



RIPTA Public Hearing – Proposed Service Changes
Pawtucket Public Library, 13 Summer Street, Pawtucket, RI
Thursday, July 31, 2025
5 PM - 6:30 PM

RIPTA staff in attendance: Christopher Durand, Edward Brown, Cristy Raposo Perry, Jim Vincent, Greg Harris, Sara Furbush, Christel Chavez, Zachary Agush, Joelle Kanter, Ken Vinacco, Joe Philbin, Paul Harrington, John Chadwick and Carlos Giglificio

Board Members in attendance: James Leach

Elected Officials in attendance: Senator Meghan E. Kallman, Senator Lori Urso, Representative Cherie L. Cruz, Representative Jennifer Stewart, Central Falls City Council President Protempore Alberto Rivas, and Central Falls Councilwoman At-Large Tatiana Baena

On Thursday, July 31, 2025, seventy-six (76) members of the public attended. Thirty-two (32) made oral comments. Six (6) provided written comments including a petition.

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

Oral comments were provided as follows:

Senator Meghan E. Kallman opposed the proposed RIPTA service cuts, emphasizing that transit funding was the responsibility of the General Assembly and the governor, not RIPTA. She recalled a prior community meeting in Pawtucket where a woman with epilepsy tearfully explained that losing her bus route would prevent her from getting to work, risking the loss of her home. Senator Kallman argued that this illustrated the real-life consequences of the cuts.

She regretted that state leadership had underfunded RIPTA for years, putting the agency in an impossible position. She called the proposed 44% reduction in Pawtucket service "untenable" for a city that heavily relies on transit. As the former sponsor of the free R-Line program, she noted that ridership increased by 48% during that fare-free pilot. Although she acknowledged current budget constraints, she insisted that meaningful conversations about economic development and environmental equity could not happen while dismantling public transit. Senator Meghan E. Kallman criticized the state for failing to cover RIPTA's \$15 million shortfall, less than 1% of the \$14 billion state budget, and called that failure appalling. She warned that reduced frequency on major routes like the R-Line and Route 1 would trigger a "transit death spiral," where lower service leads to lower ridership, further undermining the system.

Ultimately, she maintained that making an already lean agency “more efficient” was not the solution and reaffirmed her strong opposition to the cuts.

Walter Melillo, President/Business Agent of ATU Local 618, spoke in opposition to the proposed RIPTA service cuts. The 44% reduction in service in Pawtucket will be devastating not just to that community, but to surrounding areas as well. He questioned what the governor would say to people who rely on buses to access hospitals, therapy, school, and other daily necessities. Walter criticized the governor’s absence and urged him to confront the real consequences of these cuts on people’s lives. He stressed that public transit is an essential service and argued that taking it away will leave vulnerable people behind. He noted the hardship the cuts will bring to union members and riders alike, people he had worked alongside for 28 years. He praised RIPTA workers for their dedication and connection to the community, and he underscored the essential value of transit service. He expressed the union’s support for the public and urged everyone to contact their elected officials to oppose the cuts.

Lorraine Savard, a Central Falls resident, is concerned that cutting service would undermine goals related to clean air and sustainability. Reducing or making public transit uncomfortable will discourage ridership and hinder environmental progress. Due to her age, she might not always be physically or financially able to drive. If the bus service is reduced or eliminated in certain areas, she and others in similar situations would be left without viable transportation options.

Daniel Blanchette, a Pawtucket resident, expressed strong concern about proposed RIPTA service cuts. He primarily relies on Routes 76 and 35 to commute to his workplace at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence and occasionally uses Route 80. He depends on Route 35 on Sundays to attend church and to connect to buses heading toward North Providence. Daniel, a recent summa cum laude graduate with student loan debt, emphasized that losing Route 76 would severely impact his ability to get to work, access the credit union in downtown Pawtucket, and make student loan payments. He pointed out that Eastern Pawtucket had long been underserved by RIPTA, despite past efforts that had yet to show results.

He recalled a previous proposal during an earlier emergency service reduction plan, in which someone had suggested combining Routes 76 and 80 into a loop route—a solution he believed was worth revisiting. He stressed the importance of Routes 76 and 80 to the Central Avenue corridor, an area identified in the Transit Master Plan as having high unmet transit demand. He also noted ongoing apartment construction near a Route 76 stop at the Central-Daggett intersection, underscoring the need for continued service.

Blanchette concluded by stating that if Route 76 is cut, he will be forced to take an Uber home, an expense he cannot afford while managing student loan payments.

William Moitoso, a longtime rider of 40 years, expressed appreciation to RIPTA for not canceling Route 61x. He acknowledged the necessity of cuts but was grateful that this particular

route had been preserved. He suggested that when buses complete their final route at night, they should continue back to Providence while still accepting fares to generate additional revenue. He proposed merging other lines, such as Routes 73 and 51 in the Pawtucket area, to improve efficiency and coverage.

