



**RIPTA Public Hearing – Proposed Service Changes**  
**Woonsocket Public Library, 303 Clinton Street, Woonsocket**  
**Monday, July 28, 2025**  
**5:00 PM – 6:30PM**

**RIPTA staff** in attendance: Christopher Durand, Edward Brown, Cristy Raposo Perry, Joe Philbin, John Chadwick, Greg Harris, Christel Chavez, Tim McKenna, CJ Headley, Erminio Conte, Nicky Mudryy and Sara Furbush

**Board Members** in attendance: Patrick Crowley

**Elected Officials** in attendance: Senator Melissa A. Murray, Senator Brian J. Thompson, Senator Lori Urso, Representative Jon D. Brien, Representative Robert D. Phillips, and Woonsocket City Councilor Kristina Contreras Fox

On Monday, July 28, 2025, forty-eight (48) members of the public attended. Seventeen (17) made oral comments. Three (3) provided written comments.

Chief Executive Officer Christopher Durand opened the hearing by giving an overview of RIPTA's financial situation and budget deficit. Principal Planner Tim McKenna followed with an overview of proposed service changes.

**Oral comments** were provided as follows:

**Albert Paquin, a Woonsocket resident**, said that the proposed changes were heavy, and are too much. He noticed that the 54 was going to take longer on Sundays and holidays. He also mentioned frequency reduction and thought it was quite a lot, 80 minutes one way and 80 the other, which he believed was really excessive.

**Senator Melissa A. Murray** stated multiple RIPTA efficiency studies have been completed over the decades and emphasized that previous data, along with the recent efficiency study, confirm that RIPTA operates efficiently. There are no further cuts that could close the financial shortfall. Senator Murray expressed her deep concern about the proposed changes, particularly about the impact on Rhode Island and her own district.

She cited the Title VI review and pointed out the serious effects on Route 54, as well as another route running from Fairmount to Diamond Hill, both of which would disproportionately affect low-income residents. She noted that Diamond Hill was home to the only grocery store in the city of Woonsocket, highlighting the significance of these cuts.

She shared her personal experience of a time when she did not have access to a vehicle and emphasized how difficult everyday life became from taking a child to the zoo or beach, to accessing DHS services, shelters, jobs, grocery stores, and medical appointments.

Senator Murray noted that the governor's proposed budget included a \$37.6 million shortfall for the agency, and although the General Assembly added \$15 million, no budget amendment had been introduced to address the RIPTA funding gap. She argued that the shortfall would leave riders stranded.

She concluded by stating that the governor had several options at his disposal to address the situation, including using surplus funds, gas tax revenue, money from the Rhody Express Project, or increasing RIPTA's share of the highway maintenance fund from 10% to 15%. She strongly urges the governor to take action, stating that these cuts are simply unacceptable and he does not need the General Assembly to take action.

**Pat Ford, representing the Coalition Radio Network and WNRI 1380 AM**, expressed concerns about the proposed cuts. He criticized the use of public resources to provide transportation to a privately owned soccer stadium catering to wealthier suburban residents, while people in cities like Woonsocket struggled with transit cuts. Pat emphasized that elections have consequences and he held elected officials accountable for supporting the budget that enabled such spending. He reaffirmed his belief in RIPTA's mission, calling it vital to the economy, and basic human dignity. However, he expressed frustration that RIPTA, under the leadership of Peter Alviti, was prioritizing private interests over public need. He called on officials to explain how many similar "sweetheart deals" existed while everyday residents were left without basic transit options.

**Joy Thibodeau, a Pascoag resident** and Route 9x rider, spoke out against RIPTA's proposed cuts. She questioned why none of the public hearings were held in directly impacted communities like Burrillville, Gloucester, or Smithfield. She relies on ADA paratransit service to get to work and medical appointments. Although told that ADA routes would not be affected, she expressed deep concern about the uncertainty surrounding the Ride Anywhere pilot program that she depends on. She shared that without reliable transit, her livelihood, and her life could be at risk, as she has a serious medical history that isn't outwardly visible. Without transportation to medical appointments, it is a death sentence.

