



RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 31

EFFECTIVE January 28, 2024

WHEREAS, public transportation is a critical component of the infrastructure in Rhode Island, offering essential services to residents and contributing to Rhode Island's economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) has been a cornerstone in providing affordable transportation options, yet has faced challenges due to lack of funding; and

WHEREAS, a well-funded and robust public transit system is vital for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, thus aligning with Rhode Island's Act on Climate goals; and

WHEREAS, the necessary funding of \$110 million for the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority would be allocated as follows:

- \$40 million to maintain existing bus services, preventing a fiscal cliff and ensuring continuous operation.
- \$24 million to enhance the training and recruitment of bus operators, offering competitive wages and benefits that reflect the cost of living in Rhode Island.
- \$46 million annually to implement the Transit Master Plan, expanding transit services across Rhode Island, a strategic move towards meeting the state's legally mandated Act on Climate goals; and

WHEREAS, the investment in the transit system is not merely a transportation issue but a matter of social and economic equity, connecting communities, facilitating access to jobs, education, healthcare, and other important services; particularly for young people, those already struggling from low wages, seniors, and those with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, according to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database, Rhode Island ranked among the lowest in 2021 per capita state funding for transit, approximately \$19 per person, which is significantly less compared to neighboring states like Connecticut (\$68) and Delaware (\$101); and

WHEREAS, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in a drastic reduction in fare revenues, leading to financial instability within transit agencies nationwide, including RIPTA, despite temporary federal emergency relief funding; and

WHEREAS, RIPTA is projected to face a severe fiscal shortfall of \$33 million in 2024, escalating to over \$40 million in the coming years, with no federal solutions forthcoming, necessitating immediate state-level intervention; and

WHEREAS, RIPTA's operating expenses are expected to rise due to inflation, compounded by a decrease in gas tax revenue as a result of the increasing adoption of electric vehicles, potentially leading to a widening budget gap; and

WHEREAS, RIPTA is also confronting a significant challenge in workforce sustainability, with approximately 125 of its 400 bus operators eligible for retirement next year,

and recruitment efforts being hindered by non-competitive wages in comparison to rising living costs and inflation; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) recent wage increase for bus drivers to \$30 per hour, which resulted in a tripling of new applications, exemplifies the importance of competitive compensation in attracting essential transit workforce; and

WHEREAS, countless organizations including the Providence Streets Coalition, Rhode Island Transit Riders, Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition, Progreso Latino, SEIU, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 618, AFL-CIO, PVD Bike Collective, Carpenters Union 330, Conservation Law Foundation, Providence Student Union, Community Libraries of Providence, Providence Preservation Society, Groundwork, Providence Bike Collective, RICosh, West Broadway Neighborhood Association, Washington Park Neighborhood Association, South Elmwood Neighborhood Association, Climate Action Rhode Island, and elected officials including Senators Kallman, DiMario, Rep Morales and more have been advocating for saving RIPTA; and

WHEREAS, an expanded and improved public transit system fosters a healthy, vibrant local economy, fostering community development and enhancing the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Providence City Council, in solidarity with these organizations and the countless residents of Providence who rely on RIPTA, hereby requests Governor McKee and the state legislature fully fund the necessary \$110 million for the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority in the annual 2025 state budget for the fiscal year.



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution serves as a commitment to the citizens of Providence and Rhode Island, acknowledging the essential role of public transit in their daily lives and the collective responsibility to ensure RIPTA's effectiveness and sustainability.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution appeals for the necessary funding to save and enhance RIPTA, recognizing that buses are more than mere transportation – they are lifelines that bind the community and fuel the state of Rhode Island's progress.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon passage a copy of this resolution be sent to the office of Governor Dan McKee, the office of Rhode Island Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi, the office of Rhode Island State Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio, and the Office of Mayor Brett Smiley.

IN CITY COUNCIL
JAN 18 2024

READ AND PASSED, *As Amended*


RACHEL M. MILLER, PRESIDENT

CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature

Tina L. Mastroianni
City Clerk