She works for the community library system in Providence and also teaches English as a second language and citizenship classes through SEIU, primarily serving immigrant communities in the city. She took Route 73 to attend the meeting, a line scheduled for elimination under the proposed cuts. She called the proposed service cuts “class warfare,” stating they would be catastrophic for working people like herself and the immigrants she taught. She questioned whether any cuts were being made to executive salaries at RIPTA and asked how often executives and board members actually used the service. She accused leadership of having no personal stake in the outcome, highlighting the CEO’s salary of \$178,000 as evidence of disconnect. She condemned the decisions as unacceptable and labeled the proposed changes as part of a deliberate “death spiral” meant to dismantle public transit entirely.

Randall Rose, a Providence resident and member of the Kennedy Plaza Resilience Coalition, emphasized that RIPTA is not to blame for the proposed service cuts, which stemmed from insufficient state funding. He explained that RIPTA had requested the necessary budget, but state leaders underfunded the agency by \$10 million, leading to potentially severe consequences like riders being homebound or unable to reach work. He urged attendees to direct their concerns not to RIPTA, but to top decision-makers - the Governor, House Speaker, and Senate President—who control the state budget. Randall encouraged people to call these officials, spread the word, and join rider advocacy groups to amplify public pressure and demand restored or expanded transit funding.

Zuleyma Gomez, Director of Constituent Services & Health for the City of Central Falls and a Pawtucket resident, spoke in both an official and personal capacity about the importance of reliable public transportation. She recalled her own experience as a RIPTA rider, relying heavily on the bus during her early college years to access work and education, an experience that shaped her understanding of transit as essential not just for convenience, but for opportunity and survival.

Sean M. Janson, a Pawtucket resident, witnesses that same daily dependence among Central Falls residents in his current role. As one of the most economically vulnerable communities in the state, many residents lack access to personal vehicles and rely entirely on RIPTA for work, medical appointments, and family care. Proposed service cuts, especially to Routes 71, 70, and 75, will have devastating consequences, not only for individuals but for the stability of the city itself.

He emphasized that residents are already doing everything they can to stay afloat; losing access to transportation will place them in an even more difficult position. He urged the Board and the state to seek creative solutions to close the funding gap, framing the issue as one of equity,

access, and dignity. For her and the community he serves, reliable public transportation is not a luxury, it is a lifeline.

Central Falls City Council President Protempore Alberto Rivas, spoke about the serious impact proposed cuts to Routes 71, 72, and 75 will have on the community, particularly its most vulnerable residents. Central Falls is a densely populated and diverse city where many people do not own cars and rely entirely on public transportation to reach medical appointments, grocery stores, jobs, schools, and to care for their families. Approximately 20% of the city's population is over the age of 65, many of whom live in senior housing facilities or participate in community programs that depend on RIPTA service. For these individuals, these bus routes are not optional, they are essential. Alberto stressed that eliminating these routes will severely limit access to food, opportunity, and basic necessities. As an elected representative, he urged the Board not to proceed with the cuts, stating that the community was willing to fight for equitable transit. Public transportation must be affordable and accessible for everyone.

Wanda Casiano, Central Falls Housing Authority Resident Service Coordinator, spoke on behalf of the residents and submitted a petition in response to the proposed RIPTA service changes. Many residents rely on public transit daily to get to work, school, medical appointments, and other essential needs. The proposed changes will have a serious impact on their ability to live independently and remain connected to their community. Wanda urged decision-makers to preserve services close to Central Falls and to collaborate with the community to find solutions that will keep transportation accessible and equitable.

Representative Cherie Cruz, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed service cuts. She shared her personal connection to Routes 73, 75, 76, 71, and 72, recalling how she relied on them throughout her life to travel to work, school, and other destinations across the city and to downtown Providence.

The proposed cuts will severely impact hundreds of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and working-class residents in her district. Public transportation is a basic necessity, essential for accessing medical appointments, grocery stores, religious services, community events, and family.

Eliminating these routes will have devastating effects on the community and contribute to broader issues such as the housing and homelessness crisis. She called on RIPTA, state leadership, and the governor to show urgency and take action, noting that funding had been found in the past for other priorities, such as corporate interests, while essential services for working people continued to be overlooked. She urged continued public pressure and advocacy to prevent the cuts and protect access to reliable transit.

Francis Boyd, a Pawtucket public housing resident, spoke about the serious impact the proposed service cuts will have on the community, particularly those who rely on Route 73. Many residents who live at St. Germain Manor and other public housing complexes depend entirely on that route as their only means of transportation.

