

Christi & Joseph Fragale
3 Rhode Island Blvd
Portsmouth, RI 02871
4/14/26

Re: Letter of Support — Rhode Island Bike Path Bond Question (H8298)

Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express our strong support for H8298, the proposed 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 8 years since we last included funding in our Green Bond, and when asked, 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 multiple ways: reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, stronger public health outcomes, and increased economic activity along active transportation corridors. Studies consistently show that every dollar invested in bike infrastructure yields significant returns through tourism, local business activity, and reduced healthcare costs.

Rhode Island already has a proud legacy in this space — the **East Bay Bike Path** is a wonderful example of a local asset that draws residents and visitors alike.

We write to demonstrate our support for this bond, which would invest in Rhode Island's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure—investments that consistently deliver safer streets, stronger local economies, and healthier communities. On Aquidneck Island, we have a ready example of what this bond can help advance: completion of a decades-old plan to convert the Newport Secondary rail corridor to a rail-with-trail, creating a continuous shared-use path along Narragansett Bay from Newport to Portsmouth.

Across the country, there are more than 450 rails-with-trails—proven projects that safely connect people to work, school, transit, and recreation. Yet Aquidneck Island currently has less than three miles of shared-use paths. Compared with peer destinations and communities in New England, we are falling far behind: Martha's Vineyard has roughly 40 miles, Nantucket has about 35 miles, and the Cape Cod Rail Trail alone spans 25 miles and continues to expand. Statewide, Rhode Island has demonstrated interest in bicycle infrastructure, but too many critical projects—including this one—remain unfunded. As a result, Aquidneck Island residents and visitors cannot travel safely north–south by bike or on foot without navigating congested roads such as East and West Main Road, where traffic moves at high speeds and conditions often include limited sidewalks, few safe crossings, and little or no dedicated space for people biking.

The Newport Secondary path would be a high-impact, cost-effective use of bond funds. It would improve safety by separating people walking and biking from vehicle traffic, with minimal private-property impacts since RIDOT already owns the rail corridor. It would reduce congestion by making short trips practical without a car; expand recreation and public access to the shoreline; and attract visitors who support local businesses in Portsmouth, Middletown, and Newport. The project would strengthen island-wide connectivity and could complement future passenger rail by enabling easy bike-and-train trips at corridor stations. Just as importantly, it would reduce emissions from short car trips and provide more equitable mobility options for residents of all ages and abilities, including a safer space for e-bikes and e-scooters. This bond is an opportunity to deliver projects like this statewide—projects that move more people, more safely, while putting Rhode Island’s infrastructure to its highest and best use.

Dedicated bond funding would allow the state to close critical gaps in the network, improve safety at dangerous intersections, and expand access to communities that rely on cycling for everyday transportation, as well as those of all ages who use it for recreation.

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,
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