

April 7, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chairman, House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

**RE: H-7882 – Relating to Public Utilities & Carriers –Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act
Roadwork Closure Notice**

Dear Chairman Solomon:

On behalf of Rhode Island Energy, I write in **opposition** to H-7882 as drafted. While we appreciate the broader intent of this bill, namely, to improve transparency and notification around roadway work conducted by public utilities, the proposed mandate would add significant administrative and cost burdens on our Company and the customers we serve. It also does not distinguish between emergency and non-emergency (or planned) work. With that said, *Rhode Island Energy would be happy to work with the bill's sponsors and other public utilities to find a reasonable path forward.*

Rhode Island Energy provides essential energy services to more than 770,000 customers across the state through the delivery of electricity and natural gas. Our team of 1,300+ union and non-union employees is dedicated to helping Rhode Island customers and communities thrive, while supporting the transition to a cleaner energy future in a safe, reliable, and affordable manner.

Respectfully, the nature of public utility infrastructure can result in unforeseen construction activity and roadway openings – whether it is to provide energy services to new customers (e.g., an out-of-state business looking to relocate to Rhode Island with specific energy needs), expanding service to existing customers (e.g., a local restaurant wants to add new equipment and requires a service upgrade), or repairing/replacing damaged infrastructure (in both emergency and non-emergency conditions). There are many instances in which our crews cannot determine whether a lane closure is needed until they are on-site and in the field. Even the best planned excavations can result in unforeseen circumstances as we assess the conditions of underground facilities.

The Committee should be aware that Rhode Island Energy communicates and coordinates extensively with state and local agencies on utility infrastructure projects and is required to comply with all permitting requirements. Today, for planned gas work, we issue notices to all abutters approximately ten days before construction. Our contractors also distribute door hangers when they dig safe a project (usually, within 30 days of the start date and at least 72 hours before work). Some projects can last weeks or months, with work conducted in multiple phases with varying degrees of potential disruption; thus, we often repeat these notifications when there is a substantial break in construction activity. Rhode Island Energy will also deploy electronic sign boards to communicate major known or planned disruptions on larger projects in highly visible areas.


Also, Rhode Island Energy notes the following concerns:

- **The proposed notification requirements would likely add administrative and cost burdens on the Company** – *costs which would ultimately be recoverable from utility customers.*
- **The bill does not distinguish between emergency and non-emergency (or planned) work.**
- These provisions would apply even in instances when a road may need to be temporarily closed. **Our teams already coordinate with local police departments to preserve roadway and public safety. It is often the local police that determines whether a road closure will be needed** – at which point, it would be impossible for advance notification to surrounding customers. Also, in many instances, a police detail can help foster traffic around the work site with minimal disruption to the surrounding community; advance notification would likely provide minimal benefit in such instances.
- Utility work – especially when conducted underground – can be dynamic and subject to a host of conditions beyond the Company’s control, including weather or “day of” customer-related requests. **By forcing public utilities into more rigid schedules, work will become more inefficient, thereby driving up costs. This bill could also result in multiple notifications for the same job, further disrupting and frustrating local residents and businesses.**

We look forward to discussing these matters further with the bill’s sponsors in the coming days.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,



Nicholas S. Ucci
Director of Government Affairs

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee
The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Rhode Island House of Representatives