

April 10, 2024

House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Acadia Center Support of H7918 Funding for the Bicycle Mobility Plan

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

Acadia Center appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill H7918 authorizing a bond referenda for \$25,000,000 to provide funding for the implementation of the state's Bicycle Mobility Plan. Acadia Center is a non-profit research and advocacy organization committed to advancing economic and environmental policies that will have the greatest impact on carbon emissions in our region. Our work is grounded in impactful data analysis and inclusive partnerships and collaboration.

Transportation pollution accounts for the largest source of emissions in the Northeast and in Rhode Island, at over 40% of the Northeast's total CO₂ emissions and 38% of all economy-wide emissions in Rhode Island¹. Rhode Island's transportation sector is not on track to meeting its proportionate Act on Climate mandates. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT)'s transportation emissions forecast demonstrates that a much more aggressive shift to reducing vehicle miles traveled and modal shift will be needed to come close to achieving the 45% reductions by 2030, 80% by 2040 and net zero by 2050.²

Time is running out to establish the policies and make the investments necessary to achieve significant emission reductions from the region's most stubborn sector: without urgent action to reduce vehicle pollution, the state's climate targets will be unattainable. Multimodal transportation options, including bicycles and supporting infrastructure, must be considered as an important element of Rhode Island's transportation system.

Rhode Island is the second most densely populated state, with 50% of the population living within 10 miles of Providence. The state has over 75 miles of shared-use paths and 25 roadway miles with on-street bicycle lanes to build upon. The Bicycle Mobility Plan envisions connecting this existing system to a vastly expanded network of shared use paths and on-street bicycle lanes. Candidate projects offer a range of improvements designed to enhance connectivity, fill network gaps, and improve safety. However, most recommendations identified in the plan are not connected a funding source.³

¹ Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. 2020 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. October 2023.

² Rhode Island Department of Transportation. Carbon Reduction Strategy. November 2023.

³ Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, prepared by VHB. Rhode Island Moving Forward, Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan. December 2020.

Beyond addressing climate change, our outdated and underfunded transportation system hinders economic opportunity, has devastating public health impacts, and overwhelmingly burdens the most marginalized populations: low-income communities, communities of color, and rural communities lacking mobility options. At its core, transportation is a basic social need affecting the lives of all residents. Environmental justice communities have been particularly disadvantaged in transportation planning and face restricted mobility options; this investment in the state's Bicycle Mobility Plan and a more connected bicycle network is an investment in a more equitable multimodal transportation system.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bond referenda. I hope you will allow the people of Rhode Island to vote on funding its statewide bicycle system this general election.

Sincerely,

Emily Koo
Senior Policy Advocate and Rhode Island Program Director
Acadia Center
ekoo@acadiacenter.org