Francis, who lives along Route 71, noted that while he was still healthy enough to walk or occasionally use Uber, others were not as fortunate. He emphasized that losing these routes will drastically affect the lifestyles of those who rely on them for social engagement and to maintain their mental and physical health. He hopes that steps will be taken to prevent the cuts and protect those who depend on the service.

Representative Jennifer Stewart voiced strong opposition to the proposed service cuts. She echoed the concerns raised by her colleagues, emphasizing that the cuts will be harmful not only to the people of Pawtucket and Rhode Island, but also to the state's economic stability and environmental future. Representative Stewart shared that her mother was a regular RIPTA rider and that she occasionally rides Route 1 herself. She highlighted the unreliability of the current system, noting that waiting 50 minutes or more for a bus that may not show up poses a serious risk, especially for those trying to get to work or go to important appointments. She warned that such conditions contribute to a "transit death spiral," where declining reliability drives people away from using public transportation altogether. Calling the cuts immoral, Representative Stewart stressed that they will disproportionately affect individuals already facing significant challenges, compounding hardship in a system that often fails to respect people's time. She urged the public to apply pressure on the General Assembly, its leadership, and Governor McKee to reject the proposed cuts and prioritize accessible, dependable transit for all.

Jacob Tokarewich, a Warwick resident, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed service cuts, emphasizing that even though he was not a frequent rider, the impact on his household would be significant. He and his partner had moved to Rhode Island from Illinois two years earlier, in part because of the state's extensive public transit system. His partner, who does not drive, relies on Route 1 to commute to her job at Brown University.

Jacob explained that while he worked in Groton, CT in the opposite direction, he found peace of mind knowing his partner had a safe and reliable way to get to and from work. He stressed that the proposed cuts will take away that sense of security for him and for many others who depend on the system.

He specifically highlighted the section Route 1 along Post Road that is proposed for elimination. This area included their apartment building, a senior living facility, a Walmart, and multiple medical facilities. Jacob questioned how non-drivers, including seniors and low-income workers, would access essential services without the bus.

He warned that these cuts would not just reduce service but actively punish already vulnerable communities, contributing to the so-called "transit death spiral" by undermining reliability and driving away ridership. Buses are not a luxury, but a lifeline providing access to employment, healthcare, and basic necessities.

Jacob concluded by expressing his deep concern about what the future would look like if the cuts moved forward, admitting he didn't know how his household, or others in similar situations, will adapt.

Senator Lori Urso expressed strong opposition to the proposed service cuts affecting her community and others reliant on public transit. She shared her personal experience of riding RIPTA buses for three years while attending school and acknowledged the benefits the system provides.

Senator Urso noted that this was the third public hearing she had attended and appreciated hearing from other constituents. She highlighted concerns raised about the lack of transparency regarding the expected savings from the cuts and their impact on RIPTA's deficit. She criticized the agency for not exploring alternative solutions, such as combining routes, using smaller buses, or alternating weekend services, pointing out that similar routes like the 76 and 80 in Pawtucket were both slated for elimination instead of being consolidated.

She mentioned a college student from Tiverton who suggested working with universities to increase fees slightly for student transit passes, and a resident from Cumberland who criticized the agency for cutting express routes that are vital for work, school, and medical access despite claims of preserving service.

Senator Urso also criticized the absence of data supporting the selection of routes for cuts and questioned why management positions were not being reduced alongside service cuts to help address the deficit. She emphasized that the deficit represented only about 6.5% of RIPTA's nearly \$150 million budget, suggesting the agency could temporarily operate with a small deficit while awaiting financial solutions such as surplus funds or freed-up debt revenue.

She expressed frustration that many vulnerable people, including those with disabilities, were being inconvenienced without transparent communication or clear alternatives. Senator Urso stressed the need for collaboration between the governor, legislature, and RIPTA to find solutions.

Finally, she noted that on June 20, the Senate had voted overwhelmingly to increase RIPTA's budget allocation by \$15 million beyond the governor's proposal, a legislative priority. She clarified that a proposed \$10 million amendment was voted down due to concerns it could jeopardize the entire budget. The Senator invited anyone interested to contact her for further discussion.

Tara Leininger, a Warwick resident and Brown University student and employee, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed service cuts. She expressed that, like many others, she relies heavily on Route 1 daily for commuting, as she cannot drive due to personal health reasons. Tara explained that she had chosen to live where she did specifically because of the bus accessibility, which she described as a lifeline rather than a convenience.

She noted that Brown University promotes free RIPTA rides for students, staff, and faculty, as many have been pushed out of Providence due to rising costs and now live in places like Warwick and Cranston, relying on Route 1 for their commutes. Tara is deeply concerned about the proposed elimination of the segment of Route 1 south of Shaw's of Warwick, which would force riders to walk a mile on Post Road to Shaw's, a dangerous and impractical option, especially during dark winter mornings and evenings.

