

Dear Chair DiPalma and honorable committee members,

My name is Cedric Ye, and I am a high school student who lives in Providence. I am writing in support of Senator Zurier's S2668, which would better index both the gas tax itself and RIPTA's share of the gas tax to inflation.

RIPTA's current funding is closely tied to the state's gasoline tax. Over the last decade, RIPTA was shortchanged by \$7 million annually because its 9.75 cent allocation has not kept pace with the overall increase in the gas tax, which has risen from 32.5 cents to 38 cents per gallon, including an environmental fee. **Between FY2013 and FY2024, RIPTA's funding decreased by 22% when converted to 2013 dollars. This is an astonishing disparity when compared with the state budget, which grew 28%, or RIDOT, which grew 81% over this period.** The missing \$7 million had a significant impact in reducing RIPTA's fiscal cliff, and **I thank you and your colleagues for supporting an additional 2 cents to RIPTA that increased its FY2026 budget to -7% below 2013 levels.**

However, not only does RIPTA still remain below its historic funding, this additional allocation is also not indexed to inflation. Absent legislative action, RIPTA's financial path is still not sustainable. Much like this past decade, RIPTA's purchasing power will continue to decrease until it faces another fiscal cliff that will require similarly difficult legislative action to resolve. By indexing RIPTA's share of the gas tax to inflation, this bill will secure RIPTA's financial future and protect transit service that our future generations and economic development can rely on. **Importantly, this bill does not affect funding from RIDOT or the general fund this year, as it keeps RIPTA's share at today's level of 29%.**

In addition to ensuring RIPTA receives its fair share of gas tax revenue, it is essential to address the current inflation adjustment process. As it stands, the adjustment occurs every two years but only accounts for one year's worth of inflation. This insufficient adjustment fails to keep up with the rising costs of both public transit and our highways. By adding an additional penny per gallon to the gas tax starting next year, we could provide RIPTA and RIDOT with an extra \$1.3 million annually—resources that RIPTA could reinvest in better services, expanded routes, and improved infrastructure.

With S2668, we have an opportunity to create a more sustainable, forward-thinking funding structure for RIPTA and public transit in Rhode Island. This will not only help fill the immediate funding gap, but also set the stage for a more reliable and equitable transportation system in the years to come. I strongly urge the Senate Finance Committee to prioritize these bills and take decisive action in supporting public transit as a critical part of Rhode Island's future.

I urge you to support S2668, to give RIPTA a fair share of the Motor Fuel Tax and support the riders who rely on the service.

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Cedric Ye  
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