



**RIPTA Public Hearing – Proposed Service Changes  
CCRI Newport, One John H. Chafee Blvd., Newport  
Tuesday, July 29, 2025  
12:00 PM – 1:30 PM**

**RIPTA staff** in attendance: Christopher Durand, Cristy Raposo Perry, Ken Vinacco, Joe Philbin, Greg Harris, Christel Chavez, Tim McKenna, CJ Headley, Nicky Mudryy and Sara Furbush

**Elected Officials** in attendance: Newport City Councilman Xaykham (Xay) Khamsyvoravong and Newport City Manager Colin Kennedy

On Tuesday, July 29, 2025, thirty (30) members of the public attended. Nineteen (19) made oral comments. One (1) 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:

**Cheryl Gilbert, a Newport resident**, lives in the North End and is a frequent rider of Routes 63 and 68. She is concerned about the proposed elimination of Route 68. She questioned the timeline of the changes, noting that RIPTA's website mentioned free service on Routes 67 and 68 running through October 31, and suggested that if the service is already funded, it shouldn't be subject to cuts. Eliminating Route 68 and Flex 231 will leave residents without transportation, especially for those who rely on DHS services in Middletown.

**Christopher Bove, a Warwick resident**, is concerned about the severe and disproportionate impact of transit service cuts on residents of Aquidneck Island and South County. He was born blind and had relies on public transportation, particularly Route 63. The proposed elimination of Sunday service on Route 63 will severely affect working families on the island who rely on weekend transit service for essential errands and to get to work. Route 64 is the only direct transit link between the island and the University of Rhode Island; without reliable service, students will be unable to commute to school. Proposed changes to Route 60, which alternates between East and West Main Roads, will create wait times of up to two hours for some riders. He stated that elected officials will one day be questioned for allowing these cuts to proceed, especially in light of significant state spending elsewhere and urges them to reconsider and prioritize transit affordability and accessibility.

**Kenny Uong, a Providence resident**, said that the proposed service cuts are catastrophic and would devastate both transit riders and workers who keep the system running. He lives near the R Line and Route 1.

He recommended maintaining weekend service on Route 14 to preserve transit access in Jamestown and East Greenwich, noting that West Bay and South County were already heavily impacted. He also urged RIPTA to retain the Narragansett segment of Route 14. Route 69 should not be eliminated as it maintains access to Wakefield, Peace Dale, and the surrounding areas. He said that Flex 203 service is already popular and often difficult to schedule; eliminating fixed-route options like Route 69 and parts of Route 14 will only increase pressure on the Flex system, potentially overwhelming it.

Kenny urged RIPTA to preserve Route 68 and Flex 231. Route 68 serves more than just beachgoers, it also connects riders to the DHS office in Middletown. Route 9x, which, though infrequent, provides a vital link to areas like Chepachet and Pascoag in northwest Rhode Island.

Finally, Kenny recommended maintaining weekend service for Route 71, which connects Cumberland and Pawtucket, and preserving Route 75, which connects Lincoln and Pawtucket. He emphasized that these routes are among the few transit options available in the Blackstone Valley and play an essential role in regional mobility.

**Peter Hallock, a Newport resident** and a senior citizen, stated that he frequently used Route 63 and found the proposed changes unusual. He expressed admiration for regular bus riders and questioned why the route couldn't be adjusted to run along East Main Road instead of facing major cuts. He criticized the removal of Sunday service, noting that Sunday routes were already limited, with service only starting after 10am. He urged officials to take a closer look at Route 63.

**Newport City Manager Colin Kennedy** thanked RIPTA and recognized its efforts to find efficiencies and minimize the complete elimination of routes, noting that the agency appeared to be approaching the process with empathy and care while approaching an eight-figure budget deficit

Eliminating Route 68, which connects residents from northern Newport to Easton's Beach, the YMCA, and the Department of Human Services in Middletown, runs counter to future goals set by the City of Newport and the Town of Middletown, particularly plans to renovate Easton's Beach, where the city plans to build up a dune and encourage people to use public transit, and expand services at the YMCA of Newport County. Bus service is critical to these services, especially for underprivileged populations.

Once service is fully eliminated, it is far more difficult to restore than to adjust an existing route. He urged RIPTA to look at these future goals and reconsider the complete elimination of Route 68 and instead explore ways to maintain aspects of the service in support of long-term community planning and accessibility.

**Randall Rose, a Providence resident 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.

**Emily Skeehan, a Portsmouth resident and representative of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee**, spoke in support of maintaining and improving public transportation. Drawing from her experience on a school committee, she acknowledged the rising transportation costs but emphasized the need for the state to prioritize and increase support for public transit.

She stressed that reliable transportation was especially critical during emergencies when evacuating the island, particularly for those without personal vehicles. Emily believes all residents, regardless of income level, should have access to transportation for work, school, and recreation. She highlighted Route 68 as a priority due to persistent traffic congestion in the area, noting that public transit helped reduce traffic, provided access to healthcare facilities, the YMCA (which her children used), and promoted community engagement.

