August 19, 2020

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo  
Governor  
State of Rhode Island  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Transit Hubs Proposal

Dear Governor Raimondo,

Grow Smart RI shares your goal of leveraging an effective and high-performance transit system as a way to expand housing and economic opportunity across our state, further revitalize our Main Streets and Downtowns and measurably reduce climate warming greenhouse gas emissions.

That’s why we respectfully ask you to call on RIDOT to withdraw its third in a series of flawed and inadequately vetted proposals to dismantle the Downtown Providence transit hub in favor of multiple smaller hubs, none with a critical mass of service to avoid significant disruption to transit riders. We believe RIDOT’s proposal will make travel by transit more difficult and challenging for existing riders and those who might otherwise be attracted to a much improved transit system.

Your leadership in 2018 initiating Rhode Island’s first-ever long range Transit Master Plan has been a model for engaging successfully with stakeholders and riders. By contrast, each version of RIDOT’s multi hub proposal over the last four years was developed with minimal rider or stakeholder input and then predictably and avoidably faced significant opposition when rolled out. This shortsighted approach by RIDOT has wasted valuable time and is not up to your high standards for intense and inclusive examination of major new policy directions for RI.

We acknowledge that serious systemic and public safety problems exist in Kennedy Plaza and must be addressed. We firmly believe there are viable alternatives for transforming Kennedy Plaza into a safer, more welcoming and inviting public space, while also improving transit mobility through the capital city.

We ask that your administration temporarily suspend further action to implement the latest RIDOT multi-hub proposal and engage in a robust public process that involves all stakeholders, including the business, environmental, planning, social and racial justice communities, and of course transit riders. We suggest that a minimal goal of any new multi hub proposal that emerges from this process be to “do no harm” to the racially diverse group of Rhode Islanders, including many front line workers, who currently rely on transit service passing through Downtown Providence.

Unfortunately, the DOT proposal on the table does not even meet this modest standard.
Our staff and Board of Directors stand prepared to assist your administration in finding a better path forward for the quality of place and improved transit in Downtown Providence and environs.

Sincerely,

Scott Wolf
Executive Director

Cc: Nicole Verdi, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Scott Avedisian, CEO, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Peter Alviti, Director, Rhode Island Department of Transportation