



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

April 14, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 8317, *A Joint Resolution Making an Appropriation of \$5,000,000 to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority*. If passed, this legislation will meaningfully address the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority's (RIPTA) workforce challenges. The \$5 million appropriation will support RIPTA's hiring and training of bus operators and implementation of the State's Act on Climate goals.

There are also a number of proposals before this Committee today that would provide critical support to RIPTA. I want to underscore the importance of sustained and reliable funding and the need to explore all the funding mechanisms available to the state.

Robust public transportation is a core driver of economic growth and regional vitality, connecting workers to jobs, businesses to customers, and employers to a broader talent pool. Service cuts have been devastating for many riders, including Providence residents, who have lost access to the public transportation services they rely on daily. Cuts to RIPTA services severely impact residents' ability to reach jobs, schools, grocery stores, healthcare appointments, and other daily necessities. These impacts are particularly acute for elderly and disabled riders, because RIPTA provides access to basic needs, social connection, and independence.

A well-funded and reliable public transit system that is safe, frequent, and accessible for all Rhode Islanders and visitors is vital infrastructure that supports a vast array of diverse mobility needs. In addition to mobility, RIPTA service supports regional competitiveness by reducing congestion, lowering costs, and expanding access to opportunity across communities.

Investment in public transit is also essential to reaching Rhode Island's climate mandates. The transportation sector accounts for nearly 40% of our statewide emissions. The mandates required by the Act on Climate Plan, which include a significant reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs), is attainable through increasing public transportation ridership and thus decreasing the use of personal vehicles. Investing in public transportation that is fast, reliable, and *more convenient* than personal vehicles is a simple yet urgent solution that will position Rhode Island to meet our mandated climate benchmarks.

Providence's prosperity and Rhode Island's future are directly tied to the strength of our transit system. Our efforts to build a more sustainable and equitable city and state requires reducing emissions,

improving air quality, and making it safe and affordable for people to get where they need to go. All of this requires a strong and stable RIPTA.

I commend the bill sponsor for their commitment to supporting RIPTA and the people of Rhode Island. I respectfully urge the Committee to vote in favor of House Bill 8317 and to continue advancing investments that ensure long-term funding for RIPTA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett Smiley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Brett P. Smiley
Mayor