



Description of graphic: RI State Seal an anchor in gold behind a blue wheelchair logo. Just below is a blue banner with the state motto "Hope". All are in the center of a ring of 8 blue stars, in groups of 2 separated by the logos for Braille, hearing aids, low vision and amplified phone.

# Governor's Commission on Disabilities Legislation Committee's Public Forum Transportation Working Group

**Friday October 7, 2011 2 - 3:30 PM**

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meeting graphic

**Attendees:** Tim Flynn, Convener; Bill Inlow & and Chris Butler

**Staff:** Emily Crowell, Fellow

	Agenda Topics	Moderator/Leader	Time
 meeting graphic	<p><b>Public Forums on the Concerns of People with Disabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review the Transportation Related Testimony;</li> <li>➤ Identify the Concerns; and Recommend Solutions</li> </ul>	<p>Tim Flynn, Convener</p>	<p>2:07 PM</p>
<p>Purpose/Goal: To identify the transportation concerns and recommend solutions addressing those concerns.</p>			
<p>Discussion: In developing solutions take into consideration the following: infrastructure &amp; resourcing; guidance &amp; coordination; quality control; information &amp; referral; professional development &amp; credentialing; &amp; quality of life.</p>			

### Transportation Barrier Related Testimony

Starting on Page 101 Providence Forum:

**DARLENE HARTMAYER:** Hi I'm Darlene Hartmayer, H-a-r-t-m-a-y-e-r. I'm not here for RIPTA. I'm here for the sidewalks. Transportation I'm what's called an active user. I use my chair everyday to go out, even in the winter time when I know I have to ride the street. But I live off of Douglas, now if you're familiar with you go Douglas you know there's a place where 95 goes on. Well, how am I supposed to get from one side of the street to the other side of the street? There is an island in the middle. There is a cut for me to come down and a cut for me to go over. But I have to pass this island. I have two choices I can ride in the street where the cars are coming this way, or I can ride on the spot where the cars are going to turn down, and by the way they don't look. Just so you all know, they don't look. How come there are no cuts there? They put in a cut for one, but what happened to the island? Did it sort of get neglected, wasn't there because it's been there for as long as I can remember. That's Douglas. Let's go to Branch, Branch Avenue has Benny's first I want to congratulate whoever cut the greenery on Branch Avenue, so I'm not being attacked by trees, weeds, ragweed, I don't know how long it will last, but I'm pleased. I was perfectly fine to go off the sidewalk because I don't want ticks on me. I talked to the state, I talked to the city, no one wants to claim this part of the sidewalk, by the way I have to go into Branch Avenue, I will not ride the sidewalk. There is a dip I would need a toe truck to get me out of. If I didn't know it was there, I would fall into the hole with my chair. How would I get out? I can get out of the chair and walk three steps but I can't move the chair which weighs 383 pounds. So I wind up riding on Branch Avenue, all the way up to the fire station because the sidewalk isn't fixed. The state fixed so you can cross the streets where the entrances are. But this piece of sidewalk, do you know how long it's been there. I've been in a wheelchair 13 years and ten of those years it's been there. How come someone can't throw concrete in it to fix it. I don't care if it's the state, the city or God, just fix it. I know I'm not the only person to use that stretch of

road. There are at least four of us but I'm the only one here today. I'm tired of it. I almost got hit by a car yesterday. The same problem happens when you get to stop and shop when you're on Branch side. They have sort of tried to fix the sidewalk over there, so they threw tar on it. I don't know how many of you have been in an electric wheelchair I've been in a manual, but I would never go over that with a manual wheelchair in a million years, I have to balance my chair so I don't fall into the street. And then when I get there, some bright and intelligent person put a right turn signal there. I almost got wiped out by an 18-wheeler who figured he had the right of way because he had what? A green arrow saying he could turn to the right. By the way it doesn't work, the little sign that says people crossing the street because of the green arrow that goes up. I told my children if I get hit over there, to please sue everyone. Because 18-wheelers are not my particular favorite things to be hit by. In fact I don't want to get hit by anything. Now, that's Branch. But we've got an even better one, the State street the one that goes downtown. Look on the left-hand side. There is just before you get to the corner there is a spot that has a little piece of concrete in it and a whole bunch of gravel all the way around it. How do you miss it? How do you miss something that's on State Street. I have to ride in the street because I can't go down that road. If I hadn't done these roads so many times, I would be seriously hurt now. I've been riding up and down streets for a long, long time. There are two bridges that try to kill me every time I cross them. The one by the mail, near the new post office, the one that was supposed to make an accessible place in the post office for me to be able to deal with them. They never did it. I don't know how they got around it but they did when they renovated. I can't go over that bridge easily, I guess I don't know what they call it, the weather stripping, I would call it weather stripping or whatever it is for the bridge is up about that much higher than the rest of the bridge. Every time I go over it, it throws me over the railings. I wear a seat belt so I don't go over the railing. The same thing happens, well there are a couple of bridges that do it, there is one when you come over Douglas that does the same type of thing. I thought the sidewalk was part of the responsibility of the State and the city and I don't really care who the road belongs to. Fix the sidewalk. If you don't know who it owns, fix it and bill them. I'm good for that. I like living. I like my next door neighbor to live. I'd like the person who can't raise their leg up high enough to go over that. I've seen bicycles practically fly through the air over these things. So it's not just people with disabilities who will get hurt. By the way that bridge is one of the ones where the growth comes over and you're try to go figure out how you're going to get past it. I don't know, you guys like to get scratched by branches and pollen and ticks and -- I don't, I wind up riding that street in the street. It's not a tough thing. I mean if you can have guys cleaning the roads off, why can't they go by and clean up the mess on the sidewalks. It's not hard. We put state prisoners out there to clean the highway, why can't we have them at least fix the roads so that the sidewalks, so that people can go past there and live through it. And I do this every year. I have actually pictures of me one year pruning the trees back because I didn't want to get hurt. That's ridiculous. I mean, dune do you know how long it takes a guy with a trimmers to go down the thing and do it? Not very long. And I really hold the State of Rhode Island to that standard that yes, Providence and state of Rhode Island have problems. Whoopee. We're all citizens of the state of Rhode Island. Fix it so I, a bicycle rider, a person walking down the street with a cane without a cane, can go and not have to walk in the street. Now in the wintertime that's a whole other story because I can never get on and off a sidewalk because the snowplows cover the corners every time. I go out in the snow and pray, just like everybody else. As far as you know, we're in a fiscal year, so I don't think this is going to cost us anything because this is supposed to have been built, concrete was supposed to have been built into our budget. You mean to tell me you can't take a little bit of concrete from one of the bridges and put it into the sidewalk? It's not a hard fix, it's just you have to notice it. And I really notice it a lot. And all the wonderful trees that have been planted in the sidewalks, may I tell you I hate every single one of them and I love trees because when you put the tree in you make a hole. The other day my wheelchair accidentally got off the sidewalk and went into one of those holes and I had to rely upon the kindness of strangers to get me out. And I think strangers are very kind, but I really don't want to have to rely on them. They cause frost heaves in the sidewalks. If you want to go over to the post office, you can go alpine skiing with my chair. I'll be lend it to you. You're going to go whew, right over. And every time they fix a road or they do it like they did it all those apartments and everything, they killed the sidewalk but nobody went back and fixed it. Hey, it's a sidewalk. It's for everyone. Fix it. Please. I don't want to go through another year of half to go ride in the street.

DEB GARNEAU: Thank you, Darlene.

TIM FLYNN: I would like to ask a question if I could. You sound like, you're sort of surveyed the entire situation. Let me ask you, what efforts have you made in the past to rectifying the situations.