Emily also emphasized the importance of ensuring North End students could reach Easton's Beach, framing it as essential for equitable recreation access and climate awareness.

She also agreed with previous comments about the 231 South Aquidneck Flex Zone and successful use of Route 65x. She suggested that cuts to Route 64 would be devastating for commuters from the island and for students traveling to the University of Rhode Island. The proposed elimination of Route 63 Sunday service will impact working families, access to shopping and the ability for community members to attend religious services. She urged elected officials to prioritize funding for public transit and restore service.

**Sarah Wilme, a Narragansett resident and graduate student**, is opposed to the proposed service cuts. Cuts to Route 69 will significantly harm URI students, many of whom rely on public transportation for access to work, healthcare, and essential services. She explained that her decision to live in Narragansett was intentional, because of its access to transit and a lower environmental impact.

Sarah emphasized that many non-residential students at URI have already signed leases for the year, unaware that they would soon lose access to critical bus service. With limited parking on campus, especially due to ongoing construction projects, a large portion of the student population, including many who live on campus, do not have cars and cannot afford alternatives like rideshare services.

Her roommates and peers rely on Route 69 to get to off-campus jobs and medical appointments, often arriving at work over an hour early just to accommodate the limited bus schedule. With URI's cap on student work hours and limited on-campus jobs, losing transit access would require students to pay for Uber trips, costing at least \$100 per week,, while earning a maximum of \$300 per week. These cuts would also limit access to URI's Bay campus.

Sarah warned that implementing these cuts in September, after students have already made housing and financial commitments, would leave many facing hardship. Students from Newport would be limited to two buses per day, essentially stranding them on campus. She added that this would further strain campus parking and make higher education in Rhode Island less accessible, especially for low-income students. She concluded by stating that one of the most common reasons prospective students hesitate to attend URI is not the location itself, but the lack of reliable, accessible transportation.

**Newport City Councilman Xaykham (Xay) Khamsyvoravong** shared an unrelated but relevant announcement; the Newport Birthing Center would not be closing. Major institutions across the state, including public agencies like RIPTA, and healthcare organizations, are under significant strain. What might seem like small budget cuts could become ongoing issues unless there is a shift in priorities, driven by public advocacy.

He believes the power of individual stories helps guide government and organizations to prioritize what they should be focused on. In the context of transit, he pointed out that routes like 68 and Flex are essential for middle- and working-class families to maintain employment, health, and live productive lives. He urged RIPTA to ensure that future transit changes and efficiency measures are not balanced on the backs of working and middle-class families.

**Irene Glasser, a Newport resident and professor at Brown University for the past 11 years,** spoke in strong support of RIPTA and voiced concern over the proposed service cuts. She frequently uses RIPTA, especially during inclement weather, and expressed appreciation for its availability.

Irene, who has lived in Rhode Island for 21 years, noted that many of her peers around the same age do not consider using RIPTA. She suggested that older adults who may no longer feel safe driving would benefit from taking public transit. Increasing ridership could have positive economic impacts for the state.

Originally from New York City, where she grew up using public transportation, Irene was pleased to find a RIPTA stop just half a block from her home after moving to Rhode Island. She reiterated her gratitude for the service and stated that she would continue to be a regular rider.

**Majorie Simmons, Newport resident,** is a retired senior who rides the bus, particularly Route 68. It is important during the summer months, as families without cars rely on the service to access the beach and other local destinations. Public transit helps reduce heavy summer traffic and is essential for her own travel, especially to the library where she volunteers. Margaret frequently uses Route 60 to connect to Route 68, which drops her off near the library, making her trips both convenient and reliable. The bus provides vital access for residents, including stops near City Hall, the courthouse, and the Department of Human Services building. For many without personal vehicles, it is a necessary lifeline. Margaret expressed concern over proposed service cuts, stating she hadn't realized how many people rely on the buses to reach places like URI and more. She called the service "wonderful" and stressed its importance to the local community.

**Jean Quinn, a Newport resident,** is opposed to service cuts to Route 67. She shared a recent experience of being without a car for a week, during which she relied on RIPTA to get around. Despite not being a regular bus rider, she had a really good experience, finding it easy and convenient to travel throughout Newport using West Main Road and East Main Road to go shopping and run errands. She praised the RIPTA app, describing the schedule as clear and easy to read. She found it ironic that RIPTA is considering changes to such a well-functioning service.

The more people use the bus, the better it will be for the community. She is hopeful that the public will not have to face potential service cuts like this again. She mentioned the new parking lot that was recently developed near the bridge ramp and RIPTA's bus stop there, highlighting its potential to reduce the number of cars on Newport's streets even further.

**Jimmy Winters, a Newport resident and President of the NAACP Newport County Branch** emphasized the importance of maintaining all current bus routes in the community, including those serving South County. Buses are a necessary means of transportation for the elderly, people with disabilities, working-class families, students, and anyone without access to a personal vehicle, both on the island and in other areas of the state. The NAACP requested that RIPTA keep all current bus routes to their community.