Route 1 connects important residential, commercial, and industrial hubs, including Brown University, T.F. Green Airport, multiple businesses, and Rhode Island Hospital—her access to medical care. Cutting this route segment will isolate many Rhode Islanders from work, education, and community, stripping them of freedom, safety, and connection. She urged the Board to explore alternative solutions and implored everyone present to contact the governor and their representatives to oppose the cuts.

Jonathan Flynn, a longtime Pawtucket resident, spoke against the proposed service cuts, calling them not just changes but the evisceration of public transit in Rhode Island; the largest in RIPTA's history. He criticized the state's lack of leadership and long-term vision for transit, pointing out that Rhode Island ranked among the lowest in the nation for per capita public transit funding, relying almost entirely on the declining gas tax as its sole dedicated revenue stream.

Jonathan proposed several alternatives for generating sustainable transit funding. These included reinstating a car tax as an annual transit fee, dedicating a small portion of the state's sales tax to transit, and using land value capture to reclaim some of the economic benefit generated by new transit investments like the Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center. He argued that developers currently benefit from state subsidies and infrastructure investment without contributing to transit funding.

Reflecting on his personal experience, Jonathan shared that when he moved to Newport Avenue 13 years earlier, he gave up his car due to the area's strong transit access. For years, he commuted by walking, taking RIPTA, or using the MBTA to reach his work as a lobbyist at the State House and the airport. He remembered RIPTA as once being frequent, safe, and reliable.

Jonathon urged the state to reimagine public transit, drawing comparisons to successful systems in cities like Dublin, Boston, and New York, where people of all backgrounds rely on transit. He called for a system that serves everyone and emphasized the need for significant structural and funding changes to make that vision a reality.

Tom Cute, a Pawtucket resident and recently retired RIPTA bus driver, spoke against the proposed service cuts, drawing on his years of experience driving routes across the city. He acknowledged the effort made by state leaders to address the funding shortfall but emphasized that it fell short of what was needed.

Tom highlighted the long history of RIPTA routes, some dating back over 100 years to the streetcar and trolley days and stressed the importance of several specific routes.

Route 75 serves Martin Street's industrial area and the North Central Industrial Park, both critical for workers. It also connects to Lincoln Mall, Lincoln Tech, a major medical facility, the YMCA, and a bank's computer center. Route 73 travels along Middle Spring Avenue and ends at CCRI, supporting access to higher education and vocational training. It also serves Davies Vocational and the casino. Route 71 runs from Stop & Shop on Mendon Road through Valley Falls and Central Falls, into Pawtucket, and ends at Job Lot. Routes 76 and 80 serve the Darlington area and Central Avenue, which include small businesses and connects to the GATRA line near the former Apex. He also noted a new high school on Columbus Avenue will have no service if cuts proceed.

Tom urged RIPTA and state officials to consider a delay or pause in implementing the cuts, supporting Senator Urso's call for a temporary hold. He warned that the scope of the cuts would reduce RIPTA from a statewide system to a limited metro system. He called for additional funding or a pledge to revisit the issue during the fall budget reconciliation process. Tom closed by thanking past passengers and encouraging continued advocacy to preserve public transit.

Mary Healy, a resident Pawtucket's Quality Hill neighborhood, expressed strong agreement with the majority of speakers at the meeting. Drawing from her professional experience traveling to cities like Los Angeles, Boston, South Dakota, and Boulder, Colorado, she noted that these places all had thriving public transit systems. She emphasized that public transit is essential not just to prevent failure, but also to support opportunity and success. She shared her personal experience of taking the bus to URI, which allowed her to save money and continue her education without needing to drive.

Using an analogy, she compared public transit to the body's blood vessels—vital connections that keep communities alive. She warned that cutting these routes would be like severing blood vessels, causing parts of the system, and more importantly, people, to suffer. She firmly opposed the proposed cuts and urged decision-makers to take action, declaring that such a move was unacceptable.

Amanda Irwin, a longtime resident of Central Falls and an employee in the city, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed transit cuts. She referenced RIPTA's own mission to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective transit, and recalled a partnership from just three years prior in which RIPTA and Central Falls invested \$305,000 to promote increased ridership in the city. An initiative RIPTA described as ideal due to the area's small size and high population density. Amanda pointed out the contradiction between this past investment and the current proposal to eliminate service in Central Falls entirely.

She argued that the proposed cuts directly undermine RIPTA's mission, especially as new residential developments are being built where parking lots exist with the expectation that

residents would rely on public transportation rather than personal vehicles. Route 75 is essential for accessing grocery stores, doctor's offices, and the train station.

