



RIPTA Public Hearing – Proposed Service Changes
Barrington Public Library, 281 County Road, Barrington, RI
Wednesday, August 6, 2025
12 PM – 1:30 PM

RIPTA staff in attendance: Edward Brown, Tim McKenna, Cristy Raposo Perry, Greg Harris, Joe Philbin, Ken Vinacco, John Chadwick, Jim Vincent, Sara Furbush, CJ Headley, and Nicky Mudryy

Board members in attendance: James Leach and Bernard Georges

Elected Officials in attendance: Representative June S. Speakman

On Wednesday, August 6, 2025, twenty-one (21) members of the public attended. Twelve (12) made oral comments. Two (2) provided written comments.

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

Oral comments were provided as follows:

Kenny Uong, a Providence resident, spoke out against proposed service cuts to several bus routes, including those he uses (the R-Line and Route 1), as well as many others across the state. These cuts will negatively impact all riders—students, seniors, and people with disabilities—who depend on public transit for essential services like work, school, and healthcare. Many students at URI, Providence College, and Brown University are not on campus right now and may not be aware that they will lose bus service. The proposed service cuts would lead to significantly longer wait times, up to 80 minutes on weekends on some routes, forcing riders to wait in harsh winter conditions.

He criticized Governor McKee for underfunding RIPTA, calling the cuts a result of the state's failure to allocate necessary resources, despite a \$14.3 billion budget. Chronic underfunding of transit not only deepens the housing crisis, but it weakens the local economy and undermines the fight against the climate crisis. He encouraged attendance at a rally that evening at Kennedy Plaza in Providence. He believes transit is essential.

Janice Douglas, a Pawtucket resident and senior citizen, relies heavily on public transportation and regularly uses 10 different bus lines: 1, 35, 60, 71, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 92, and the R-Line. She will not be able to get her prescription medications with the proposed cuts to weekend service.

Service reductions will lead to overcrowding, and access for senior citizens will become severely limited. Particularly concerning is the change to the Route 73, which will no longer stop at the Leon Mathieu Senior Center - a vital destination for many older residents.

Janice urges government officials to take immediate action. Public transportation is a necessity for seniors, not a luxury. She called for the restoration of funding and a return to full service, especially on weekends, to ensure seniors and others who depend on transit are not left behind.

Joanne Devoe, a Warren resident, emphasized that many people rely on buses as a fundamental service to get to work. While she is retired and currently doesn't depend on transit, she acknowledges that as she gets older and driving becomes more difficult, buses will likely become essential for her as well.

She shared the example of her neighbor, a professor at RISD, who depends on the Warren bus that runs down Main Street to get to work. Reliable transit service enables people to stay connected to employment and their communities, as long as the service is dependable. Joanne believes RIPTA is being run as efficiently as possible under the circumstances, but stresses that the state must provide enough funding to maintain and improve service. RIPTA needs more money.

Tom Padwa, a Warren resident, is not angry with RIPTA, but with the Governor and the State Legislature for failing to provide the necessary funding for public transit. As part of a one-car family, Tom chose his home specifically because of its proximity to Route 60 bus service.

He said that public transit is not a profit center; it is part of the state's cost of doing business. Like a circulation system, it keeps the state moving. Thousands of Rhode Islanders rely on buses every day to get to work, medical appointments, and shopping.

He added that the state is spending tens of millions to move the bus hub in Providence while claiming there's no money to maintain regular bus service. He urged attendees to direct their concerns toward lawmakers at Smith Hill and in Providence. RIPTA must be fully funded.

Rachel Quint, a North Providence resident, shared that as a mother to a one-year-old, she chose to raise her son in the city because of all the art and beauty that Providence has to offer. Originally from San Diego, she explained that RIPTA is their only means of accessing Providence and staying connected. She emphasized that public transit is part of the "village" that society promises to families; it supports safety, connection, and opportunity. The proposed service cuts will disproportionately impact Black and Brown communities, who rely heavily on transit for daily life. As citizens, she believes it's our responsibility to support our neighbors and prioritize the needs of those who depend on RIPTA the most. She strongly urged the RIPTA Board to not allow these route changes and cuts and instead focus on how they can reach more people who need public transit.

Miles Simmons, a Riverside resident and veterinary assistant in downtown Providence, depends on Route 33 to get to work every day. Miles also regularly uses Route 1 and other bus lines to visit family and simply get out of the house. Miles emphasized that he, like many others, has no alternative transportation. “If I can’t take the bus, I’m not going,” Miles said, noting rideshares are costly. While service cuts might save money in the short term, Miles warned they will isolate people from work, leisure, and daily life, impacting riders, drivers, and even clients at work. Miles called the cuts “detrimental to the state” and “the wrong decision,” urging state leaders to prioritize fully funding RIPTA in the future.

Judy Byrnes, a Bristol resident, stated that RIPTA is an *essential public service* - emphasizing the importance of each of those three words. Rhode Island is a very small state and without a really robust public transportation system, the state cannot remain economically competitive or attract new businesses. Tourism revenue, particularly from Newport, plays a major role in supporting the state’s economy. Judy highlighted that this tourism is unsustainable without key bus routes like Route 60 and local service in Newport.

