

TO: Senate Finance Committee  
SUBJECT: SUPPORT (S2825) - \$5 million Budget Allocation for RIPTA

Dear Chair DiPalma and Committee members,

My name is Merrill Schmidt, and I live in Cranston, and I am writing in support of Bill S2825, Sen. McKenney's \$5M allocation to reverse RIPTA's service cuts. While I just occasionally take public transit, RIPTA is essential for my family since I share a car with my partner, who relies on RIPTA to get to and from work and daycare pick-up every day. In addition, I work with many high school students in Providence who rely on RIPTA for their daily transportation. Since the 2025 service cuts went into effect, I have heard about many challenges with taking RIPTA, including long wait times and generally longer routes, very limited options for the weekend, and trouble getting to school and work on time. In order to ensure sufficient transit options and have a functional state, we cannot accept the current conditions and funding levels of RIPTA. We need to invest in public transit as a public good that is essential for daily life for so many of our fellow Rhode Islanders.

The service cuts have been devastating for tens of thousands of riders like me. A [report](#) released by the Save RIPTA coalition found that since the service cuts went into effect in September 2025:

- Ridership dropped 12.1% or about 125,000 trips by November
- Riders are burdened with less reliable and frequent service — restricting access to jobs, healthcare, education, and recreation.
- 30% of RIPTA riders are at risk of losing employment, 8% lost pay, and 3.6% lost their jobs directly
- RIPTA operators' working conditions have deteriorated
- RIPTA service has gotten 29% more expensive to operate per service hour

'Public Transit' is mentioned no less than 80 times in Rhode Island's own strategic plans for [economic development](#), [housing production](#), and [climate](#). However, the service cuts have left RIPTA too small and crippled to even meet the needs of its existing riders, let alone expand to strengthen our state's competitiveness and livability.

That's why I'm urging you to support S2825. Without reversing RIPTA's devastating service cuts, RIPTA cannot meet the needs of a growing population that requires affordable and sustainable transportation, and RIPTA cannot grow to meet our climate, social justice, and economic goals.

Sincerely,

Merrill Schmidt  
Cranston, RI