DARLENE HARTMAYER: I've tried talking to my Councilman and to city hall. The only other issue I forgot and I apologize, how am I supposed to get home from Rhode Island Hospital at 2 o'clock in the morning when I'm not the patient. I thought we signed a law recently saying there was supposed to be a handicapped

accessible cab. Do you know how much fun it is to go from Rhode Island Hospital at 2 o'clock in the morning over to where I live in North Providence. I can't get a ride home if it's my daughter who is in the hospital.

TIM FLYNN: Back to the efforts you made.

DARLENE HARTMAYER: It's really hard. Nobody wants to listen. I just decided maybe this time somebody would listen. I've talk today a number of people. Especially about bridges.

TIM FLYNN: Perhaps we can talk after the meeting. We have an access committee at the Commission and you sound like just a person we could use who is not afraid to advocate.

DARLENE HARTMAYER: If there was the right person there, I would challenge them to come with me for a road trip.

TIM FLYNN: You know, you're aware the Governor's Commission on Disabilities?

DARLENE HARTMAYER: Yes, I used to go to it. Unfortunately I got ill for a while.

TIM FLYNN: You sound like you're better now.

DARLENE HARTMAYER: Oh, I'm definitely better now that the winter is over and they took care of a few things.

TIM FLYNN: So you're familiar with the access committee, so --

DARLENE HARTMAYER: Yeah.

TIM FLYNN: If not, give me your information and I'll make sure someone from the committee contacts you.

DARLENE HARTMAYER: The thing is I moved and I stopped getting the information and then other problems. There's always a problem that comes up along the way and I don't remember everything.

TIM FLYNN: Thank you very much for raising all of these issues.

DARLENE HARTMAYER: Thank you for listening.

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## Human Services Transportation Related Testimony

### Page 12 Barrington Forum:

MARY WAMBACH: I will summarize my comments because I understand other people want to speak and have to leave. My comments are from my home address because I've not had time to go through all of this with my board. I'm very familiar and very involved in almost all of the agencies and groups that involve people with disabilities at State and local levels.

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Developmental disability services, uhm, we've spoken just recently about funding changes and system changes. In my view, they're going to make it impossible for consumers to have choices about programs, about daily activities. These changes will make employment and supported employment almost impossible because the staff to consumer ratio will make it impossible for the DSP, direct service providers, to function as job coaches, whether formally through ORS funding or informally. It's a huge change. It's a violation of human rights and ethics. In the past, the DD programs were able to give a lot of attention to individual choice and need. Under the new funding regulations, and staffing ratios, we will not be able to pay nearly as much attention to individual aid. Adults who have mood, behavioral, medical communication needs, there's going to be very little time between staff to do a 15-minute head count to really pay attention to the consumers that most need support in order to be active in society. BHDDH (sounds like) and EOHHS, have said services won't change. Services are going to change a lot. Transportation Most of us have already cut our transportation budgets We've reduced staffing. We can't do recreational stuff we used to do anymore. Human Services Most of us are not going to have anymore out of state trips, job training, supported employment, especially if we're not getting funded. We're not going to have that anymore because the new billing system will not pay for staff to do this. I think it's warehousing human beings and I think it's criminal. And I think that the state needs to stop try to go sell the program to families as if there were no changes. And my paper it suggests that maybe we can start a 12-step program for administrators and solutions. I just felt about the fact in my agency when we needed to make serious cuts, we started at the top, myself and my manager took significant pay cuts. That was last November, we're not getting them back now, and we don't expect to get them back this year or maybe ever. That's what this state needs to do. It's obscene that in Rhode Island, when the people up there make mistakes, even big ones, even year after year after year, the people up there are not the ones that take the hit, it's what they call the low-hanging crew, and I think that is criminal. And I think that we need to start seeing pay cuts for our top officials.

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### Page 79 Blackstone Valley Forum:

KELLY RICHARDS: I'm at the Trudeau Center and they are going to be cutting down on the things that they do. Transportation I don't drive because I have seizures and I need them to help me get around. I don't know what to do about that. I know I take the bus, but I cannot carry a lot of groceries on the bus. They will cut down on the buses, too. That does not help either. I don't know what to do about that. Thank you. (Applause).

Page 90 Kingston Forum:

I don't have anything prepared, so I just wanted to share with you some of the concerns that I have and I had asked you what year we were talking about? We are talking about planning for next year, I'm more focused on the here and now. Maybe I misunderstood the intent of this forum. I have to talk about what is here and now. Human Services I'm here as a sibling, my brother is 53 years old with a developmental disability. My other brother is here who is his advocate and guardian as well. My concern of the here and now of the cut that has come down to the Development of -- -- Developmental Disabilities it was enacted 12% of the immediate cut -- it was placed upon the division of the residential and day program agency providers. I just want to kind of talk about what that cut does and how it is manifested in the everyday life of an individual. My brother lives in a home, 24-hour support with living arrangements with three other individuals with developmental disabilities. He also attends a day program.

With the cut in the funding that happens almost immediately, what that has happened is that he will be receiving two hours less a day of the state program services. The day program has to cut back on what the services that they can provide. The residential program and the agency that is providing services by is Bridges and it is a wonderful organization. I'm speaking very highly of them.

What is happening is Ladd Center closed, I do not have the exact dates. We started deinstitutionalization in the late 80s and everybody was living in community-based programs and the Ladd Center was completely empty by 1992 or everybody had the opportunity to live in a community-based program. My concern is with the cut that has been enacted and will continue to be enacted in the future. What we have done is have closed Ladd Center and merely now because of the restrictions in the funding, we are creating mini Ladd Centers. By that I mean when you cut the funding, you cut the staffing, when you cut the staffing hours, you cut the opportunity for individuals to access the community. Transportation Therefore, transportation, they won't be able to go in the vans and access -- especially in a rural community we don't have RIPTA or public transportation at a particular hour that maybe they were able to access their community after 6:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. in the evening. Human Services They will not be able to do that because the staffing patterns will be different or they will not have the gas in order to access their community. I'm finding that on the basic human rights of individuals with developmental disability they do have the right to respect and dignity in a safe and supportive environment. I don't believe we can continue to provide that and access to our communities, if we are going to continue to cut the budget. 12% is a significant amount of dollars to cut an agency to provide any types of services.

I think that the year 2011 and 2012 is important, but I'm much more concerned about August 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and going forward. These cuts are in effect today. Therefore, I feel that my brother and many other people with developmental disabilities, who are living at home or receiving supports of a group home, are going to be denied access to your community.

You had mentioned of living a life where they are truly integrated to their fullest potential. I believe that the cuts that the legislature has done are denying them that opportunity now, not next year. Thank you. (Applause).

LAURA JONES: Thank you so much. Do any of our panelist want to speak to that?

TIM FLYNN: It may or may not be too soon to ask this question. Have you -- have you remarked--

ANNIE OLEAN: What is your question?

TIM FLYNN: I see.

ANNIE OLEAN: Because the cuts are happening and will be occurring I can tell you that we spend many hours with our brother on Sunday, but because the staff pattern will be changing we'll spend 9:00 a.m. in the morning until 7:00 p.m. at night with our brother in order to support him and access the community and spend time with us. Community activities will be affected because there will only be one staff person on 7:00 p.m. on in the evening. Based upon the diagnostic profiles who live in the home we need two staff on. So, yeah it will impact. Again the agency that we are involved with is outstanding and wonderful. This is not critical of the agency that administers the program. This is the restriction of the hours. What happens is that it is easier to monitor individuals when they are in a closed environment, we all know that, but that does not mean that is quality of life for people, how would any of us would like to be home by 7:00 p.m. at night. To know that we cannot access the community until the next morning when we have more coverage. Because if we want to

access the community we have to make sure that all four of us want to go to the same place at the same time the same way. That's denying people making their own choices. The services will be affected starting in August.

