

Chris O'Brien

From: barry schiller <bschillert358@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 10:39 AM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: support for H8317 and RIPTA, with a financial argument

Categories: Green category

This is Barry Schiller, writing to support H8317 and other RIPTA bills to ensure that RIPTA is financed well enough next year to not only retain current service, but also to be able to restore the serious service cuts that were made last fall.

The Governor's budget proposals include measures to maintain current RIPTA service, and there are alternative financing mechanisms to do this in several of the bills before this Committee. I leave it to those more experienced in budgeting to figure out the best way to meet the Governor's budget total, but I want to single out H8317 as that is the bill that explicitly will also restore the lost service. I also want to advocate that the Committee help future budgets by ensuring that RIPTA's revenue grows with inflation. Thus I want to also single out H8315 that in effect indexes RIPTA's share of the gas tax to inflation, keeping its percentage of the tax what it is now. The way the inflation index works now, only RIDOT gets the additional revenue when it is updated, but RIPTA's expenses also grow with inflation. Not to do this indexing means that RIPTA's budgets will face future deficits just due to inflation, leading to uncertainty for planners, riders, and legislators.

The opening of H8317 gives oft-expressed reasons why we should support RIPTA and public transit, but here is one more consideration.

As we get about \$4.4 million from each cent of the gas tax, it implies about 440 million gallons of gas are sold per year in RI. At current prices of \$100/barrel, with 42 gallons per barrel,, we are now paying almost \$2.40 per gallon just for the crude oil. Add costs of oil transport, refining, and distribution, we are likely paying about \$3 per gallon that flows out of RI to out of state oil interests. Times the 440 million gallons, that means we are exporting well over \$1 billion of our wealth each year for gas. Good transit, (and good bicycle facilities, which also support compact walkable neighborhoods that are far more energy efficient than the sprawl from paving over the countryside) can help reduce this outflow of dollars and keep that wealth within the state that can be used for local commerce.

Thank you for considering these views

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