

THE PROVIDENCE FOUNDATION

May 21, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chair
Senate Committee on Finance
Rhode Island Senate

RE: S 2680 – Public Utilities and Carriers – Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Providence Foundation appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to S 2680.

One of the Foundation's core priorities is advancing effective and accessible public transit for all riders. Public transportation is also an important economic development tool. Employees, particularly younger workers, increasingly rely on reliable transit to access jobs, housing, education, and opportunity. As both an advocate and regular public transit rider myself, I understand firsthand the importance of a safe, modern, and well-functioning transit system. For Rhode Island to remain competitive and continue growing its economy, a modern, multi-modal transit center is essential.

We believe the state is on the right path with the current transit center planning process. S 2680 would undermine that progress by prohibiting the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority from utilizing voter-approved bond funding for the proposed transit center near Providence Station.

As a civic organization engaged in this effort long before the initial bond referendum was approved, The Providence Foundation spent years working collaboratively with riders, Grow Smart Rhode Island, bus operators, RIPTA, two gubernatorial administrations, mayoral administrations, and members of the General Assembly to advance this important project. Legislation that derails this progress now would be harmful to the future of Providence and Rhode Island's broader economic and transportation goals.

S 2680 would significantly undermine efforts to modernize Rhode Island's public transportation infrastructure at a time when strategic investment is urgently needed. Kennedy Plaza has long faced operational, public safety, and economic development challenges and has not been able to function at its highest potential. Our capital city deserves a modern, efficient, accessible transit hub that better serves riders, strengthens regional connectivity, and supports continued economic growth.

There are successful models that demonstrate how transformative these investments can be. The transit center developed in Rochester, NY more than a decade ago serves as an effective example

of how a centralized, modern transit facility can improve and expand the rider experience, while strengthening transit operations, and supporting surrounding economic development.¹ Rhode Island should be looking toward these successful examples rather than stepping away from progress.

The proposed transit center represents a critical investment in the future of Downtown Providence and Rhode Island's transportation network. Preventing RIPTA from accessing already-approved funding for this project sends the wrong message about our state's commitment to public transit, infrastructure, and long-term economic development.

For these reasons, The Providence Foundation respectfully urges the committee to oppose S 2680.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



David Salvatore
Executive Director
The Providence Foundation

¹ <https://www.myrts.com/TransitCenter>