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Sustainable Economic Growth
& Quality of Place

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April 2, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
VIA EMAIL - HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Re: Support for S-2095 (Amending allocations from the RI Highway Maintenance Account (HMA) with 20% going to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority)

Dear Chair DiPalma and honorable members of the Committee,

On behalf of Grow Smart RI, I write in full support for S-2095, an amendment to the Transportation Investment and Debt Reduction Act of 2011 increasing the percentage of funds from the HMA to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority. We thank Senator Zurier for introducing this legislation.

Grow Smart RI is Rhode Island's statewide smart growth advocacy organization. We represent a big-tent coalition of business and civic leaders along with community stakeholders committed to strengthening and growing Rhode Island's economy in a sustainable and equitable way. We work with community partners across the state to integrate smart land use, transportation and housing policies in a way that uses resources most efficiently and that creates vibrant and opportunity rich places for all to thrive.

As many know, for decades RIPTA's revenue has not kept pace with the inflationary pressure on its expenses, despite RIPTA's time and again *demonstrated* efficiency. And while the Governor's proposed FY27 State Budget would close RIPTA's projected deficit for FY27, it does not restore the sweeping and damaging service cuts that took effect last September due to insufficient funding, despite the earnest and appreciated efforts of the General Assembly to avoid such cuts.

Passage of this bill would take an important step forward in making our transit system really work for more Rhode Islanders.

An 80/20 split for surface transportation funding between highways and mass transit has been the standard in Congress since 1982. But Rhode Island currently practices a 90/10 split.

This and the remaining package of bills before you this evening would put Rhode Island on a path that many other states and metro regions have chosen – to invest in achieving the benefits of a data-driven and state-adopted blueprint for improving transit - increased ridership, affordability, more transit-oriented housing development, economic growth and progress in meeting the state's Act on Climate requirements.

We urge your approval of this measure.

Thank you,

John Flaherty
Senior Advisor and Special Projects