### **Ride Related Testimony**

#### Page 13 Barrington Forum:

LEAH: Hi, my name is Leah and I do a lot of things. Like theatre, going to college, sometimes I do a lot of things, too like hang with friends. Sometimes I go to parties. I work.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Leah, how are you able to do these things, do you have help?

LEAH: Transportation Oh, yeah, I also have, what is it called? Ride.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And you have people from Looking Upwards to help you.

LEAH: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And they helped you to learn how to work at CVS

LEAH: Employment. Yeah, at CVS and stuff.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you work there alone and independently?

LEAH: Yes, I do.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How long have you worked at CVS?

LEAH: A few years.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: A few years. And so now, you do it all on your own and you earn your own money.

LEAH: Yes, I do.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Pretty cool, huh?

LEAH: Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Human Services So if you didn't have the services from Looking Upwards, you wouldn't be able to earn money and wouldn't be able to be as independent, right?

LEAH: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That's very important to keep that, right?

LEAH: That's really important.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you want to say anything else?

LEAH: I think that's it.

SHARON BRINKWORTH: Thank you, Leah.

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#### Page 61 Middletown Forum:

DARLENE THOMPSON: We are both members of the National Federation of the Blind. Two years ago I was before this Commission and issues that were brought up were housing, affordable, liveable, Ride cuts to programs and I sat back over the two years and I've seen nothing change. Now, with those cuts in place we are losing more services and we are being told "accept it." I'm sorry I cannot accept it. I depend on these services as does everybody else in this room or their family members. I can't give up my Transportation Ride program because I'm considered dangerous if I'm walking. I might walk into a street because the pavements and sidewalks are not accessible. As Annette mentioned two years ago, Newport is not sidewalk friendly for wheelchairs and blind people. They like to put things on the side, and they are not consistent. There's a sidewalk across the street leading to Valley Road, I have walked into that wooden pole and hugged it so many times because Middletown will not take that pole out of the middle of the sidewalk. Sometimes I think it might be my mother, so, I'm hitting it and I grab it.

Now, I'm being told "accept your cuts to RIPTA" accept that you are not getting food stamps. Human Services I've been taken off the food stamp program because I did not read my mail that was sent to me in the mail. Darn, I'm blind I don't usually read written mail. I've ask them to e-mail me and call me or send it electronically on a tape, CD, however you need to do it that will help me. That's not their way.

I don't have food stamps, I've not had food this month except for the donations from my family. I've called representatives and I'm still waiting, but I bet none of you sitting on that panel and I'll bet none of my representatives and the Governor, have had to make a loaf of bread stretch the whole month. Where are my food stamps?

As the prices are going up and nothing goes down, Transportation they are asking me to pay more money

for my RIde program. It was just increased last year. Okay, I would love to. It is a service I need. It is a service that I value, and it is worth it. I would pay millions for that service, if I had it. I don't have it. Always the government comes back to the people that can least afford it and ask for our money that we don't have. I was talking to one of the RIde drivers the other day and mentioned the \$5 increase. And I said that's not a bad idea, I would gladly pay it, but I can't. Thank you and I hope these issues do get resolved.

Thank you. (Applause).

LINDA WARD: I will say, Darlene, I share your frustration in how long it takes to get done. We have had some success with Share with taxis, which may not seem like it applies to many folks but it is potentially an economic driver when we have people come in from out of state, coming to the airport, who need a cab that is accessible and it has not existed, we think at times it actually kept groups away from having conferences and other things here. Our understanding is that RIPTA has bids out. There will be minivans that will be used for people with physical challenges and it will be used by any member of the general public. It took five years to get that to happen. It is a very frustrating experience. I would also not want to speak for the person from the Rhode Island Disability Law Center. I would bet that they might be able to offer you some advice on the food stamp issue.

There are lots of people being cut off food stamps because of similar issues while they may not be visually impaired, but may be intellectually disabled and cannot read the notices as well. It is an ongoing issue with the Food Stamp Office. It may help them to have a concern.

DARLENE THOMPSON: I will thank you.

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Page 101 Providence Forum:

HEIDI SHOWSDED: Couple of things I want to say, I'm Heidi Showsded, and typically I serve on about 8 subcommittees, on a handful of boards across the state. Today I'm collecting information for them, but I'm speaking for myself. And I have two major issues that I really want to work on.

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Transportation RIde program. I mean, yes, I'm a very lucky person, I have friends and I have, you know, people who care about me and I have a lot of outlets but I also have my independence. And the way that I'm able to have my independence is through the RIde program. That's the way I'm available to volunteer, see friends contribute to society to the strongest of my ability. And if you take that away from people with disabilities, you're basically institutionalizing them in their house without the institution. I mean you're telling me from some of the routes that I've seen I wouldn't be able to go to work at the mall anymore, shopping with friends. I wouldn't be able to go to the Lincoln mall movie theatre or doctor's appointments that I need or socialize at all. And you're also telling people that are blind and physically impaired that they won't be able to go to In-Sight because that's on Jefferson Boulevard, I don't use that but I've heard wonderful things about them. Vanguard that's on that route as well. If all these routes are cut, how are people supposed to have a quality of life that they're entitled to. I don't use it on holidays, to see my family members, but I have a lot of friends that do and I feel that it's important that somebody speak up for them. And who is Transportation RIPTA or any other State people to say, oh, well you're not going to be able to see your sick grandmother on Christmas because the route's cut. Or you're not going to be able to go out with your friends unless you ask you know, a friend of yours to go somewhere. People don't mind doing favors for you, but if every time you have to go somewhere you're asking for help that, gets real old real fast and you're stuck. Think about yourselves. Most of you can drive. Most of you, you want to go somewhere, you get in the car and go. You don't have to say, well, how long am I going to be there? How far in advance should I book my trip in am I going to be on a bus route? Am I going to be safe at night? I must be home by 9 o'clock because of a curfew where services stop at 10. It's a quality of life issue and civil rights issue and just try to put yourself in the frame of mind of a person with disability. Because disability aside you're people first. And you should be entitled to live your lives as you choose, be the way you do your personal care or the way you travel or anything else and these cuts are making it very, very difficult to do so. Think of ways you can have services for people disabilities get funded and more available instead of less funded and less available. That's all I have to say for now, thank you very much.

DEB GARNEAU: Thank you Heidi. Uhm -- is it safe to say Tim that these testimony will also be shared with RIPTA folks.

TIM FLYNN: Sure, we have people at RIPTA who serve on our committee. So they'll certainly get the word. I'm sure they've got an earful the last couple of weeks. But I really appreciate. Heidi eloquent as always.

HEIDI SHOWSDED: Thank you.

TIM FLYNN: And I really appreciate, you're preach to go the choir here, we'll take what you said under advertisement and we'll keep people in the community allowing them to get to where they need to get to on their own terms.

