

My name is Madison Bertotto, I live in Providence, and I am writing in support of Bill H7363. I use the RIPTA to visit my cousin who studies in University of Rhode Island. We've always been separated by a plane ride, so being able to take a bus to see each other was really exciting. I thought I'd be using the RIPTA on random days at any time, because it was going to run really often— until the budget cuts happened. It's impacted how often we see each other, and adds a layer of difficulty especially with our separate schedules. Getting RIPTA more funding from more diverse sources would mean the world to me, and I can only imagine what it would mean to all families in the state. Requiring Rhode Island's largest employers to offer transit passes as a fringe benefit is a simple way to increase funding, with the additional benefits of improving congestion, reducing emissions, and increasing Rhode Island's competitiveness as a business-friendly destination.

The numbers speak for themselves. According to the American Public Transportation Association, individuals who use public transit save an average of \$9,000 annually compared to those who drive. In Rhode Island, where traffic congestion is a growing concern, these savings would provide significant financial relief to workers while decreasing congestion for all road users. Offering transit passes would ensure that employees, especially those with lower incomes, can access more affordable transportation options, reducing the burden of expensive gas, parking, and car maintenance costs.

Rhode Island's largest 25 companies employ more than 100,000 people (Source: Providence Business News), yet very few offer transit passes to employees as a fringe benefit. If even a fraction of this population took transit, it would have a profound impact on RIPTA ridership, carbon emissions, and highway congestion. By providing employees with reliable and affordable transportation options, employers can attract and retain a more diverse and skilled talent pool, particularly from areas that may be underserved by car-dependent infrastructure.

As a transit rider and supporter, I am relying on you to support this simple solution for increasing ridership and fare revenue for RIPTA. Securing new and diverse funding streams that do not rely on the federal government or declining gas tax revenue will not only achieve financial stability, but allow for the expansion of service to meet the needs of a growing population that requires access to the affordable and sustainable travel option that public transit provides.

I want to use the RIPTA, and more funding means more rides means more visits. I urge you to support H7363, to support workers and increase revenue for RIPTA, giving Rhode Island workers access to affordable transportation and growing the base of ridership for public transit.