



more, better & safer bicycling

April 13, 2026

To: Chair Marvin Abney and members of the House Finance Committee

Re: Support for H8298 Bond Referenda for Capital Development – Funding the Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan

Bari Freeman
Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Coriander
Board Chair

Guillermo Rojas
Vice Chair

Chyleene O'Connor
Secretary

Peter Friedrichs
Treasurer

Jennifer Amaral

Melissa Bodnar

James Bracey

Akeia de Barros Gomes

Brenda Delasanta

Nicholas Del Greco

Kaitlyn Ellis

Jim Fry

Donald Hartley

Stacy Hennessey

Paige Myatt

Robert Penha

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

Representing Bike Newport, I write to express our strong support for H8298, the bond measure to fund the implementation of the Rhode Island Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan and completion of bike paths across Rhode Island. It has been eight years since we last included bike mobility funding in our Green Bond. At that time, voters overwhelmingly supported the investment, with 78.9% voting yes.

Safe, well-connected bicycle infrastructure is a sound public investment. Rhode Island's communities stand to benefit in myriad ways: reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, stronger public health outcomes, and increased economic activity along active transportation corridors.

On Aquidneck Island, we know that 1 out of every 4 car trips is under one mile. 50% are under two miles. People want to ride bicycles these short distances, but don't - because it is unsafe to do so. Imagine the reduction in traffic challenges in our downtown areas if people were able to ride bicycles to local destinations. In Newport, an average of 1600 people/day ride bicycles to the Newport Folk Festival – that is an estimated reduction of 750 cars/day.

Financially: studies consistently show that every dollar invested in bike infrastructure yields significant returns through tourism, local business activity, and reduced healthcare costs.

The comparison of investing in shared use paths vs highway is stunning: A \$285 million spend on bicycle infrastructure in Milan resulted in 466 miles of citywide separated bicycle infrastructure. In comparison, that spend was 35% of the cost to build one new highway interchange in Chicago. Eight years ago, a \$40 million estimate to add bicycle and pedestrian access to the Pell, Verrazzano, and Mount Hope Bridges here in Rhode Island had a comparable price tag to widening one highway exit ramp on I95. Those are stunning comparisons, especially given the significant ROI of building separated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Active Transportation spending is an economic stimulator and has a high return on investment compared to highway spending because:

- **Capital Costs are lower.** Bike lanes and sidewalks are significantly less expensive to build than multi-lane highways.
- **Labor benefits.** A greater proportion of the budget is spent on local wages rather than materials.

- **Local economy benefits.** Improved walking/cycling infrastructure boosts local retail sales by making access and parking convenient and economical. Additionally, proximity to bicycle infrastructure has direct and positive impact on property values.

Rhode Island is poised to deliver the infrastructure and reap the economic, health, and environmental benefits of this investment.

- The RI Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan was adopted in 2020.
- The RI Climate Action Strategy 2025 recognizes that biking and walking play a critical role in reducing carbon emissions.
- Increased biking and walking contribute to dramatically improved public health outcomes.
- Ocean State's Accelerates, RI's economic development plan adopted in 2023 identifies bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as essential to economic competitiveness.
- RI's Long Range Transportation Plan, Moving Forward RI 2050, identifies implementation of the Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan as a key strategy.

Rhode Island already has a proud legacy in this space – the state's many beautiful bike paths from the Blackstone River Valley Path in the north to the South County Bike Path are beloved assets that draw residents and visitors alike. Dedicated bond funding will allow the state to connect a statewide network, to improve safety at dangerous intersections, and to expand access to communities to strengthen a healthy and economical multimodal system for everyday transportation, as well as safe accessible recreation for people of all ages and abilities.

Five years into the 20-year Bicycle Mobility Plan, only 1.7% of the Bicycle Mobility Plan has been implemented. It's time to fund the plan and experience the promise of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

We urge the Committee to support H8298, adding this component to the Green Bond question in 2026 and give voters the opportunity to once again invest in bike paths and in Rhode Island's future — one that is healthier, greener, and more connected.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Bari Freeman, Executive Director