**Linda Sears, a Cumberland resident**, has been a RIPTA commuter for almost 41 years. She voiced strong opposition to the proposed transit cuts. She pointed out the contradiction between RIPTA's statement regarding preserving transportation for work, education, and medical appointments and the reality of the proposed service reductions. Sears emphasized that she had paid taxes in the state for over four decades and agreed with others that a strong public transit system is essential for a thriving state. She criticized the planned elimination of the express (X) routes as short-sighted, noting that these routes were originally created to serve professionals and those needing reliable access to education and medical care. She warned that once the ridership is lost, it will be difficult—if not impossible—to regain.

**Elizabeth Baglini, a Woonsocket resident**, and RIPTA rider for 40 years, urged RIPTA and state leaders to look beyond the data and consider the real people that will be affected by the proposed service cuts. The proposed cuts will lead to increased traffic, more accidents, higher emissions, and financial strain for riders, especially those without viable local transit options. She highlighted the burden of carrying work equipment and the rising costs of commuting. Elizabeth specifically addressed the proposed elimination of express (X) routes, stating that riders had repeatedly asked for thoughtful modifications, such as route consolidations or removing underused stops like Slatersville. She suggested partnerships with local institutions like CCRI and Stop & Shop to provide safe parking options for riders forced onto local routes.

She stressed that regular riders had valuable insight into which routes and stops were effective, urging RIPTA to collaborate directly with them. She warned that once long-time riders stop using the service due to cuts, they would not return. She expressed a willingness to pay more to preserve essential transit and pleaded for leadership to listen and work with riders.

**John Lenou, a Woonsocket resident**, is opposed to the proposed changes. He spoke about his personal history with local transit, recalling a time when there were no local Walnut Hill buses on Sundays and the “Woonsocket Rocket” ran only once every two hours. He noted that even then, when he was more physically able, the limited service was difficult. He expressed concern and disappointment at the possibility of service returning to those inadequate levels.

**John Flaherty, a Slatersville resident**, rides Route 59x and has been a transit advocate for over 20 years. He expressed his gratitude to the professionals at RIPTA for running an efficient bus system over many years, noting that their strong performance was often overlooked because the agency frequently sought additional funding. He explained that RIPTA’s repeated financial requests were due to its reliance on a declining revenue stream that had not kept pace with rising expenses. He acknowledged that the proposed cuts were not something the staff wanted, but understood they were being made to stay within budget.

More than 20 years ago, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) identified the same funding issue and warned that RIPTA would face annual service reductions unless a multi-year fiscal recovery plan was adopted. That warning remained true, and little progress had been made since then.

The proposed service reductions, the largest in RIPTA’s 59-year history, are unconscionable, especially at a time when the agency should be expanding, not shrinking. RIPTA’s six-year-old Transit Master Plan lacks the necessary funding to move forward. The cuts will impact tens of thousands of residents and their employers, many of whom might not yet realize the consequences.

He stated that Governor McKee has the authority to make a one-time transfer of up to \$15 million from surplus funds and freed-up gas tax revenue to RIPTA to prevent these service cuts. He called for the development of a long-term, reliable funding stream to sustain and grow RIPTA service in the future.

**Susan Langlois, a Woonsocket resident** and longtime RIPTA rider, voiced her agreement with previous speakers and shared her concern over the proposed RIPTA service cuts. The service cuts will have a significant impact on people who rely on transit for work, school, and medical appointments. She criticized the proposed elimination of Route 75, explaining that she had used it regularly in the past to commute to work (with a transfer to Route 54); its removal will seriously affect many riders. The proposed changes to Route 87 will increase wait times to nearly an hour and a half, which is unacceptable. Susan questioned the decision to increase intervals on Route 66 to 45 minutes, noting that Route 54, which is frequently overcrowded, is a major transit line in the area and should not be de-emphasized. She urged decision-makers to consider the real impact of these changes and encouraged others to contact the governor's office and share their concerns.

