

Marygrace Heywood Larocque

From: Eugenia Marks <emarks66@gmail.com>
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To: Senate Finance
Subject: RIPTA funding

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March 29, 2026

Senate Finance Committee
RI General Assembly
Senator Louis DiPalma Chair
via email

re: S-2095 and S-7127/ Budget Article 2

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am in favor of filling the short-fall in the RIPTA budget (S-7127/Budget Article 2). However, providing a specific amount, as in S-7127, will not keep up with inflation over the years. In addition to this amount, I favor Increasing the funds from the Highway Maintenance Account (S-2095) to 20% to provide more adequate funding that keeps pace with increases in inflation.

Taxes on gasoline, licenses, inspections, permits, etc., paid by drivers, contribute to the Highway Maintenance Account. The opportunity costs of driving instead of using public transportation, including the impacts of pollution and other social burdens like space for parking, should be borne by drivers. As a driver I am willing to pay for the privilege of driving.

DMV takes 5% of the Highway Maintenance Account, and RIDOT receives 95% of the remainder, the other 5% going to RIPTA. I support a higher percentage, 20%, going to RIPTA.

Because public transportation fills a vital economic function, the state should find an efficient and related way to pay for the service. The Department of Transportation should assume the responsibility of adequate public transportation in the same way it budgets for snow removal, pothole repair, and from installation and maintenance of traffic signalization to design of highway and bridge construction. Public transportation can reduce air pollution.

The recent history of RI DOT and its allocation of resources leads me to think that efficiencies could be found in RI DOT, and an expedited return to the truck tolling system would bring in needed revenue, which could add to the revenues directed to RIPTA.

12,529,300 riders used the RIPTA system in 2025. In 2014 ridership peaked at 20,500,000 according to reports published by the agency. The reasons for the decline in ridership are complex, but one factor has been the declining route and frequency service which are reflections of declining budgets for the system. Just as roads are a service to those who get around by auto, adequate public transportation should be a service to those who cannot afford, or who choose not, to own a car.

Thank you, Eugenia Marks, M. A. Brown University, 11 Methyl Street, Providence, RI 02906 (401) 272-8424