

## ***Statement from RIPTA Chairman Normand Benoit***

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Over the last four years as RIPTA's board chair, I have had a chance to see first-hand the progress that's been made at the agency during Scott Avedisian's tenure as CEO. While it's important to acknowledge where we've fallen short, the record as a whole is strong.

This comes into sharper focus in light of the fact that RIPTA outperforms similar agencies across the country in almost every key performance indicator. Despite a chronic lack of state funding, RIPTA still provides more trips, in a larger area, at a more effective cost per trip than other transit agencies that serve similar population areas or provide statewide service anywhere in America. RIPTA also outperforms its peers in total trips, fare revenues, farebox recovery and trips per capita. It is an impressive, if under-appreciated, record.

RIPTA's pension plan is stronger than it has been in years and the agency has a balanced budget. Meanwhile, the federal government has expressed its confidence in RIPTA by investing over \$45 million in federal grants. Today, as we continue to recover from the pandemic, RIPTA provides 900,000 rides per month to Rhode Islanders.

Putting DOT in charge of public transit in Rhode Island would not be sound public policy. DOT's responsibility is to keep our state's roads and bridges in a high state of repair. This mission is very different from RIPTA's mission to provide transit riders with safe, reliable service.

Subordinating RIPTA to DOT was proposed, and rejected, only three years ago. Nothing has changed since then, and I am certain that I speak for our riders, and all supporters of public transit across Rhode Island when I say that making RIPTA an adjunct to DOT would be a grave error.

In fact, in a letter to Gov. Raimondo when she proposed the same thing in 2020, Grow Smart RI recommended just the opposite approach, stating "it seems to make good sense to consider reassigning all transit "operating" functions that currently reside at RIDOT to RIPTA."

I look forward to appearing before the Senate Committee on Rules, Government Ethics & Oversight to answer any questions and address any concerns that any members may have. I continue to support Scott Avedisian as CEO of this organization and I am confident that he will continue to work with RIPTA's committed staff and the Board in the best interests of the people we serve. I look forward to a constructive, informed dialogue with state leaders and our many stakeholders about how to provide RIPTA with the funding and support it needs to achieve its full potential.