Lisa Buteau, a Pawtucket resident, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed transit cuts. She stressed the importance of preserving essential RIPTA services, particularly for workers and families who rely on public transit for daily needs. She urged against cutting third-shift, weekend, and holiday routes, explaining that many residents, including herself, depend on them to reach jobs, medical care, and other critical services. She highlighted the lack of affordable fare options for families, noting that current costs were unaffordable for low-income households.

Lisa shared her personal experience of relying on RIPTA after being diagnosed with a serious medical condition and facing the possibility of job loss. Without a functioning car and with rising healthcare expenses, she depends entirely on the bus system to get to work and medical appointments. Eliminating these services will harm those who need them most and called on decision-makers to protect public transit access for working-class Rhode Islanders.

Jenaya Smith, a Pawtucket resident, just moved to the city last month, in part because of the strong public transit coverage, which is essential to her daily life. Public transit is a lifeline; the proposed service cuts would severely impact her, even though she primarily uses the paratransit Ride Anywhere program rather than fixed-route buses. She explained that the Ride Anywhere program, while helpful, was not guaranteed and depended on availability. With cuts to fixed-route services, demand for the program will rise significantly, making it less reliable for users like her. As someone currently seeking employment, she expressed concern about accepting a job that could become inaccessible due to unreliable transit. She urged decision-makers to reconsider the proposed cuts, warning that they will deeply affect residents who depend on public transportation to maintain stability and opportunity in their lives.

Michael Pompili, a Pawtucket resident, expressed frustration over what he described as an annual budget crisis for RIPTA, where the state consistently fails to provide adequate funding. As a result, severe service cuts are being proposed, disproportionately affecting Pawtucket, one of Rhode Island's most transit-dependent communities. He pointed out that some routes were likely being cut due to low ridership but argued this was a symptom of the "transit death spiral," where infrequent and unreliable service pushed people toward other transportation options. He noted that the most frequent weekday service on routes like the 76 and 80 run only every 60 to 100 minutes, discouraging usage.

He criticized the state for investing \$5 million in a passenger building at the new Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center while proposing to cut half the routes serving it. These cuts will eliminate all service to key destinations like Stop & Shop and Job Lot, affecting residents' access to food, work, and education. He also questioned the prioritization of free, high-frequency service to the new Centreville Bank Stadium while essential community routes faced elimination. With over \$130 million invested in the stadium and millions more in highway

infrastructure, he argued that maintaining RIPTA's core transit service, at a fraction of those costs, should be a clear priority.

Katelyn Robinson, a Pawtucket resident, is a high school student who relies heavily on Routes 54, 73, 78, 80, and 35 to commute between school, work, and home. Without these routes, particularly Route 73 and 80, she will be cut off from the rest of the state. She described the experience of missing Route 73 and being forced to walk a long, difficult route to the transit center, illustrating how inaccessible the area would become without that line.

Due to medical conditions, she is unable to drive safely and thus depends entirely on public transit. She also expressed concern for their peers, who use RIPTA to get to work, including jobs at Providence Place Mall. She attends Beacon Charter High School in Woonsocket, which is specifically suited to her needs; changing schools is not an option. She urged RIPTA not to eliminate Routes 73 and 80, which is critical to her education and future.

Dylan Giles, a Woodlawn resident and Operations Manager for the Providence Streets Coalition, is concerned about the impact of RIPTA's proposed service cuts. He regularly rides Route 71, which provides essential access to doctor's appointments in Central Falls and grocery stores in Cumberland. He also uses Route 75 to travel to Lincoln Mall for errands and groceries, noting its popularity was evident from the number of abandoned shopping carts at the bus stop. Route 71, which does not go to Providence, serves a unique and necessary northbound route for residents needing to reach Central Falls.

Dylan, who had spent significant time advocating at the State House for increased transit funding, said he will now be personally affected by the very outcomes he and others had tried to prevent. He thanked the elected representatives who had shown up and criticized Governor McKee for proposing a budget that included no funding to close RIPTA's deficit. While the General Assembly allocated \$15 million, it fell short of what was needed. He urged continued pressure on state leadership and called on attendees to contact the governor's office to stress the vital importance of public transit in Rhode Island.

Eric Harrison, a lifelong Rhode Island resident who grew up in North Providence, shared how transit has been a part of his family's life, with his father riding Route 51 daily. After moving to Lincoln near three RIPTA routes, he experienced the loss of Route 53 shortly after relocating. He mainly relies on Route 75 despite its limited service hours and poor frequency, and he had to get a ride home after attending the hearing because the last outbound 75 had already left.

