



Department of Transportation  
Two Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02903

Office 401-222-2450  
Fax 401-222-3905  
[www.dot.ri.gov](http://www.dot.ri.gov)

April 7, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., Chairperson  
House Corporations Committee  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: 2026 H 7871 – AN ACT RELATING TO HIGHWAYS – RELOCATION OF UTILITY SERVICES**

Dear Chairman Abney:

Thank you for the opportunity to allow the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) to submit this letter regarding H 7871, AN ACT RELATING TO HIGHWAYS – RELOCATION OF UTILITY SERVICES.

Utility bill relief is a top priority for Governor McKee's administration, and we appreciate the intent behind H 7871 to address ratepayer impacts. However, as currently drafted, H 7871 would have significant implications for transportation funding and project delivery.

In 2022, H7604 and S2771 were proposed by RIDOT and subsequently passed by the General Assembly. The purpose of this legislation was to change the reimbursement formula from one hundred percent (100%) to fifty percent (50%), which is consistent with neighboring states, in order to better control the expenses and delays associated with utility relocations and to allow RIDOT to complete projects on time and within budget.

By changing the formula in 2022 through H7604 and S2771, an additional layer of accountability was introduced when utility services must be relocated within RIDOT projects. Under this framework, reimbursement is subject to work being completed on time.

Since the legislation was passed in 2022, and based on current utility billings for FY 2023, FY 2024, and FY 2025, RIDOT has been able to dedicate \$7.76 million in federal funding to critically needed bridge, paving, and safety-related projects throughout the State of Rhode Island.

While we share the goal of providing ratepayer relief, we believe it is important to balance this objective with the need to maintain reliable transportation funding and timely infrastructure delivery.

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We welcome the opportunity to work with the bill sponsors to identify a solution that appropriately balances transportation needs with ratepayer impacts.

Thank you for your review and consideration. We are available to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Sincerely,



Robert Rocchio, P.E.

Interim Director, Rhode Island Department of Transportation

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee  
The Honorable Alex S. Finkelman  
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel