



Alimente

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TO: Senate Finance Committee

Chair DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Committee

SUBJECT: SUPPORT (S2813) - Transit Master Plan Bond Referenda

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 S2813, Sen. Vargas' \$100 million Transit Master Plan Bond Bill, which would finally begin implementing the visionary Transit Master Plan that was adopted by the state in 2020.

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 face the greatest barriers get hit first and hardest. Most RIPTA trips today are not competitive with driving because buses are stuck in traffic and make too many stops. This bond would fund the construction of rapid bus routes identified in the Transit Master Plan, including a Metro Connector that would dramatically speed up travel times and attract new ridership. It would also fund critically needed improvements to bus stops and shelters, safer pedestrian access, and better passenger facilities at bus hubs.

If Rhode Island is serious about affordability, safety, and climate action, we need generational capital investment in the system that helps people reach jobs, groceries, schools, and healthcare. Please support S2813 to give our state's public transit system the 21st-century infrastructure it needs.

Sincerely,

Jason Kashdan, MS, RD