**Carmen Critz, a Newport resident,** regularly rides the bus and is opposed to the service cuts, particularly Routes 68 and 63. She relies on the bus to visit the library, go to the beach, and access the Department of Human Services (DHS). Individuals with disabilities use Route 68 to get to work or to restaurants located at the beginning of Aquidneck Avenue. On weekends, when some buses do not run, riders can take Route 63, get off near the rotary, and walk to nearby shops like Stop & Shop and Walmart. For residents in nearby housing who do not have any other means of transportation, Route 68 is a vital connection to the beach and local destinations like Miantonomi Park. Carmen concluded by saying it would be wonderful to preserve this important route.

**Jeff Mello, a Providence resident,** uses the bus on a daily basis. He believes the cessation of certain entire routes would alienate certain groups of people including students, people who are older, and people with disabilities.

**Rebeka Gomez, a Jamestown resident and Executive Director of Conexión Latina Newport,** shared a personal story to illustrate the human impact of RIPTA's proposed service cuts. Her husband's family is from Peru, and after 18 years, some of his relatives recently arrived in the United States. Their niece, who is living in Jamestown is a brain cancer survivor; she experiences mobility and balance challenges and cannot drive. She depends on public transit, specifically Routes 14 and 64, to travel from Jamestown to Newport for work, volunteering, and English classes. Cuts to these routes will be a devastating loss for her family.

Rebeka emphasized the broader impact on the Hispanic community in Newport, many of whom rely on public transit to get to work both on and off the island and are the backbone of the hospitality industry. Reducing Route 64 to just two trips per day will make Aquidneck Island nearly unlivable for many residents. The proposed cuts primarily affect evenings and weekends, times when Uber prices surge, making alternative transportation unaffordable. These changes will create more barriers for vulnerable communities, and she urged lawmakers and decision-makers to do everything they could to prevent the cuts.

**Barbara Henry, a Providence resident,** spoke about her previous advocacy efforts at the State House alongside others in the room, where they had called for increased funding for RIPTA. She expressed hope that the proposed service cuts would not go into effect in September and urged lawmakers to explore tax reforms to ensure that wealthier individuals contribute more of their share. She emphasized that people who work and volunteer, like many in the room, already contribute their fair share, and the burden should be more equitably distributed.

Barbara also voiced concern about how the proposed cuts could shape where people are able to live, and how they could reinforce feelings of exclusion, especially for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. She recounted deeply personal experiences of waiting over an hour and a half for a bus in the cold and rain with her son, feeling like a terrible mother due to unreliable bus service. She stressed that many people ride with family, and long waits can be especially difficult and painful.

Public transportation should be accessible to everyone.

**Ted Critz, a Newport resident,** echoed the concerns raised by his wife and others about the potential elimination of Route 68. He regularly rides Routes 60 and 68 almost every day. Route 68 passes key locations such as Third Beach near Bayside. He observed many hospitality workers wearing shirts for Wyndham Long Wharf and Newport Harbor Hotels using the bus for work, noting that they were likely unable to attend the meeting.

Though retired, Ted also uses Route 68 to avoid the hassle and high cost of parking downtown, which could be \$30 to \$40. He urged RIPTA to consider not completely cutting Route 68, emphasizing how many people rely on it.

**Mary Alice Smith, a Newport resident and member of The Village Common of RI**, spoke about the positive impact of Route 67 in reducing tourist car traffic around Newport, noting that buses often fill quickly near Salve Regina University due to high demand. Effective public transit is crucial for meeting statewide goals to reduce carbon emissions. She is frustrated with the traffic congestion on local streets and highways and believes that frequent public transit service is key to encouraging people to leave their cars behind. She agreed with earlier speakers about the challenges faced by those without transportation, especially in winter, and expressed hope that ridership on Route 68 will grow similarly to Route 67, though people need to be made aware of it. She personally enjoys using the bus to avoid traffic on Bellevue Avenue and to reach events or go downtown, giving people alternatives to driving. Many Newport residents who are mobility-challenged or economically disadvantaged rely on these bus routes to work and live. She is opposed to the cuts and stressed the importance of supporting public transit for all community members.

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

## COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Kenny Vond  
Address: [REDACTED] 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.

- Route 14 - keep weekend service so Jamestown + East Greenwich can have service. Please keep Narragansett branch of Route 14 as well
- Route 69 - keep route to provide service to Wakefield, Peace Dale and Narragansett
- Flex 203 service is currently popular so it's been difficult to even schedule a ride. Getting rid of Route 69 service (and 14 to Narragansett) would just shift demand over to 203 - possibly overwhelming it.
- Routes 55 and 71 - keep weekend service - seen riders get on/off along Admiral and Broad Sts.
- Route 75 - retain service - one of the few options for Blackstone Valley
- Route 9X - may not run often but it provides crucial link to Gloucester, Citizens Bank employees
- Route 27 - keep at least Woonasquaket Ave. branch
- Route 1 - keep service to TF Green (Walmart on Post Rd. - would be 20 min. walk from Route 20 on Elmwood Ave.