

Dear Chair DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my strong and unequivocal support for S3084, the Rideshare Sales Tax Reallocation to Ride Anywhere, as both a paratransit rider and a member of the RIPTA Board of Directors. This legislation is not only fiscally responsible, but essential to preserving equitable access to transportation for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

In my personal experience as a blind paratransit rider, RIPTA's services are not a convenience... they are a necessity. Access to reliable transportation determines whether I can attend appointments, participate in public life, and fulfill my professional responsibilities. However, increasing demand and constrained resources have made it more difficult to rely on this system with confidence. There is a growing dependence on third-party services that are often inconsistent and not always equipped to meet accessibility needs. These challenges are not abstract, they directly affect my independence and quality of life.

From my perspective as a RIPTA Board member, I see clearly that the system is under extraordinary strain. The expansion of paratransit service statewide with the continuation of the Ride Anywhere program reflect our shared commitment to accessibility. However, without dedicated and sustainable funding, these commitments are at risk. RIPTA is already forced to rely on costly supplemental services to meet demand, an approach that is neither efficient nor sustainable over time.

S3084 presents a practical and fair solution. By reallocating the existing sales tax on rideshare services, this bill invests in a public system that serves those who need it most.

Rideshare platforms, while widely used, do not consistently provide accessible options and have contributed to broader challenges for public transit systems nationwide.

Redirecting this funding toward RIPTA's paratransit programs ensures that resources are aligned with public need and accessibility priorities.

Reliable paratransit service is fundamental to economic participation, healthcare access, and community inclusion. Without it, many Rhode Islanders face unnecessary isolation and hardship.

The recent reductions in RIPTA's fixed-route services have further intensified demand on the RId e Anywhere program, as individuals with disabilities who previously relied on those routes and no longer have access to consistent, reliable service are increasingly seeking and depending upon paratransit and RId e Anywhere services to meet their transportation needs.

This bill represents a critical step toward strengthening a system that thousands depend on every day.

I respectfully urge you to support S3084 and help secure the long-term sustainability and accessibility of RIPTA's paratransit services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Schey

RIPTA Board Member

Warwick RI