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Sustainable Economic Growth  
& Quality of Place

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## Testimony before the House Finance Committee

April 10, 2024

RE: Opposition to H-7491 – Authorizing RIPTA to proceed with design-build or progressive design-build for new transit hub

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of Grow Smart RI, I write in opposition to House Bill 7491 authorizing RIPTA to enter into certain projects and procure related services including the transit center project, using design-build contracting and progressive design-build contracting.

Grow Smart RI is Rhode Island's statewide smart growth advocacy organization. We represent a big-tent coalition of business and civic leaders and community stakeholders committed to strengthening and growing Rhode Island's economy in a sustainable and equitable way. We work with community partners across the state to integrate smart land use, transportation and housing policies in a way that uses resources most efficiently and that creates thriving, vibrant and opportunity rich places.

Grow Smart RI has been a leading champion for development of a new full-service transit hub in downtown. **However, we cannot support taking this step absent a commitment by state leaders to properly fund transit service itself.** The mobility, freedom, and access to jobs, schools, healthcare and all of life's essentials is far more urgent and vital to transit passengers than a new terminal facility.

This position is consistent with an [open letter](#) that we sent to Governor McKee, Speaker Shekarchi and Senate President Ruggiero on March 1, 2024.

A legislative proposal ([H-7774](#)) was introduced by Representative Karen Alzate that has earned the support of 31 co-sponsors. It would address RIPTA's longstanding lack of sustainable funding, while setting Rhode Island on a path to making transit work for more Rhode Islanders who wish to save on the second-highest household expense – transportation.

Here's what we know:

- **Rhode Island already has a publicly vetted and adopted blueprint for the future of transit will get more Rhode Islanders where they need to go, when they needed to get there, conveniently, safely and with dignity.**
- **There's never been more federal funding available to help states improve transit, but state matching funds and operating funds are essential.**
- **State Funding:** RI ranks among the lowest in 2021 per capita state funding of transit (\$18.51) especially when compared to other urbanized states in our region, including CT (\$67.84), DE (\$100.86), PA (\$120.24), NJ (\$142.93), MD (\$198.72) and MA (\$238.76).

Yours truly,

John Flaherty  
Deputy Director