



RIPTA Public Hearing – Proposed Service Changes
Kingston Free Library, 2605 Kingstown Road, Kingston, RI
Wednesday, July 30, 2025
5 PM - 6:30 PM

RIPTA staff in attendance: Edward Brown, Steve Colantuono, Joe Philbin, CJ Headley, Sara Furbush, and Jane Williams.

Elected Officials in attendance: South Kingstown Town Council Member Sharon Davis

On Wednesday, July 30, 2025, forty-seven (47) members of the public attended. Eighteen (18) made oral comments. Eight (8) provided written comments.

Director of Service Planning and Scheduling Edward Brown opened the hearing by giving an overview of RIPTA's financial situation and budget deficit. He then followed with an overview of proposed service changes.

Oral comments were provided as follows:

Scott Molloy, a former RIPTA bus driver, longtime transit advocate, and retired URI professor of labor relations, urged immediate political action to save public transit in Rhode Island. He emphasized that RIPTA's challenges are not due to mismanagement, but a political failure. Scott warned that once bus routes are cut, they are rarely restored, calling the current crisis "a public execution of mass transit." He encouraged attendees to pressure their legislators by phone, email, or even in the supermarket and demand an emergency session of the General Assembly to restore funding. He closed by saying, "If we're quiet or timid, RIPTA is gone."

Shelley O'Connor, URI's Office of International Students and Scholars, spoke about the essential role Route 69 plays for international students. She described the route as a lifeline, providing access to grocery stores, pharmacies, and off-campus housing for those without cars. She stressed that cutting the route would negatively impact both student well-being and the university's ability to recruit and retain international students. Public transportation is a major factor for students deciding where to study and eliminating this service would create a serious barrier for those adjusting to life in a new country.

Caroline Kaercher, a North Kingstown resident, spoke passionately about the essential role of Routes 14, 66, and 69 in South County. Many riders, including students, seniors, and families, depend on RIPTA for access to work, school, medical appointments, food pantries, and more. For many, the bus is their only transportation option.

She described the buses as generally reliable and safe, with friendly drivers. She stressed that alternatives like Uber and Lyft are unaffordable, unreliable, and not viable for families with children due to car seat restrictions. Flex service, while helpful, is often booked and does not run on weekends. Caroline urged RIPTA to offer consistent daily service with early and late buses, rather than reduced or irregular weekend schedules. She warned that cutting service will isolate residents, especially in areas like Newport and Jamestown, where walking across bridges is not an option. “We need more service,” she said, “not less.”

Shubhaun Chomal, a graduate student at URI, spoke on behalf of the international student community. Most graduate students earn modest stipends and cannot afford cars, making RIPTA routes like the 64 and 69 essential. The university’s subsidized housing, already a key resource, is being demolished next year, forcing students to move farther away, increasing their reliance on transit. Cutting these routes will isolate students from the rest of the state and could harm Rhode Island’s reputation as a hub for quality education. “My own ability to continue my studies is now in question,” he said, urging leaders not to eliminate these lifelines.

Dan Convey, a South Kingston resident, shared that during times when his car broke down, Route 69 was his only way to get to school and work. He is a former URI Student who commuted to campus Pawtucket. While he acknowledged he has backup options, like help from family, many students, especially international students, do not. He emphasized that public transit is a necessity for accessing essentials like food, pharmacies, doctors, and even basic quality of life. Many people in Rhode Island, particularly in lower-income and immigrant communities, are not eligible for driver’s licenses and rely entirely on RIPTA. Dan warned that ongoing gentrification is already pushing low-income residents further from jobs and services, and eliminating transit routes only deepens that divide. He also pointed out the contradiction in offering free education at CCRI while simultaneously removing students’ ability to get there.

Logan Pollack, a South Kingstown resident and a URI student, expressed concern for friends and local veterans who rely on Route 69 to get to school and work. He emphasized that cutting or reducing service would make it harder for students to attend classes and exams on time, especially with already limited bus frequency. Logan works with veterans and calls it unacceptable to deny them access to jobs and essential services. URI’s relative isolation makes transit access even more critical, not only for daily needs but also for connecting to larger hubs like Providence and Newport. He chose URI over schools like UMass and UConn in part because of the public transportation options and warned that future students may not make the same choice if service is cut. Drawing on personal experience, he added that when bus routes are eliminated, they rarely return and entire communities suffer.

