



GrowSmartRI

Twenty-five years of thought leadership, advocacy, and helping communities to effectively integrate land-use, transportation, housing and conservation strategies that strengthen Rhode Island.

People. Places. Prosperity. Planet.

Summary of Comments to RIPTA Board - 1/25/24

Like everyone else here today, Grow Smart RI is very concerned that state government might allow devastating service cuts to take effect due to the fiscal challenges that RIPTA ... and [most other transit agencies in our country](#) are facing in the aftermath of the pandemic.

While other states are proactively confronting this fiscal crisis to avoid massive disruption to the millions of people and employers that would be affected, we in Rhode Island seem to be largely ignoring it. We hope this Board will reconsider its Budget Request and appeal directly to the General Assembly leadership to close the fiscal deficit without further cuts to service.

But today we want to call your attention specifically to what seems to be a **double standard** applied to transit riders vs. motorists when it comes to improvements and equity in our transportation system.

Delaying the service improvements that are outlined in the data-driven, heavily vetted, and state-approved Transit Master Plan, now 3 years old ...delaying that until completion of yet another in a long line of fiscal reviews is not the answer. **Punishing the tens of thousands of people and employers who rely on public transport would be wrong.**

And by the way, previous reviews - including by the legislature - have concluded that **RIPTA is well-managed. According to one, the agency outperforms its peers in nearly all performance metrics, including efficiency.**

We wouldn't think of punishing motorists by halting improvements to our [worst in the nation roads](#) until a thorough review of the DOT is performed.

Reviewing any agency's performance can and should happen regularly while their vital work continues - just as the DOT will be reviewed for the Washington bridge crisis, without halting new projects that improve roads and bridges.

If this Board believes that implementation of the Transit Master Plan should not advance until you're assured of optimum efficiency by another fiscal review, then surely this should also apply to advancing development of a new transit hub as well.

Grow Smart has been a leading supporter of advancing the Dorrance St Transit Center.

However, if the application of double standards is to prevail - if Rhode Island is unable to adequately fund and begin implementing the service improvements that are far more important to transit riders than a new hub - then **Grow Smart RI would have little choice but to strongly oppose any further action to advance development of a new transit hub at this time.**

To use the "vegetables and dessert" analogy that's been discussed lately, Mr. Chairman, **transit service is very much the vegetable - and a shiny new transit hub - that's the dessert.**

Thank you for your time and your service to RIPTA and to better transit.