

SAVE RIPTA

May 7th, 2026
House Committee on Finance
RE: H7313

Dear Chair Abney and Committee Members,

The Save RIPTA Coalition would like to extend its support of Representative Alzate's H7313 which would create a 3% tax on income OVER \$640,000/year (the top 1% of income earners in the state). This proposal would raise \$203 million/year – that's \$68 million/year more than a millionaires tax, which would raise \$135 million/year. We believe that due to the numerous needs of the state and the fact that the richest Rhode Islanders got massive tax breaks at the federal level this is the right pathway to help Rhode Islanders needs best.

For public transportation, our 47th president has made it obvious that there is no federal solution to our transit fiscal cliff. Our last hope of saving public transit is now in the hands of the State of Rhode Island. The General Assembly generously allocated over \$30 million to RIPTA over the last two years, but this was still not enough.

Bus lines represent access to opportunity. Rhode Island has the foundation of a wonderful statewide bus system, but it has suffered from disinvestment and neglect for many years. The transit system is key to our efforts to reduce emissions, to connect communities, and to create healthy, vibrant local economies. But in order to make that a reality, we need to invest in it like the serious piece of infrastructure that it is: that means preserving and expanding service, maintaining a thriving workforce, and making sure it is timely and reliable.

The Massachusetts Fair Share Amendment and its resulting \$1.3 billion Education and Transportation Fund has been used to upgrade the MBTA's aging rail infrastructure, improve transit operations, and fund free buses across Massachusetts. We hear a lot about the struggles with the MBTA's subway and commuter rail systems, but increased revenues have also funded the Fair Free Grant, which now provides fare-free service to 13 of the 15 regional transit authorities! In Rhode Island, we only have one: RIPTA. And we have never adequately invested in its operations, or taken any serious steps to increase the frequency and reliability of its services.

RIPTA is not in its current financial position because it operates inefficiently, or because people don't ride enough. We're here because of decades of chronic underinvestment from the State of Rhode Island. We have eliminated the car tax at an annual cost of \$250M, and invested billions of dollars expanding and repairing our highways, while doing nothing for our 30,000+ daily transit riders except letting the service and funding degrade slowly over time, forcing us to advocate for it again and again.

The wealthiest in our state need to pay their fare share. Equity may be a dirty word in Washington right now, but it's still a core value in the State of Rhode Island. Let's prove it by passing this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole O'Loughlin
Political Director
Providence Streets Coalition/Save RIPTA