Hopkinton Town Councilor Sharon Davis, a member of the Kingston Congregational Church, spoke in support of URI students, faculty, and staff who rely on RIPTA service. She urged RIPTA not to eliminate Route 95x and Flex 301, the only transit options available in Hopkinton. She also asked that weekend and holiday service on Flex 203 be preserved, and that Saturday service on Route 64 not be cut. She opposed reductions to Routes 64 and 66, emphasizing that URI students depend on them.

Anastasiia Inomura, an Exeter resident and mother of three, spoke about how eliminating Route 69 will completely cut her family off from essential care and daily life. Her family relies on the bus to access pediatricians, the YMCA, libraries, grocery stores, and friends in Wakefield and Narragansett. Route 69 is their only transportation option south of Exeter. Carpooling or rideshares aren't viable, Uber doesn't accommodate three car seats and a stroller. As a foreigner, the process of getting a car and license would take years and money her family doesn't have. The bus isn't a backup plan; it is the only option. Anastasiia urged RIPTA to consider alternatives like reduced frequency or prioritizing key stops instead of fully eliminating the route. She also asked that Flex 203 be preserved as a minimum lifeline for her area.

Melinda Lemos-Jackson, a South Kingstown resident, spoke on behalf of her 30-year-old son with autism, who cannot drive. The Flex bus has given him a level of independence and access to the community that he wouldn't otherwise have, enabling him to go to urgent care, CVS, and the grocery store without relying on his parents. Weekend and holiday service are essential for adults with disabilities, especially those working in retail jobs that do not follow a Monday to Friday schedule. Seniors in South County rely on Flex for critical needs like grocery shopping, particularly during the winter when other options are limited. Melinda urged RIPTA and state leaders to consider how cutting Flex service will isolate vulnerable populations who depend on it to live, work, and participate in their communities.

Tony Jacob, a South Kingstown resident and URI student, studies and works at the Bay Campus. Route 64 is the only transit option that connects him to that location. The bus allows him to attend classes, participate in campus life, and commute to work with ease. Any reduction in service or frequency will disrupt his education and job, forcing him to reconsider his entire schedule. He is opposed to the service reductions.

Jacob Greene, a Providence resident and graduate student, shared his deep reliance on RIPTA as both a student and researcher. He regularly rides multiple routes, including Route 66 and 57, to commute, attend soccer games, and stay connected to the community. Long transfers already make his round trip up to four hours, and further cuts would worsen this burden, taking time away from his family and health. He recounted a personal story of taking the bus to visit a mentor in the hospital, something only made possible through public transit. Jacob emphasized that RIPTA is more than just transportation; it's a lifeline for Rhode Islanders. He urged everyone to contact their legislators and make noise to protect these essential services, adding that this isn't just a funding issue, but a matter of political will.

El Hartshorn, a recent URI graduate from URI and former undergraduate representative for Disability Access on campus, spoke strongly against the proposed elimination of Route 69. The route directly serves a local homeless shelter and food pantry, resources critical to low-income, disabled, and unhoused individuals. She challenged RIPTA's claim that eliminating Route 69 would not impact low-income communities, pointing out that the alternative, Route 14, still requires a 45-minute walk, often on roads that are not accessible for those with mobility challenges or young children. El also emphasized that many URI students, including herself, rely

on Route 69 to attend school. Cutting it would force students to reconsider whether they can afford to continue their education in Rhode Island. She urged RIPTA to reinstate the route if any additional funding is secured.

India Awe, a South Kingstown resident, spoke in opposition to RIPTA service cuts, noting that while she personally would be fine, many others would not. She highlighted the poor timing of public hearings, held midday or early evening on weekdays, as a barrier to true accessibility. India rides Route 65x to Providence daily but drove to the meeting. Transit access is directly tied to community well-being, allowing people to get to work, school, medical appointments, and even the beach. She urged RIPTA not to eliminate or reduce essential routes, stating, "People should be able to get wherever they want to go."