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VICTORIA HARDY: Hello everyone my name is Victoria Hardy and I came here tonight to speak about the Transportation RIde program and the RIPTA cuts which I know we've already heard a few things about the RIde program and the RIPTA cuts but I have other things to add. I know everyone has been complaining that the transportation options are rather inadequate and it's a tough thing and that was before the cuts and before things had gotten worse. One thing I noticed, I only lost my ability to drive last summer, it's been a very difficult thing for me to adjust to and I've lost a lot of my independence as a result of it, but I have been using the RIde van since last September, I went back to school to CCRI and it was all right for the fall semester and string semester and then around May t started to get worse. It seems to me the RIde program, the services it's just been noticeably worse over the summer and I'm not really sure why. But there have been a lot of breakdowns with buses and that wasn't happening before. There have been mix-ups with scheduling, there has been a lot of scheduling that's unreasonable, in which they don't allow enough time to get everyone where they need to go on time. I actually have an internship here at the department of administration, I just finished it up today and I have been late one quarter of the time as a result of these things and I scheduled myself to come here 15 minutes early and this still happened. And it leaves me very concerned about what is going to happen to me after I graduate in December and look for a job. Because obviously, if I have to rely on the RIde van to get there, your employers are probably not going to accept that sort of thing, being late a quarter of the time, due to circumstances I can't control. I admit it's also very frustrating because when I was able to drive, I was known for being very punctual, I was careful about that and it's honestly humiliating to have this happen because of circumstances I can't control just because of everything I've done to avoid it. I'm also concerned about the cuts. To give an example of the types of ways this can effect someone, I don't know if the cuts will effect CCRI, but I have evening classes and if they do, and RIPTA, the RIde program has grumbled about picking me up at 10 o'clock at night before, but they've done it. If these cuts have effected the route, it's possible I'll be left with an unfortunate dilemma where I may have to leave the lecture early which is not a very good solution or else arrange for someone to pick me up. The problem is, I can do that, but they can't pick up my scooter. I have limited ability to walk, but it would be very painful for me to walk to and from the classrooms of that large building, so that would be a very nasty dilemma to have to deal with if these cuts are going to effect it. It's very unfortunate, in fact, it's gotten to the point where I'm actually considering moving up to Boston after I graduate and look for work. Because I lived there a long time ago, they have much better public transportation and here, if they keep cutting things and limit it go and make it go worse than it is, I can barely deal with it. And of course, my family won't be with me if I move to Boston, so that's other issues that that would bring up. And that, is the issue that I wanted to discuss tonight.

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Page 115 Written, Emailed, Faxed Testimony

July 26, 2011

Governor's Commission on Disabilities

41 Cherry Dale Court

Cranston, RI 02920

To Whom It May Concern,

My wife and I are frequent users of the Ride program. I am writing to express our concerns about the proposed Transportation RIPTA service cuts. From what I understand, these cuts do not impact the service in and around my home. However, it could affect us for doctor's appointments, meetings we need to attend, and visiting family.

I believe the eye doctor I go to may be on the Kent County route. I am on the Board of Directors at In-Sight and need to attend meetings there. This route is another slated to curtailed. Since both my wife and I are blind, we occasionally need help with some errands and shopping. To accomplish this we go to m family's home in Coventry. We take Ride to their home, do that we need to do and return home though RIde. This route is also expected to have a major cut.

As you can see these cuts will affect our lives immensely. Every year we are faced with deficits in the RIPTA budget. This service is a lifeline for many people, especially the blind, handicapped and seniors who cannot afford any other means of transportation. It is time for the Governor and the State Legislators to find a way to permanently fund RIPTA. Please do all you can to maintain the service as it is. Rhode Island is such a small state, we should have accessible public transportation throughout. The State and RIPTA should be working toward this goal.

Richard Gaffney {signature}

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Kathleen Boland 7/31/2011 10:44 AM

My name is Kathleen P Boland, I have been the advocate for my 90 yr old mother and 55 yr old disabled sister for many years now.

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We use the Transportation RIde program for all of my mother's appointments, as she is wheel chair bound. My mother is unable to sit in a car, so without RIde, she would also be housebound.

My major concern is the future. When the time comes that my mother can no longer stay at home, where will my sister find housing, if the current programs are cut? Their home is handicap accessible, with the bathroom remodeled, steel ramp and chair lift, all thanks to PARI and OSCIL. She could stay there with a great deal of support. Other options would be assisted living, but, from what I understand, there are waiting lists that are years long. If they are able to remain open!

Please do not let the most fragile in our community be forgotten while balancing budgets. These programs allow our elders and disabled to retain their independence and dignity.

Thank you

Kathleen P Boland

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### **RIPTA & RIde Related Testimony**

#### Page 3 Barrington Forum:

RICK COSTA: My name is Rick Costa and hi, Angie how are you. I'm also a member of the National Federation of the Blind and also a member of the Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living Council. Transportation My concern today is the proposed threats of the, of the Para transit and bus route cuts and my concern is that, you know, we have such a small state to begin with. We already have areas in this state that are inaccessible to us, and by cutting these routes, we're going to have less accessibility in the State of Rhode Island. Every day, you know, speaking for myself, I wake up in the morning and try to be as independent as I possibly can be, and when I have these bus routes that are going to be cut and then I can't get to a doctor's office or a meeting that I'm supposed to attend because there's no transportation, that concerns me, you know, very, very much. I'm looking to continue my quality of life. I'm looking to continue to be you know, an independent person and these proposed cuts will be detrimental to these issues taking place here. So that's my concern, is that transportation. To me, the system is broken. It seems like every two years we're being threatened with cuts and, I see the people with disabilities being used as a bait for you know, things to happen within this, you know, getting funds. I think as far as legislation is concerned, I would love to see us try to get a new way to fund the transportation system, because I seriously think that this system is broken and is in deep need of repair.

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#### Page 5:

JASON: Jason: My name is Jason, and I'd like to talk about the bus situation as well. Transportation It's important to have the Town bus and it's important to have more routes in the town. I use RIde I have a ticket for that, and I take the bus to go to other towns. And hopefully, they'll build more bus routes and more options. I use RIde. I use that ticket -- I take the bus to visit my father and my sister and my uncle, my family, like to birthday parties and holidays, things like Easter and Christmas and I use the bus to get there, to get home. It's important for me to be able to travel by myself and get to the store, and I use the bike path independently. Like I can ride the bike to the market and I stop at the stop signs and go to the store, so it's important for me to be independent. And if I can't ride somewhere on the bicycle, I want to take the bus. I get on and I know which stop to get on and off on. So there you go.

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Page 25 Warwick Forum:

ANNA LIEBERNOW: I did not hear who was on the panel. I wanted to take a moment and talk to you guys about something that I think is really important which is how do people get around -- can everyone hear me okay? Okay. Transportation You know, one of the things this last year there were a bunch of people that were trying to get more money for RIPTA and that did not happen and so at the very last minute, RIPTA got no extra money. That means that they are looking at maybe cutting routes. That's how people get around and I know that for people who have no other way of getting around that's really a big problem. That's really horrendous. There are hearings coming up for RIPTA within the next week. I'm assuming that they will have information about those dates. If people can be at those hearings that would be really good. That will give everyone an opportunity to speak about the ways that the Transportation RIde program and buses are helpful to them and they really need them. I am also guessing, but I don't know that everybody knows, that if they cut fixed route buses which is what they are initially talking about, if they cut fixed route buses, that right away means that RIde vans are also cut.

That's 3/4 of a mile. Every time that one fixed route bus gets cut any RIde van that goes anywhere at the same hours as the one that got cut they would have to take that away. It is really important for people that use the buses as well as people that use RIde vans to be able to be at those hearings and talk about it. I hope that everyone can be there and also I really hope that next year, we find a way to make sure that RIPTA gets more money and a big piece of that is being able to go to the legislature and talk about them getting funded. That's it, thank you (applause).

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Page 58 Middletown:

CATHERINE MITCHELL: My name is Catherine Mitchell, I'm here, representing, the National Federation of the Blind in Rhode Island, I'm secretary of the Mount Hope Chapter in this area. I have two things that I am really concerned with of late. One is like everyone else is the RIPTA cuts. Transportation I can't -- the more I hear about this, I'm fairly new to Rhode Island.