Eric predicts that, with these cuts, he will drive more, something he is privileged to do but acknowledged many others could not. He expressed concern for vulnerable populations like those in Cumberland Manor, a large public housing complex served by Routes 71 and 75, where residents are mostly elderly or disabled and will lose weekend service and access to affordable shopping. He hopes to remain in Rhode Island long term and looks to transit plans like Transit Forward 2040 to ensure mobility without a car. However, he fears these cuts will mark a major setback for the state's transit system and overall quality of life.

If Rhode Island wants to be more than a slightly cheaper place to live for Boston workers, the transit system needs to improve dramatically. It was encouraging during the last round of service changes to see actual increases and measurable improvements.

He criticized the state's priorities, noting that \$10 million, the amount needed to prevent the cuts, was the same amount spent on decorative highway letters near the airport. He urged the administration not to abandon Rhode Island's history or its people.

Central Falls Councilwoman At-Large Tatiana Baena recounted how RIPTA has deeply shaped her life since she arrived in the United States from Colombia at age eight. Growing up in a hardworking, working-class family without a car, she and her family relied on RIPTA buses like the 72 and 69 to get around, including trips to the beach. Even as she got older, she used public transit to visit places like Providence Place Mall and downtown Providence, which provided her and other youth a way to explore beyond Central Falls. As a student at URI, she depended on Route 66 despite its infrequent service and had to plan her schedule carefully to align with the bus.

She emphasized that public transit is a lifeline for many and tied closely to tourism and economic development, especially with events like the upcoming FIFA World Cup. She criticized the state's failure to prioritize efficient, clean, and reliable transit, calling the current situation a poor reflection on Rhode Island's image and its ability to attract visitors. She noted the recurring pattern of budget hearings without meaningful action and urged decision-makers to truly prioritize working-class residents by opposing the proposed service cuts.

Larry Johnson, a Pawtucket resident, expressed frustration over the last-minute hearings about transit service cuts, especially as they were planned to begin in winter when transit needs are greatest. He rides Route 71 twice a week and also relies on Route 1 and others. He questioned why there seemed to be little urgency from RIPTA to secure funding to maintain routes and keep drivers employed.

Larry criticized politicians for prioritizing expensive bond issues and new infrastructure, such as a new transit station connecting to Boston, while simultaneously cutting bus routes. He found the decisions confusing and insensitive to riders' needs. He is strongly opposed to the cuts and urged bus users to hold politicians accountable, suggesting executives should reduce their own positions rather than cutting essential bus services. He viewed the situation as showing a lack of concern for the community, especially given the relatively small amount of money involved compared to other funding measures.

Joseph Bong, a Providence resident, shared personal stories to illustrate the impact RIPTA's proposed service cuts would have on everyday people. He spoke about a woman he knows who came to study at Johnson & Wales University. She relies on Route 33 to travel from Shaw's in Riverside to Providence. If the service changes take effect, it will be devastating for her; she will be stranded. He also shared the story of his uncle, who with reduced service, will be forced to walk more, often in sweltering heat or freezing cold, making his job significantly harder. He emphasized that the proposed service cuts will have widespread, harmful effects on the

community, calling it deeply unfortunate that people are being put in this position. Route 73 does not run on weekends, and reducing the frequency of Route 72 will lengthen the commute and leave people stranded at stops. He suggested that a solution to prevent such issues could be found by following Massachusetts' example of using a millionaire's tax dedicated specifically to transportation and education, instead of relying on the general fund, which would save money.

Elizabeth Moreira, Deputy Director of Administration for the City of Pawtucket, Elizabeth expressed concern that many bus riders who speak Spanish, Portuguese, or Cape Verde Creole lacked access to important information about the hearings because there were no interpreter services or ways for non-English speakers to share how the proposed changes would affect them. She agreed with the points made by others but emphasized the need to provide technical assistance to non-English speakers so they could testify, contact legislators, and participate in meetings without feeling confused or excluded. She urged communities to mobilize and ensure information and opportunities for input were available in languages people understood, to create a truly equitable system.

Samuel Pleuterio, a lifelong Rhode Island resident who grew up in Warwick and has been a RIPTA rider since he was 17, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed cuts. He shared how multiple routes like the 3, 72, 51, 14, 16, 20, and 22 are essential to his daily life. If Route 14 weekend service is cut, he will no longer be able to get to work in East Greenwich without spending a lot on Uber rides. Or he will have to find a new job, which could cause him to lose his healthcare and employee benefits. Despite his busy schedule, he made time to speak out and urged legislative leaders and Governor McKee to take the issue seriously.

Grant Dulgarian, Providence resident and a lifelong environmentalist and transit advocate for over fifty years, expressed strong support for RIPTA and praised its administration for doing an excellent job under difficult financial constraints. He acknowledged that without an additional \$10 million in funding, precise service cuts were inevitable. While he placed most of the blame on the leadership of the state legislature, he emphasized the importance of increasing RIPTA ridership as a fundamental and achievable solution. He plans to provide full testimony at the upcoming Providence hearing and encouraged others to promote using public transit and advocate for better funding.