Susan Candon, a Wakefield resident, has relied on RIPTA for 23 years to commute to her job at Brown University. She spoke in strong support of maintaining Routes 65x and 69, calling them a "blessing" to the community. She noted that ridership was high before 2015 and that while the pandemic shifted commuting habits, many, including herself, still depend on the bus to get to work. Brown University offers bus passes and supports reducing vehicle traffic for environmental reasons and due to limited parking in Providence. She suggested maintaining at least one morning and one evening 65x trip, and floated ideas like using trolley buses or increasing fares to keep service running. While she acknowledged that some Route 69 trips run with low ridership, she urged RIPTA not to eliminate the route. Instead, she proposed scaling service to business hours to better serve low-income residents and URI students. She closed by asking RIPTA to evaluate community needs individually and avoid punishing riders who rely on and value public transit.

Kelsey Sawyer, a Wakefield resident and mother of two young children, shared that RIPTA has been essential to her family. Riding the bus to work in Providence has allowed them to manage with one car, enabling her husband to stay home with their kids. She stressed that losing routes like the 66, 69, or 65X would disrupt their lives and limit their ability to participate in the community, whether attending school events, helping neighbors, or caring for family. "Public transportation," she said, "is the lifeblood of a vibrant and connected community."

Heidi Travers, a Narragansett resident and a longtime 65x rider, expressed deep concern over the disproportionate service cuts facing South County. She criticized the framing of these cuts as a matter of choosing which populations "deserve" transit more, emphasizing that *all* communities deserve access to a reliable bus service. Terminating Route 14 in North Kingstown will severely limit people's ability to access basic necessities like grocery stores. Once routes, riders, and park-and-ride lots are lost, they rarely return—along with the political momentum they create. While she is able to drive, she stressed that many others do not have that option. She urged attendees to contact their legislators and called for consideration of a fare increase, pointing out that RIPTA fares have remained nearly unchanged for almost two decades.

Nancy DiPietro, U.S. Department of Labor employee for 31 years, commutes daily from Charlestown to Providence and has relied on RIPTA's commuter service for years. She strongly

opposes the elimination of commuter express routes like the 65x, arguing that these buses are essential for getting taxpayers to work - people whose jobs fund the very services RIPTA supports. She criticized the plan as political mismanagement, pointing out that traffic is already overwhelming and more cars on the road will only make it worse. She also questioned the lack of outreach to potential riders, especially federal employees recently pulled off telework who are eligible for subsidized transit yet were never contacted. Many regular riders are over 40 years old, a demographic protected by age discrimination laws, and yet they will be left without a way to get to work. The proposed cuts are not just short-sighted, they're shameful. Lastly, she pointed out the poor planning of the hearings themselves, saying the timing and notice made them nearly inaccessible to the very riders most impacted.

Jim Altrakhani, a Hopkinton resident, spoke in support of preserving Flex Route 301, which serves the rural areas of Hope Valley and Hopkinton. He emphasized that this route is essential for low-income and elderly residents, many of whom are wheelchair users or rely on canes. Flex 301 provides vital access to places like Stop & Shop and Walmart; destinations that are otherwise difficult to reach in such a rural part of the state. The accessibility features of the buses, such as wheelchair lifts, make this route a lifeline for those who depend on it. He urged RIPTA to keep Flex 301 intact.

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

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July 30, 2025
1700 session
S. Kingston
Library

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Pooja Pednekar

Address: [REDACTED] South Kingstown, RI
02879,

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

Hello! I am a user of Bus #69 daily to and fro on Main St. As I work as Research Assistant ^{in UKI} under critical times for the country & time for environmental justice, I do not own a car & have been relying on the bus to not only be it's comfortable but also to lower my part for carbon cost for the country & a researcher. The bus I take is the only way I could visit the & commute to UKI. The Narragansett/Gaithers Route is not only the only resource for public to afford in these challenging times especially who live long distance. If this decision is enacted it would not serve the community but work towards heavy traffic coming through & towards UKI. I also take 69 to Bay Campus of UKI which would prohibit me commute to work efficiently. could-

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COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: ANANYA PUDRY

Address: [REDACTED] KINGSTON, RI 02881

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

is to doctor's appointments

I work at URI & I ^{live} ~~live~~ in Kingston. I use the 69 route to get to work everyday. The RIPTA bus system allows me to get groceries, run other errands, get to the airport, among other functions. The frequency & convenience of the routes have made travel around the state more accessible for me & many other riders. I do not own a car due to financial barriers, and the reduction/elimination of routes would significantly impair my quality of life. Rhode Island's bus service was one of the main reasons I decided to move here, and these service changes may become the reason I move. I would rather RIPTA consider a marginal fare hike ~~rather~~ than completely remove such an essential public service.