Even I know that they should not be cutting. They should be adding. Also, the -- I've recently learned that the -- anyone who uses the RIde service, also relies on RIPTA, the bus routes which they want to cut. Not only will cut -- those are hourly wage jobs. They want to cut, weekend and holiday and evenings those are the hours you must work. I'm trying to get employment. If they cut those hours I can't get that job or that one. So it is just making me sick. In addition to that, the RIde service already is limited to, I guess they are allowed to go as far as a mile and a half off route now it is 3/4 of a mile, the minimum. This means we cannot go to the doctors if we would like to. The same thing with bus routes. It is already limited as it is. To limit it more is just, you know to -- I only have five minutes, I've spoke to other riders and how it will affect their income at a time when people are having such a hard time to eliminate jobs and limit the jobs that people can get is just, I think very unreasonable. The second thing, that came to my attention recently is that, there's I'm not sure how to start this. In the American's with Disabilities Act. There's a hearing in Congress right now about reinstating 1973 something or other Act that I have on a petition. What it does is in a sneaky way that sounds positive, it allows Congress to leave in language that makes it legal for people with disabilities to be paid below the minimum wage. Companies that have special certificates. These are nationwide including here in Rhode Island. I'm ashamed to say. This shocked me. I could not even tell you. You know, some places they are paid so low they are paid lower than incarcerated convicts, than third world workers overseas. It is an absolute disgusting disgrace. I have a petition with me today. I don't know if this is appropriate I have not done this before, I have a petition if you are interested in signing the National Federation of the Blind has initiated a campaign to get this quashed.

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Page 106:

JOHN PIMENTAL: My name is John Pimental and among other things, I represent National Federation of the Blind.

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And the first you've heard a million times so I'm going to say it very briefly, Transportation the current transportation crisis and it is a crisis, affects the lower income segment of our population and the disabled segment of our population more than anyone else in the state. And it threatens to push those of us who are not on entitlement programs onto them and to keep those of us who would like to get off entitlement programs from doing that. I want to thank the young lady who made the nice comments about In-Sight because I work for

In-Sight and we do, do wonderful work there. It's a great thing to have a place to go when you lose your vision. I speak from experience. The most awful thing that's ever happen today me was going blind. You feel helpless, you feel useless, you lose your job, you lose your ability to drive. In many cases you lose your friends, sometimes even your family. To have a place like In-Sight where you can go to get back your independence, and your sense of worth, and to reassure yourself that you can actually function and real a real wholesome life, and I've heard people say to live life after blindness is huge. The RIPTA cuts threaten to take that away. Every couple of years we go through the same problem. RIPTA and the government play a game of chicken with the poor and the disabled populations in the middle. We stand between a RIPTA bus and the government locomotive while they try to see who is going to give up first. In the case of the blind community, in particular, that means lack of ability to get to those services they need. Among other things I'm a diabetes counselor and I work with blind and vision impaired diabetics. I'm the only blind diabetic counselor in the state. And I show people how to manage diabetes when you can't see. And guess what? There are people who can't come for counseling who desperately need it because they can't get transportation to Jefferson Boulevard from where they are. And that's now. That's before cuts. In the interest of full disclosure, I should tell you if the Jefferson Boulevard route is cut, I lose my job. That's not why I'm here. There are more important things and there are a lot more people being hurt than just me. There are people who stand to lose their independence, their sense of self-worth, and their reason for being because of the current RIPTA cuts. We need to fix the system of funding for the RIPTA and the RIde program and for those of you who don't know, and I suspect most all of you do, every RIPTA cut means a RIde cut. The RIde program is automatically cut for any area we cut the RIPTA program. That's huge. I think it was Marie Antoinette who said people have no bred, let them eat cake. Here we have the state saying the blind people have no buses they'll just have to drive.

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Page 123 Written, Faxed, Emailed:

To whom it may concern,

I am thankful for the opportunity to give input in matters relating to people with disabilities in Rhode Island.

I am blind, and keep a busy schedule to get done what I need to get done. This does include school and work, activities which advance my goals to achieve financial independence, among other things.

This forum is taking place at a time when Transportation RIPTA faces a 10 percent budget cut, and a considerable reduction of services to all Rhode Islanders. The disability community and policy makers must understand first the obligations RIPTA has to provide services. We also do ourselves a big favor to understand the benefits of public transportation to the community as a whole. RIPTA needs to be convinced that public transportation services are directly linked to a community's ability to work and live free of barriers. These barriers are imposed by a government unwilling to procure funds to provide its citizens the basic right to move to and fro.

Lack of service restricts the poor, the disabled, other disadvantaged populations, and the general public to a limited lifestyle. This only creates a culture of apathy, and mistrust of an agency that does not strive to really serve the state. RIPTA may be restricted from lack of funding, and there may be "nothing we can do' according to public officials.

Well, let us see the poor and the disabled have nothing they can do regarding their careers, doctor appointments, and social life because of service cuts, and the state will face deeper budget shortfalls since the poor and disabled will have learned to live a limited life, and will not be able to pay taxes due to lack of work.

It is that serious. Cut 33 and 34 service where I live and RIde service will not take me home at certain times. I can currently leave Wayland Square at 10:00 P.M. on the 78 bus and get home without trouble. I am not sure if I can do this should cuts take effect. And even if this will still be possible, we the public will find out the extent of our limits only when services cease and our very livelihoods must change to adjust to the new bus schedules.

The impact to the general public becomes greater to people with disabilities. The blind must travel to unknown sites, get dropped off at unfamiliar locations by unhelpful drivers, and will depend on the good will of the sighted public to find their way at times.

Those on wheel chairs may miss a bus, and have little to no option to find the next bus. They may continue to face negative attitudes from drivers who must balance their duty to load and unload the chair with their requirement to get to Kennedy Plaza on time. Some will just drive by, leaving people stranded.

Riders may become stranded late, or depending on the schedule, not so late at night with no feasible transport options. This is especially concerning due to lack of cab accessibility for wheel chairs in this state.

In summary, transportation fulfills a basic human right to move and live in the world. It must be protected to promote one's obligations, dreams, and duty to community, family, and self.

I hope that transportation will become a priority for providers in this state. The failure to provide this service will make Rhode Island the smallest, most inaccessible and economically depressing state of the Union.

Most sincerely,

Antonio M. Guimaraes Jr.

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### **RIPTA Related Testimony**

#### Page 10 Barrington Forum:

ROB: My name is Rob and I'm independent, I pay my bills like my credit cards, and I have a RIPTA card as well. Transportation I use RIPTA. I'm a user of RIPTA, I use the bus. I take Bus 36 to Warren. And I take that to Shaw's. I walk on the bike path as well. I take the bus to where I need to go. Franklin, Massachusetts.

INTERPRETER: Sorry, the interpreter is not clear as to what Robert is trying to say.

ROB: I hope to have a job in the future.

MARY WAMBACH: Good job, Rob, thank you.

Rob: Thank you.

SHARON BRINKWORTH: Thank you, Rob.

ROB: Thank you.

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TOM ARMSTRONG: My name is Tom Armstrong, and I have a 28 year-old son with autism that lives at home with us. And this is an overriding concern that builds upon what other folks have said, that with the budget that was passed by the legislation got passed and signed by the Governor, a concern that with these budget cuts the effect that that has on the community-based system that we've built where we've gone over a number of years over a lot of years from an institutional system to a good, community-based system, and what effect these budget cuts are going to have on this community-based system. Human Services The provider networks basically, the choices that you have are to cut services, to cut for instance staff paying benefits, which, in the long-run is not good at retaining and attracting the best staff that you can get. So, it's an overriding concern as to how those cuts are going to effect the community-based system that we've built over time. And a concern, too, actually, that the DD budget is 3% of the State budget and 15% of the cuts that were made actually came out of DD. Any consistency in terms of that are much larger percentage of cuts out of DD than out of other concerns. So, a real concern as to how the agencies can continue to provide and build on good community-based services to people with developmental disabilities. And I just actually wanted to add on another issue on the transportation issue that has come up with a few folks, there actually is a group, transportation comprehensive transportation group, that actually has been looking at other funding strategies for RIPTA because the gasoline tax is actually decreasing over time as fuel economy gets better on vehicles, actually the money that's being collected by the gas tax has actually been decreasing over time and probably will continue to decrease, so that there is a need for another funding strategy to fund RIPTA. Transportation And this group has been looking at other strategies and actually vehicles, miles travelled was one of the funding strategies that has been looked at. And actually, a couple of weeks ago when some of the stories with RIPTA cuts came out, there was actually an article in the Providence Journal that addressed this issue, and this transportation group has been looking at other strategies for funding because the gas tax is not sustainable over time. Thank you.

