90% of surface transportation funding, leaving RIPTA only 10%.

RIDOT has been heavily criticized in recent years for its near-total focus on cars in transportation planning, to the detriment of other modes of transit including walking, cycling, and public transportation. This has entrenched Rhode Island’s position as a car-centric state that is not serious about expanding access to affordable transportation.

This is evidenced by the state’s failure to avoid a RIPTA budget shortfall in 2025, which caused “the largest service reduction in the agency’s 59-year history . . . affecting 45 out of 63 routes


and reducing service by approximately 15% across the system.”<sup>1</sup> RIPTA and its riders didn’t deserve these budget cuts. As noted in the Save RIPTA campaign’s 2025 Service Cuts Impact Report, “[a] much-delayed efficiency study, released on August 1 [2025], predictably concluded that RIPTA is an efficient operator of essential public transit service throughout the state.”<sup>2</sup> In contrast, RIDOT does not spend efficiently. As noted by the Save RIPTA coalition, RIDOT ranks 30th in the nation for cost per lane mile, behind the rest of New England.

It is time to admit that a car-centric society does not meet the fundamental human right of access to affordable transportation by all Rhode Island residents. It is also time to take affirmative steps to meet this fundamental goal. Passing House Bill No. 8178 is a step in the right direction.

We therefore ask that you pass House Bill No. 8178.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Stang  
Senior Attorney, Rhode Island  
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the House Committee on Finance  
Representative Mary Ann Shallcross Smith  
Representative Julie A. Casimiro  
Representative Stephen M. Casey  
Representative Cherie L. Cruz  
Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.  
Representative Deborah A. Fellela  
Representative Patricia A. Serpa  
Representative Mary Messier  
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation

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<sup>1</sup> Save RIPTA, *2025 Service Cuts Impact Report* (Jan. 2026), available at [https://rhodeislandcurrent.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Service-Impacts-Report\\_package.pdf](https://rhodeislandcurrent.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Service-Impacts-Report_package.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*