



Alimente

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April 2, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

Chair DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Committee

SUBJECT: SUPPORT (S2095) - Highway Maintenance Account Increase

My name is Jason Kashdan. I'm a registered dietitian based in Providence and the founder of Alimente, an equity-focused nutrition and food policy strategy practice. I'm writing in strong support of S2095, which would increase RIPTA's share of the Highway Maintenance Account and provide a more stable, predictable funding stream for public transit in Rhode Island.

I chose to move to Rhode Island after earning my Master's degree at Tufts University to complete my dietetic courses at URI. The commute was a breeze because I could rely on RIPTA to get between Providence and the Kingstown campus. I had the opportunity to read, chat with regulars I met on the route, and enjoy some downtime to help quiet the noise in my brain.

Today, my nutrition counseling approach is grounded in structural determinants of health, and public transportation is a crucial component. One concrete health benefit that RIPTA affords riders is the opportunity to pause from our hectic lives and ease symptoms of chronic stress. These days, I love taking the bus to get to my practice space in Providence. My nervous system is calmer, and I'm more relaxed and focused when I arrive.

Our community members who already carry the most barriers, including low-income residents, disabled riders, and people without cars, get hit first and hardest by service cuts and underfunding. In a compact state like Rhode Island, it should be easy to get where you need to go.

An 80/20 split for surface transportation funding between highways and mass transit has been the standard in Congress since 1982. Rhode Island practices a 90/10 split. With the gas tax projected to decline as more drivers switch to electric vehicles, and the replacement EV tax flowing into the Highway Maintenance Account, RIPTA needs an adequate and predictable share of that account to remain financially sustainable long term.

Please support S2095 to give RIPTA the stable funding foundation it needs, so that Rhode Island residents have reliable access to affordable transportation now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Jason Kashdan, MS, RD