SHARON BRINKWORTH: Thank you, Thomas. Any comments from the panel? Thank you very much.

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#### Page 22 Warwick Forum:

NOELLE: I'm going to introduce my son, Joseph and then I'm going to come up and testify. Thank you. Thank you, distinguished panel members. I do not object to be recorded. I'm not a newcomer to this. I've given testimony before the Governor's Commission up in Lincoln and I'm familiar with the Rhode Island Disability Law Center. My son Joe is 39 years old. Joe is a client of Gateways to Change in Warwick. He has been for two years. There are many issues that I want to address today. On behalf of all of the citizens here. I want you to know that those of us who can be advocates for you, need to step forward at this time because there are so many things going on that are really detrimental.

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Transportation We talked about the RIPTA situation, Joe just got his first RIPTA pass. He was so excited about it. He can go all over the state. If he want to go to Narragansett to go to the beach, he can do that. To visit his sister in Tiverton, he can do that. He's not driving any more. It was a great thing for him to be able to do that. If the funds are cut from RIPTA, he's not going to be able to do that and many of you who go to work or appointments or visit family and friends will not be able to do that.

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Page 25:

CATHY KUPER: Hello can everybody hear me? I'm here to talk about my son, Thomas. One of the things that I want to highlight is both the budget cuts and the proposed cuts to Transportation RIPTA and how they will affect my son's life and my son's independence. He learned how to use the bus when he was 19. His world opened for him. He was able to meet friends, he was able to go to the beach, he was able to come and visit me at my house and he was able to go back to his apartment.

It was life changing for him and life changing for me, his mother, so I was not driving him everywhere along with all of the other things that go along with being a parent. My son now lives in a supported apartment. He does receive funding from the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Through his program he is in residential care at one program, but receives his day programming from another program because we liked the job training portion of that program better.

This past Friday, you'll remember how hot it was. My son decided to come home and he had asked the residential house to give him a ride. He was informed since it was between the hours of 9:00 and 3:00 that they could not give him a ride that day. That was okay. They have to do what they have to do. They can only do what they are getting paid to do. He was going to take the bus which he has done many times before. He got on and he took the bus or let me rephrase that. He tried to take the bus.

He made it to Kennedy Plaza. That was the day when buses were free. There were so many people wanting to get on that bus to go south, that he had to wait for two different buses to go by. About an hour and a half he was waiting in the hot sun. And when he finally was able to get on a bus, he was starting to see spots through his eyes and feeling a little funny. He made it. It probably took him three hours. He called me from the bus in a bit of a panic thinking he would pass out.

We talked him through it. He made it to the Dunkin' Donuts and I was able to pick him up. These things, so many people want to use the bus that he had to wait for additional buses to come. Now, they are going to cut this service? He would have gotten a ride if the funding were there, but the funding was not there. These are my concerns. Thank you.

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Page 26:

KATHLEEN KEITHAN: Hi, I'm Kathleen Keithan and I have something to say and I'm very frustrated that we are getting booted and we should get more help. We should not be ignored. We should be saying it louder, keep nagging, have hope, like she does. The Governor should listen. No matter what they should listen. I do agree with what you say. Something is not right, we should not be ignored, nor denied, we should be heard, but even louder even more louder. I feel some or a lot of parents are stuck with in so many ways, we need money, plus money for the utilities and all sorts. Obama did say that we must be more careful on what we spend, ways on spending and how we should use it. All I can say is we have no choice but to use it wisely for the utilities and for the renting of housing and stuff. Transportation I Don't take the city bus because I had a job, now, I don't. The money on the city bus have risen and I cannot afford it and I feel for those, though, I wish they could reduce the change that you have in your pockets -- those that don't have cards. Meaning that there should be an understanding they should have more money so we don't have to put up with it or whatever you call it.

I am worried about me and everyone and everything else. That's all I have to say, thank you. (Applause).

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Page 34:

HEIDI SHOWSTEAD: I would like to speak. Thank you, very much, typically, I serve on multiple boards across the state and I'm here today on behalf of the Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living Council just so I can get the feedback for the state of Rhode Island. Right now I'm speaking as a private citizen.

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I just want to state that I'm not going to go away quietly. I'm going to be at many hearings, including RIPTA hearings. Transportation

I wish that people would think about the impact that the route cuts that they are proposing for RIde and RIPTA would affect people. They are talking about the Lincoln Mall, the Warwick Mall. Places like Jefferson Boulevard which services people with visual challenges, that's where In-Sight is, the wheelchair repair shop is. I live in Providence but volunteer all over Rhode Island and a lot of the routes that they are planning to take away will debilitate my quality of life. I go from a life of independence where I get the help and go to where I choose, to total dependence relying on family and friends whatever the case may be. You think about saving money by cutting the RIde routes. What you are not realizing is that the more they take away from peoples' independence, personal care and community living, the more you will pay for hospital bills when people who are not depressed because they have fulfilling lives become depressed and fall into that mind/body connection, become sick. We don't want to see this happening in the state. We beg for you to think about ways to increase revenues for the DD services as wells the personal care and please keep the routes in place that let people live fulfilling lives and be able to see their families and make a difference. Don't let this state go down the wrong path, thank you. (Applause).

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Page 38 Middletown Forum:

PHYLLIS DOBBINS: Hello. I've never done this I'm Phyllis Dobbins Human Services I'm representing SOS. I volunteer with NAMI and a volunteer at the harbor house an independent clubhouse. Working with those suffering from mental illness.

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Transportation And fourth, we asked that RIPTA be expanded rather than cut back so all people including those recovering from mental illness be able too use public transportation and be able to get to everything they need. I'm shocked by the number of times I see a bus going down Mendon Road with one passenger and perhaps smaller vehicles would work more efficiently. And also smarter scheduling. If my family member needs to get from Cumberland to Woonsocket by bus will take three hours. By the time he gets to Lincoln mall the bus to Woonsocket has already left. So scheduling issues would really help helping people get better public transportation. As our Rhode Island population is aging, more of us will need that bus and those of us forced to stop working because they can't get to their job at Lincoln mall on a Sunday will become a financial burden to the state.

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Page 65:

ATTENDEE: My question is RIPTA. Transportation Where do the monies come from for operating expenses? Wider revenue, 100% self funded or taxpayer state revenue that keeps RIPTA afloat and what percentage is derived for that?

The Governor's Commission on Disability was a cosponsor along with the Coalition for Transportation Choice. Some name like that to move from a system which is based on the gas tax. A certain percent of the gas taxes underwrites RIPTA. Fares have almost no impact. They contribute very little to the cost of running RIPTA. It was based on gas tax. As you know when gas goes up, people typically use less and so actually funding for RIPTA and RIde has decreased over the last couple of years. There was a movement afoot to do a different funding for it and I'm trying to remember exactly what that was. It was not successful. We'll leave it at that. There's some federal money. There's gas tax. There's ridership, but there's nowhere obviously, nowhere near enough.