**Senator Brian J. Thompson** spoke out strongly against the proposed RIPTA service cuts. He thanked the audience and emphasized that the cuts would devastate communities, particularly in his district. He noted that the General Assembly allocated \$15 million of the \$32.6 million cut from the previous year's budget by Governor McKee. Despite this effort, RIPTA is still facing a \$17.6 million shortfall. He stated that the issue was not simply about budgeting, but rather a failure of leadership, placing responsibility squarely on the governor. He emphasized that the governor had the authority to reallocate funds from state or federal sources without legislative approval but had chosen not to act.

He detailed the specific impacts in his district, including the complete elimination of weekend service on Route 71 and the full elimination of Route 75 in Cumberland, as well as drastic reductions in weekday and weekend frequencies on Routes 54 and 87 in Woonsocket. The cuts are unacceptable; residents rely on these services not just for convenience but for their livelihoods.

He pledged to work with Senate leadership to secure funding for RIPTA and urged the governor to take immediate action. Reliable public transportation is what residents need and deserve.

**Representative Jon D. Brien** is against the proposed service cuts. He noted that this was not the first public hearing held at the local library, and while he appreciated the officials' presence and presentation, he criticized the process as performative — suggesting that decisions had already been made regardless of community input.

Representative Brien emphasized that residents of Woonsocket, particularly those in the Fairmount District, heavily rely on RIPTA service. The General Assembly had already done its part by allocating \$15 million to RIPTA. He then referenced a recent social media post by Governor Dan McKee touting Rhode Island's commitment to economic growth and job creation, which he found ironic given the state's struggle to maintain a basic transit system. If the government can't run a bus company, they're never go run the state properly.

He described the hearing as "kabuki theater," accusing officials of going through the motions while ignoring the voices of the people most affected. He criticized the pattern of low-income residents in Woonsocket bearing the brunt of service cuts and called for decisions to be based on actual route usage and need rather than generalized data or political convenience.

Brien urged the state to leverage available funds and run an efficient, people-centered transit system. He stressed that effective public transportation was foundational to running the state properly and that the impact of these cuts would be deeply felt by the very communities officials were supposed to serve—unlike those making the decisions, who would get in their car and drive home unaffected. He concluded by urging decision-makers to take the needs of Woonsocket residents seriously when finalizing their plans.

**Randall Rose, a Providence and a member of the Kennedy Plaza Resilience Coalition**, stated that the cuts are completely unacceptable and will affect many routes he relies on. RIPTA was forced into these cuts due to insufficient funding from state politicians, and no matter how RIPTA tried to adjust, serious reductions were unavoidable. Randall emphasized that RIPTA did not want to make these cuts but had to work within the limited budget provided by the government.

He urged attendees not to only voice complaints to RIPTA but to contact state politicians directly, especially those in top leadership positions like the governor and legislative leaders who control the budget. He encouraged bus riders to call and leave messages with their representatives and to join local bus rider groups to strengthen advocacy. Randall believes that with enough pressure, the cuts could be reversed and service expanded, but it requires ongoing public action.

**Kara Provost, a Pawtucket resident**, spoke as a concerned citizen about the impact of RIPTA service cuts. She noted that many people likely couldn't attend the meeting because they had no bus access. Her son, who lives in Providence, relies on public transit to get to work and to access healthcare in Woonsocket. With only one car shared between him and his wife, the bus is essential for their daily needs, a reality for many people.

She highlighted the environmental importance of public transportation and said that, although she has the luxury of having a car, she tries to walk, bike, or use the bus whenever possible. She believes that with a better-funded RIPTA, the state, despite its small size, could offer stronger transit options and become a leader in environmental responsibility.

Public transit not only enables people to get to work but also provides jobs, such as bus drivers. RIPTA has been underfunded and the burden lays not with the agency but with state leadership. She urged RIPTA to communicate to government leaders that there is a strong demand for public transportation, and demand will increase if buses run more frequently and if previously cut routes are restored.