With no further comments, the meetings ended at 7:00 PM.



Statement by Councilman Alberto Rivas, District 1 – City of Central Falls

Public Hearing on Proposed Cuts to RIPTA Routes 71, 72, and 75

Distinguished members of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA):

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on behalf of the residents of District 1 and the entire city of Central Falls.

I come before you with deep concern regarding the proposed cuts to RIPTA routes 71, 72, and 75. If implemented, these changes would have a devastating impact on a community like ours—marked by high population density, cultural diversity, and most importantly, a strong reliance on public transportation in daily life.

Central Falls is a city where parking is extremely limited, and many families do not own a vehicle. In our community, walking or taking the bus is not a secondary choice—it is the only way hundreds of residents access essential services like medical appointments, workplaces, schools, grocery stores, or care for loved ones.

It is crucial to highlight that 19.8% of our population—nearly one in five residents—is 65 years of age or older. Seniors living in communities such as Forand Manor, Wilfrid Manor, and Blackstone Apartments depend on these routes daily to preserve their independence, health, and dignity. For them, and for many others, public transportation is not a luxury—it is a lifeline.

As the Councilman for District 1, I am convinced that these proposed cuts would endanger fundamental principles such as equity, fair mobility, and social inclusion. At a time when we speak of social justice, sustainability, and human rights, cutting essential transportation routes in hardworking cities like ours represents an unacceptable step backward.

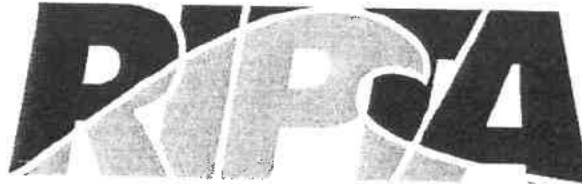
Therefore, I urge you to reconsider these proposals. I ask that you engage in open dialogue with the most affected municipalities. Let us work together to explore solutions that prioritize people—not just budgets. Because when access to public transportation is reduced, so too is access to opportunity, healthcare, education, and overall community development.

Central Falls raises its voice today—not just for itself, but for all Rhode Island communities that deserve a public transportation system that is dignified, accessible, and reliable.

Marketing @ ripta.com

July 31, 2025
Pawtucket
5PM

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Colin Call

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.

With my own experiences using public transit extensively and the many stories mentioned at the public hearing, I believe it is imperative to maintain the current lines. Additionally, with rising rents, it will soon become a larger issue with more workers having to commute longer distances to work the same wage. So, it should be expanded rather than diminished.

Marketing C R I P T A . c o m

7.31.25

5pm

COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Megan Mello

Address: [REDACTED]

Rumford, RI 02916

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

How can Rhode Island expect to attract industry, innovation, business, economic development, tourism, etc. (let alone retain it!) without a robust transit system? It's simply not possible.

Transit is such a key part of a successful economy. I don't understand how our state leadership doesn't get that.

I'm a transportation planner myself, who recently moved back to Rhode Island so I could have a positive impact on transportation in my home state.

That includes driving, walking, biking, and transit. I am strongly against these cuts and urge the state legislature to find the funds.

I also urge Secretary Mitti to broaden his view of transportation beyond just roads + drivers.

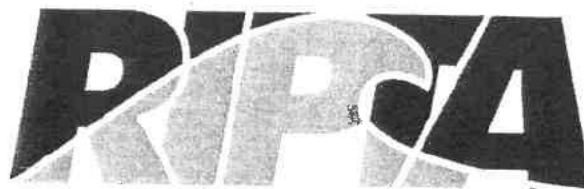
July 31, 2025

500 PM

PAWTUCKET
LIBRARY

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COMMENT SHEET



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Name: Ben Evans

Address:

Pawtucket RI

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

Governor McKee must find the funding to fill RIPTA's budget shortfall and if not the legislature must go back into emergency session to pass the bill to tax the rich. The recent poll from Salve Regina University's Pell Center found 70% of Rhode Islanders support increasing taxes on the wealthiest.

Public transit is crucial and one of the few methods of mitigating climate change. When our democratically elected government can't do what a majority of voters want, people lose faith in democracy.

July 31, 2025
PAWTUCKET
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5:00 PM

7/31/25

Statement by Jeanne Theberge Re: RIPTA and RIDE Service

My name is Jeanne Theberge and I am 74 years old. I live at 808 Central Avenue in Pawtucket and have been a resident of Pawtucket and have lived in the same house my entire life. I have Morquio Syndrome which has left me disabled and wheelchair bound. I get around to my local stores in my wheelchair, but I depend heavily on the RIDE bus for transportation to my Dr. appointments, physical therapy and an occasional restaurant dinner.

