**Testimony in Support of HB-8178, HJR-8317, & HB-8145 – Appropriations to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)**
**House Finance Committee**
**April 14, 2026**
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The Economic Progress Institute urges the House Finance Committee to fully fund RIPTA and reverse the recent service cuts, ensuring that riders across Rhode Island have access to reliable and affordable public transportation. **We strongly support HB-8178, HJR-8317, and HB-8145**, which would establish dedicated, sustainable revenue streams for RIPTA.

Rhode Islanders deserve affordable, reliable public transportation. Time and time again, it has been proven that a dependable transportation system boosts economic competitiveness, attracts investment, and helps ensure that the general population can meet their basic needs, all while contributing to more sustainable communities.[1] Maintaining and expanding public transportation reduces congestion, improves air quality, and enhances the reliability of cars and trucks as congestion-related traffic decreases.[2] To foster a thriving economy and sustainable environment, it is essential to invest in RIPTA. Those investments should include providing competitive wages, shielding communities from fare increases, while also preserving and expanding services and operational hours. Funding RIPTA is especially important considering the cost of cars has significantly increased in recent years. According to the American Public Transportation Association, people who use public transit save more than $13,000 a year, or $1,100 a month, compared to those who drive. Additionally, from 2019 to 2023, the cost of purchasing a new car increased by 30%, and the cost of purchasing a used car increased by 40%.[3]

Accordingly, we strongly support **Representative Cortvriend's HB-8178, which would** amend the Transportation Investment and Debt Reduction Act of 2011 **to increase RIPTA's share of the Highway Maintenance Fund from 10% to 20%**. This would align more closely with the longstanding federal transportation funding framework, which has generally followed an 80/20 split between highways and public transit since its establishment by Congress in 1982.[4]

We also strongly support **Representative Alzate's HJR-8317, which would allocate an additional $5,000,000 to reverse service cuts to pre-September 2025 levels**. The cuts made to

[1] https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/Transportation-as-an-Economic-Indicator/9czv-tjte/#:~:text=Transportation%20plays%20a%20vital%20role,activity%20in%20its%20own%20right.
[2] https://t4america.org/portfolio/la-transit-strike/
[3] https://www.apta.com/research-technical-resources/research-reports/transit-savings-report/
[4] https://enotrans.org/article/highway-trust-fund-101/

RIPTA last fall were devastating, impacting 45 out of 63 routes and reducing services by approximately 15% across the system.[5]

Lastly, **we urge the committee to support Representative Stewart's HB-8145**, which would allocate the current 7% sales tax collected on all Uber and Lyft rides to RIPTA's RIde Anywhere operational budget. This reallocation is estimated to generate $10-$15 million in annual revenue towards RIPTA and would provide a stable, dedicated source of funding for essential transportation services.[6]

I would also urge the members of the committee to **consider public transit funding in the broader context of *all* transportation funding**. As many are already aware, the car-tax phase-out was not a one-time event, and the enacted FY2026 budget includes $239.5 million to make local governments whole from the loss of revenue from the phase-out. This is an *annual* and *indefinite* appropriation, and the entirety of the appropriation subsidizes car owners, so they need not pay the tax. The phase-out and the annual appropriation do not provide the benefit of tax relief to *all* Rhode Islanders. It provides no relief for the approximately 9% of Rhode Island households without any available vehicles.[7] For rental-occupied households, this rate is 21.5%, according to United States Census Bureau data.[8]

**If we are subsidizing car owners with $239.5 million from General Revenue funds each year, we should think about doing more to subsidize non-car owners**, as well as car owners who would prefer to use public transportation more often than they do. The amount provided for the trial period for free R-Line service was welcome but a small subsidy in comparison.

We strongly urge the General Assembly to fully fund RIPTA, restore services to pre-September 2025 levels, and adopt dedicated, sustainable revenue streams.

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5 https://pvdstreets.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Service-Impacts-Report_package.pdf
6 https://pvdstreets.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Service-Impacts-Report_package.pdf
7 https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/11/14/1-in-10-americans-rarely-or-never-drive-a-car/#:~:text=Most%20U.S.%20households%20(92%25),have%20three%20or%20more%20vehicles.
8 https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/vehicles/#:~:text=Occupied%20Housing%20Units%20with%20No,Data%20Profiles/Housing%20Characteristics