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January 21, 2026

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chairman
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2026 H 7074, RELATING TO HIGHWAYS – CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF STATE ROADS

Dear Chairman Bennett:

Thank you for the opportunity to allow the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) to respectfully submit this letter of concern, requesting the following amendments to H 7074.

This bill empowers the Department to plant pollinator friendly vegetation, such as trees, shrubs, and otherwise beautify the area within the limits of the state roadways, and highways when deemed advisable. The use of the language “shall” in the bill, as it currently reads, requires RIDOT to build this associated cost into the project, impacting the overall time to execute the project as well as the associated costs. The Department would prefer the language to reflect our position to have the option, or choice to implement pollinator plantings, when advisable and or appropriate.

RIDOT is already actively taking steps towards more sustainable, conservation efforts. In 2025 RIDOT launched a Pollinator Conservation Program as part of our efforts to commit to a more sustainable roadside management and habitat enhancement. This initiative supports a variety of pollinator species, including the monarch butterfly. By improving roadside habitats and adjusting our mowing practices to allow native plants to thrive.

For the reasons cited above, we respectfully request that on line 6 and line 12 the word “shall” be edited to read “may”. This language will reflect the current language in the RIGL 24-8-11 Beautification. *“It is stated the department of transportation is hereby authorized and empowered to plant trees, shrubs and otherwise beautify the area within the limits of a road in a manner and location as the department may deem advisable.”*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information and for your diligence in reviewing these pieces of legislation. Please let me know if any further information is needed. We have attached a facts sheet highlighting the efforts of the Pollinator Conservation Program for your reference.

Sincerely,

Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E.
Director, Rhode Island Department of Transportation

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
The Honorable Michelle E. McGaw
Nicole McCarty Esq. Chief Legal Counsel

RIDOT is proud to launch a new *Pollinator Conservation Program* as part of our commitment to sustainable roadside management and habitat enhancement. This initiative supports a variety of pollinator species, including the monarch butterfly, by improving roadside habitat and adjusting mowing practices to allow native plants to thrive.

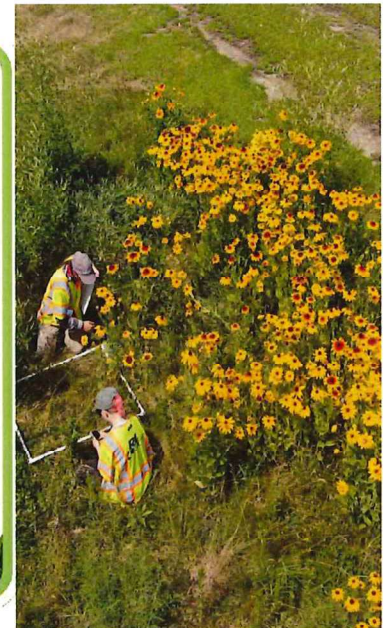
What RIDOT Has Done!

- Updated the Roadside Pollinator Seed Mix with native grasses and flowers. The seed blend, along with best installation practices, was designed and tested by the University of Rhode Island.
- Selected the best location for our conservation mowing pilot along the I-295 corridor.
- Created conservation area signs.



2025

- Begin conservation mowing on the I-295 corridor (except for areas immediately adjacent to the roadway that must remain clear for visibility and safety, or within construction zones).
- Monitor conservation mowing practices.
- Enroll in the Monarch Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), in lieu of implementing a project-by-project approach,
- Continue public outreach.



Beyond 2025

RIDOT will evaluate the program's success and expects to expand conservation mowing to additional corridors. Pollinator-supportive plants will continue to establish naturally, with supplemental seeding in select areas using RIDOT's specialized mix. Reduced mowing frequency will offset costs associated with seeding, monitoring, and reporting - creating environmental and financial benefits for the State of Rhode Island.

Program updates will be shared on RIDOT's website [RIDOT Environmental Division](#)