



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon
Chairman
Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: S 2704 An Act Relating to Public Property and Works – Acquisition of Land

Dear Chairman Bissaillon,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on S 2704, which would authorize the creation of “special ways” by municipalities or state agencies. DEM has concerns with this legislation as currently drafted.

DEM manages more than 67,000 acres of land across Rhode Island including state parks, beaches, and campgrounds; management areas; boat launches, and other types of properties. We interpret the provision found on page 1, lines 13-17 to mean that a municipality could designate a special way on state property, or that a state agency could do so on municipal property. We recommend that this language be clarified to reflect that the entity designating the special way must hold title or a property interest in the property where the proposed special way is located. As currently drafted, the proposal could violate the property rights of the state or municipal property owner. This change will avoid circumstances where special ways are designated against the will of the property owner.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Ryan Mulcahey, DEM Director of Legislative Affairs, at ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government
The Honorable Victoria Gu
Kristen Silvia, Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Legislation