My concern is, if the Central Avenue 76 Bus is permanently eliminated, how will this impact my use of the RIDE Bus? RIDE states you must live within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of a regular bus stop. Since the bus stop has been in front of my home all my life, and if it gets eliminated, will I no longer have RIDE services?

I would be essentially home bound and unable to get to my important appointments.

Please consider the consequences for so many elderly and disabled residents if the RIDE bus service does not continue if the 76 Bus is eliminated.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

Jeanne Theberge

[REDACTED]
Pawtucket, RI 02861
[REDACTED]

Wanda Casiano

Resident Services Coordinator
Central Falls Housing Authority

wandac@cfhousing.org / 401-244-7402

July 31, 2025

To:

Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)
Attn: Public Outreach / Planning Department
705 Elmwood Avenue
Providence, RI 02907

Subject: Petition Submission from Central Falls Housing Authority Residents

Dear RIPTA Planning Team,

On behalf of the residents of the Central Falls Housing Authority, I am submitting the attached petition in response to the proposed service changes affecting public transportation in our community.

These signatures represent residents who rely heavily on RIPTA for daily transportation to work, school, medical appointments, and essential errands. The proposed changes would significantly impact their mobility, independence, and quality of life.

As noted in the petition, we respectfully urge RIPTA to:

- Reconsider any cuts or reductions in service to Central Falls
- Hold a public hearing within our community to gather direct feedback
- Share transparent data behind service decisions
- Collaborate with local leadership to protect critical transit access

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and welcome any opportunity to continue the dialogue with RIPTA to ensure equitable transportation for our residents.

Sincerely,

Wanda Casiano

Resident Services Coordinator
Central Falls Housing Authority

Attachment: Resident Petition – Central Falls Housing Authority

To: Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)

From: Concerned Residents and Riders of Central Falls, Rhode Island

Date: July 29, 2025

We, the undersigned residents and regular users of RIPTA public transit services, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed upcoming service changes affecting Central Falls.

Public transportation is a vital lifeline in our community—providing access to jobs, schools, health care, essential services, and family. Changes that reduce, reroute, or disrupt service will harm those who depend on transit the most, including working families, seniors, youth, and individuals with disabilities.

We respectfully urge RIPTA to:

1. Reconsider or revise the proposed service changes, especially those disproportionately affecting Central Falls residents.
2. Hold a public hearing in Central Falls to collect direct community input before implementing changes.
3. Work with local leaders to find alternatives that preserve essential routes and equitable access.

Public transit is not just a service—it is a right and a necessity for many in our city. We call on RIPTA to work with, not around, the people of Central Falls.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Residents of Central Falls

Name	Address	Signature
Confesor AM		CM
Degamure		DF
Nanny Messier		RFW
Bob Spright		
Mike Descoteaux		Mike Descoteaux
David L Beland		David L Beland
Fr. S. Hill		Fr. S. Hill
Lita Wren		A-85
Aida Ramirez		207
Abigail C. Navas		A 612
Moises Jimenez		A-71
Joshua Rodgers		
Caplan Roma		96
Paul Roma		96
Maria del Mar		A45
Rosario Vargas		
Ismael Alvarez		
Jose O. Quile		Jose O. Quile
Francisco A		
Dora Norvaez		608
Catherine Shilton		Catherine Shilton
Joseph Thurston		Joseph Thurston
Jimmy Acosta		Jimmy Acosta
Carmen Gonzalez		Carmen Gonzalez
Jeanne Bueno		Jeanne Bueno
Carmen Diodonet		
Alfonso		

Sabado Natuna 2000

Name	Address	Signature
Fabrizio Trujillo		Fabrizio Trujillo
Betsabeh Lirio		Betsabeh Lirio
Rafael Lopez		Rafael Lopez
Olga Velazquez		Olga Velazquez
Wendy R. Anchia		Wendy R. Anchia
Amel Compuen de Rocio		Amel Compuen de Rocio
Blanca Costa		Blanca Costa
Carmen Urrutia		Carmen Urrutia
María Eudora		María Eudora
Carlota Oller		Carlota Oller
Dei C. M. Garcia		Dei C. M. Garcia
Thomas Kocan		Thomas Kocan
Donna Harbeck		Donna Harbeck
Lynda M. Hane		Lynda M. Hane
Delaine DeBorja		Delaine DeBorja
Noelje Soares		Noelje Soares
Maribel Ruiz		Maribel Ruiz
CARLOS Velazquez		CARLOS Velazquez
MARIO DOS REIS		MARIO DOS REIS
Colleen Doherty		Colleen Doherty
Blanca Herrera		Blanca Herrera
Ana Maro		Ana Maro
Eulalia Sinay		Eulalia Sinay