**Woonsocket City Councilor Kristina Conteras Fox** is strongly opposed to the proposed RIPTA service cuts and echoed the concerns raised by others at the hearing. These cuts will directly impact workers, individuals attending medical appointments, job training programs, and those visiting family. The proposed changes could add up to an hour to daily commutes, especially on heavily used routes like 54 and 87 between Pawtucket and Providence and Flex. These buses are as full as the R-Line. Many residents who will be affected weren't able to attend the meeting due to poor health or mobility issues. Without proper service, trips from East Woonsocket to a downtown medical provider like Thundermist could become as difficult as traveling to Newport or Cranston. She criticized the failure of the General Assembly to approve an additional \$10 million for RIPTA and called on the governor to use his discretion to close the funding gap. She suggested that while service cuts might be the easiest solution for those holding the purse strings, they would cause real harm to cities like Woonsocket, which are already struggling to meet budget needs and cannot continue to place additional burdens on residents and taxpayers. Drawing on her past work with the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, she shared that food insecurity was widespread across all communities, and these cuts could not have come at a worse time. She urged decision-makers to examine the cuts closely and consider their full impact on well-used, essential routes like the 54 and 87, arguing that such reductions would undermine efforts to improve the state and its transportation infrastructure.

**An anonymous attendee** stated that people, especially the elderly, will suffer in the heat and the cold if they have to wait 80 minutes for a bus. Vulnerable riders will die in the streets because of the proposed cuts.

**Antonio LaChance, a Woonsocket resident**, said that Route 54 is the only way for him and his sister to get to the bank in Park Square.

**Mark McElroy, a Woonsocket resident** who commutes to Providence for work, is strongly opposed to the proposed RIPTA service cuts. Traveling is already difficult with traffic congestion on Rte. 146. He pointed out that many people assumed everyone had access to a car, which was far from the truth for many transit riders. He criticized the RIPTA handout summarizing the changes, noting that it was filled with reductions and eliminations and offered no real solutions. He called the explanation of revenue shortfalls and service cuts "government talk" and rejected it, arguing that RIPTA was not a business but a public service accountable to the people—its riders. Antonio shared that he is simply someone trying to get to work and make a living. He emphasized that his struggles were likely shared by many others in the room and described the proposed cuts as absurd, obscene, and unacceptable. He concluded by urging RIPTA to find a real solution, stressing that no one rides the bus for fun; they ride because they have to.

**With no further comments, the hearing ended at 6:30 PM.**

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July 28, 2025  
Woonsocket  
1700 session

## COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Lotus Kachina Phoenix

Address: [REDACTED] Woonsocket, RI 02895

Thank you for attending RIPTA's public hearing. Please use this sheet for any comments or questions you may have. Thank you.

As someone who relies completely on RIPTA to get to doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, & general life situations these proposed cuts would be devastating! I have to travel from & throughout Woonsocket ~~then~~ Providence, East Providence, Pawtucket, North Providence, etc. These cuts would seriously ~~hamp~~ <sup>hamper</sup> my ability to get the care I need, to get to the places I need to rely on for survival & also shut my sister as well! She, like me, is completely disabled and we both can not drive for medical reasons nor is for washing & carrying things here, there, and everywhere an option! If these cuts go through you are effectively <sup>handing</sup> ~~handing~~ my sister & I both a death sentence! Please getting around to work, appointments, the supermarket, etc. is already tough enough - please don't make it that much harder!!! This really is people's lives that will be impacted deeply!!!

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## COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Steven Can

Address: [REDACTED]

Woonsocket RI 02895

Thank you for attending RIPTA's public hearing. Please use this sheet for any comments or questions you may have. Thank you.

I understand why you have to change things but to eliminate  
RTs is not fair. <sup>How</sup> are people like myself get around  
<sup>alone</sup> I can't afford to take cabs and ubers to work or  
for pleasure. Please don't eliminate bus routes.

Thank you

marketing@ripta.com

June 28, 2025  
Woonsocket  
1700 session

## COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Sue Langlais

Address: [REDACTED]

Woon

Thank you for attending RIPTA's public hearing. Please use this sheet for any comments or questions you may have. Thank you.

For the smallest state in the U.S.  
why do we have such a hard time  
running a public transportation. Many  
people in Woon. depends for work, school,  
shopping, doctors. People who work  
they may not have understanding issues  
if they have to change bus and may lose  
their jobs.

Come on Woon with us, Fight for  
US we need RIPTA  
without these big cuts & charges