I wanted to -- RIPTA concerns me not because I need it. Although I totally respect that it serves a great purpose for those who do. Whether it is economic or disability-based reasons for running. My personal observation and you can't substantiate it -- I won't try to with a great study. This is just observation. I see a lot of empty RIPTA buses. What I would say to myself and my fellow citizens and taxpayers and gas tax users is: I don't think the issue is likely to be best handled by asking RIPTA, who is a self-interested organization, think about it -- RIPTA wants to continue to employ its bus drivers and mechanics and to fund their pensions and health and whatever else their benefits are, which I suspect may be richer and more robust than the benefits that most of us enjoy from our employers or government resources. I'm going to assume that RIPTA is a unionized organization. I could be wrong about that. That tends to contribute to fat verses lean operations. What I would say to those who want to advocate for a RIPTA system that does not have cuts is, we need to look at RIPTA from a business perspective, from a bottom line and say where is there fat and waste and abuse in the RIPTA system as it exists today? You cannot ask RIPTA to do that. That's asking the criminal to look at

his own behavior. That's not fair. RIPTA is not in a position to do that. No organization can self police that way. That's where we need perspective outside of it. In a state that has a very bad fiscal bottom line, which is Rhode Island and a federal government who has the same. The United States of America. We have to think more creatively and more fiscally responsibly. Why not approach, Harvard, Yale any one of the big MBA schools and say take on as a pro bono project for your students the analysis of RIPTA. Look at it, get inside, rip it open, look at where they spend money to repair old buses versus new. I don't know the answer but it needs to be looked at. Look at where they spend money in union benefits versus the private sector benefits. I don't know the answer it has to be looked at. Look at routes that are dysfunctional that should not be operating because they cannot produce revenue and PS: Ridership should be a significant component of a master transportation system. It is about riders, hello? Airplanes fly because we pay air fares, RIPTA should be the same. Crack that puppy open and get some good business thinkers to look at it pro bono. This stuff happens, really, and come back to the state of Rhode Island with suggestions and hold their feet to the fire to implement the things that are best serving the public. We don't have extra tax revenue or gas revenue to throw at organizations that are broken like RIPTA. They need to serve well and smart. This segment and demographic they are discrete units but the whole of RIPTA operates more like a wasteful, big bulky bureaucratic thing. That does not serve anyone in this room. If you want to advocate for RIPTA staying afloat, you cannot look at RIPTA as your champion. They are only championing, RIPTA.

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Page 100 Providence Forum:

NZINGA MISGANA: I am a caretaker of and relative of people with disabilities. What I wanted to speak mostly about tonight are people with psychiatric disabilities, but I do help care for my elderly parents who have mobility issues.

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Secondly, Transportation I want to mention the RIPTA cuts which absolutely effect the people with disabilities. You've heard it all before at the RIPTA hearings you can get information from those. The one I was at was extraordinarily well attended with articulate and well prepared people testifying. But I just want to say that the bus keeps my loved one with psychiatric disabilities connected to the world. He can go shopping. Want to go to the mall? Got a little bit of money? You know young people sometimes want to buy video games, have saved, go on your own. Meet a friend for coffee. Go and visit people. Does this on weekends and holidays, too, by the way. Does this after 10 o'clock. And finally, when he feels up to it, he's able to take classes to get to class back and forth, which really helps him feel like he's contributing to his own life and to society. And I just am stunned that instead of RIPTA getting better, which it needs to be, this state, even in the midst of, I don't want to hear anymore about how bad financially we are, things like public transportation, cutting the ADA buses, c'mon, this is crazy. These cuts in RIPTA are disproportionately affecting the elderly, the disabled, and people of color. If this state thinks it's not a recipe for a lawsuit, they have another thing coming. It's been done in other states. Think smart. Help RIPTA figure it out. I want to thank you for doing these. I never knew they existed. I found out this year. I hope they make a difference and thank you for your time and attention.

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Page 101:

HEIDI SHOWSDED: Couple of things I want to say, I'm Heidi Showsded, and typically I serve on about 8 subcommittees, on a handful of boards across the state. Today I'm collecting information for them, but I'm speaking for myself. And I have two major issues that I really want to work on.

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And if you take that away from people with disabilities, you're basically institutionalizing them in their house without the institution. I mean you're telling me from some of the routes that I've seen I wouldn't be able to go to work at the mall anymore, shopping with friends. I wouldn't be able to go to the Lincoln mall movie theatre or doctor's appointments that I need or socialize at all. And you're also telling people that are blind and physically impaired that they won't be able to go to In-Sight because that's on Jefferson Boulevard, I don't use that but I've heard wonderful things about them. Vanguard that's on that route as well. If all these routes are cut, how are people supposed to have a quality of life that they're entitled to. I don't use it on holidays, to see my family members, but I have a lot of friends that do and I feel that it's important that somebody speak up for them. And who is Transportation RIPTA or any other State people to say, oh, well you're not going to be able to see your sick grandmother on Christmas because the route's cut. Or you're not going to be able to go out with your friends unless you ask you know, a friend of yours to go somewhere. People don't mind doing favors for you, but if every time you have to go somewhere you're asking for help that, gets real old real fast and you're stuck. Think about yourselves. Most of you can drive. Most of you, you want to go somewhere, you get in the car and

go. You don't have to say, well, how long am I going to be there? How far in advance should I book my trip in am I going to be on a bus route? Am I going to be safe at night? I must be home by 9 o'clock because of a curfew where services stop at 10. It's a quality of life issue and civil rights issue and just try to put yourself in the frame of mind of a person with disability. Because disability aside you're people first. And you should be entitled to live your lives as you choose, be the way you do your personal care or the way you travel or anything else and these cuts are making it very, very difficult to do so. Think of ways you can have services for people disabilities get funded and more available instead of less funded and less available. That's all I have to say for now, thank you very much.

DEB GARNEAU: Thank you Heidi. Uhm -- is it safe to say Tim that these testimony will also be shared with RIPTA folks.

TIM FLYNN: Sure, we have people at RIPTA who serve on our committee. So they'll certainly get the word. I'm sure they've got an earful the last couple of weeks. But I really appreciate. Heidi eloquent as always.

HEIDI SHOWSDED: Thank you.

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MATTHEW FLAHERTY: Flaherty, I came before this committee today to tell you that because of what may be transpiring with the SSI cuts.

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Page 104:

Transportation RIPTA, I rely on RIPTA to go to work and go home, go to the movies out to eat, and just food and close shopping. I never did drive, but those cuts will affect me deeply and affect my friends deeply. A lot of the friends have the same disability I have which is schizophrenia. But I'm glad with medication and that's another thing they do at the manor, they make sure we have our meds and eat good. I'm very much concerned about that and I don't want to see us have to be separated. We don't want to see the manor closed. Let's try to make Rhode Island a better state than it is now, thank you.

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Page 108:

CHARLES FELDMAN: I grew up when things were a little bit better and so I'm doing pretty well now, just like John,

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So that's another thing. Transportation And then RIPTA also, if I was younger and I stayed out later, now I go to bed early, so I'm not likely to be out after 10 o'clock, but if I was younger and staying out later, I might not have been able to get around where I wanted to go. Excuse me, and even as it is now, I didn't even think to look at this, when I go to my spiritual center in the evening and on Sunday evenings I don't even know if I can get back home by bus anymore if these cuts go through. And then I was in the hospital, I fortunately was never in the Eleanor Slater hospital, if that had not been there for me, I wouldn't have been able to recover and be here now. Fortunately I was able to get into the hospital and get the treatment I needed. It took a while to get the right treatment but I was able to get the treatment I needed.

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Page 111:

CHRISTINA BATISTA: I'm Christina Batista with the Cross Disability Coalition. And I just have a little dialogue to go off of hello and I am the cross disability coalition coordinator. And today, I stand before you representing the members of the coalition. The coalition is an initiative of the Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council. The coalition includes individuals with all types of disabilities including developmental disabilities. The coalition has identified four priority issues which are safe affordable housing, employment, state budget cuts and transportation.

