

PRESS RELEASE



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Contact: Patricia Raub, RI Transit Alliance
401.225.6472

RIPTA Bus Riders and Local Organizations Gather to Oppose Flawed RIDOT Hub Proposal

Groups Urge RIDOT and Governor to Stop this Plan and Listen to Public Input to Create a Viable Proposal

The Rhode Island Transit Riders Alliance joined with local organizations including Grow Smart Rhode Island, the Jewelry District Association and the Providence Preservation Society at a press conference this morning to oppose the RI Department of Transportation's (RIDOT) proposed bus hub plan. Gathered on the riverfront land beside the vacant National Grid building on Dyer Street -- the primary site in RIDOT's multi-hub plan, community leaders and bus riders highlighted the lack of public input in the process as well as the decline in quality of service created by the proposed design. Opponents also noted the plan would disproportionately affect elderly, disabled and minority populations that make up a majority of transit riders. **The group called on RIDOT and the Governor to put the needs of transit riders first and stop this flawed plan now.**

"We believe a strengthened mass-transit system can help reinvigorate the downtowns of our core cities, strengthen Rhode Island's economy, fight climate change, and improve the mobility of the many Rhode Island residents who cannot or choose not to drive. But for public transit to help realize these goals, transit users must be fully in the loop and heard in public hearings as the plans are developed," Patricia Raub, chair of the RI Transit Alliance said. "A plan initiated without the input of transit users and other members of the public is unlikely to succeed."

To date, RIDOT has held no public meetings to listen to and incorporate input into the proposed hub plan. RIDOT claims there has been a public process, but has held nothing more than a few private meetings with so-called "stakeholders" to whom they presented their plan. A RIPTA board meeting last week brought dozens of people, all of whom voiced their opposition to the proposal. RIDOT has said they will move the process to RFP in the coming weeks, regardless.

"Any design on how to allocate the \$35 million transportation bond approved by taxpayers in 2014 should NOT be driven by artificial deadlines without the benefit of transparency, data and public input. A building project of this magnitude, using public funds, that would relocate

thousands of RIPTA passengers daily, requires more than a few weeks of public presentations. A legitimate public process should build public support, not catalyze widespread opposition," said Sharon Steele, president of the Jewelry District Association.

Brent Runyon, executive director of PPS said, "PPS joins fellow organizations and concerned citizens who are baffled and frustrated by RIDOT's unexpected introduction of a new transit proposal that included negligible public input. We respectfully request that RIDOT immediately pause the rollout and planning of this bus hub proposal at Dyer Street and engage in a true participatory process that balances needs of riders with our City's need for high quality public space."

Grow Smart RI Deputy Director John Flaherty recalled a line Gov. Gina Raimondo used when speaking about the future of transit in RI. "This is no way to build back a 'better normal' for those of us who rely on transit to get to work and essential services. We call on RIDOT to withdraw its third in a series of flawed and inadequately vetted proposals and engage with stakeholders and riders to strengthen, not weaken our transit system."

Need to enhance, not degrade the current system

Transit riders speaking at today's press event spoke of being left out of the decision process entirely, while RIDOT pushes the proposal forward without input from Rhode Islanders who use the bus for work, medical appointments, school, visits with family, and much more. The riders also indicated having multiple hubs with longer walks and more transfers which may slow their necessary commutes and add a significant burden onto riders. Riders believe the \$35 million in transit bonds should be spent to improve services, not degrade them.

"This civic amenity should enhance the riders' experience, including on-site amenities and easy to navigate routes. Most importantly, our transit system investment should be focused on creating an asset the state and riders can rely on for decades to come," Flaherty said.

Raub concluded, "The Dyer Street location, where RIDOT plans for the bulk of the buses to go, is too small to serve as the single downtown hub. It appears that the selection of this site has forced the development of the awkward and inconvenient multi-hub solution simply to accommodate the leftover buses."

Steele said, "This proposed hub is adjacent to the State's Innovation & Design District in the I-195 corridor. The waterfront park adjacent to this site was meant to provide a Gateway to this important business hub to nurture the new economy. This park was also designed to be an important public space where residents, workers & visitors alike would come together to live, work & play. By locating a transit hub with too small a footprint here, this valuable public asset will be limited to a single use and could limit investment in Governor's signature economic development plan. "

At the press event, Sharon Steele read a supportive statement from Providence Representative Chris Blazjewski and Brent Runyon read a letter in opposition from Councilwoman Helen Anthony.