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July 30, 2025
5 PM session
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COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Heidi Travers

Address: [REDACTED]

Narragansett, RI

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

As a frequent 65X rider I am very distressed with the route's elimination. The proposed elimination means I will not be able to take the bus to work. Furthermore the changes cut off South County from Providence. The 14 bus is not a viable option ~~as~~ given its travel time to Providence and its frequency as it is being eliminated in Narragansett. On a larger basis, cutting off service to the park-n-rides statewide, excites a constituency of riders to RIPTA potentially ^{eroding} support for RIPTA. On another note, cutting service to Wakefield, Galilee, etc. essentially eliminates South County service. ~~and~~ Access to grocery stores, etc. becomes more difficult for those without transportation.

20% reduction in service - ~~would~~ not being applied fairly to South County - 65X would be eliminating 1-2 routes per day

Consider a more equal reduction statewide along w/ fare increases

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Camille Woodring

Address: [REDACTED] Wakefield RI 02879

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

I ride the 69 to/from URI in order to attend college,
and eliminating this service means I'll have to walk hours
each direction in the winter.

Route 69 is ~~not~~ not listed as a "low-income route"
based on residents' income, but RIPTA's calculations don't
account for thousands of seasonal URI students who
take RIPTA seasonally. Most of these students are
away for the summer and will be blindsided by
these changes!!

Furthermore, several of my friends ride the 69 to and
from work everyday and are unable to attend these
meetings since they're at work. These cuts will
impact more people than you realize.

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COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

30 Jul 2025
13 session
S. Kingston
Library

Name: Christine Allan

Address: [REDACTED] South Kingston

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

We need more not less public transport in the USA
We are way behind ^{other} developed countries in providing
public transport
Using the bus is a great alternative to driving -
less costly, less polluting & more community building
If you remove this alternative, who will be
incubated to take the bus - when there is no bus.
If it is a financial decision, find the money elsewhere
or get a grant from RI foundation or someone
Rearrange your budget!
Do not eliminate Route #69 especially - it is
crucial for URI students, faculty & workers.

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: M. Khan!

Address: _____

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

I am a PhD student at URI. And I take the 69 at least twice a day everyday. It is my only source of commute URI and one of the main reasons of choosing URI for studies and it is a reason for ~~URI~~ many international students like my self.

The impact of eliminating RIPTA would be devastating to the student population at URI and I hope that would never happen. Thank You!

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RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Sharon Davis - Hopkinton Town Councilor

Address: [REDACTED] - KCC Church member

Hope Valley, RI 02832 lobbying for URI
students, teachers,
& workers who
use the bus.

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

① Please do not eliminate Routes Flex 301 & 95x (Park + Ride)
They are the only routes available in Hopkinton

② Please do not eliminate weekend/holiday service for
Route Flex 203 & do not eliminate Saturday service
for Route 64 - the URI students need them

③ Please do not reduce Route 64 & Route 66 →
the URI students need them

thank you for your understanding

Sharon Davis

20 July, 2025
5PM
SECTION
Library

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Jeanne Wettlaufer

Address: [REDACTED]

Wakefield, RI 02879

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

Eliminating any routes which give access to universities will only result in more cars on campus and for those who cannot afford a car, it will mean higher cost of housing to get close enough to walk to campus.

I live in Wakefield village and rent bedrooms in my primary residence to URI students. Mostly it is international students who arrive without a car or a means to get one. My location is ideal with the village close to walk to the stores and the bus 69 right at the bottom of the hill.

This has been the life of these students for the 15 years I have been hosting them.

To remove "69" would create a hardship for so many URI students living in South Kingston and Narragansett.

Eliminating "14" leaves residents without a way to get to stop+stop

Without "69" how will residents get to the Block Island →