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Transportation Today, I would like to identify members concerns on transportation and on state budget cuts. Transportation has been on everyone's mind this week due to proposed cuts from RIPTA. People with disabilities have a difficult time getting to and from places on a regular basis. If RIPTA reduces services statewide then people with disabilities will have more trouble get willing around than before. For individuals with disabilities who are employed and use one of the 39 bus routes, their jobs could be compromised. Also, individuals would not be able to attend meetings of interest, participate in the community, go to routine doctor's

appointments or visit family or friends. RIPTA is proposing to end service at 10 P.M.. does this mean if one chooses to see a movie at 8, they must leave the theatre at 9:30 missing the end of the movie? Sometimes taking the bus is the only means for one to see their family or friends on holidays. This truly would be unfair. We, as individuals with disabilities, enjoy our social time when we can get it. Aside from routes being cut and holiday services being terminated members would also like to see the buses in better working condition, thus having this working properly. It is very important to us that our voices be heard. Members of the coalition go to the state house and talk to legislators about transportation issues, attend RIPTA hearings and speak up at the Governor's Commission hearings. We encourage others to do the same. State budget cuts are worrying everyone, especially people with disabilities. The effect of cuts on people's lives would be horrible. We would be in jeopardy of losing our personal care assistants and may lose our section 8 waiver assistance for food et cetera. The coalition recommends helping the state to see the importance of ADA and how it helps the independence of people. There is a need for people to be more involved in public policy and talk about with government leaders. We also suggest that Rhode Island establish an individual development account. Which is an IDA program for people with disabilities. In closing, the coalition asks that all potential cuts of the state budget be looked at, not just disability services. Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns. Thank you.

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Page 113 Written, Faxed, and Emailed Testimony

"Mary-Jo Wentzell" 7/26/2011 10:39 AM

I myself have a disability and find it very hard to get by even though I strive to work and better myself. I actually like to work because it helps to keep me more positive and structured. I hope that the government doesn't take from the families and the people with mental and physical challenges any opportunities that are already in place. Transportation It is sad to see that the RIPTA Bus is cutting back. I understand all about the high deficient but a lot of the people we are talking about don't have cars and they have been cut back on their support such as their home health aid hours. Meaning that they can't get to doctors appointments or school or just now the quality of their life is not as good. Sometimes these people would take them to the movies say. Also in the center there used to be arts and crafts groups all different groups. When I asked about it because I wanted to go to the crafts group I was told they had cut backs. I hope that everything that Patrick Kennedy fought so hard for will be considered when your making your decisions.

Sincerely, A concerned citizen.

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"Mary-Jo Wentzell" 7/26/2011 12:01 PM

Hello,

My name is Mary-Jo Wentzell and I am writing to you today to tell you a little about myself, my story, and how it is applicable in today's current financial downfall.

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In addition, another concern I have is the Transportation RIPTA Bus making financial cut backs because of the deficit. A lot of the people I am talking about have to take the bus because they don't know how to drive. I have heard that RIPTA is considering eliminating bus routes, making it difficult for the disabled to get around the state. Due to their disabilities, not every individual will be able to find transportation to and from appointments and daily obligations, thus making their lives even further complicated.

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Page 118:

July 31, 2011

Governor's Commission on Disabilities

41 Cherry Dale Court

Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Public Forum Members:

We the members of the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island are extremely concerned about the proposed transportation cuts by Transportation RIPTA. The RIPTA board as well as State legislators should develop a sustainable funding mechanism for public transportation in Rhode Island. Access to public transportation is essential for those of us who are blind to continue to travel independently, be able to participate in our communities, live active lives, and be productive members of society.

Those of us who are blind and visually impaired rely on fixed bus routes and Paratransit services to go to work, school, medical appointments, shop for groceries and run other errands. If services are decreased or cut entirely we blind and visually impaired Rhode Islanders are left isolated in our homes, lose our independence and have to become a burden to our families and friends. Losing access to reliable transportation will diminish our quality of life. Cuts in public transportation will not only negatively impact those of us who cannot drive but also the lives of our families and friends.

The lack of reliable and effective public transportation will cause some blind and visually impaired individuals to lose their jobs, and have to go on Disability benefits in order to survive. There are already many Rhode Island communities that are isolated with little to no access to public transportation. This lack of transportation is a barrier to employment, school, and medical care for blind individuals who live in these communities. Rhode Island is fast becoming an inhospitable environment for those of us with disabilities. Accessible public transportation for Rhode Island residents is imperative in order to maximize our independence.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Graciela Pires

President, National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island

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Page 120:

Hello, my name is Max Zapata and I am representing the Save Our Mental Health Services Coalition, or SOS for short.

I am concerned about the following issues, and I would like the Governor's Commission on Disabilities to focus on these in the upcoming year:

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We ask that Transportation RIPTA be expanded, rather than cut back, so that all people in Rhode Island who need buses or RIde vans, can use public transportation to get to doctor's appointments, shopping, and even recreation, which people need to lift their spirits.

Just think about and realize how difficult is the daily struggle, hardness and limitations of many people and families dealing with a mental condition such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, OCD, PTSD, panic attack and the more than ninety phobias that are out there. Those people deserve our attention and support.

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**School Transportation Related Testimony**

Page 29 Warwick Forum:

MARY MANSON: I'm Mary Manson. Actually I work for the Warwick School Department. I'm not sure if I have the right to come up here but I believe I do. Taking care of special needs children is more difficult than people realize. On July 20th 2011 I was told to pick up a school bus at the First Student bus yard by my superior because my bus had broken down the day before. When I approached the bus that they told me to take, I was concerned on the capacity it was a 14-passenger bus and weighed 11,545 pounds much larger than I usually drive. I called my dispatcher to verify that it was the correct bus I was supposed to drive. And to verify if I was licensed for it. Transportation It worried me as a bus driver for 23 years, the tires were worn out and it was the bumpiest bus I had ever driven. We were bouncing up and down. I feel these buses are not appropriate for our special needs children. We have children with feeding tubes, suction machines, oxygen, ventilators and this bus was so bumpy. My biggest concern is the lack of air conditioning on the special needs school buses. Many of our special needs children have severe respiratory problems. We hear every day on the news "take the bus because of Rhode Island's poor air quality" our special needs children need and deserve the best air quality through air conditioning. Currently they are not receiving it. I feel that specific changes need to be taken when it comes to our special needs children. In this heat there should not be one special needs child without air conditioning on their bus. We do not have the right equipment to perform our daily job. This is a disgrace to our Warwick School Department in allowing this to go on. Warwick used to be the best special needs for students in the state. I feel that the school department is not taking care of their responsibility.

Concerns	Recommendations	Testimony on Pages
1. federal/congress make cuts to public transportation that could effect RIPTA/Ride and cut funding further	Table until springtime (funding through March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2012)	65, 123,101
2. Funding formula is broken for public transportation.	Look at other sources of money, look at the funding formula. Suggestions for other means of funding for public transportation.	29, 65,106,
3. raising awareness of who it impacts, people associate transportation w/ RIPTA do not think of Ride and the fact that many disabled people rely on it as their only means of transportation	Executive committee draft document of impact statement to the transportation subcommittee of the finance committee- put a face to the cause.	100, 25,101, 123,109,
4. No action/opinion	none	113, 38, 3,13, 61,10, 22, 25
5. cuts to DD system and services	Get behind advocacy groups and services working on behalf of the DD system to restore cuts to transportation. Advocate earmarks for disabled transportation from any expansions for RIPTA funding.	118, 34, 32, 90,10

 **MOTION:** To recommend the above list of concerns and recommended solutions to the Legislation Committee. BI/CB passed unanimously

 <small>alarm clock graphic</small>	<b>Adjournment</b>	Tim Flynn	3:25 PM
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 Convener adjourn the meeting at 3:30 PM