RIPTA also plays a vital role in civic engagement; it allows her to get to the State House to testify and meet with legislators. She stressed the importance of intermodal transportation, including bike racks and connections to other services.

Having lived on Aquidneck Island for 45 years before moving to Bristol (a decision influenced by Route 60 access), Judy pointed out that removing bus shelters on the island was a step backward. Shelters are essential to encouraging people to choose transit over driving. She also mentioned the Newport Gateway Park-and-Ride discount for bus riders should be promoted and suggested that a free bus route would have been more effective than a ferry when the Washington Bridge closure first happened.

Mayra Paulino, a Barrington resident, relies on public transportation, which already limits where she can live and work within the state. She mentioned Massachusetts’ implementation of a millionaire’s tax, which has generated billions of dollars to fund initiatives like school lunches and free bus service. “We need more buses, not less. It would promote equity, improve commute times and traffic, help protect the environment and reduce high asthma rates.”

Randall Rose, a Providence resident and member of the Kennedy Plaza Resilience Coalition, spoke out against the proposed service cuts. He emphasized that RIPTA is not responsible for the cuts; the real issue lies with state leadership, which provided \$10 million less than RIPTA requested. With this funding gap, service cuts are unavoidable and will severely impact riders.

He pointed out that major funding decisions are made not by RIPTA or most legislators, but by the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the Senate President. These leaders often “test” public reaction by underfunding services and only respond if there’s significant public backlash. To fight the cuts, he urged people to call their state legislators and press them to lobby the top leadership for restored funding. He also encouraged joining local bus advocacy groups saying collective action makes politicians take riders more seriously.

He noted that the Senate recently voted on restoring the \$10 million RIPTA needs, but the measure failed. Some local senators voted in favor, while others, including Senate President Lawson, voted against it. He hopes those who voted no will reconsider and that continued public pressure can stop the cuts before they go into effect this September.

Lorraine Savard, a Central Falls resident and former Barrington resident, attended the public hearing in Pawtucket. She questioned how the Board could possibly review the many hours of public testimony from 12 hearings and still make a final decision by 9:30 the next morning. She called it a monumental task for the Board to accomplish, unless the decision on the cuts has already been made.

Savard criticized the elimination of “fun” weekend routes to destinations like Narragansett and Newport on weekends. The temporary disruptions, followed by service cuts in September, will upset and confuse riders and ultimately hurt ridership.

Grant Dulgarian, Providence resident, is opposed to the service cuts, emphasizing their negative impact on efforts to combat climate change. He pointed out that transportation is the largest source of carbon emissions in Rhode Island, contributing roughly 40% of the state’s total. Grant argued that instead of reducing service, RIPTA and the state should be working to *increase* ridership through better outreach—like mailing bus schedules directly to residents in service areas—and making transit more convenient for people with busy lives. He criticized the state’s broader transportation priorities, especially the costly Washington Bridge replacement project, now estimated at over \$400 million. Grant proposed that, rather than pouring money into highway infrastructure, the state should invest in alternatives like rail service between Providence and Newport. He called for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to explore the environmental and economic benefits of rail transit as a long-term solution. Ultimately, he urged state leaders to take a more informed, sustainable, and rider-focused approach to transit policy.

Representative June S. Speakman thanked attendees for directing their frustration at elected officials, not RIPTA itself. She asked for clarification on how public testimony from the hearings would be compiled and presented to the RIPTA Board.

As a Warren resident who lives near Route 60, she emphasized that this route is an essential lifeline for riders to get from Providence down to Newport. It serves two universities, multiple businesses, senior centers, and her own family. She personally understands the importance of Route 60 and stressed that there can be no meaningful economic development or social interaction without reliable public transit.

Representative Speakman urged the Board to listen closely to what the public has said and to take into account the essential service that public transit provides.

With no further comments, the hearing ended at 1:30 PM.

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Kenny Uong
Address: Providence, RI 02906

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

- Please consider retaining Route 69 service at least between URI and Salt Pond Plaza in Narragansett
 - When classes are in session, consider keeping weekend service on Route 55 and Route 50 to Bryant University (55 serves Fatima Hosp, 50 serves Amtrak too.)
 - Please consider keeping Route 95X to Westerly. Amtrak too. is expensive. Route 204 Flex won't have any connections if Routes 69 and 95X are eliminated
 - Please keep weekend service on Route 71 to serve the Broad St. corridor in Central Falls and Valley Falls
 - Keep weekend service on Route 14 to Newport so Jamestown can have transit service.
 - Keep Route 92 as is - but if have to split, keep weekend service on Route 91. Fox Point needs service !!
 - Keep Route 16 service on Sundays - Shops along Bald Hill Rd.
 - Keep Route 68 to serve DHS office in Middletown + YMCA
- Flex 231 proposed for elimination as well so please keep 68.

marketing@ripta.com

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name:

Pat Mabe

Address:



Providence, RI 02906

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

I do not appreciate the cancellation of a direct route from Riverwood Place to RI College (Route 92) forcing my son to switch buses at Kennedy Plaza & possibly miss out to get to school on time for class. OK to make hourly passes. Please bring back the direct bus from Eastville to RIC weekdays.

Thanks,

Pat